READING 2C Relate the characters, setting, and theme of a literary work to the historical, social, and economic ideas of its time. 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, graphics, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.

DID YOU KNOW?

The original Beowulf manuscript ...

- exists in only one copy.
- · was damaged and nearly destroyed in a fire in the 18th century.
- has now been preserved through digitization.



The Anglo-Saxon Epic

from Beowulf

Epic Poem by the Beowulf Poet Translated by Burton Raffel



VIDEO TRAILER THINK, KEYWORD: HML12-40A

Meet the Author

The Beowulf Poet about 750?



"Hear me!" So begins Beowulf, the oldest surviving epic poem in English. The command was intended to capture the listening audience's attention, for Beowulf was originally chanted or sung aloud. Centuries of poet-singers, called scops (shops), recited the adventures of Beowulf. It is our great fortune that eventually a gifted poet unified the heroic accounts and produced an enduring work of art.

By Anonymous Unfortunately, we don't know who that poet was or when Beowulf was composed. Scholars contend that the poet may have lived anytime between the middle of the seventh century A.D. and the end of the tenth century. However, we do know where the poem was written. In the fifth century, bloody warfare in northern Europe had driven many Germanicspeaking tribes, including groups of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, to abandon their homes. Many of these groups settled in England, where they established what is now called Anglo-Saxon civilization.

The people of the Anglo-Saxon period spoke a language known as Old English, the language in which Beowulf was composed.

Old English bears little resemblance to Modern English and so must be translated for readers today. By the time Beowulf was written, the Anglo-Saxons had also converted to Christianity. This Christian influence is evident in the poem.

Long Ago and Far Away Although Beowulf was composed in England, the poem describes events that take place in Scandinavia around the 500s among two groups: the Danes of what is now Denmark and the Geats (gets) of what is now Sweden. Beowulf is a Geat warrior who crosses the sea to defeat Grendel, a monster who is terrorizing the Danes. He later returns to his homeland to succeed his uncle as king of the Geats.

Beowulf celebrates warrior culture and deeds requiring great strength and courage. Scops recited the poem and other tales in mead halls, large wooden buildings that provided a safe haven for warriors returning from battle. During the performances, audiences feasted and drank mead, an alcoholic beverage.

Survivor The sole surviving copy of *Beowulf* dates from about the year 1000. It is the work of Christian monks who preserved the literature of the past by copying manuscripts. After suffering mistreatment and several near-disasters, the Beowulf manuscript is now safely housed in the British Library in London.

Author Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML12-40B

■ LITERARY ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EPIC

An **epic**, a long narrative poem that traces the adventures of a great hero, has the power to transport you to another time and place. *Beowulf* takes you to the Anglo-Saxon period and the land of the Danes and the Geats, where a mighty warrior battles fantastic monsters. As you read the poem, note some of the following characteristics of epic poetry:

- The **hero** is a legendary figure who performs deeds requiring incredible courage and strength.
- The hero embodies **character traits** that reflect lofty ideals.
- The poet uses formal diction and a serious tone.
- The poem reflects timeless values and universal themes.

■ READING STRATEGY: READING OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Old English poetry is marked by a strong rhythm that is easy to chant or sing. Here are some of the techniques used in an Old English poem:

- alliteration, or the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, which helps unify the lines
 - So mankind's enemy continued his crimes
- caesura (sĭ-zhŏor'ə), or a pause dividing each line, with each part having two accented syllables to help maintain the rhythm of the lines
 - He took what he wanted, // all the treasures
- kenning, a metaphorical compound word or phrase substituted for a noun or name, which enhances meaning for example, "mankind's enemy" used in place of "Grendel"

As you read *Beowulf*, note examples of these techniques and consider their effect on rhythm and meaning in the poem.

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The words shown here help convey the monstrous forces Beowulf faces in the epic. Choose a word from the list that has the same definition as each numbered item.

WORDafflictionlairpurgeLISTgorgelividtaloninfamousloathsome

1. claw 2. burden 3. notorious 4. cram



Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Where do MONSTERS lurk?

Unlike the monsters in *Beowulf*, those in our world are not always easy to identify. Evil can hide in the most unexpected places: behind a smiling face, between the lines of a law, in otherwise noble-sounding words. Even when evil is clearly exposed, people may disagree on how to confront it.

QUICKWRITE What does *evil* mean to you? Write your own definition of the word, and provide some examples of real-life monsters.





Hrothgar (hrôth'gär'), king of the Danes, has built a wonderful mead hall called Herot (hĕr'ət), where his subjects congregate and make merry. As this selection opens, a fierce and powerful monster named Grendel invades the mead hall, bringing death and destruction.

GRENDEL

A powerful monster, living down
In the darkness, growled in pain, impatient
As day after day the music rang
Loud in that hall, the harp's rejoicing

- 5 Call and the poet's clear songs, sung
 Of the ancient beginnings of us all, recalling
 The Almighty making the earth, shaping
 These beautiful plains marked off by oceans,
 Then proudly setting the sun and moon
- 10 To glow across the land and light it;
 The corners of the earth were made lovely with trees
 And leaves, made quick with life, with each
 Of the nations who now move on its face. And then
 As now warriors sang of their pleasure:

A OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 1–2 aloud. Notice the use of **alliteration** with the repetition of the letters p and d. What **mood**, **or feeling**, does the alliteration convey?

Analyze Visuals ▶

Examine the composition, or arrangement of shapes, in this photograph. How does the angle of the photo contribute to its impact?



15 So Hrothgar's men lived happy in his hall
Till the monster stirred, that demon, that fiend,
Grendel, who haunted the moors, the wild
Marshes, and made his home in a hell
Not hell but earth. He was spawned in that slime,

20 Conceived by a pair of those monsters born Of Cain, murderous creatures banished By God, punished forever for the crime Of Abel's death. The Almighty drove Those demons out, and their exile was bitter,

25 Shut away from men; they split
Into a thousand forms of evil—spirits
And fiends, goblins, monsters, giants,
A brood forever opposing the Lord's
Will, and again and again defeated.

Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel
Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors
Would do in that hall when their drinking was done.
He found them sprawled in sleep, suspecting
Nothing, their dreams undisturbed. The monster's
Thoughts were as quick as his greed or his claws:
He slipped through the door and there in the silence
Snatched up thirty men, smashed them
Unknowing in their beds and ran out with their bodies,

40 To his <u>lair</u>, delighted with his night's slaughter.

At daybreak, with the sun's first light, they saw
How well he had worked, and in that gray morning
Broke their long feast with tears and laments
For the dead. Hrothgar, their lord, sat joyless

The blood dripping behind him, back

45 In Herot, a mighty prince mourning
The fate of his lost friends and companions,
Knowing by its tracks that some demon had torn
His followers apart. He wept, fearing
The beginning might not be the end. And that night •

50 Grendel came again, so set
On murder that no crime could ever be enough,
No savage assault quench his lust
For evil. Then each warrior tried
To escape him, searched for rest in different

55 Beds, as far from Herot as they could find, Seeing how Grendel hunted when they slept. Distance was safety; the only survivors Were those who fled him. Hate had triumphed. **17 moors** (moorz): broad, open regions with patches of bog.

19 spawned: given birth to.

21 Cain: the eldest son of Adam and Eve. According to the Bible (Genesis 4), he murdered his younger brother Abel.

EPIC

Note the description in lines 23–29 of supernatural creatures that are "again and again defeated." What universal theme might these lines suggest?

lair (lâr) *n*. the den or resting place of a wild animal

A FPI

What is the **tone** of lines 44–49? What words and details convey this tone?

So Grendel ruled, fought with the righteous,

- 60 One against many, and won; so Herot Stood empty, and stayed deserted for years, Twelve winters of grief for Hrothgar, king Of the Danes, sorrow heaped at his door By hell-forged hands. His misery leaped
- 65 The seas, was told and sung in all Men's ears: how Grendel's hatred began, How the monster relished his savage war On the Danes, keeping the bloody feud Alive, seeking no peace, offering
- 70 No truce, accepting no settlement, no price In gold or land, and paying the living For one crime only with another. No one Waited for reparation from his plundering claws: That shadow of death hunted in the darkness,
- 75 Stalked Hrothgar's warriors, old And young, lying in waiting, hidden In mist, invisibly following them from the edge Of the marsh, always there, unseen.

So mankind's enemy continued his crimes,

- 80 Killing as often as he could, coming
 Alone, bloodthirsty and horrible. Though he lived
 In Herot, when the night hid him, he never
 Dared to touch king Hrothgar's glorious
 Throne, protected by God—God,
- 85 Whose love Grendel could not know. But Hrothgar's Heart was bent. The best and most noble Of his council debated remedies, sat In secret sessions, talking of terror And wondering what the bravest of warriors could do.
- 90 And sometimes they sacrificed to the old stone gods, Made heathen vows, hoping for Hell's Support, the Devil's guidance in driving Their <u>affliction</u> off. That was their way, And the heathen's only hope, Hell
- 95 Always in their hearts, knowing neither God Nor His passing as He walks through our world, the Lord Of Heaven and earth; their ears could not hear His praise nor know His glory. Let them Beware, those who are thrust into danger,
- In their hearts, cannot hope to be better! Hail To those who will rise to God, drop off Their dead bodies and seek our Father's peace!

D OLD ENGLISH POETRY

What does the **kenning** "hellforged hands" in line 64 suggest about Grendel?

73 reparation: something done to make amends for loss or suffering. In Germanic society, someone who killed another person was generally expected to make a payment to the victim's family as a way of restoring peace.

84 The reference to God shows the influence of Christianity on the Beowulf Poet.

91 heathen (hē'thən): pagan; non-Christian. Though the Beowulf Poet was a Christian, he recognized that the characters in the poem lived before the Germanic tribes were converted to Christianity, when they still worshiped "the old stone gods."

affliction (ə-flĭk'shən) *n*. a force that oppresses or causes suffering



The Oseberg Ship (850), Viking. Viking Ship Museum, Bygdoy, Norway. © Werner Forman/Art Resource, New York.

So the living sorrow of Healfdane's son
105 Simmered, bitter and fresh, and no wisdom
Or strength could break it: that agony hung
On king and people alike, harsh
And unending, violent and cruel, and evil.
In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's

110 Follower and the strongest of the Geats—greater
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world—
Heard how Grendel filled nights with horror
And quickly commanded a boat fitted out,
Proclaiming that he'd go to that famous king,

Now when help was needed. None
Of the wise ones regretted his going, much
As he was loved by the Geats: the omens were good,
And they urged the adventure on. So Beowulf

120 Chose the mightiest men he could find, The bravest and best of the Geats, fourteen In all, and led them down to their boat: 104 Healfdane's son: Hrothgar.

109–110 Higlac's follower: a warrior loyal to Higlac (hĭg'lăk'), king of the Geats (and Beowulf's uncle).

He knew the sea, would point the prow Straight to that distant Danish shore. . . . •

Beowulf and his men sail over the sea to the land of the Danes to offer help to Hrothgar. They are escorted by a Danish guard to Herot, where Wulfgar, one of Hrothgar's soldiers, tells the king of their arrival. Hrothgar knows of Beowulf and is ready to welcome the young prince and his men.

Then Wulfgar went to the door and addressed
The waiting seafarers with soldier's words:

"My lord, the great king of the Danes, commands me
To tell you that he knows of your noble birth
And that having come to him from over the open
130 Sea you have come bravely and are welcome.
Now go to him as you are, in your armor and helmets,
But leave your battle-shields here, and your spears,
Let them lie waiting for the promises your words
May make."

Beowulf arose, with his men
135 Around him, ordering a few to remain
With their weapons, leading the others quickly
Along under Herot's steep roof into Hrothgar's
Presence. Standing on that prince's own hearth,
Helmeted, the silvery metal of his mail shirt
140 Gleaming with a smith's high art, he greeted
The Danes' great lord:

"Hail, Hrothgar! Higlac is my cousin and my king; the days Of my youth have been filled with glory. Now Grendel's Name has echoed in our land: sailors

Of all mead-halls, deserted and useless when the moon Hangs in skies the sun had lit, Light and life fleeing together. My people have said, the wisest, most knowing

Great king. They have seen my strength for themselves, Have watched me rise from the darkness of war, Dripping with my enemies' blood. I drove Five great giants into chains, chased

155 All of that race from the earth. I swam In the blackness of night, hunting monsters Out of the ocean, and killing them one



TEKS 2C

EPIC

An epic is a long narrative poem that traces the adventures of a great hero. Almost all national cultures have their own epics, whose stories and heroes play a role in defining the national character. An epic may describe how a nation was established or highlight specific traits associated with its people. Read lines 109-124. At what point in the story is Beowulf introduced? What traits of an epic hero does he appear to possess? Which traits of Beowulf's might also be used to describe the British people and their origins?

139 mail shirt: flexible body armor made of metal links or overlapping metal scales.

140 smith's high art: the skilled craft of a blacksmith (a person who fashions objects from iron).

142 cousin: here, a general term for a relative. Beowulf is actually Higlac's nephew.

By one; death was my errand and the fate They had earned. Now Grendel and I are called **6**

160 Together, and I've come. Grant me, then,
Lord and protector of this noble place,
A single request! I have come so far,
Oh shelterer of warriors and your people's loved friend,
That this one favor you should not refuse me—

165 That I, alone and with the help of my men,May purge all evil from this hall. I have heard,Too, that the monster's scorn of menIs so great that he needs no weapons and fears none.Nor will I. My lord Higlac

170 Might think less of me if I let my sword Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid Behind some broad linden shield: my hands Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life Against the monster. God must decide

175 Who will be given to death's cold grip.
Grendel's plan, I think, will be
What it has been before, to invade this hall
And **gorge** his belly with our bodies. If he can,
If he can. And I think, if my time will have come,

There'll be nothing to mourn over, no corpse to prepare For its grave: Grendel will carry our bloody Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls Of his den. No, I expect no Danes

185 Will fret about sewing our shrouds, if he wins.

And if death does take me, send the hammered
Mail of my armor to Higlac, return

The inheritance I had from Hrethel, and he
From Wayland. Fate will unwind as it must!"

190 Hrothgar replied, protector of the Danes:
 "Beowulf, you've come to us in friendship, and because
Of the reception your father found at our court.
Edgetho had begun a bitter feud,
Killing Hathlaf, a Wulfing warrior:
195 Your father's countrymen were afraid of war,
If he returned to his home, and they turned him away.
Then he traveled across the curving waves
To the land of the Danes. I was new to the throne,
Then, a young man ruling this wide

EPIC

Notice that in lines 153–159, Beowulf boasts about past victories that required superhuman strength and courage. Why might the people of Beowulf's time have valued such traits?

purge (pûrj) v. to cleanse or rid of something undesirable

172 linden shield: a shield made from the wood of a linden tree.

172–174 Beowulf insists on fighting Grendel without weapons.

gorge (gôrj) v. to stuff with food; glut

185 shrouds: cloths in which dead bodies are wrapped.

188 Hrethel (hrĕth'əl): a former king of the Geats—Higlac's father and Beowulf's grandfather.

189 Wayland: a famous blacksmith and magician.

193 Edgetho (ĕj'thō): Beowulf's father. **194 Wulfing:** a member of another Germanic tribe. 200 Kingdom and its golden city: Hergar,
My older brother, a far better man
Than I, had died and dying made me,
Second among Healfdane's sons, first
In this nation. I bought the end of Edgetho's
205 Quarrel, sent ancient treasures through the ocean's
Furrows to the Wulfings; your father swore
He'd keep that peace. My tongue grows heavy,
And my heart, when I try to tell you what Grendel
Has brought us, the damage he's done, here

Our ranks have become, and can guess what we've lost To his terror. Surely the Lord Almighty Could stop his madness, smother his lust! How many times have my men, glowing

Of ale, sworn to stay after dark
And stem that horror with a sweep of their swords.
And then, in the morning, this mead-hall glittering
With new light would be drenched with blood, the benches

220 Stained red, the floors, all wet from that fiend's
Savage assault—and my soldiers would be fewer
Still, death taking more and more.
But to table, Beowulf, a banquet in your honor:
Let us toast your victories, and talk of the future." ①

Then Hrothgar's men gave places to the Geats, Yielded benches to the brave visitors
And led them to the feast. The keeper of the mead Came carrying out the carved flasks,
And poured that bright sweetness. A poet
230 Sang, from time to time, in a clear

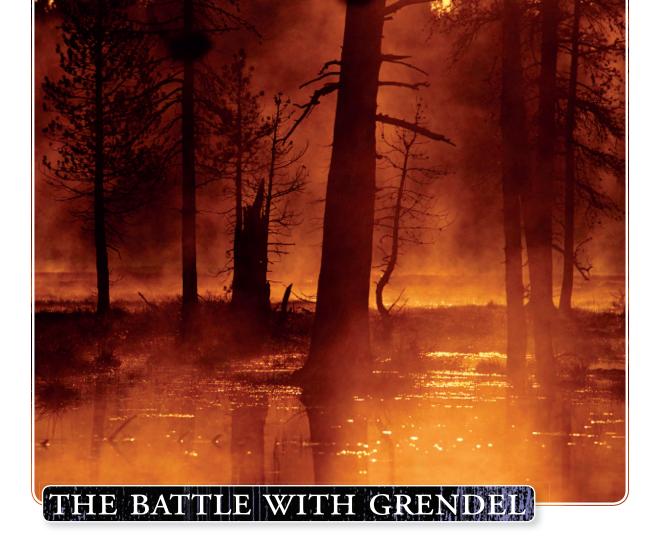
Pure voice. Danes and visiting Geats
Celebrated as one, drank and rejoiced. . . .

G OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Observe that as Hrothgar begins to speak about Grendel in lines 207–210, his **tone**, or his attitude toward his subject, becomes bleak and despairing. What repeated sounds does the poet use to suggest this tone?

♠ EPIC

Note that Hrothgar delivers a long speech to Beowulf in lines 190–224. What values are reflected in the speech?



After the banquet, Hrothgar and his followers leave Herot, and Beowulf and his warriors remain to spend the night. Beowulf reiterates his intent to fight Grendel without a sword and, while his followers sleep, lies waiting, eager for Grendel to appear.

Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred,

235 Grendel came, hoping to kill
Anyone he could trap on this trip to high Herot.
He moved quickly through the cloudy night,
Up from his swampland, sliding silently
Toward that gold-shining hall. He had visited Hrothgar's
240 Home before, knew the way—

But never, before nor after that night,
Found Herot defended so firmly, his reception
So harsh. He journeyed, forever joyless,
Straight to the door, then snapped it open,

245 Tore its iron fasteners with a touch

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 233–235. Notice that the translator uses punctuation to convey the effect of the midline pauses, or caesuras, in the lines. In what way does the rhythm created by the pauses reinforce the action recounted here?

246 threshold: the strip of wood or stone at the bottom of a doorway.

And rushed angrily over the threshold. He strode quickly across the inlaid Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome

- 250 Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hall
 Crowded with sleeping warriors, stuffed
 With rows of young soldiers resting together.
 And his heart laughed, he relished the sight,
 Intended to tear the life from those bodies
- 255 By morning; the monster's mind was hot
 With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
 Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
 Grendel to gnaw the broken bones
 Of his last human supper. Human
- 260 Eyes were watching his evil steps, Waiting to see his swift hard claws. Grendel snatched at the first Geat He came to, ripped him apart, cut His body to bits with powerful jaws,
- 265 Drank the blood from his veins and bolted Him down, hands and feet; death And Grendel's great teeth came together, Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
- Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
 —And was instantly seized himself, claws
 Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.
 That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime,

Knew at once that nowhere on earth

- 275 Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
 His mind was flooded with fear—but nothing
 Could take his <u>talons</u> and himself from that tight
 Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run
 From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide there:
- This was a different Herot than the hall he had emptied.
 But Higlac's follower remembered his final
 Boast and, standing erect, stopped
 The monster's flight, fastened those claws
 In his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel
- 285 Closer. The <u>infamous</u> killer fought
 For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
 Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
 Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to Herot
 Was a miserable journey for the writhing monster!

talon (tăl'ən) n. a claw

278–289 Up to this point Grendel has killed his human victims easily.

infamous (ĭn'fə-məs) *adj*. having a very bad reputation

The high hall rang, its roof boards swayed, 290 And Danes shook with terror. Down The aisles the battle swept, angry And wild. Herot trembled, wonderfully Built to withstand the blows, the struggling 295 Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls; Shaped and fastened with iron, inside And out, artfully worked, the building Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell To the floor, gold-covered boards grating 300 As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them. Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned Herot To stand forever; only fire, They had planned, could shatter what such skill had put Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor 305 Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly The sounds changed, the Danes started In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain 310 And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms Of him who of all the men on earth Was the strongest.

That mighty protector of men Meant to hold the monster till its life 315 Leaped out, knowing the fiend was no use To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf's Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral Swords raised and ready, determined To protect their prince if they could. Their courage 320 Was great but all wasted: they could hack at Grendel From every side, trying to open A path for his evil soul, but their points Could not hurt him, the sharpest and hardest iron Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained demon 325 Had bewitched all men's weapons, laid spells That blunted every mortal man's blade. And yet his time had come, his days Were over, his death near; down To hell he would go, swept groaning and helpless 330 To the waiting hands of still worse fiends.

II OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 293–300. What impression of the battle does the alliteration help convey?

Language Coach

Homophones Many word pairs sound alike but have different spellings and meanings. For example, taught is the past tense of teach. Which word in line 311 is a homophone for taught? Guess the word's meaning using the surrounding text.

Now he discovered—once the afflictor
Of men, tormentor of their days—what it meant
To feud with Almighty God: Grendel
Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
335 Bound fast, Higlac's brave follower tearing at
His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
But his power had gone. He twisted in pain,
And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
Snapped, muscle and bone split
340 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf

340 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf Had been granted new glory: Grendel escaped, But wounded as he was could flee to his den, His miserable hole at the bottom of the marsh, Only to die, to wait for the end

Of all his days. And after that bloody
Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
He who had come to them from across the sea,
Bold and strong-minded, had driven affliction
Off, purged Herot clean. He was happy,

Now, with that night's fierce work; the Danes
Had been served as he'd boasted he'd serve them; Beowulf,
A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
Forced on Hrothgar's helpless people

355 By a bloodthirsty fiend. No Dane doubted
The victory, for the proof, hanging high
From the rafters where Beowulf had hung it, was the monster's
Arm, claw and shoulder and all.

And then, in the morning, crowds surrounded
360 Herot, warriors coming to that hall
From faraway lands, princes and leaders
Of men hurrying to behold the monster's
Great staggering tracks. They gaped with no sense
Of sorrow, felt no regret for his suffering,
365 Went tracing his bloody footprints, his beaten
And lonely flight, to the edge of the lake
Where he'd dragged his corpselike way, doomed
And already weary of his vanishing life.
The water was bloody, steaming and boiling
370 In horrible pounding waves, heat
Sucked from his magic veins; but the swirling
Surf had covered his death, hidden

338 sinews (sĭn'yooz): the tendons that connect muscles to bones.

Deep in murky darkness his miserable End, as hell opened to receive him. ��

Then old and young rejoiced, turned back
From that happy pilgrimage, mounted their hard-hooved
Horses, high-spirited stallions, and rode them
Slowly toward Herot again, retelling
Beowulf's bravery as they jogged along.

On earth or under they swore that nowhere
On earth or under the spreading sky
Or between the seas, neither south nor north,
Was there a warrior worthier to rule over men.
(But no one meant Beowulf's praise to belittle

385 Hrothgar, their kind and gracious king!)

And sometimes, when the path ran straight and clear, They would let their horses race, red

And brown and pale yellow backs streaming

Down the road. And sometimes a proud old soldier

390 Who had heard songs of the ancient heroes
And could sing them all through, story after story,
Would weave a net of words for Beowulf's
Victory, tying the knot of his verses
Smoothly, swiftly, into place with a poet's

Smoothly, swiftly, into place with a poet's

Quick skill, singing his new song aloud

While he shaped it, and the old songs as well. . . . •

GRAMMAR AND STYLE

To capture a scene, the poet often uses vivid **imagery.** Notice the use in lines 369–374, for example, of **adjectives** such as *bloody, steaming, pounding,* and *swirling* to help readers see and feel the violent, churning water.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 389–396. In what ways does this description reflect the techniques used by Anglo-Saxon poets? Cite details.

Literary Analysis

- 1. Clarify Why does Beowulf journey across the sea to the land of the Danes?
- 2. Summarize How does Beowulf trap and kill Grendel?
- **3. Analyze Motivation** What drives Grendel to attack so many men at Herot, the mead hall?
- **4. Make Inferences** Why does Beowulf hang Grendel's arm from the rafters of Herot?



Although one monster has died, another still lives. From her lair in a cold and murky lake, where she has been brooding over her loss, Grendel's mother emerges, bent on revenge.

So she reached Herot,

Where the Danes slept as though already dead;

Her visit ended their good fortune, reversed

- 400 The bright vane of their luck. No female, no matter How fierce, could have come with a man's strength, Fought with the power and courage men fight with, Smashing their shining swords, their bloody, Hammer-forged blades onto boar-headed helmets,
- Slashing and stabbing with the sharpest of points.
 The soldiers raised their shields and drew
 Those gleaming swords, swung them above
 The piled-up benches, leaving their mail shirts
 And their helmets where they'd lain when the terror took hold of them.
- To save her life she moved still faster,
 Took a single victim and fled from the hall,
 Running to the moors, discovered, but her supper
 Assured, sheltered in her dripping claws.
 She'd taken Hrothgar's closest friend,
- 415 The man he most loved of all men on earth; She'd killed a glorious soldier, cut A noble life short. No Geat could have stopped her: Beowulf and his band had been given better

▲ Analyze Visuals

What mood is conveyed by this photograph? Which elements help create that mood?

400 vane: a device that turns to show the direction the wind is blowing—here associated metaphorically with luck, which is as changeable as the wind.

404 boar-headed helmets: Germanic warriors often wore helmets bearing the images of wild pigs or other fierce creatures in the hope that the images would increase their ferocity and protect them against their enemies.

Beds; sleep had come to them in a different
420 Hall. Then all Herot burst into shouts:
She had carried off Grendel's claw. Sorrow
Had returned to Denmark. They'd traded deaths,
Danes and monsters, and no one had won,
Both had lost! . . .

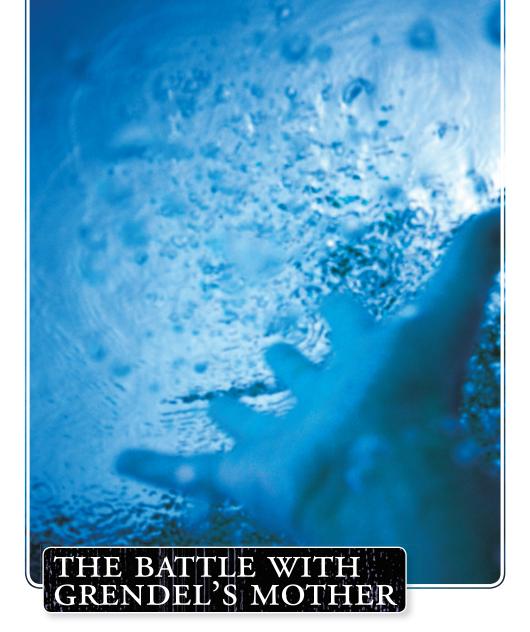
Devastated by the loss of his friend, Hrothgar sends for Beowulf and recounts what Grendel's mother has done. Then Hrothgar describes the dark lake where Grendel's mother has dwelt with her son.

- 425 "They live in secret places, windy
 Cliffs, wolf-dens where water pours
 From the rocks, then runs underground, where mist
 Steams like black clouds, and the groves of trees
 Growing out over their lake are all covered
- 430 With frozen spray, and wind down snakelike Roots that reach as far as the water And help keep it dark. At night that lake Burns like a torch. No one knows its bottom, No wisdom reaches such depths. A deer,
- 435 Hunted through the woods by packs of hounds,
 A stag with great horns, though driven through the forest
 From faraway places, prefers to die
 On those shores, refuses to save its life
 In that water. It isn't far, nor is it
- And storms, waves splash toward the sky, As dark as the air, as black as the rain That the heavens weep. Our only help, Again, lies with you. Grendel's mother
- You've not seen. Seek it, if you dare! Save us, Once more, and again twisted gold, Heaped-up ancient treasure, will reward you For the battle you win!" . . .

Language Coach

Homographs Words with the same spelling but different meanings, pronunciations, or both are homographs. The word wind, for example, can rhyme with sinned or kind. What is the pronunciation and meaning of wind in line 430? How can you tell?

447–449 Germanic warriors placed great importance on amassing treasure as a way of acquiring fame and temporarily defeating fate.



Beowulf accepts Hrothgar's challenge, and the king and his men accompany the hero to the dreadful lair of Grendel's mother. Fearlessly, Beowulf prepares to battle the terrible creature.

He leaped into the lake, would not wait for anyone's
Answer; the heaving water covered him
Over. For hours he sank through the waves;
At last he saw the mud of the bottom.
And all at once the greedy she-wolf
Who'd ruled those waters for half a hundred
Years discovered him, saw that a creature
From above had come to explore the bottom
Of her wet world. She welcomed him in her claws,
Clutched at him savagely but could not harm him,
Tried to work her fingers through the tight
Ring-woven mail on his breast, but tore

And scratched in vain. Then she carried him, armor And sword and all, to her home; he struggled To free his weapon, and failed. The fight

- Her catch, a host of sea beasts who beat at His mail shirt, stabbing with tusks and teeth As they followed along. Then he realized, suddenly, That she'd brought him into someone's battle-hall,
- 470 And there the water's heat could not hurt him, Nor anything in the lake attack him through The building's high-arching roof. A brilliant Light burned all around him, the lake Itself like a fiery flame.

Then he saw

- 475 The mighty water witch, and swung his sword, His ring-marked blade, straight at her head; The iron sang its fierce song, Sang Beowulf's strength. But her guest Discovered that no sword could slice her evil
- 480 Skin, that Hrunting could not hurt her, was useless Now when he needed it. They wrestled, she ripped And tore and clawed at him, bit holes in his helmet, And that too failed him; for the first time in years Of being worn to war it would earn no glory;
- 485 It was the last time anyone would wear it. But Beowulf Longed only for fame, leaped back Into battle. He tossed his sword aside, Angry; the steel-edged blade lay where He'd dropped it. If weapons were useless he'd use
- 490 His hands, the strength in his fingers. So fame
 Comes to the men who mean to win it
 And care about nothing else! He raised
 His arms and seized her by the shoulder; anger
 Doubled his strength, he threw her to the floor.
- 495 She fell, Grendel's fierce mother, and the Geats'
 Proud prince was ready to leap on her. But she rose
 At once and repaid him with her clutching claws,
 Wildly tearing at him. He was weary, that best
 And strongest of soldiers; his feet stumbled
- 500 And in an instant she had him down, held helpless. Squatting with her weight on his stomach, she drew A dagger, brown with dried blood, and prepared To avenge her only son. But he was stretched

M EPIC

Reread lines 464–474. What details of the battle and its setting are characteristic of an epic?

476 his ring-marked blade: For the battle with Grendel's mother, Beowulf has been given an heirloom sword with an intricately etched blade.

480 Hrunting (hrŭn'tĭng): the name of Beowulf's sword. (Germanic warriors' swords were possessions of such value that they were often given names.)

On his back, and her stabbing blade was blunted

By the woven mail shirt he wore on his chest.

The hammered links held; the point

Could not touch him. He'd have traveled to the bottom of the earth,

Edgetho's son, and died there, if that shining

Woven metal had not helped—and Holy

God, who sent him victory, gave judgment

For truth and right, Ruler of the Heavens,

Once Beowulf was back on his feet and fighting.

Then he saw, hanging on the wall, a heavy Sword, hammered by giants, strong 515 And blessed with their magic, the best of all weapons But so massive that no ordinary man could lift Its carved and decorated length. He drew it From its scabbard, broke the chain on its hilt, And then, savage, now, angry 520 And desperate, lifted it high over his head And struck with all the strength he had left, Caught her in the neck and cut it through, Broke bones and all. Her body fell To the floor, lifeless, the sword was wet 525 With her blood, and Beowulf rejoiced at the sight. The brilliant light shone, suddenly, As though burning in that hall, and as bright as Heaven's Own candle, lit in the sky. He looked N At her home, then following along the wall 530 Went walking, his hands tight on the sword, His heart still angry. He was hunting another Dead monster, and took his weapon with him For final revenge against Grendel's vicious Attacks, his nighttime raids, over 535 And over, coming to Herot when Hrothgar's Men slept, killing them in their beds, Eating some on the spot, fifteen Or more, and running to his **loathsome** moor With another such sickening meal waiting 540 In his pouch. But Beowulf repaid him for those visits, Found him lying dead in his corner, Armless, exactly as that fierce fighter Had sent him out from Herot, then struck off His head with a single swift blow. The body

545 Jerked for the last time, then lay still.

What does the light

What does the light described in lines 526–528 suggest about Beowulf's victory?

loathsome (lōth'səm) adj. disgusting

The wise old warriors who surrounded Hrothgar, Like him staring into the monsters' lake,
Saw the waves surging and blood
Spurting through. They spoke about Beowulf,
550 All the graybeards, whispered together
And said that hope was gone, that the hero
Had lost fame and his life at once, and would never
Return to the living, come back as triumphant
As he had left; almost all agreed that Grendel's
555 Mighty mother, the she-wolf, had killed him.
The sun slid over past noon, went further
Down. The Danes gave up, left
The lake and went home, Hrothgar with them.
The Geats stayed, sat sadly, watching,
560 Imagining they saw their lord but not believing

They would ever see him again. —Then the sword Melted, blood-soaked, dripping down Like water, disappearing like ice when the world's Eternal Lord loosens invisible 565 Fetters and unwinds icicles and frost As only He can, He who rules Time and seasons, He who is truly God. The monsters' hall was full of Rich treasures, but all that Beowulf took 570 Was Grendel's head and the hilt of the giants' Jeweled sword; the rest of that ring-marked Blade had dissolved in Grendel's steaming Blood, boiling even after his death. And then the battle's only survivor 575 Swam up and away from those silent corpses; The water was calm and clean, the whole

Then that noble protector of all seamen
Swam to land, rejoicing in the heavy
580 Burdens he was bringing with him. He
And all his glorious band of Geats
Thanked God that their leader had come back unharmed;
They left the lake together. The Geats
Carried Beowulf's helmet, and his mail shirt.
585 Behind them the water slowly thickened
As the monsters' blood came seeping up.

Huge lake peaceful once the demons who'd lived in it

550 graybeards: old men.

O EPIC

What do lines 549–555 suggest about attitudes toward fame in the Anglo-Saxon period?

578 that noble protector of all seamen: Beowulf, who will be buried in a tower that will serve as a navigational aid to sailors.

Were dead.

They walked quickly, happily, across Roads all of them remembered, left The lake and the cliffs alongside it, brave men 590 Staggering under the weight of Grendel's skull, Too heavy for fewer than four of them to handle— Two on each side of the spear jammed through it— Yet proud of their ugly load and determined That the Danes, seated in Herot, should see it. P 595 Soon, fourteen Geats arrived At the hall, bold and warlike, and with Beowulf, Their lord and leader, they walked on the mead-hall Green. Then the Geats' brave prince entered Herot, covered with glory for the daring 600 Battles he had fought; he sought Hrothgar To salute him and show Grendel's head. He carried that terrible trophy by the hair, Brought it straight to where the Danes sat,

Drinking, the queen among them. It was a weird

605 And wonderful sight, and the warriors stared. . . .

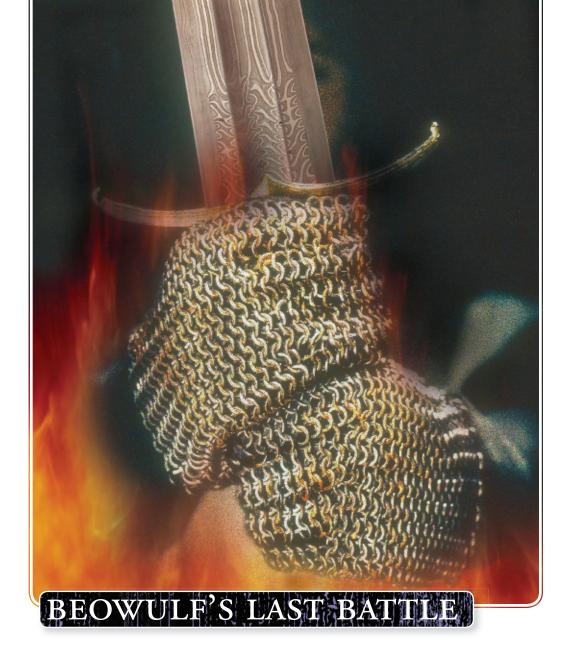
EPIC

Reread lines 587–594. Why do you think the Geats want the Danes to see Grendel's skull?

604 queen: Welthow, wife of Hrothgar.

Literary Analysis

- 1. Clarify Why does Hrothgar ask Beowulf to battle Grendel's mother?
- 2. Summarize What does Beowulf do after he kills Grendel's mother?
- **3. Compare and Contrast** Compare the two monsters. Does the behavior of Grendel's mother seem as wicked or unreasonable as Grendel's behavior? Support your opinion with evidence from the text.



With Grendel's mother destroyed, peace is restored to the land of the Danes, and Beowulf, laden with Hrothgar's gifts, returns to the land of his own people, the Geats. After his uncle and cousin die, Beowulf becomes king of the Geats and rules in peace and prosperity for 50 years. One day, however, a fire-breathing dragon that has been guarding a treasure for hundreds of years is disturbed by a thief, who enters the treasure tower and steals a cup. The dragon begins terrorizing the Geats, and Beowulf, now an old man, takes on the challenge of fighting it.

And Beowulf uttered his final boast:

"I've never known fear, as a youth I fought
In endless battles. I am old, now,
But I will fight again, seek fame still,
610 If the dragon hiding in his tower dares
To face me."

Then he said farewell to his followers, o

Each in his turn, for the last time:

"I'd use no sword, no weapon, if this beast

Could be killed without it, crushed to death

615 Like Grendel, gripped in my hands and torn

Limb from limb. But his breath will be burning

Hot, poison will pour from his tongue.

I feel no shame, with shield and sword

And armor, against this monster: when he comes to me

620 I mean to stand, not run from his shooting

Flames, stand till fate decides

Which of us wins. My heart is firm,

My hands calm: I need no hot

Words. Wait for me close by, my friends.

625 We shall see, soon, who will survive

This bloody battle, stand when the fighting

Is done. No one else could do

What I mean to, here, no man but me

Could hope to defeat this monster. No one

630 Could try. And this dragon's treasure, his gold

And everything hidden in that tower, will be mine

Or war will sweep me to a bitter death!"

Then Beowulf rose, still brave, still strong,

And with his shield at his side, and a mail shirt on his breast,

635 Strode calmly, confidently, toward the tower, under

The rocky cliffs: no coward could have walked there!

And then he who'd endured dozens of desperate

Battles, who'd stood boldly while swords and shields

Clashed, the best of kings, saw

640 Huge stone arches and felt the heat

Of the dragon's breath, flooding down

Through the hidden entrance, too hot for anyone

To stand, a streaming current of fire

And smoke that blocked all passage. And the Geats'

645 Lord and leader, angry, lowered

His sword and roared out a battle cry,

A call so loud and clear that it reached through

The hoary rock, hung in the dragon's

Ear. The beast rose, angry,

650 Knowing a man had come—and then nothing

But war could have followed. Its breath came first,

A steaming cloud pouring from the stone,

Then the earth itself shook. Beowulf

Q OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Notice the repeated use of the letter f in lines 606–611. What **tone** does the **alliteration** help convey?

648 hoary (hôr'ē): gray with age.

Swung his shield into place, held it
655 In front of him, facing the entrance. The dragon
Coiled and uncoiled, its heart urging it
Into battle. Beowulf's ancient sword
Was waiting, unsheathed, his sharp and gleaming
Blade. The beast came closer; both of them

660 Were ready, each set on slaughter. The Geats' Great prince stood firm, unmoving, prepared Behind his high shield, waiting in his shining Armor. The monster came quickly toward him, Pouring out fire and smoke, hurrying

665 To its fate. Flames beat at the iron
Shield, and for a time it held, protected
Beowulf as he'd planned; then it began to melt,
And for the first time in his life that famous prince
Fought with fate against him, with glory

And struck at the dragon's scaly hide.
The ancient blade broke, bit into
The monster's skin, drew blood, but cracked
And failed him before it went deep enough, helped him

With pain, thrashed and beat at him, spouting
Murderous flames, spreading them everywhere.
And the Geats' ring-giver did not boast of glorious
Victories in other wars: his weapon

680 Had failed him, deserted him, now when he needed it Most, that excellent sword. Edgetho's Famous son stared at death,
Unwilling to leave this world, to exchange it For a dwelling in some distant place—a journey

685 Into darkness that all men must make, as death Ends their few brief hours on earth.

Quickly, the dragon came at him, encouraged As Beowulf fell back; its breath flared, And he suffered, wrapped around in swirling

690 Flames—a king, before, but now
A beaten warrior. None of his comrades
Came to him, helped him, his brave and noble
Followers; they ran for their lives, fled
Deep in a wood. And only one of them

695 Remained, stood there, miserable, remembering, As a good man must, what kinship should mean. §

R EPIC

Reread lines 668–671. What do these lines reveal about the qualities of an **epic hero?**

678 ring-giver: king; lord. When a man swore allegiance to a Germanic lord in return for his protection, the lord typically bestowed a ring on his follower to symbolize the bond.

S EPIC

What values are implied in lines 691–696? What message about these values do the lines convey?

His name was Wiglaf, he was Wexstan's son
And a good soldier; his family had been Swedish,
Once. Watching Beowulf, he could see
700 How his king was suffering, burning. Remembering
Everything his lord and cousin had given him,
Armor and gold and the great estates
Wexstan's family enjoyed, Wiglaf's
Mind was made up; he raised his yellow
705 Shield and drew his sword. . . .

And Wiglaf, his heart heavy, uttered

The kind of words his comrades deserved:

"I remember how we sat in the mead-hall, drinking

And boasting of how brave we'd be when Beowulf

710 Needed us, he who gave us these swords

And armor: all of us swore to repay him,

When the time came, kindness for kindness

—With our lives, if he needed them. He allowed us to join him,

Chose us from all his great army, thinking

Our boasting words had some weight, believing
Our promises, trusting our swords. He took us
For soldiers, for men. He meant to kill
This monster himself, our mighty king,
Fight this battle alone and unaided,

720 As in the days when his strength and daring dazzled Men's eyes. But those days are over and gone And now our lord must lean on younger Arms. And we must go to him, while angry Flames burn at his flesh, help

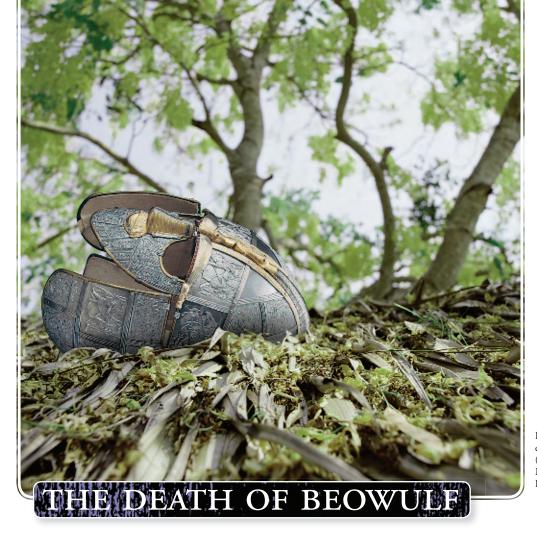
725 Our glorious king! By almighty God, I'd rather burn myself than see Flames swirling around my lord. And who are we to carry home Our shields before we've slain his enemy

730 And ours, to run back to our homes with Beowulf So hard-pressed here? I swear that nothing He ever did deserved an end Like this, dying miserably and alone, Butchered by this savage beast: we swore

735 That these swords and armor were each for us all!"...

Language Coach

Connotation The images or feelings connected to a word are its connotations. Killed has many synonyms with different connotations. Slain (line 729) means "killed violently or in large numbers." Butchered (line 734) means "killed viciously." Why are these connotations important in lines 728–735?



Iron helmet covered with decorative panels of tinned bronze (early 600s). Anglo-Saxon. From Mound 1, Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, England. © The British Museum.

Wiglaf joins Beowulf, who again attacks the dragon single-handed; but the remnant of his sword shatters, and the monster wounds him in the neck. Wiglaf then strikes the dragon, and he and Beowulf together finally succeed in killing the beast. Their triumph is short-lived, however, because Beowulf's wound proves to be mortal.

Beowulf spoke, in spite of the swollen,

Livid wound, knowing he'd unwound

His string of days on earth, seen

As much as God would grant him; all worldly

740 Pleasure was gone, as life would go,

Soon:

"I'd leave my armor to my son,
Now, if God had given me an heir,
A child born of my body, his life
Created from mine. I've worn this crown
745 For fifty winters: no neighboring people
Have tried to threaten the Geats, sent soldiers

livid (Iĭv'ĭd) *adj*. discolored from being bruised

Against us or talked of terror. My days
Have gone by as fate willed, waiting
For its word to be spoken, ruling as well
750 As I knew how, swearing no unholy oaths,
Seeking no lying wars. I can leave
This life happy; I can die, here,
Knowing the Lord of all life has never
Watched me wash my sword in blood

755 Born of my own family. Belovèd Wiglaf, go, quickly, find
 The dragon's treasure: we've taken its life,
 But its gold is ours, too. Hurry,
 Bring me ancient silver, precious
760 Jewels, shining armor and gems,
 Before I die. Death will be softer,
 Leaving life and this people I've ruled

So long, if I look at this last of all prizes."

Then Wexstan's son went in, as quickly

765 As he could, did as the dying Beowulf
Asked, entered the inner darkness
Of the tower, went with his mail shirt and his sword.
Flushed with victory he groped his way,
A brave young warrior, and suddenly saw

770 Piles of gleaming gold, precious
Gems, scattered on the floor, cups
And bracelets, rusty old helmets, beautifully
Made but rotting with no hands to rub
And polish them. They lay where the dragon left them;

775 It had flown in the darkness, once, before fighting
Its final battle. (So gold can easily
Triumph, defeat the strongest of men,

No matter how deep it is hidden!) And he saw, **10**

780 Banner, woven by the best of weavers
And beautiful. And over everything he saw
A strange light, shining everywhere,
On walls and floor and treasure. Nothing
Moved, no other monsters appeared;

Hanging high above, a golden

785 He took what he wanted, all the treasures That pleased his eye, heavy plates And golden cups and the glorious banner, Loaded his arms with all they could hold.

■ EPIC

Note that Beowulf summarizes his 50-year reign in lines 744–755. What ideals are reflected in Beowulf's speech?

EPIC

Reread lines 768–778. What theme do the lines suggest?

Beowulf's dagger, his iron blade,
790 Had finished the fire-spitting terror
That once protected tower and treasures
Alike; the gray-bearded lord of the Geats
Had ended those flying, burning raids
Forever. V

Then Wiglaf went back, anxious

795 To return while Beowulf was alive, to bring him

Treasure they'd won together. He ran,

Hoping his wounded king, weak

And dying, had not left the world too soon.

Then he brought their treasure to Beowulf, and found

800 His famous king bloody, gasping

For breath. But Wiglaf sprinkled water

Over his lord, until the words

Deep in his breast broke through and were heard.

"For this, this gold, these jewels, I thank Our Father in Heaven, Ruler of the Earth— For all of this, that His grace has given me, Allowed me to bring to my people while breath Still came to my lips. I sold my life

Beholding the treasure he spoke, haltingly:

What I leave, Wiglaf, lead my people,
Help them; my time is gone. Have
The brave Geats build me a tomb,
When the funeral flames have burned me, and build it

On this spit of land, so sailors can see
This tower, and remember my name, and call it
Beowulf's tower, and boats in the darkness
And mist, crossing the sea, will know it."

Then that brave king gave the golden
Necklace from around his throat to Wiglaf,
Gave him his gold-covered helmet, and his rings,
And his mail shirt, and ordered him to use them well:

"You're the last of all our far-flung family.

Fate has swept our race away,

Taken warriors in their strength and led them

To the death that was waiting. And now I follow them."

The old man's mouth was silent, spoke

No more, had said as much as it could; 830 He would sleep in the fire, soon. His soul

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Identify the **kennings** used in lines 789–794 to refer to the dragon and to Beowulf. What does the phrase used to describe Beowulf emphasize about the warrior?

816 spit: a narrow point of land extending into a body of water.

© EPIC

Reread lines 812–819. Why is it important to Beowulf that he leave a legacy behind?

805

Left his flesh, flew to glory. . . .

And when the battle was over Beowulf's followers

Came out of the wood, cowards and traitors,

Knowing the dragon was dead. Afraid,

835 While it spit its fires, to fight in their lord's

Defense, to throw their javelins and spears,

They came like shamefaced jackals, their shields

In their hands, to the place where the prince lay dead,

And waited for Wiglaf to speak. He was sitting

840 Near Beowulf's body, wearily sprinkling

Water in the dead man's face, trying

To stir him. He could not. No one could have kept

Life in their lord's body, or turned

Aside the Lord's will: world

845 And men and all move as He orders,

And always have, and always will.

Then Wiglaf turned and angrily told them

What men without courage must hear.

Wexstan's brave son stared at the traitors,

850 His heart sorrowful, and said what he had to:

"I say what anyone who speaks the truth

Must say. . . .

Too few of his warriors remembered

To come, when our lord faced death, alone.

855 And now the giving of swords, of golden

Rings and rich estates, is over,

Ended for you and everyone who shares

Ended for you and everyone who share

Your blood: when the brave Geats hear

How you bolted and ran none of your race

860 Will have anything left but their lives. And death

Would be better for them all, and for you, than the kind

Of life you can lead, branded with disgrace!"...

Then the warriors rose,

Walked slowly down from the cliff, stared

865 At those wonderful sights, stood weeping as they saw

Beowulf dead on the sand, their bold

Ring-giver resting in his last bed;

He'd reached the end of his days, their mighty

War-king, the great lord of the Geats,

870 Gone to a glorious death. . . .

836 javelins (jăv'lĭnz): light spears used as weapons.

837 jackals (jăk'əlz): doglike animals that sometimes feed on the flesh of dead beasts.

859 bolted: ran away; fled.

What does Wiglaf's speech in lines 851–862 tell you about the importance of honor and the consequences of dishonorable behavior in Beowulf's time?



Then the Geats built the tower, as Beowulf Had asked, strong and tall, so sailors
Could find it from far and wide; working
For ten long days they made his monument,
Sealed his ashes in walls as straight
And high as wise and willing hands
Could raise them. And the riches he and Wiglaf
Had won from the dragon, rings, necklaces,
Ancient, hammered armor—all

- 880 The treasures they'd taken were left there, too, Silver and jewels buried in the sandy Ground, back in the earth, again And forever hidden and useless to men. And then twelve of the bravest Geats
- Rode their horses around the tower,
 Telling their sorrow, telling stories
 Of their dead king and his greatness, his glory,
 Praising him for heroic deeds, for a life
 As noble as his name. So should all men
- 890 Raise up words for their lords, warm
 With love, when their shield and protector leaves
 His body behind, sends his soul
 On high. And so Beowulf's followers
 Rode, mourning their beloved leader,
- 895 Crying that no better king had ever Lived, no prince so mild, no man So open to his people, so deserving of praise.

▲ Analyze Visuals

What details in this photograph suggest the mourning for Beowulf? Explain.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 889–893 aloud. Notice the **alliteration** in the phrases "words for their lords" and "warm with love." How would you describe the **tone** of these lines?

896 mild: gentle or kindly.



Comprehension

- 1. Recall In what way does Beowulf's sword fail him?
- 2. Summarize How do the Geats honor Beowulf after he dies?

4

READING 2C Relate the characters, setting, and theme of a literary work to the historical, social, and economic ideas of its time. 3 Evaluate changes in sound, form, figurative language, graphics, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.

Deeds

Literary Analysis

- 3. Examine Epic Characteristics Review the discussion of the characteristics of an epic in the Literary Analysis Workshop on pages 38–39. Then use a chart like the one shown to list Beowulf's traits as an epic hero and the deeds that reveal these traits. Is he a typical epic hero?
- 4. Analyze Old English Poetry Review the list you created as you read. In what ways might the alliteration, caesuras, and kennings in Beowulf have helped Anglo-Saxon poets chant or sing the poem and convey its meaning?
 - **5. Analyze Theme** Beowulf is able to defeat Grendel and Grendel's mother, yet he loses his life when he battles the dragon. What theme does this suggest about the struggle between good and evil?
 - **6. Compare and Contrast** Compare and contrast the portrayals of Beowulf as a young and old man. Also compare Hrothgar's recollections of his early deeds with his limitations as an aged king. What view of youth and age do these comparisons convey? Support your conclusions with specific evidence.
 - 7. Draw Conclusions Describe Beowulf's attitude toward death or mortality in each of the following passages: lines 179–189, lines 481–492, and lines 665–691. How does his attitude change over time?
 - **8. Evaluate Author's Purpose** Reread lines 81–85, which reveal the influence of Christianity on the Beowulf Poet. Why might the poet have chosen to describe Hrothgar and Grendel in terms of their relationship to God?

Literary Criticism

9. Different Perspectives In his 20th-century novel *Grendel*, writer John Gardner tells the story of Grendel's attacks against the Danes from the monster's point of view. Consider the selection you have read from the perspectives of Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon. What reasons might each of them have to hate Beowulf and other men?

Where do MONSTERS lurk?

Monsters like Grendel often combine human and animal features. Think of other monsters from literature, television, or film that combine these features. Why are such monsters particularly disturbing?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether the words in each pair are synonyms or antonyms.

- 1. affliction/blessing
- 2. gorge/empty
- 3. infamous/respected
- 4. lair/hideout

- 5. livid/bruised
- 6. loathsome/delightful
- 7. purge/remove
- 8. talon/claw

WORD LIST

affliction

gorge

infamous

lair

livid

loathsome

purge

talon

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

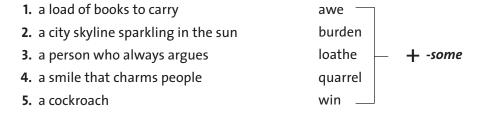
• concept • culture • parallel • section • structure

How has the **concept** of a hero changed since Beowulf's time? Write a paragraph about how the hero is represented in movies or TV in today's culture. Refer to at least one **section** of *Beowulf* for comparison. Use at least one additional Academic Vocabulary word in your response.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE ANGLO-SAXON SUFFIX -SOME

Many English words with Anglo-Saxon word parts were born whole into Old English, changing slightly over time. Others developed from the combination of Old English word parts during the time when people spoke Middle English. The adjective-forming suffix -some, which means "like" or "tending to cause," appears in both types of words. In Old English, -sum occurred in the word wynsum (today's winsome). Later, the Middle English word loth ("to feel disgust") combined with the Old English -sum to make lothsum: "tending to cause disgust." Though the spelling has changed over time, loathsome has the same meaning today.

PRACTICE Use an adjective ending in the suffix -some to describe each person, place, or thing listed. Form the adjective by adding -some to a word shown in the equation.





READING 1A Determine the meaning of technical academic English words in multiple content areas derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes.

1D Analyze and explain how the English language has developed and been influenced by other languages.



Conventions in Writing

GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Create Imagery

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 54. To describe a scene or convey a mood, the Beowulf Poet uses imagery—words and phrases that create vivid sensory experiences for the audience. The poet frequently creates this imagery through an effective use of adjectives and verbs. Here is an example from the epic:



Understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing.

The dragon leaped

With pain, thrashed and beat at him, spouting Murderous flames, spreading them everywhere. (lines 675–677)

Notice that the verbs leaped, thrashed, and beat suggest a sense of movement and that the adjective murderous conveys the feeling of the flames' heat. The imagery in the sentence helps you envision the scene and experience its intensity.

PRACTICE Write down each of the following lines from *Beowulf*. Identify the adjectives and verbs in each sentence that create imagery and then write your own sentence with similar elements.

EXAMPLE

He moved quickly through the cloudy night, / Up from his swampland, sliding silently / Toward that gold-shining hall.

She drifted slowly down the leaf-strewn street, away from the city lights, winding sadly toward the deserted house.

- 1. ... Grendel will carry our bloody / Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones / And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls / Of his den.
- 2. He strode quickly across the inlaid / Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes / Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome / Light.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of *Beowulf* by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tips** to improve your analysis.

WRITING PROMPT

WRITE AN ANALYSIS The review on page 74 describes the experience of listening to an oral performance of Beowulf. Write a three-to-five-paragraph analysis of Beowulf in which you describe what features of the poem bring it to life for you. You might focus on its characters, its vivid descriptions, or its use of elements of Old English poetry.

REVISING TIPS

- Clearly identify the features of the poem that make Beowulf a distinctive and powerful work of literature.
- · Include details from the poem to show how each of these features makes the poem come to life for you.



Reading for Information

REVIEW Listening to the story of *Beowulf* sung by a scop playing a harp is not an experience confined to the past. American musician and medieval scholar Benjamin Bagby performs Beowulf in the original Anglo-Saxon to enthusiastic audiences. The following review captures the excitement of Bagby's Beowulf.

A Collaboration Across 1,200 Years

uropean noblemen of a thousand years ago had much more exciting and intelligent entertainment than anything to be found now. Anyone who doubts that need only look in on Benjamin

D. J. R. BRUCKNER

Bagby's astonishing Review By performance of the first quarter of the epic poem Beowulf in Anglo-Saxon,

no less—tonight at the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse at Lincoln Center. It will be the last of his three appearances in the Lincoln Center Festival.

From the moment he strode on stage on Sunday for the opening night, silencing the audience with that famous first word. "Hwaet!" ("Pay attention!"), until hell swallowed the "pagan soul" of the monster Grendel 80 minutes later,

Mr. Bagby came as close to holding hundreds of people in a spell as ever a man has. As the epic's warriors argued, boasted, fought or fell into the monster's maw, there were bursts of laughter, mutters and sighs, and when Mr. Bagby's voice stopped at the end, as abruptly as it had begun, there was an audible rippling gasp before a thunderclap of applause from cheering people who called him back again and again, unwilling to let him go.

Mr. Bagby—a Midwesterner who fell in love with *Beowulf* at 12 and who now is co-director of a medieval music ensemble, Sequentia, in Cologne, Germany—accompanies himself on a six-string lyre modeled on one found in a seventhcentury tomb near Stuttgart. This surprisingly facile instrument underscores the meter of the epic





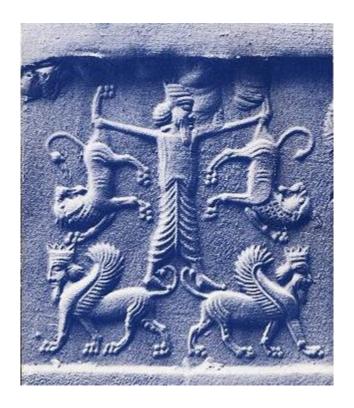
verses and is counterpoint to Mr. Bagby's voice as he recites, chants and occasionally sings the lines.

On the whole, this is a restrained presentation. The performer captures listeners at once simply by letting us feel his conviction that he has a tale to tell that is more captivating than any other story in the world. He avoids histrionic gestures, letting the majestic rhythms of the epic seize our emotions and guide them through the action. Gradually the many voices that fill the great poem emerge and

the listener always knows who is speaking: a warrior, a watchman, a king, a sarcastic drunk. A translation is handed out to the audience, but after a while one notices people are following it less and just letting the sound of this strange and beautiful language wash over them. Perhaps not so strange, after all—enough phrases begin to penetrate the understanding that one finally knows deep down that, yes, this is where English came from.

How authentic is all this? Well, we know from many historical sources that in the first millennium at royal or noble houses a performer called a scop would present epics. Mr. Bagby has lived with this epic for many years, as well as with ancient music, and his performance is his argument that *Beowulf* was meant to be heard, not read, and that this is the way we ought to hear it. It is a powerful argument, indeed. The test of it is that when he has finished, you leave with the overwhelming impression that you know the anonymous poet who created Beowulf more than a dozen centuries ago, that you have felt the man's personality touch you. That is a much too rare experience in theater.

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH



N. K. Sanders

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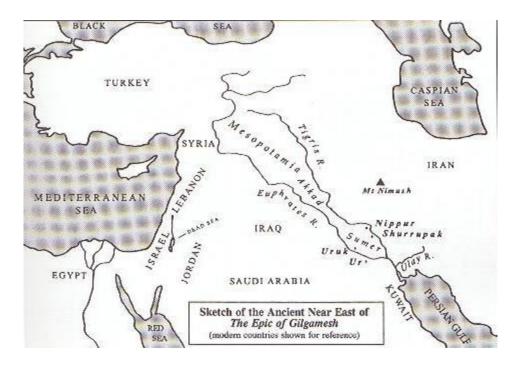
PROLOGUE

GILGAMESH KING IN URUK

I WILL proclaim to the world the deeds of Gilgamesh. This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went on a long journey, was weary, worn-out with labour, returning he rested, he engraved on a stone the whole story.

When the gods created Gilgamesh they gave him a perfect body. Shamash the glorious sun endowed him with beauty, Adad the god of the storm endowed him with courage, the great gods made his beauty perfect, surpassing all others, terrifying like a great wild bull. Two thirds they made him god and one third man.

In Uruk he built walls, a great rampart, and the temple of blessed Eanna for the god of the firmament Anu, and for Ishtar the goddess of love. Look at it still today: the outer wall where the cornice runs, it shines with the brilliance of copper; and the inner wall, it has no equal. Touch the threshold, it is ancient. Approach Eanna the dwelling of Ishtar, our lady of love and war, the like of which no latter-day king, no man alive can equal. Climb upon the wall of Uruk; walk along it, I say; regard the foundation terrace and examine the. masonry: is it not burnt brick and good? The seven sages laid the foundations.



THE COMING OF ENKIDU

GILGAMESH went abroad in the world, but he met with none who could withstand his arms till be came to Uruk. But the men of Uruk muttered in their houses, 'Gilgamesh sounds the tocsin for his amusement, his arrogance has no bounds by day or night. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all, even the children; yet the king should be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble; yet this is the shepherd of the city, wise, comely, and resolute.'

The gods heard their lament, the gods of heaven cried to the Lord of Uruk, to Anu the god of Uruk: 'A goddess made him, strong as a savage bull, none can withstand his arms. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all; and is this the king, the shepherd of his people? His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble. When Anu had heard their lamentation the gods cried to Aruru, the goddess of creation, 'You made him, O Aruru; now create his equal; let it be as like him as his own reflection, his second self; stormy heart for stormy heart. Let them contend together and leave Uruk in quiet.'

So the goddess conceived an image in her mind, and it was of the stuff of Anu of the firmament. She dipped her hands in water and pinched off clay, she let it fall in the wilderness, and noble Enkidu was created. There was virtue in him of the god of war, of Ninurta himself. His body was rough, he had long hair like a woman's; it waved like the hair of Nisaba, the goddess of corn. His body was covered with matted hair like Samugan's, the god of cattle. He was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land.

Enkidu ate grass in the hills with the gazelle and lurked with wild beasts at the water-holes; he had joy of the water with the herds of wild game. But there was a trapper who met him one day face to face at the drinking-hole, for the wild game had entered his territory. On three days he met him face to face, and the trapper was frozen with fear. He went back to his house with the game that he had caught, and he was dumb, benumbed with terror.



King Ashurbanipal, 669-627 B.C.. The excavations of his library provided a major source of Mesopotamian literature, including a good portion of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

His face was altered like that of one who has made a long journey. With awe in his heart he spoke to his father: 'Father, there is a man, unlike any other, who comes down from the hills. He is the strongest in the world, he is like an immortal from heaven. He ranges over the hills with wild beasts and eats grass; the ranges through your land and comes down to the wells. I am afraid and dare not go near him. He fills in the pits which I dig and tears up-my traps set for the game; he helps the beasts to escape and now they slip through my fingers.'

His father opened his mouth and said to the trapper, 'My son, in Uruk lives Gilgamesh; no one has ever prevailed against him, he is strong as a star from heaven. Go to Uruk, find Gilgamesh, extol the strength of this wild man. Ask him to give you a harlot, a wanton from the temple of love; return with her, and let her woman's power overpower this man. When next he comes down to drink at the wells she will be there, stripped naked; and when he sees her beckoning he will embrace her, and then the wild beasts will reject him.'

So the trapper set out on his journey to Uruk and addressed himself to Gilgamesh saying, 'A man unlike any other is roaming now in the pastures; he is as strong as a star from heaven and I am afraid to approach him. He helps the wild

game to escape; he fills in my pits and pulls up my traps.' Gilgamesh said, 'Trapper, go back, take with you a harlot, a child of pleasure. At the drinking hole she will strip, and when, he sees her beckoning he will embrace her and the game of the wilderness will. surely reject him.'

Now the trapper returned, taking the harlot with him. After a three days' journey they came to the drinking hole, and there they sat down; the harlot and the trapper sat . facing one another and waited for the game to come. For the first day and for the second day the two sat waiting, but on the third day the herds came; they came down to drink and Enkidu was with them. The small wild creatures of the plains were glad of the water, and Enkidu with them, who ate grass with the gazelle and was born in the hills; and she saw him, the savage man, come from far-off in the hills. The trapper spoke to her: 'There he is. Now, woman, make your breasts bare, have no shame, do not delay but welcome his love. Let him see you naked, let him possess your body. When he comes near uncover yourself and lie with him; teach him, the savage man, your woman's art, for when he murmurs love to you the wild' beasts that shared his life in the hills will reject him.'

She was not ashamed to take him, she made herself naked and welcomed his eagerness; as he lay on her murmuring love she taught him the woman's art For six days and seven nights they lay together, for Enkidu had forgotten his home in the hills; but when he was satisfied he went back to the wild beasts. Then, when the gazelle saw him, they bolted away; when the wild creatures saw him they fled. Enkidu would have followed, but his body was bound as though with a cord, his knees gave way when he started to run, his swiftness was gone. And now the wild creatures had all fled away; Enkidu was grown weak, for wisdom was in him, and the thoughts of a man were in his heart. So he returned and sat down at the woman's feet, and listened intently to what she said. 'You are wise, Enkidu, and now you have become like a god. Why do you want to run wild with the beasts in the hills? Come with me. I will take you to strong-walled Uruk, to the blessed temple of Ishtar and of Anu, of love and of heaven there Gilgamesh lives, who is very strong, and like a wild bull he lords it over men.'

When she had spoken Enkidu was pleased; he longed for a comrade, for one who would understand his heart. Come, woman, and take me to that holy temple, to the house of Anu and of Ishtar, and to the place where Gilgamesh lords it over the people. I will challenge him boldly, I will cry out aloud in Uruk, "I am the strongest here, I have come to change the old order, I am he who was born in the hills, I am he who is strongest of all."

She said, 'Let us go, and let him see your face. I know very well where Gilgamesh is in great Uruk. O Enkidu, there all the people are dressed in their gorgeous robes, every day is holiday, the young men and the girls are wonderful to see. How sweet they smell! All the great ones are roused from their beds. O Enkidu, you who love life, I will show you Gilgamesh, a man of many moods; you shall look at him well in his radiant manhood. His body is perfect in strength and maturity; he never rests by night or day. He is stronger than you, so leave your boasting. Shamash the glorious sun has given favours to Gilgamesh, and Anu of the heavens, and Enlil, and Ea the wise has given him deep understanding. f tell you, even before you have left the wilderness, Gilgamesh will know in his dreams that you are coming.'

Now Gilgamesh got up to tell his dream to his mother; Ninsun, one of the wise gods. 'Mother, last night I had a dream. I was full of joy, the young heroes were round me and I walked through the night under the stars of the firmament, and one, a meteor of the stuff of Anu, fell down from heaven. I tried to lift it but it proved too heavy. All the people of Uruk came round to see it, the common people jostled and the nobles thronged to kiss its feet; and to me its attraction was like the love of woman. They helped me, I braced my forehead and I raised it with thongs and brought it to you, and you yourself pronounced it my brother.'

Then Ninsun, who is well-beloved and wise, said to Gilgamesh, 'This star of heaven which descended like a meteor from the sky; which you tried to lift, but found too heavy, when you tried to move it it would not budge, and so you brought it to my feet; I made it for you, a goad and spur, and you were drawn as though to a woman. This is the strong comrade, the one who brings help to his friend in his need. He is the strongest of wild creatures, the stuff of Anu; born in the grass-lands and the wild hills reared him; when you see him you will be glad; you will love him as a woman and he will never forsake you. This is the meaning of the dream.'

Gilgamesh said, 'Mother, I dreamed a second dream. In the streets of strong-walled Uruk there lay an axe; the shape of it was strange and the people thronged round. I saw it and was glad. I bent down, deeply drawn towards it; I loved it like a woman and wore it at my side.' Ninsun answered, 'That axe, which you saw, which drew you so powerfully like love of a woman, that is the comrade whom I give you, and he will come in his strength like one of the host of heaven. He is the brave companion who rescues his friend in necessity.' Gilgamesh said to his mother, 'A friend, a counsellor has come to me from Enlil, and now I shall befriend and counsel him.' So Gilgamesh told his dreams; and the harlot retold them to Enkidu.

And now she said to Enkidu, 'When I look at you you have become like a god. Why do you yearn to run wild again with the beasts in the hills? Get up from the ground, the bed of a shepherd.' He listened to her words with care. It was good advice that she gave. She divided her clothing in two and with the one half she clothed him and with the other herself, and holding his hand she led him like a child to the sheepfolds, into the shepherds' tents. There all the

shepherds crowded round to see him, they put down bread in front of him, but Enkidu could only suck the milk of wild animals. He fumbled and gaped, at a loss what to do or how he should eat the bread and drink the strong wine. Then the woman said, 'Enkidu, eat bread, it is the staff of life; drink the wine, it is the custom of the land.' So he ate till he was full and drank strong wine, seven goblets. He became merry, his heart exulted and his face shone. He rubbed down the matted hair of his body and anointed himself with oil. Enkidu had become a man; but when he had put on man's clothing he appeared like a bridegroom. He took arms to hunt the lion so that the shepherds could rest at night. He caught wolves and lions and the herdsmen lay down in peace; for Enkidu was their watchman, that strong man who had no rival.

He was merry living with the shepherds, till one day lifting his eyes he saw a man approaching. He said to the harlot, 'Woman, fetch that man here. Why has he come? I wish to know his name.' She went and called the man saying, 'Sir, where are you going on this weary journey?' The man answered, saying to Enkidu, 'Gilgamesh has gone into the marriage-house and shut out the people. He does strange things in Uruk, the city of great streets. At the roll of the drum work begins for the men, and work for the women. Gilgamesh the king is about to celebrate marriage with the Queen of Love, and he still demands to be first with the bride, the king to be first and the husband to follow, for that was ordained by the gods from his birth, from the time the umbilical cord was cut. But now the drums roll for the choice of the bride and the city groans.' At these words Enkidu turned white in the face. 'I will go to the place where Gilgamesh lords it over the people, I will challenge him boldly, and I will cry aloud in Uruk, "I have come to change the old order, for I am the strongest here."

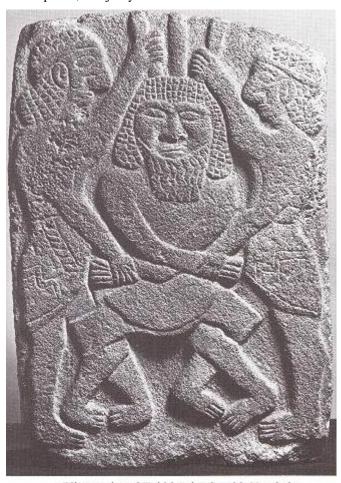
Now Enkidu strode in front and the woman followed behind. He entered Uruk, that great market, and all the folk thronged round him where he stood in the street in strong-walled Uruk. The people jostled; speaking of him they said, 'He is the spit of Gilgamesh. 'He is shorter.' 'He is bigger of bone.' This is the one who was reared on the milk of wild beasts. His is the greatest strength.' The men rejoiced: 'Now Gilgamesh has met his match. This great one, this hero whose beauty is like a god, he is a match even for Gilgamesh.'

In Uruk the bridal bed was made, fit for the goddess of love. The bride waited for the bridegroom, but in the night Gilgamesh got up and came to the house. Then Enkidu stepped out, he stood in the street and blocked the way. Mighty Gilgamesh came on and Enkidu met him at the gate. He put out his foot and prevented Gilgamesh from entering the house, so they grappled, holding each other like bulls. They broke the doorposts and the walls shook, they snorted like bulls locked together. They shattered the doorposts and the walls shook. Gilgamesh bent his knee with his foot planted on the ground and with a turn Enkidu was thrown. Then immediately his fury died. When Enkidu was thrown he said to Gilgamesh, 'There is not another like you in the world. Ninsun, who is as strong as a wild ox in the byre, she was the mother who bore you, and now you are raised above all men, and Enlil has given you the kingship, for your strength surpasses the strength of men.' So Enkidu and Gilgamesh embraced and their friendship was sealed.

THE FOREST JOURNEY

ENLIL of the mountain, the father of the gods, had decreed the destiny of Gilgamesh. So Gilgamesh dreamed and Enkidu said, 'The meaning of the dream is this. The father of the gods has given you kingship, such is your destiny, everlasting life is not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed. He has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given you unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before Shamash.'

The eyes of Enkidu were full of tears and his heart was sick. He sighed bitterly and Gilgamesh met his eye and said,' My friend, why do you sigh so bitterly? But Enkidu opened his mouth and said, 'I am weak, my arms have lost their strength, the cry of sorrow sticks in my throat, I am oppressed by idleness.' It was then that the lord Gilgamesh turned his thoughts to the Country of the Living; on the Land of Cedars the lord Gilgamesh reflected. He said to his servant Enkidu, 'I have not established my name stamped on bricks as my destiny decreed; therefore I will go to the country where the cedar is felled. I will set up my name in the place where the names of famous men are written, and where- no man's name is written yet I will wise a monument to the gods. Because of the evil that is in the land, we will go to the forest and destroy the evil; for in the forest lives Humbaba whose name is "Hugeness", , a ferocious giant. But Enkidu sighed bitterly and said, 'When I went with the wild beasts ranging through the wilderness I discovered the forest; its length is ten thousand leagues in every direction. Enlil has appointed Humbaba to guard it and armed him iii sevenfold terrors, terrible to all flesh is Humbaba. When he roars it is like the torrent of the storm, his breath is like fire, and his jaws are death itself. He guards the cedars so well that when the wild heifer stirs in the forest, though she is sixty leagues distant, he hears her. What man would willingly walk into that country and explore its depths? I tell you, weakness overpowers whoever goes near it: it is not an equal struggle when one fights with Humbaba; he is a great warrior, a battering-ram. Gilgamesh, the watchman of the forest never sleeps.'



Gilgamesh and Enkidu's battle with Humbaba.

Gilgamesh replied: 'Where is the man who can clamber to heaven? Only the gods live for ever with glorious Shamash, but as for us men, our days are numbered, our occupations are a breath of wind. How is this, already you are afraid! I will go first although I am your lord, an4.youmay safely call out, "Forward, there is nothing to fear!" Then if I fall I leave behind me a name that endures; men - will say of me, "Gilgamesh has fallen in fight with ferocious Humbaba." Long after the child has been bony in my house, they will say it, and remember.' Enkidu spoke again to Gilgamesh, 'O my lord, if you will enter that country, go first to the hero Shamash, tell the Sun God, for the land is his. The country where the cedar is cut belongs to Shamash.'

Gilgamesh took up a kid, white without spot, and a brown one with it; he held them against his breast, and he carried them into the presence of the sun. He took in his hand his silver sceptre and he said to glorious Shamash, 'I am going to that country, O Shamash, I am going; my hands supplicate, so let it be well with my soul and bring me back to

the quay of Uruk. Grant, I beseech, your protection, and let the omen be good.' Glorious Shamash answered, 'Gilgamesh, you are strong, but what is the Country of the Living to you?

'O Shamash, hear me, hear me, Shamash, let my voice be heard. Here in the city man dies oppressed at heart, man perishes with despair in his heart. I have looked over the wall and I see the bodies floating on the river, and that will be my lot also. Indeed I know it is so, for whoever is tallest among men cannot reach the heavens, and the greatest cannot encompass the earth. Therefore I would enter that country: because I have not established my name stamped on brick as my destiny decreed, I will go to the country where the cedar is cut. I will set up my name where the names of famous men are written; and where no man's name is written I will raise a monument to the gods.' The tears, ran down his face and he said, 'Alas, it is a long journey that I must take to the Land of Humbaba. If this enterprise is not to be accomplished, why did you move me, Shamash, with the restless desire to perform it? How can I succeed if you will not succour me? If I die in that country I will die without rancour, but if I return I will make a glorious offering of gifts and of praise to Shamash.'

So Shamash accepted the sacrifice of his tears; like the compassionate man he showed him mercy. He appointed strong allies for Gilgamesh, sons of one mother, and stationed them in the mountain caves. The great winds he appointed: the north wind, the whirlwind, the stone and the icy wind, the tempest and the scorching wind. Like 'vipers, like dragons, like a scorching fire, like a serpent that freezes the heart, a destroying flood and the lightning's fork, such were they and Gilgamesh rejoiced.

He went to the forge and said, ...I will give orders to the armourers; they shall cast us our weapons while we watch them.' So they gave orders to the armourers and the craftsmen sat down in conference. They went into the groves of the plain and cut willow and box-wood; they cast for them axes of nine score pounds, and great swords they cast with blades of six score pounds each one, with pommels and hilts of thirty pounds. They cast for Gilgamesh the axe 'Might of Heroes' and the bow of Anshan; and Gilgamesh was armed and Enkidu; and the weight of the arms they carried was thirty score pounds.

The people collected and the counsellors in the streets and in the market-place of Uruk; they came through the gate of seven bolts and Gilgamesh spoke to them in the market-place: 'I, Gilgamesh, go to see that creature of whom such things are spoken, the rumour of whose name fills the world. I will conquer him in his cedar wood and show the strength of the sons of Uruk, all the world shall. know of it. I am committed to this enterprise: to climb the mountain, to cut down the cedar, and leave behind me an enduring name.' The counsellors of Uruk; the great market, answered him, 'Gilgamesh, you are young, your courage carries you too far, you cannot know what this enterprise means which you plan. We have heard that Hurnbaba is not like men who die, his weapons are such that none can stand against them; the forest stretches for ten thousand leagues in every direction; who would willingly go down to explore its depths? As for Humbaba, when he roars it is like the torrent of the storm, his breath is like fire and his jaws are death itself. Why do you crave to do this thing, Gilgamesh? It is no equal struggle when one fights with Humbaba, that battering-ram:

When he heard these words of the counsellors Gilgamesh looked at his friend and laughed, 'How shall I answer them; shall I say I am afraid of Humbaba, I will sit at home all the rest of my days?' Then Gilgamesh opened his mouth again and said to Enkidu, 'My friend, let us go to the Great Palace, to Egalmah, and stand before Ninsun the queen. Ninsun is wise with deep knowledge, she will give us counsel for the road we must go.' They took each other by the hand as they went to Egalmah, and they went to Ninsun the great queen. Gilgamesh approached, he entered the palace and spoke to Ninsun. 'Ninsun, will you listen to me; I have a long journey to go, to the Land of Humbaba, I must travel an unknown road and fight a strange battle. From the day I go until I return, till I reach the cedar forest and destroy the evil which Shamash abhors, pray for me to Shamash.'

Ninsun went into her room, she put on a dress becoming to her body, she put on jewels to make her breast beautiful, she placed a tiara on her head and her skirts swept the ground. Then she went up to the altar of the Sun, standing upon the roof of the palace; she burnt incense and lifted her arms to Shamash as the smoke ascended: 'O Shamash, why did you give this restless heart to Gilgamesh, my son; why did you give it? You have moved him and now he sets out on a long journey to the Land of Humbaba, to travel an unknown road and fight a strange battle. Therefore from the day that he goes till the day he returns, until he reaches the cedar forest, until he kills Humbaba and destroys the evil thing which you, Shamash, abhor, do not forget him; but let the dawn, Aya, your dear bride, remind you always, and when day is done give him to the watchman of the night to keep him from harm.' Then Ninsun the mother of Gilgamesh extinguished the incense, and she called to Enkidu with this exhortation: 'Strong Enkidu, you are not the child of my body, but I will receive you as my adopted son; you are my other child like the foundlings they bring to the temple. Serve Gilgamesh as a foundling serves the temple and the priestess who reared him. In the presence of my women, any votaries and hierophants, I declare it.' Then she placed - the amulet for a pledge round his neck, and she said to him, 'I entrust my son to you; bring him back to me safely.'

And now they brought to them the weapons, they put in their hands the great swords in their golden scabbards, and the bow and the quiver. Gilgamesh took the axe, he slung the quiver from his -shoulder, and the bow of Anshan,

and buckled the sword to his belt; and so they were armed and ready for the journey. Now all the people came and pressed on them and said, 'When will you return to the city? The counsellors blessed Gilgamesh and warned him, 'Do not trust too much in your own strength, be watchful, restrain your blows at first. The one who goes in front protects his companion; the good guide who knows the way guards his friend. Let Enkidu lead the way, he knows the road to the forest, he has seen Humbaba and is experienced in battles; let him press first into the passes, let him be watchful and look to himself. Let-Enkidu protect his friend, and guard his companion, and bring him safe through the pitfalls of the road. We, the counsellors of Uruk entrust our king to you, O Enkidu; bring him back safely to us.' Again to Gilgamesh, they said, 'May Shamash give you your heart's desire, may he let you see with your eyes the thing accomplished which your lips have spoken; may he open a path for you where it is blocked, and a road for your feet to tread. May he open the mountains for your crossing, and may the nighttime bring you the blessings of night, and Lugulbanda, your guardian god, stand beside you for victory. May you have victory in the battle as though you fought with a child. Wash your feet in the river of Humbaba to which you are journeying; in the evening dig a well, and let there always be pure water in your water-skin. Offer cold water to Shamash and do not forget Lugulbanda.'

Then Enkidu opened his mouth and said, 'Forward, there is nothing to fear. Follow me, for I know the place where Humbaba lives and the paths where he walks. Let the counsellors go back. Here is no cause for fear.' When the counsellors heard this they sped the hero on his way. 'Go, Gilgamesh, may your guardian god protect you on the road and bring you safely back to the quay of Uruk.'

After twenty leagues they broke their fast; after another thirty leagues they stopped for the night. Fifty leagues they walked in one day; in three days they had walked as much as a journey of a month and two weeks. They crossed seven mountains before they came to the gate of the forest. Then Enkidu called out to Gilgamesh, 'Do not go down into the forest; when I opened the gate my hand lost its strength.' Gilgamesh answered him, 'Dear friend, do not speak like a coward. Have we got the better of so many dangers and travelled so far, to turn back at last? You, who are tried in wars and battles, hold dose to me now and you will feel no fear of death; keep beside me and your weakness will pass, the trembling will leave your hand. Would my friend rather stay behind? No, we will, go down together into the heart of the forest. Let your courage be roused by the battle to come; forget death and follow me, a man resolute in action, but one who is not foolhardy. When two go together each will protect himself and shield his companion, and if they fall they leave an enduring name.'

Together they went down into the forest and they came to the green mountain. There they stood still, they were struck dumb; they stood still and gazed at the forest. They saw the height of the cedar, they saw the way into the forest and the track where Humbaba was used to walk. The way was broad and the going was good. They gazed at the mountain of cedars, the dwelling-place of the gods and the throne of Ishtar. The hugeness of the cedar rose in front of the mountain, its shade was beautiful, full of comfort; mountain and glade were green with brushwood:

There Gilgamesh dug a well before the setting sun. He went up the mountain and poured out fine meal on the ground and said, 'O mountain, dwelling of the gods, bring me a favourable dream.' Then they took each other' by the hand and lay down to sleep; and sleep that flows from the night lapped over them. Gilgamesh dreamed, and at midnight sleep left him, and he told his dream to his friend. 'Enkidu, what was it that woke me if you did not? My friend, I have dreamed a dream. Get up, look at the mountain precipice. The sleep that the gods sent me is broken. Ah, my friend, what a dream I have had! Terror and confusion; I seized hold of a wild bull in the wilderness. It bellowed and beat up the dust till the whole sky was dark, my arm was seized and my tongue bitten. I fell back on' my knee; then someone refreshed me with water from his water-skin.'

Enkidu said, 'Dear friend, the god to whom we are travelling is no wild bull, though his form is mysterious. That wild bull which you saw is Shamash the Protector; in our moment of peril he will take our hands. The one who gave water from his water-skin, that is your own god who cares for your good name, your Lugulbanda. United with him, together we will accomplish a work the fame of which will never die.'

Gilgamesh said, 'I dreamed again. We stood in a deep gorge of the mountain, and beside it we two were like the smallest of swamp flies; and suddenly the mountain fell, it struck me and caught my feet from under me. Then came an intolerable light blazing out, and in it was one whose grace and whose beauty were greater than the beauty of this world. He pulled me out from under the mountain, he gave me water to drink and my heart was comforted, and he set my feet on the ground.'

Then Enkidu the child of the plains said, 'Let us go down from the mountain and talk this thing over together.' He said to Gilgamesh the young god, 'Your dream is good, your dream is excellent, the mountain which you saw is Humbaba. Now, surely, we will seize and kill him, and throw his body down as the mountain fell on the plain.'

The next day after twenty leagues they broke their fast, and after another thirty they stopped for the night. They dug a well before the sun had set and Gilgamesh ascended the mountain. He poured out fine meal on the ground and said, 'O mountain, dwelling of the gods, send a dream for Enkidu, make him a favourable dream.' The mountain fashioned a dream for Enkidu; it came, an ominous dream; a cold shower passed over him, it caused him to cower

tike the mountain barley under a storm of rain. But Gilgamesh sat with his chin on his knees till the sleep which flows over all mankind lapped over him. Then, at midnight, sleep left him; he got up and said to his friend, 'Did you call me, or why did I wake? Did you touch me, or why am I terrified? Did not some god pass by, for my limbs are numb with fear? My friend, I saw a third dream and this dream was altogether frightful. The heavens roared and the earth roared again, daylight failed and darkness fell, lightnings flashed, fire blazed out, the clouds lowered, they rained down death. Then the brightness departed, the fire went out, and all was turned to ashes fallen about us. Let us go down from the mountain and talk this over, and consider what we should do.'

When they had come down from the mountain Gilgamesh seized the axe in his hand: he felled the cedar. When Humbaba heard the noise far off he was enraged; he cried out, 'Who is this that has violated my woods and cut down my cedar?' But glorious Shamash called to them out of heaven, 'Go forward, do not be afraid.' But now' Gilgamesh was overcome by weakness, for sleep had seized him suddenly, a profound sleep held him; he lay on the ground, stretched out speechless, as though in a dream. When Enkidu touched him he did not rise, when he spoke to him he did not reply. 'O Gilgamesh, Lord of the plain of Kullab, the world grows dark, the shadows have spread over it, now is the glimmer of dusk. Shamash has departed, his bright head is quenched in the bosom of his mother Ningal. O Gilgamesh, how long will you lie like this, asleep? Never let the mother who gave you birth be forced in mourning into the city square.'

At length Gilgamesh heard him; lie put on his breastplate, 'The Voice of Heroes', of thirty shekels' weight; he put it on as though it had been a light garment that he carried, and it covered him altogether. He straddled the earth like a bull that snuff's the ground and his teeth were clenched. 'By the life of my mother Ninsun who gave me birth, and by the life of my father, divine Lugulbanda, let me live to be the wonder of my mother, 'as when she nursed me on her lap.' A second time he said to him, 'By the life of Ninsun my mother who gave me birth, and by the life of my father, divine Lugulbanda, until we have fought thus man, if man he is, this god, if god he is, the way that I took to the Country of the Living will not turn back to the city.'

Then Enkidu, the faithful companion, pleaded, answering him, 'O my lord, you do not know this monster and that is the reason you are not afraid. I who know him, I am terrified. His teeth are dragon's fangs, his countenance is like a lion, his charge is the rushing of the flood, with his look he crushes alike the trees of the forest and reeds in the swamp. O my Lord, you may go on if you choose into thus land, but I will go back to the city. I will tell the lady your mother all your glorious' deeds till she shouts for joy: and then I will tell the death that followed till she weeps for bitterness.' But Gilgamesh said, 'Immolation and sacrifice are not yet for me, the boat of the dead shall not go down, nor the three-ply cloth be cut for my shrouding. Not yet will my people be desolate, nor the pyre be lit in my house and my dwelling burnt on the fire. Today, give me your aid and you shall have mine: what then can go amiss with us two? All living creatures born of the flesh shall sit at last in the boat of the West, and when it sinks, when the boat of Magilum sinks, they are gone; but we shall go forward and fix our eyes on this monster. If your heart is fearful throw away fear; if there is terror in it throw away terror. Take your axe in your hand and attack. He who leaves the fight unfinished is not at peace.'

Humbaba came out from his strong house of cedar. Then Enkidu called out, 'O Gilgamesh, remember now your boasts in Uruk. Forward, attack, son of Uruk, there is nothing to fear.' When he heard these words his courage rallied; he answered, 'Make haste, close in, if the watchman is there do not let him escape to the woods where he will vanish. He has put on the first of his seven splendours but not yet the other six, let us trap him before he is armed.' Like a raging wild bull he snuffed the ground; the watchman of the woods turned full of threatenings, he cried out. Humbaba came from his strong house of cedar. He nodded his head and shook it, menacing Gilgamesh; and on him he fastened his eye, the eye of death. Then Gilgamesh called to Shamash and his tears were flowing, 'O glorious Shamash, I have followed the road you commanded but now if you send no succour how shall I escape? Glorious Shamash heard his prayer and he summoned the great wind, the north wind, the whirlwind, the storm and the icy wind, the tempest and the scorching wind; they came like dragons, like a scorching fire, like a serpent that freezes the heart, a destroying flood and the lightning's fork. The eight winds rose up against Humbaba, they beat against his eyes; he was gripped, unable to go forward or back. Gilgamesh shouted, 'By the life of Ninsun my mother and divine Lugulbanda my father, in the Country of the Living, in this Land I have discovered your dwelling; my weak arms and my small weapons I have brought to this Land against you, and now I will enter your house'.

So he felled the first cedar and they cut the branches and laid them at the foot of the mountain. At the first stroke Humbaba blazed out, but still they advanced. They felled seven cedars and cut and bound the branches and laid them at the foot of the mountain, and seven times Humbaba loosed his glory on them. As the seventh blaze died out they reached his lair. He slapped his thigh in scorn. He approached like a noble wild bull roped on the mountain, a warrior whose elbows are bound together. The tears started to his eyes and he was pale, 'Gilgamesh, let me speak. I have never known a mother, no, nor a father who reared me. I was born of the mountain, he reared me, and Enlil made me the keeper of this forest. Let me go free, Gilgamesh, and I will be your servant, you shall be my lord; all the trees of the forest that I tended on the mountain shall be yours. I will cut them down and build you a palace.' He took him by the hand and led him

to his house, so that the heart of Gilgamesh was moved with compassion. He swore by the heavenly life, by the earthly life, by the underworld itself: 'O Enkidu, should not the snared, bird return to its nest and the captive man return to his mother's arms?' Enkidu answered, 'The strongest of men will fall to fate if he has no judgement. Namtar, the evil fate that knows no distinction between men, will devour him. If the snared bird returns to its nest, if the captive man returns to his mother's arms, then you my friend will never return to the city where the mother is waiting who gave you birth. He will bar the mountain road against you, and make the pathways impassable.'

Humbaba said, 'Enkidu, what you have spoken is evil: you, a hireling, dependent for your bread! In envy and for fear of a rival you have spoken evil words.' Enkidu said, 'Do not listen, Gilgamesh: this Humbaba must die. Kill Humbaba first and his servants after.' But Gilgamesh said, 'If we touch him the blaze and the glory of light will be put out in confusion, the glory and glamour will vanish, its rays will be quenched.' Enkidu said to Gilgamesh, 'Not so, my friend. First entrap the bird, and where shall the chicks run then? Afterwards we can search out the glory and the glamour, when the chicks run distracted through the grass.'

Gilgamesh listened to the word of his companion, he took the axe in his hand, he drew the sword from his belt, and he struck Humbaba with a thrust of the sword to the neck, and Enkidu his comrade struck the second blow. At the third blow Humbaba fell. Then there followed confusion for this was the guardian of the forest whom they had felled to the ground. For as far as two leagues the cedars shivered when Enkidu felled the watcher of the forest, he at whose voice Hermon and Lebanon used to tremble. Now the mountains were moved and all the hills, for the guardian of the forest was killed. They attacked the cedars, the seven splendours of Humbaba were extinguished. So they pressed on into the forest bearing the sword of eight talents. They uncovered the sacred dwellings of the Anunnaki and while Gilgamesh felled the first of the trees of the forest Enkidu cleared their roots as far as the banks of Euphrates. They set Humbaba before the gods, before Enlil; they kissed the ground and dropped the shroud and set the head before him. When he saw the head of Humbaba, Enlil raged at them. 'Why did you do this thing? From henceforth may the fire be on your faces, may it eat the bread that you eat, may it drink where you drink.' Then Enlil took again the blaze and the seven splendours that had been Humbaba's: he gave the first to the river, and he gave to the lion, to the stone of execration, to the mountain and to the dreaded daughter of the Queen of Hell.

O Gilgamesh, king and conqueror of the dreadful blaze; wild bull who plunders the mountain, who crosses the sea, glory to him, and from the brave the greater glory is Enki's!

ISHTAR AND GILGAMESH, AND THE DEATH OF ENKIDU

GILGAMESH Washed out his long locks and cleaned his weapons; he flung back his hair from his shoulders; he threw off his stained clothes and changed them for new. He put on his royal robes and made them fast. When Gilgamesh had put on the crown, glorious Ishtar lifted her eyes, seeing the beauty of Gilgamesh. She said, 'Come to me Gilgamesh, and be my bridegroom; grant me seed of your body, let me be your bride and you shall be my husband. I will harness for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and of gold, with wheels of gold and horns of copper; and you shall have mighty demons of the storm for draft mules. When you enter our house in the fragrance of cedar-wood, threshold and throne will kiss your feet. Kings, rulers, and princes will bow down before you; they shall bring you tribute from the mountains and the plain. Your ewes shall drop twins and your goats triplets; your pack-ass shall outrun mules; your oxen shall have no rivals, and your chariot horses shall be famous far-off for their swiftness.'

Gilgamesh opened his mouth and answered glorious Ishtar, 'If I take you in marriage, what gifts can I give in return? What ointments and clothing for your body? I would gladly give you bread and all sorts of food fit for a god. I would give you wine to drink fit for a queen. I would pour out barley to stuff your granary; but as for making you my wife - that I will not. How would it go with me? Your lovers have found you like a brazier which smoulders in the cold, a backdoor which keeps out neither squall of wind nor storm, a castle which crushes the garrison, pitch that blackens the bearer, a water-skin that chafes the carrier, a stone which falls from the parapet, a battering-ram turned back from the enemy, a sandal that trips the wearer. Which of your lovers did you ever love for ever? What shepherd of yours has pleased you for all time? Listen to me while I tell the tale of your lovers. There was Tammuz, the lover of your youth, for him you decreed wailing, year after year. You loved the many coloured roller, but still you struck and broke his wing; now in the grove he sits and cries, "kappi, kappi, my wing, my wing." You have loved the lion tremendous in strength: seven pits you dug for him, and seven. You have loved the stallion magnificent in battle, and for him you decreed whip and spur and a thong, to gallop seven leagues by force and to muddy the water before he drinks; and for his mother Silili lamentations. You have loved the shepherd of the flock; he made meal-cake for you day after day, he killed kids for your sake. You struck and turned him into a wolf, now his own herd-boys chase him away, his own hounds worry his flanks. And did you not love Ishullanu, the gardener of your father's palm grove? He brought you baskets filled with dates without end; every day he loaded your table. Then you turned your eyes on him and said, "Dearest Ishullanu, come here to me, let us enjoy your manhood, come forward and take me, I am yours.' Ishullanu answered, "What are you asking from me? My mother has baked and I have eaten; why should I come to such as you for food that is tainted and rotten? For when was a screen of rushes sufficient protection from frosts?" But when you had beard his answer you struck him. He was changed to a blind mole deep in the earth, one whose desire is always beyond his reach. And if you and I should be lovers, should not I be served in the same fashion as all these others whom you loved once?"

When Ishtar heard this she fell into a bitter rage, she went up to high heaven. Her tears poured down in front of her father Anu, and Antum her mother. She said, 'My father, Gilgamesh has heaped insults on me, he has told over all my abominable behaviour, my foul and hideous acts.' Anu opened his mouth and said, 'Are you a father of gods? Did not you quarrel with Gilgamesh the king, so now he has related your abominable behaviour, your foul and hideous acts.'

Ishtar opened her mouth and said again, 'My father, give me the Bull of Heaven to destroy Gilgamesh. Fill Gilgamesh, I say, with arrogance to his destruction; but if you refuse to give me the Bull of Heaven I will break in the doors of hell and smash the bolts; there will be confusion of people, those above with those from the lower depths. I shall bring up the dead to eat food like the living; and the hosts of dead will outnumber the living.' Anusa d to great Ishtar, 'If I do what you desire there will be seven years of drought throughout Uruk when corn will be seedless husks. Have you saved grain enough for the people and grass for the cattle? Ishtar replied. 'I have saved grain for the people, grass for the cattle; for seven years of seedless husks there is grain and there is grass enough.'

When Anu heard what Ishtar had said he gave her the Bull of Heaven to lead by the halter down to Uruk: When they reached the gates of Uruk the Bull went to the river; with his first snort cracks opened in the earth and, a hundred young men fell down to death. With his second snort cracks opened and two hundred fell down to death. With his third snort cracks opened, Enkidu doubled over but instantly recovered, he dodged aside and leapt on the Bull and seized it by the horns. The Bull of Heaven foamed in his face, it brushed him with the thick of its tail. Enkidu cried to Gilgamesh, 'my friend, we boasted that we would .leave enduring names behind us. Now thrust in your sword between the nape and the horns.' So Gilgamesh followed the Bull, he seized the thick of its tail, he thrust the sword between the nape and the horns and slew the Bull. When they had killed the Bull of Heaven they cut out its heart and gave it to Shamash, and the brothers rested.

But Ishtar rose tip and mounted the great wall of Uruk; she sprang on to the tower and uttered a curse: 'Woe to Gilgamesh, for he has scorned me in killing the Bull of Heaven.' When Enkidu heard these words he tore out the Bull's right thigh and tossed it in her face saying, 'If I could lay my hands on you, it is this I should do to you, and lash the entrails to your side.' Then Ishtar called together her people, the dancing and singing girls, the prostitutes of the temple, the courtesans. Over the thigh of the Bull of Heaven she set up lamentation.

But Gilgamesh called the smiths and the armourers, all of them together. They admired the immensity of the horns. They were plated with lapis lazuli two fingers thick. They were thirty pounds each in weight, and their capacity in oil was six measures, which he gave to his guardian god, Lugulbanda. But he carried the horns into the palace and hung them on the wall. Then they washed their hands in Euphrates, they embraced each other and went away. They drove through the streets of Uruk where the heroes were gathered to see them, and Gilgamesh called to the singing girls, 'Who is most glorious of the heroes, who is most eminent among men?' 'Gilgamesh is the most glorious of heroes, Gilgamesh is most eminent among men.' And now there was feasting, and celebrations and joy in the palace, till the heroes lay down saying, 'Now we will rest for the night.'

When the daylight came Enkidu got up and cried to Gilgamesh, 'O my brother, such a dream I had last night. Anu, Enlil, Ea and heavenly Shamash took counsel together, and Anu said to Enlil, "Because they have killed the Bull of Heaven, and because they have killed Humbaba who guarded the Cedar Mountain one of the two must , die." Then glorious Shamash answered the hero Enlil, "It was by your command they killed the Bull of Heaven, and killed Humbaba, and must Enkidu die although innocent?" Enlil flung round in rage at glorious Shamash, "You dare to say this, you who went about with them every day like one of themselves!"

So Enkidu lay stretched out before Gilgamesh; his tears ran down in streams and he said to Gilgamesh, 'O my brother, so dear as you are to me, brother, yet they will take me from you.' Again he said, 'I must sit down on the threshold of the dead and never again will I see my dear brother with my eyes.'

While Enkidu lay alone in his sickness he cursed the gate as though it was living flesh, 'You there, wood of the gate, dull and insensible, witless, I searched for you over twenty leagues until I saw the towering cedar. There is no wood like you in our land. Seventy-two cubits high and twenty-four wide, the pivot and the ferrule and the jambs are perfect. A master craftsman from Nippur has made you; but O, if I had known the conclusion! If I had known that this was all the good that would come of it, I would have raised the axe and split you into little pieces and set up here a gate of wattle instead. Ah, if only some future king had brought you here, or some god- had fashioned you. Let him obliterate my name and write his own, and the curse fall on him instead of on Enkidu.'

With the first brightening of dawn Enkidu raised his head and wept before the Sun God, in the brilliance of the sunlight his tears streamed down. 'Sun God, I beseech you, about that vile Trapper, that Trapper of nothing because of whom I was to catch less than my comrade; let him catch least, make his game scarce, make him feeble, taking the smaller of every share, let his quarry escape from his nets.'

When he had cursed the Trapper to his heart's content he turned on the harlot. He was roused to curse her also. 'As for you, woman, with a great curse I curse you! I will promise you a destiny to all eternity. My curse shall come on you soon and sudden. You shall be without a roof for your commerce, for you shall not keep house with other girls in the tavern, but do your business in places fouled by the vomit of the drunkard. Your hire will be potter's earth, your thievings will be flung into the hovel, you will sit at the cross-roads in the dust of the potter's quarter, you will make your bed on the dunghill at night, and by day take your stand in the wall's shadow. Brambles and thorns will tear your feet, the drunk and the dry will strike your cheek and your mouth will ache. Let you be stripped of your purple dyes, for I too once in the wilderness with my wife had all the treasure I wished.'

When Shamash heard the words of Enkidu he called to him from heaven: 'Enkidu, why are you cursing the woman, the mistress who taught you to eat bread fit for gods and drink wine of kings? She who put upon you a 'magnificent garment, did she not give you glorious Gilgamesh for your companion, and has not Gilgamesh, your own brother, made you rest on a 'royal bed and recline on a couch at his left hand? He has made the princes of the earth kiss your feet, and now all the people of Uruk lament and wail over you. When you are dead he will let his hair grow long for your sake, he will wear a lion's pelt and wander through the desert.'

When Enkidu heard glorious Shamash his angry heart grew quiet, he called back the curse and said, 'Woman, I promise you another destiny. The mouth which cursed you shall bless you! Kings, princes and nobles shall adore you. On your account a man though twelve miles off will clap his hand to his thigh and his hair will twitch. For you he will undo his belt and open his treasure and you shall have your desire; lapis lazuli, gold and' carnelian from the heap in the treasury. A ring for your hand and a robe shall be yours. The priest will lead you into the presence of the gods. On your account a wife, a mother of seven, was forsaken.'

As Enkidu slept alone in his sickness, in bitterness of spirit he poured out his heart to his friend. 'It was I who cut down the cedar, I who levelled the forest, I who slew Humbaba and now see what has become of me. Listen, my friend, this is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I

before an awful being, the sombre-faced man-bird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was a vampire face, his foot was a lion's foot, his hand was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare towards me, and he led me away to the palace of Irkalla, the Queen of Darkness, to the house from which none who enters ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

'There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds " with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away for ever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Ann and Enlil stood now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the water-skin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Dish whom the eagle carried to heaven in the days of old. I saw also Samuqan, god of cattle, and there was Ereshkigal the Queen of the Underworld; and Befit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head, she saw me and spoke:" Who has brought this one here?" Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rashes; like one whom the bailiff has seized and his heart pounds with terror.'

Gilgamesh had peeled off his clothes, he listened to his words and wept quick tears, Gilgamesh listened and his tears flowed. He opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu: 'Who is there in strong-walled Uruk who has wisdom like this? Strange things have been spoken, why does your heart speak strangely? The dream was marvellous but the terror was great; we must treasure the dream whatever the terror; for the dream has shown that misery comes at last to the healthy man, the end of life is sorrow.' And Gilgamesh lamented, 'Now I will pray to the great gods, for my friend had an ominous dream.'

This day on which Enkidu dreamed came to an end and be lay stricken with sickness. One whole day he lay on his bed and his suffering increased. He said to Gilgamesh, the friend on whose account he had left the wilderness, 'Once I ran for you, for the water of life, and I now have nothing:' A second day he lay on his bed and Gilgamesh watched over him but the sickness increased. A third day he lay on his bed, he called out to Gilgamesh, rousing him up. Now he was weak and his eyes were blind with weeping. Ten days he lay and his suffering increased, eleven and twelve days he lay on his bed of pain. Then he called to Gilgamesh, 'My friend, the great goddess cursed me and I must die in shame. I shall not die like a man fallen in battle; I feared to fall, but happy is the man who falls in the battle, for I must die in shame.' And Gilgamesh wept over Enkidu. With the first light of dawn he raised his voice and said to the counsellors of Uruk:

'Hear me, great ones of Uruk, I weep for Enkidu, my friend, Bitterly moaning like a woman mourning I weep for my brother. O Enkidu, my brother, You were the axe at my side. My hand's strength, the sword in my belt, The shield before me, A glorious robe, my fairest ornament; An evil Fate has robbed me. The wild ass and the gazelle That were father and mother, All long-tailed creatures that nourished you Weep for you, All the wild things of the plain and pastures; The paths that you loved in the forest of cedars Night and day murmur. Let the great ones of strong-walled Uruk Weep for you: Let the finger of blessing Be stretched out in mourning; Enkidu, young brother. Hark, There is an echo through all the country Like a mother mourning. Weep all the paths where we walked together;

And the beasts we hunted, the bear and hyena,

Tiger and panther, leopard and lion,

The stag and the ibex, the bull and the doe.

The river along whose banks we used to walk,

Weeps for you,

Ula of Elam and dear Euphrates

Where once we drew water for the water-skins.

The mountain we climbed where we slew the Watchman,

Weeps for you.

The warriors of strong-walled Uruk

Where the Bull of Heaven was killed,

Weep for you.

All the people of Eridu

Weep for you Enkidu.

Those who brought grain for your eating

Mourn for you now;

Who rubbed oil on your back

Mourn for you now;

Who poured beer for your drinking

Mourn for you now.

The harlot who anointed you with fragrant ointment

Laments for you now;

The women of the palace, who brought you a wife,

A chosen ring of good advice,

Lament for you now.

And the young men your brothers

As though they were women

Go long-haired in mourning.

What is this sleep which holds you now?

You are lost in the dark and cannot hear me.'

He touched his heart but it did not beat, nor did he lift his eyes again. When Gilgamesh touched his heart it did not beat. So Gilgamesh laid a veil, as one veils the bride, over his friend. He began to rage like a lion, like a lioness robbed of her whelps. This way and that he paced round the bed, he tore out his hair and strewed it around. He dragged of his splendid robes and flung them down as though they were abominations.

In the first light of dawn Gilgamesh cried out, 'I made you rest on a royal bed, you reclined on a couch at my left hand, the princes of the earth kissed your feet. I will cause all the people of Uruk to weep over you and raise the dirge of the dead. The joyful people will stoop with sorrow; and when you have gone to the earth I will let my hair grow long for your sake, I will wander through the wilderness in the skin of a lion.' The next day also, in the first light, Gilgamesh lamented; seven days and seven nights he wept for Enkidu, until the worm fastened on him. Only then he gave him up to the earth, for the Anunnaki, the judges, had seized him.

Then Gilgamesh issued a proclamation through the land, he summoned them all, the coppersmiths, the goldsmiths, the stone-workers, and commanded them, 'Make a statue of my friend.' The statue was fashioned with a great weight of lapis lazuli for the breast and of gold for the body. A table of hard-wood was set out, and on it a bowl of carnelian filled with honey, and a bowl of lapis lazuli filled with butter. These he exposed and offered to the Sun; and weeping he went away.

THE SEARCH FOR EVERLASTING LIFE

BITTERLY Gilgamesh wept for his friend Enkidu; he wandered over the wilderness as a hunter, he roamed over the plains; in his bitterness he cried, 'How can I rest, how can I be at peace? Despair is in my heart. What my brother is now, that shall I be when I am dead. Because I am afraid of death I will go as best I can to find Utnapishtim whom they call the Faraway, for he has entered the assembly of the gods.' So Gilgamesh travelled over the wilderness, he wandered over the grasslands, a long journey, in search of Utnapishtim, whom the gods took after the deluge; and they set him to live in the land of Dilmun, in the garden of the sun; and to him alone of men they gave everlasting life.

At night when he came to the mountain passes Gilgamesh prayed: 'In these mountain passes long ago I saw lions, I was afraid and I lifted my eyes to the moon; I prayed and my prayers went up to the gods, so now, O moon god Sin, protect me.' When he had prayed he lay down to sleep, until he was woken from out of a dream. He saw the lions round him glorying in life; then he took his axe in his hand, he drew his sword from his belt, and he fell upon them like an arrow from the string, and struck and destroyed and scattered them.

So at length Gilgamesh came to Mashu, the great mountains about which he had heard many things, which guard the rising and the setting sun. Its twin peaks are as high as the wall of heaven and its paps reach down to the underworld. At its gate the Scorpions stand guard, half man and half dragon; their glory is terrifying, their stare strikes death into men, their shimmering halo sweeps the mountains that guard the rising sun. When Gilgamesh saw them he shielded his eyes for the length of a moment only; then he took courage and approached. When they saw him so undismayed the Man-Scorpion called to his mate, 'This one who comes to us now is flesh of the gods.' The mate of the Man-Scorpion answered, 'Two thirds is god but one third is man.'

Then he called to the man Gilgamesh, he called to the child of the gods: 'Why have you come so great a journey; for what have you travelled so far, crossing the dangerous waters; tell me the reason for your coming?' Gilgamesh answered, 'For Enkidu; I loved him dearly, together we endured all kinds of hardships; on his account I have come, for the common lot of man has taken him. I have wept for him day and night, I would not give up his body for burial, I thought my friend would come back because of my weeping. Since he went, my life is nothing; that is why I have travelled here in search of Utnapishtim my father; for men say he has entered the assembly of the gods, and has found everlasting life: I have a desire to question him, concerning the living and the dead.' The Man-Scorpion opened his mouth and said, speaking to Gilgamesh, 'No man born of woman has done what you have asked, no mortal man has gone into the mountain; the length of it is twelve leagues of darkness; in it there is no light, but the heart is oppressed with darkness. From the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun there is no light.' Gilgamesh said, 'Although I should go in sorrow and in pain, with sighing and with weeping, still I must go. Open the gate 'of the mountain:' And the Man-Scorpion said, 'Go, Gilgamesh, I permit you to pass through the mountain of Mashu and through the high ranges; may your feet carry you safely home. The gate of the mountain is open.'

When Gilgamesh heard this he did as the Man-Scorpion had said, he followed the sun's road to his rising, through the mountain. When he had gone one league the darkness became thick around him, for there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After two leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After four leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After four leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. At the end of five leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. When he had gone seven leagues the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. When he had gene eight leagues Gilgamesh gave a great cry, for the darkness was thick and he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After nine leagues he felt the northwind on his face, but the darkness was thick and there was no light, he could see nothing ahead and nothing behind him. After ten leagues the end was near: After eleven leagues the dawn light appeared. At the end of twelve leagues the sun streamed out.

There was the garden of the gods; all round him stood bushes bearing gems. Seeing it he went down at once, for there was fruit of carnelian with the vine hanging from it, beautiful to look at; lapis lazuli leaves hung thick with fruit, sweet to see. For thorns and thistles there were haematite and rare stones, agate, and pearls from out of the sea. While Gilgamesh walked in the garden by the edge of the sea Shamash saw him, and he saw that he was dressed in the skins of animals and ate their flesh. He was distressed, and he spoke and said, 'No mortal man has gone this way before, nor will, as long as the winds drive over the sea.' And to Gilgamesh he said, 'You will never find the life for which you are

searching.' Gilgamesh said to glorious Shamash, 'Now that I have toiled and strayed so far over the wilderness, am I to sleep, and let the earth cover my head for ever? Let my eyes see the sun until they are dazzled with looking. Although I am no better than a dead man, still let me see the light of the sun.'

Beside the sea she lives, the woman of the vine, the maker, of wine; Siduri sits in the garden at the edge of the sea, with the golden bowl and the golden vats that the gods gave her. She is covered with a veil; and where she sits she sees Gilgamesh coming towards her, wearing skins, the flesh of the gods in his body, but despair in his heart, and his face like the face of one who has made a long journey. She looked, and as she scanned the distance she said in her own heart, 'Surely this is some felon; where is he going now? And she barred her gate against him with the cross-bar and shot home the bolt. But Gilgamesh, hearing the sound of the bolt, threw up his head and lodged his foot in the gate; he called to her, 'Young woman, maker of wine, why do you bolt your door; what did you see that made you bar your gate? I will break in your door and burst in your gate, for I am Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, I killed the watchman of the cedar forest, I overthrew Humbaba who lived in the forest, and I killed the lions in the passes of the mountain.'

Then Siduri said to him, 'If you are that Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, who killed the watchman of the cedar forest, who overthrew Humbaba that lived in the forest, and killed the lions in the passes of the mountain, why are your cheeks so starved and why is your face so drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned from heat and cold, and why do you come here wandering over the pastures in search of the wind?

Gilgamesh answered her, 'And why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey, it was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures in search of the wind? My friend, my younger brother, he who hunted the wild ass of the wilderness and the panther of the plains, nay friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me and who endured dangers beside me, Enkidu my brother, whom I laved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept far him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness and cannot rest. But now, young woman, maker of wine, since I have seen your face do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much.'

She answered, 'Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man.'

But Gilgamesh said to Siduri, the young woman, 'How can I be silent, how can I rest, when Enkidu whom I love is dust, and I too shall die and be laid in the earth. You live by the sea-shore and look into the heart of it; young woman, tell me now, which is the way to Utnapishtim, the son of Ubara-Tutu? What directions are there for the passage; give me, oh, give me directions. I will cross the Ocean if it is possible; if it is not I will wander still farther in the wilderness.' The wine-maker said to him, 'Gilgamesh, there is no crossing the Ocean; whoever has come, since the days of old, has not been able to pass that sea. The Sun in his glory crosses the Ocean, but who beside Shamash has ever crossed it? The place and the passage are difficult, and the waters of death are deep which flow between. Gilgamesh, how will you cross the Ocean? When you come to the waters of death what will you do? But Gilgamesh, down in the woods you will find Urshanabi, the ferryman of Utnapishtim; with him are the holy things, the things of stone. He is fashioning the serpent prow of the boat. Look at him well, and if it is possible, perhaps you will cross the waters with him; but if it is not possible, then you must go back.'

When Gilgamesh heard this he was seized with anger. He took his axe in his hand, and his dagger from his belt. He crept forward and he fell on them like a javelin. Then he went into the forest and sat down. Urshanabi saw the dagger flash and heard the axe, and he beat his head, for Gilgamesh had shattered the tackle of the boat in his rage. Urshanabi said to him, 'Tell me, what is your name? I am Urshanabi, the ferryman of Utnapishtim the Faraway." He replied to him, 'Gilgamesh is my name, I am from Uruk, from the house of Anu.' Then Urshanabi said to him, 'Why are your cheeks so starved and your face drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey; yes, why is your face burned with heat and with cold, and why do you come here wandering over the pastures in search of the wind?

Gilgamesh said to him, 'Why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart, and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey. I was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures? My friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me, and who endured dangers beside me, Enkidu my brother whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness. His fate lies heavy upon me. How

can I be silent, how can I rest? He is dust and I too shall die and be laid in the earth for ever. I am afraid of death, therefore, Urshanabi, tell me which is the road to Utnapishtim? If it is possible I will cross the waters of death; if not I will wander still farther through the wilderness.'

Urshanabi said to him, 'Gilgamesh, your own hands have prevented you from crossing the Ocean; when you destroyed the tackle of the boat you destroyed its safety.' Then the two of them talked it over and Gilgamesh said, 'Why are you so angry with me, Urshanabi, for you yourself cross the sea by day and night, at all seasons you cross it' 'Gilgamesh, those things you destroyed, their property is to carry me over the water, to prevent the waters of death from touching me. It was for this reason that I preserved them, but you have destroyed them, and the *urnu* snakes with them. But now, go into the forest, Gilgamesh; with your axe cut poles, one hundred and twenty, cut them sixty cubits long, paint them with bitumen, set on them ferrules and bring them back.'

When Gilgamesh heard this he went into the forest, he cut poles one hundred and twenty; he cut them sixty cubits long, he painted them with bitumen, he set on them ferrules, and he brought them to Urshanabi. Then they boarded the boat, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi together, launching it out on the waves of Ocean. For three days they ran on as it were a journey of a month and fifteen days, and at last Urshanabi brought the boat to the waters of death: Then Urshanabi said to Gilgamesh, 'Press on, take a pole and thrust it in, but do not let your hands touch the waters. Gilgamesh, take a second pole, take a third, take a fourth pole. Now, Gilgamesh, take a fifth, take a sixth and seventh pole. Gilgamesh, take an eighth, and ninth, a tenth pole. Gilgamesh, take an eleventh, take a twelfth pole.' After one hundred and twenty thrusts Gilgamesh had used the last pole. Then he stripped himself, he held up his arms for a mast and his covering for a sail. So Urshanabi the ferryman brought Gilgamesh to Utnapishtim, whom they call the Faraway, who lives in Dihnun at the place of the sun's transit, eastward of the mountain. To him alone of men the gods had given everlasting life.

Now Utnapishtim, where he lay at ease, looked into the distance and he said in his heart, musing to himself, 'Why does the boat sail here without tackle and mast; why are the sacred stones destroyed, and why does the master not sail the boat? That man who comes is none of mine; where I look I see a man whose body is covered with skins of beasts. Who is this who walks up the shore behind Urshanabi, for surely he is no man of mine? So Utnapishtim looked at him and said, 'What is your name, you who come here wearing the skins of beasts, with your cheeks starved and your face drawn? Where are you hurrying to now? For what reason have you made this great journey, crossing "the seas whose passage is difficult? Tell me the reason for your coming.'

He replied, 'Gilgamesh is my name. I am from Uruk, from the house of Anu.' Then Utnapishtim said to him, 'If you are Gilgamesh, why are your cheeks so starved and your face drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned with heat and cold; and why do you come here, wandering over the wilderness in search of the wind?

Gilgamesh said to him, 'Why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey. It was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures? My friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me and endured dangers beside me, Enkidu, my brother whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death; because of my brother I stray through the wilderness. His fate lies heavy upon me. How can I be silent, how can I rest? He is dust and I shall die also and be laid in the . earth for ever.' Again Gilgamesh said, speaking to Utnapishtim, 'It is to see Utnapishtim whom we call the Faraway that I have come this journey. For this I have wandered over the world, I have crossed many difficult ranges, I have crossed the seas, I have wearied myself with travelling; my joints are aching, and I have lost acquaintance with sleep which is sweet. My clothes were worn out before I came to the house of Siduri. I have killed the bear and hyena, the lion and panther, the tiger, the stag and the ibex, all sorts of wild game and the small creatures of the pastures. I ate their flesh and I wore their skins; and that was how I came to the gate of the young woman, the maker of wine, who barred her gate of pitch and bitumen against me. But from her I had news of the journey; so then I came to Urshanabi the ferryman, and with him I crossed over the waters of death. Oh, father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?

Utuapishtim said, 'There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand for ever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep for ever, does the flood-time of rivers endure? It is only the nymph of the dragon-fly who sheds her larva and sees the sun in his glory. From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki, the judges, come together, and Mammetun the mother of destinies, together they decree the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death they do not disclose.'

Then Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the Faraway, 'I look at you now, Utnapishtim, and your appearance is no different from mine; there is nothing strange in your features. I thought I should find you like a hero prepared for battle, but you he here taking your ease on your back. Tell me truly, how was it that you came to enter the company of the gods

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and to possess everlasting life?' Utnapishtim said to Gilgamesh, 'I will reveal to you a mystery, I will tell you a secret of the gods.'

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

'You know the city Shurrupak, it stands on the banks of Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. There was Anu,-lord of the firmament, their father, and warrior Enlil their counsellor, Ninurta the helper, and Ennugi watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea. In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, "The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel." So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind. Enlil did this, but Ea because of his oath warned me in a dream. He whispered their words to my house of reeds, "Reed-house, reed-house! Wall, O wall, hearken reed-house, wall reflect; O man of Shurrupak, son of Ubara-Tutu; tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat. These are the measurements of the barque as you shall build her: let hex beam equal her length, let her deck be roofed like the vault that covers the abyss; then take up into the boat the seed of all living creatures."

'When I had understood I said to my lord, "Behold, what you have commanded I will honour and perform, but how shall I answer the people, the city, the elders?" Then Ea opened his mouth and said to me, his servant, "Tell them this: I have learnt that Enlil is wrathful against me, I dare no longer walk in his land nor live in his city; I will go down to the Gulf to dwell with Ea my lord. But on you he will rain down abundance, rare fish and shy wild-fowl, a rich harvest-tide. In the evening the rider of the storm will bring you wheat in torrents."

'In the first light of dawn all my household gathered round me, the children brought pitch and the men whatever was necessary. On the fifth day I laid the keel and the ribs, then I made fast the planking. The ground-space was one acre, each side of the deck measured one hundred and twenty cubits, making a square. I built six decks below, seven in all, I divided them into nine sections with bulkheads between. I drove in wedges where needed, I saw to the punt poles, and laid in supplies. The carriers brought oil in baskets, I poured pitch into the furnace and asphalt and oil; more oil was consumed in caulking, and more again the master of the boat took into his stores. I slaughtered bullocks for the people and every day I killed sheep. I gave the shipwrights wine to drink as though it were river water, raw wine and red wine and oil and white wine. There was



A fragment of a tablet showing the story of the flood, inscribed in Assyrian cuneiform characters.

feasting then as -there is at the time of the New Year's festival; I myself anointed my head. On the seventh day the boat was complete.

-'Then was the launching full of difficulty; there was shifting of ballast above and below till two thirds was submerged. I loaded into her all that 1 had of gold and of living things, my family, my kin, the beast of the field both wild and tame, and all the craftsmen. I sent them on board, for the time that Shamash had ordained was already fulfilled when he said, "in the evening, when the rider of the storm sends down the destroying rain, enter the boat and batten her down." The time was fulfilled, the evening came, the rider of the storm sent down the rain. I looked out at the weather and it was terrible, so I too boarded the boat and battened her down. All was now complete, the battening and the caulking; so I handed the tiller to Puzur-Amurri the steersman, with the navigation and the care of the whole boat.

'With the first light of dawn a black cloud came from the horizon; it thundered within where Adad, lord of the storm was riding. In front over hill and plain Shullat and Hanish, heralds of the storm, led on. Then the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninurta the war-lord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame. A stupor of despair went up to heaven when the god of the storm turned daylight to darkness, when he smashed the land like a cup. One whole day the tempest raged, gathering fury as .it went, it poured over the people like the tides of battle; a imam could not see his brother nor the people be seen from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the flood, they fled to the highest heaven, the firmament of Ann; they crouched against the walls, cowering like curs. Then Ishtar the sweet-voiced Queen of Heaven cried out like a woman in travail: "Alas the days -of old are turned to dust because I commanded evil; why did I command thus evil in the council of all the gods? I commanded wars to destroy the people, but are they not my people, for I brought them forth? Now like the spawn of fish they float in the ocean." The great gods of heaven and of hell wept, they covered their mouths.

'For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the, flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay. The surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top; I opened a hatch and the light fell on my face. Then I bowed low, I sat down and I wept, the tears streamed down my face, for on every side was the waste of water. I looked for land in vain, but fourteen leagues distant there appeared a mountain, and there the boat grounded; on the mountain of Nisir the boat held fast, she held fast and did not budge. One day she held, and -a second day on the mountain of Nisir she held fast and did not budge. A third day, and a fourth day she held fast on the mountain and did not budge; a fifth day and a sixth day she held fast on the mountain. When the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place she returned. Then I loosed a swallow, and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed a raven, she saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation on the mountain top. Seven and again seven cauldrons I set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savour, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Then, at last, Ishtar also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of heaven that once Anu had made to please her. "O you gods here present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget. Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this offering, for without reflection he brought the flood; he consigned my people to destruction."

'When Enlil had come, when he saw the boat, he was wrath and swelled with anger at the gods, the host of heaven, "Has any of these mortals escaped? Not one was to have survived the destruction." Then the god of the wells and canals Ninurta opened his mouth and said to the warrior Enlil, "Who is there of the gods that can devise without Ea? It is Ea alone who knows all things." Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to warrior Enlil, "Wisest of gods, hero Enlil, how could you so senselessly bring down the flood?

Lay upon the sinner his sin,
Lay upon the transgressor his transgression,
Punish him a little when he breaks loose,
Do not drive him too hard or he perishes,
Would that a lion had ravaged mankind
Rather than the f loud,
Would that a wolf had ravaged mankind
Rather than the flood,
Would that famine had wasted the world
Rather than the flood,
Would that pestilence had wasted mankind
Rather than the flood.

It was not I that revealed the secret of the gods; the wise man learned it in a dream. Now take your counsel what shall be done with him."

'Then Enlil went up into the boat, he took me by the hand and my wife and made us enter the boat and kneel down on either side, he standing between us. He touched our foreheads to bless us saying, "In time past Utnapishtim was a mortal man; henceforth he and his wife shall live in the distance at the mouth of the rivers." Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers.'

THE RETURN

UTNAPISHTIM said, 'As for you, Gilgamesh, who will assemble the gods for your sake, so that you may find that life for which you are searching? But if you wish, come and put into the test: only prevail against sleep for six days and seven nights.' But while Gilgamesh sat there resting on his haunches, a mist of sleep like soft wool teased from the fleece drifted over him, and Utnapishtim said to his wife, 'Look at him now, the strong man who would have everlasting life, even now the mists of sleep are drifting over him.' His wife replied, 'Touch the man to wake him, so that he may return to his own land in peace, going back through the gate by which he came.' Utnapishtim said to his wife, 'All men are deceivers, even you he will attempt to deceive; therefore bake loaves of bread, each day one loaf, and put it beside his head; and make a mark on the wall to number the days he has slept.'

So she baked loaves of bread, each day one loaf, and put it beside his head, and she marked on the wall the days that he slept; and there came a day when the first loaf was hard, the second loaf was like leather, the third was soggy, the crust of the fourth had mould, the fifth was mildewed, the sixth was fresh, and the seventh was still on the embers. Then Utnapishtim touched him and he woke. Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the Faraway, 'I hardly slept when you touched and roused me.' But Utnapishtim said, 'Count these loaves and learn how many days you slept, for your first is hard, your second like leather, your third is soggy, the crust of your fourth has mould, your fifth is mildewed, your sixth is fresh and your seventh was still over the glowing embers when I touched and woke you.' Gilgamesh said, 'What shall I do, O Utnapishtim, where shall I go? Already the thief in the night has hold of my limbs, death inhabits my room; wherever my foot rests, there I find death.'

Then Utnapishtim spoke to Urshanabi the ferryman: 'Woe to you Urshanabi, now and for ever more you have become hateful to this harbourage; it is not for you, nor for you are the crossings of this sea. Go now, banished from the shore. But this man before whom you walked, bringing him here, whose body is covered with foulness and the grace of whose limbs has been spoiled by wild skins, take him to the washing-place. There he shall wash his long hair clean as snow in the water, he shall throve off his skins and let the sea carry them away, and the beauty of his body shall be shown, the fillet on his forehead shall be renewed, and he shall be given clothes to cover his nakedness. Till he reaches his own city and his journey is accomplished, these clothes will show no sign of age, they will wear like a new garment.' So Urshanabi took Gilgamesh and led him to the washing-place, he washed his long hair as clean as snow in the water, he threw off his skins, which the sea carried away, and showed the beauty of his body. He renewed the fillet on his forehead, and to cover his nakedness gave him clothes which would show no sign of age, but would war like a new garment till he reached his own city, and his journey was accomplished.

Then Gilgamesh and Urshanabi launched the boat on to the water and boarded it, and they made ready to sail away; but the wife of Utnapishtim the Faraway said to him, `Gilgamesh came here wearied out, he is worn out; what will you give him to carry him back to his own country? So Utnapishtim spoke, and Gilgamesh took a pole and brought the boat in to the bank. `Gilgamesh, you came here a man wearied out, you have worn yourself out; what shall I give you to carry you back to your own country? Gilgamesh, I shall reveal a secret thing, it is a mystery of the gods that I am telling you. There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickle like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man:

When Gilgamesh heard this he opened the sluices so that a sweet water current might carry him out to the deepest channel; he tied heavy stones to his feet and they dragged him down to the water-bed. There he saw the plant growing;; although it pricked him he took it in his hands; then he cut the heavy stones from his feet, and the sea carried him and threw him on to the shore. Gilgamesh said to Urshanabi the ferryman, 'Come here, and see this marvellous plant. By its virtue a man may win back all his former strength. I will take it to Uruk of the strong walls; there I will give it to the old men to eat. Its name shall be "The Old Men Are Young Again"; and at last I shall eat it myself and have back all my lost youth.' So Gilgamesh returned by the gate through which he had come, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi went together. They travelled their twenty leagues and then they broke their fast; after thirty leagues they stopped for the night.

Gilgamesh saw a well of cool water and he went down and bathed; but deep in the pool there was lying a serpent, and the serpent sensed the sweetness of the flower. It rose out of the water and snatched it away, and immediately it sloughed its skin and returned to the well. Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept, the tears ran down his face, and he took the hand of Urshanabi; 'O Urshanabi, was it for this that I toiled with my hands, is it for this I have wrung out my heart's blood? For myself I have gained nothing; not I, but the beast of the earth has joy of it now. Already the stream has carried

it twenty leagues back to the channels where I found it. I found a sign and now I have lost it. Let us leave the boat on the bank and go.'

After twenty leagues they broke their fast, after thirty leagues they stopped for the night; in three days they had walked as much as a journey of a month and fifteen days. When the journey was accomplished they arrived at Uruk, the strong-walled city. Gilgamesh spoke to him, to Urshanabi the ferryman, 'Urshanabi, climb up on to the wall of Uruk, inspect its foundation terrace, and examine well the brickwork; see if it is not of burnt bricks; and did not the seven wise men lay these foundations? One third of the whole is city, one third is garden, and one third is field, with the precinct of the goddess Ishtar. These parts and the precinct are all Uruk.'

This too was the work of Gilgamesh, the king, who knew the countries of the world. He was wise,, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went a long journey, was weary, worn out with labour, and returning engraved on a stone the whole story.

THE DEATH OF GILGAMESH

THE destiny was fulfilled which the father of the gods, Enlil of the mountain, had decreed for Gilgamesh: 'In nether-earth the darkness will show him a light: of mankind, all that are known, none will leave a monument for generations to come to compare with his. The heroes, the wise men, like the new moon have their waxing and waning. Men will say, "Who has ever ruled with might and with power like him?" As in the dark month, the month of shadows, so without him there is no light. O Gilgamesh, this was the meaning of your dream. You were given the kingship, such was your destiny, everlasting life was not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed; he has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before the face of the Sun.'

The king has laid himself down and will not rise again, The Lord of Kullab will not rise again; He overcame evil, he will not come again; Though he was strong of arm he will not rise again;

He had wisdom and a comely face, he will not come again; He is gone into the mountain, he will not come again; On the bed of fate he lies, he will not rise again, Front the couch of many colours he will not come again.

The people of the city, great and small, are not silent; they lift up, the lament, all men of flesh and blood lift up the lament. Fate has spoken; like a hooked fish he lies stretched on the bed, like a gazelle that is caught in a noose. Inhuman Namtar is heavy upon him, Namtar that has neither hand nor foot, that drinks no water and eats no meat.

For Gilgamesh, son of Ninsun, they weighed out their offerings; his dear wife, his son, his concubine, his musicians, his jester, and all his household; his servants, his stewards, all who lived in the palace weighed out their offerings for Gilgamesh the son of Ninsun, the heart of Uruk. They weighed out their offerings to Ereshkigal, the Queen of Death, and to all the gods of the dead. To Namtar, who is fate, they weighed out the offering. Bread for Ned the Keeper of the Gate, bread for Ningizzida the god of the serpent, the lord of the Tree of Life; for Dumuzi also, the young shepherd, for Enki and Ninki, for Endukugga and Nindukugga, for Enmul and Nimnul, all the ancestral gods, forbears of Enlil. A feast for Shulpae the god of feasting. For Samuqan, god of the herds, for die mother Ninhursag, and the gods of creation in the place of creation, for the host of heaven, priest and priestess weighed out the offering of the dead.

Gilgamesh, the son of Ninsun, lies in the tomb. At the place of offerings he weighed the bread-offering, at the place of libation he poured out the wine. In those days the lord Gilgamesh departed, the son of Ninsun, the kung, peerless, without an equal among men, who did not neglect Enlil his master. O Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, great is thy praise.

GLOSSARY OF NAMES

A SHORT description of the gods and of other persons and places mentioned in the Epic will be found in this Glossary. The gods were credited at different times with a variety of attributes and characteristics, sometimes contradictory; only such as are relevant to the material of the Gilgamesh Epic are given here. The small number of gods and other characters who play a more important part in the story are described in the introduction; in their case a page reference to this description is given at the end of the Glossary note. Cross-references to other entries in the Glossary are indicated by means of italics.

ADAD: Storm-, rain-, and weather-god.

ANUNNAKI: Usually gods of the underworld, judges of the dead and offspring of Anu.

ANSHAN: A district of Elam in south-west Persia; probably the source o£ supplies of wood for making bows. Gilgamesh has a 'bow of Anshan'.

ANTUM: Wife of Anu.

ANU: Sumerian An; father of gods, and god of the firmament, the 'great above'. In the Sumerian cosmogony there was, first of all, the primeval sea, from which was born the cosmic mountain consisting of heaven, 'An', and earth, 'Ki'; they were separated by Enlil, then An carried off the heavens, and Enlil the earth. Ann later retreated more and more into the background; he had an important temple in Uruk.

APSU: The Abyss; the primeval waters under the earth; in the later mythology of the Enuma Elish, more particularly the sweet water which mingled with the bitter waters of the sea and with a third watery element, perhaps cloud, from which the first gods were engendered. The waters of Apsu were thought of as held immobile underground by the 'spell' of Ea in a death-like sleep.

ARURU: A goddess of creation, she created Enkidu from clay in the image of Anu.

AYA: The dawn, the bride of the Sun God Shamash.

BELIT-SHERI: Scribe and recorder of the underworld gods:

BULL of HEAVEN: A personification of drought created by Anu for Ishtar.

DILMUN: The Sumerian paradise, perhaps the Persian Gulf; sometimes described as 'the place where the sun rises' and 'the Land of the Living'; the scene of a Sumerian creation myth and the place where the deified Sumerian hero of the flood, Ziusudra, was taken by the gods to live for ever. See p. 39.

DUMUZI: The Sumerian form of Tammuz; a god of vegetation and fertility, and so of the underworld, also called 'the Shepherd and 'lord of the sheepfolds'. As the companion of Ningizzida 'to all eternity' he stands at the gate of heaven. In the Sumerian 'Descent of Inanna' he is the husband of the goddess Inanna, the Sumerian counterpart of Ishtar. According to the Sumerian King-List Gilgamesh was descended from 'Dumuzi a shepherd'.

EA: Sumerian Enki; god of the sweet waters, also of wisdom, a patron of arts and one of the creators of mankind, towards whom he is usually well-disposed. The chief god of Eridu, where he had a temple, he lived 'in the deep'; his ancestry is uncertain, but he was probably a child of Anu.

EANNA: The temple precinct in Uruk sacred to Anu and Ishtar.

EGALMAH: The 'Great Palace' in Uruk, the home of the goddess Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh.

ENDUSUGGA: With Nindukugga, Sumerian gods living in the underworld; parents of Enlil.

ENKIDU: Moulded by Aruru, goddess of creation, out of clay is the image and 'of the essence of Anu', the sky-god, and of Ninurta the war-god. The companion of Gilgamesh, he is wild or natural reran; he was later considered a patron or god of anima b and may have been the hero of another cycle. See P. 30.

ENLIL: God of earth, wind, and the universal air, ultimately spirit; the executive of Anu. In the Sumerian cosmogony he was born of the union of An heaven, and Ki earth. These he separated, and he then carried off earth as his portion. In later times he supplanted Anu as chief god. He was the patron of the city of Nippur. See p. 24.

ENMUL: See Endukugga.

ENNUGI: God of irrigation and inspector of Canals.

ENUMA ELLISH: The Semitic creation epic which describes the creation of the gods, the defeat of the powers of chaos by the young god Marduk, and the creation of man from the blood of Kingu, the defeated champion of chaos. The title is taken from the first words of the epic 'When on high'.

ERESHKIGAL: The Queen of the underworld, a counterpart of Persephone; probably once a sky-goddess. In the Sumerian cosmogony she was carried off to the underworld after the separation of heaven and earth. See p. 27.

ETANA: Legendary king of Kish who reigned after the flood; in the epic which bears his name he was carried to heaven on the back of an eagle.

GILGAMESH: The hero of the Epic; son of the goddess Ninsun and of a priest of Kullab, fifth king of Uruk after the flood, famous as a great builder and as a judge of the dead. A cycle of epic poems has collected round his name.

HANISH: A divine herald of storm and bad weather.

HUMBABA: Also Huwawa; a guardian of the cedar forest who opposes Gilgamesh and is killed by him and Enkidu. A nature divinity, perhaps an Anatolian, Elamite, or Syrian god. See p. 32.

IGIGI: Collective name for the great gods of heaven.

IRKALLA: Another name for Ereshkigal; the Queen of the underworld.

ISHTAR: Sumerian Inanna; the goddess of love and fertility, also goddess of war, called the Queen of Heaven. She is the daughter of Anu and patroness of Uruk, where she has a temple. See p. 25.

ISHULLANA: The: gardener of Anu, once loved by Ishtar whom he rejected; he was turned by her into a mole or frog.

KI: The earth.

KULLAS:Part of Uruk.

LUGULEANDA: Third king of the post-diluvian dynasty of Uruk, a god and shepherd, and hero of a cycle of Sumerian poems; protector of Gilgamesh.

MAGAN: A land to the west of Mesopotamia, sometimes Egypt or Arabia, and sometimes the land of the dead, the underworld:

MAGILUM: Uncertain meaning, perhaps 'the boat of the dead'.

MAMMETUM: Ancestral goddess responsible for destinies.

MAN-SCORPION: Guardian, with a similar female monster, of the mountain into which the sun descends at nightfall. Shown on sealings and ivory inlays as a figure with the upper part of the body human and the lower part ending in a scorpion's mil. According to the Enuma Elish created by the primeval waters in order to fight the gods.

MASHU: The word means 'twins' in the Akkadian language. A mountain with twin peaks into which the sun descends at nightfall and from which it returns at dawn. Sometimes thought of as Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon.

NAMTAR: Fate, destiny in its evil aspect; pictured as a demon of the underworld, also a messenger and chief minister of Ereshkigal; a bringer of disease and pestilence.

NEDU: See Ned.

NERGAL: Underworld god, sometimes the husband of Ereshkigal, he is the subject of an Akkadian poem which describes his translation from heaven to the underworld; plague-god.

NETI: The Sumerian form of Nedu, the chief gatekeeper in the

underworld.

NINDUKUGGA: With *Endukugga*, parental gods living in the underworld:

NINGAL: Wife of the Moon God and mother of the Sun.

NINGIESU: An earlier form of Ninurta; god of irrigation and fertility, he had a field near Lagash where all sorts of plants flourished; he was the child of a she-goat.

NINGIZZIDA: Also Gizzida; a fertility god, addressed as 'Lord of the Tree of Life'; sometimes he is a serpent with human head, but later he was a god of healing and magic; the companion of Tammuz, with whom he stood at the gate of heaven.

NINHURSAG: Sumerian mother-goddess; one of the four principal Sumerian gods with An, Enlil, and Enki; sometimes the wife of Enki, she created all vegetation. The name means 'the Mother'; she is also called 'Nintu', lady of birth, and IG, the earth.

NINKI: The 'mother' of Enlil, probably a form of Ninhursag.

NINLIL: Goddess of heaven, earth, and air and in one aspect of the underworld; wife of Enlil and mother of the Moon; worshipped with Enlil in Nippur.

NINSUM The mother of Gilgamesh, a minor goddess whose house was in Uruk; she was noted for wisdom, and was the wife of Lugulbaada.

NINURTA: The later forth of Ningirsu; a warrior and god of war, a herald, the south wind, and god of wells and irrigation. According to one poem he once dammed up the bitter waters of the underworld and conquered various monsters.

NISABA: Goddess of grain.

NISIR: Probably means 'Mountain of Salvation'; sometimes identified with the Pir Oman Gudrun range south of the lower Zab, or with the biblical Ararat north of Lake Van.

PUZUR-AMURRI: The steersman of Utnapishtim during the flood.

SAMUQAN: God of cattle;

SEVEN SAGES: Wise men who brought civilization to the seven oldest cities of Mesopotamia.

SHAMASH: Sumerian Utu; the sun; for the Sumerians he was principally the judge and law-giver with some fertility attributes. For the Semites he was also a victorious warrior, the god of wisdom, the son of Sin, and 'greater than his father'. He was the husband and brother of Ishtar. He is represented with the saw with which he cuts decisions. In the poems 'Shamash' may mean the god, or simply the sun.

SHULLAT: A divine herald of storm and of bad weather.

SHULPAE: A god who presided over feasts and feasting.

SHURRUPAX: Modem Fara, eighteen miles north-west of Uruk; one of the oldest cities of Mesopotamia, and one of the five named by the Sumerians as having existed before the flood. The home of the hero of the flood story.

SIDURI: The divine wine-maker and brewer; she lives on the shore of the sea (perhaps the Mediterranean), in the garden of the sun. Her name in the Hurrian language means 'young woman' and she may be a form of Ishtar.

SILILI: The mother of the stallion; a divine mare?

SIN: Sumerian Nama, the moon. The chief Sumerian astral deity, the father of Utu-Shamash, the sun, and of Ishtar. Ills parents were Enlil and Ninlil. His chief temple was in Ur.

TAMMUZ: Sumerian Dunuzi; the dying god of vegetation, bewailed by Ishtar, the subject of laments and litanies. In an Akkadian poem Ishtar descends to the underworld in search of her young husband Tammuz; but in the Sumerian poem on which this is based it is Inanna herself who is responsible for sending Dumuzi to the underworld because of his pride and as a hostage for her own safe return.

UBARA-TUTU: A king of Shurrupak and father of Utnapishtim The only king of Kish named in the prediluvian Ring-List, apart from Utnapishtim.

URSHANABI: Old Babylonian Sursunabu; the boatman of Utnapishtim who ferries daily across the waters of death which divide the garden of the sun from the paradise where Utnapishtim lives for ever (the Sumerian Dilmun). By accepting Gilgamesh as a passenger he forfeits this right, and accompanies Gilgamesh back to Uruk instead.

URUK: Biblical Erech, modem Warka, in southern Babylonia between Fara (Shutrupak) and Ur. Shown by excavation to have been an important city from very early times, with great temples to the gods Anu and Ishtar. Traditionally the enemy of the city of Kish, and after the flood the seat of a dynasty of kings, among whom Gilgamesh was the fifth and most famous.

UTNAPISHTIM: Old Babylonian Utanapishtim, Sumerian Ziusudra; in the Sumerian poems he is a wise king and priest of *Shurrupak*; in the Akkadian sources he is a wise citizen of Shurrupak. He is the son of Ubara Tutu, and his name is usually translated, 'He Who Saw Life'. He is the protege of the god Ea, by whose connivance he Survives the flood, with his family and with 'the seed of all living creatures'; afterwards he is taken by the gods to live for ever at 'the mouth of the rivers' and given the epithet 'Faraway'; or according to the Sumerians he lives in Dihnun where the sun rises



Sahelian Landscape, Mali, 1991. Tilly Willis. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

from #SUNDIATA

Recorded by D. T. Niane Translated by G. D. Pickett

destined for greatness. Acting on the instructions of a soothsayer, his father, the king of Mali, had married a hideous, hunchbacked woman named Sogolon. As foretold, the couple had a son. It seemed, however, that the boy was unlikely to become a great leader as had been predicted. The young Sundiata could not even walk. He and his ugly mother became the object of cruel jokes and jealous abuse by the old king's first wife. At the age of seven, Sundiata suddenly reacted to an insult by standing up and tearing a tree from the ground. He instantly became the center of atten-

tion, a boy with great charm and the strength of ten men. Among his constant companions were the princes Fran Kamara and Kamandjan.² Even more important to him was his griot, Balla Fasséké,³ who taught him the history of his people and of the world beyond.

Still fearing persecution from the jealous queen, Sogolon escaped with Sundiata to neighboring Ghana. There the amazing boy grew up. In his absence, Mali was taken over by the king of Sosso, a cruel sorcerer named Soumaoro, whose secret chamber was tapestried with human skins and

A soothsayer is someone who claims to be able to foretell the future.

^{2.} Kamara (kä' mä rä), Kamandjan (kä' män jän)

^{3.} Balla Fasséké (bä' lä fä sā' kā)

^{4.} Soumaoro (soo' mər ō)

adorned with the skulls of his enemies. Soumaoro captured Balla Fasséké and Sundiata's half-sister, Nana Triban.⁵ Enraged by Soumaoro's barbarism, Sundiata raised an army and prepared to restore his country to its rightful people. Although he succeeded in defeating Soumaoro in a great battle, he could not capture or kill the man himself, for the magician had the power to appear and disappear at will. While Sundiata rested in the town of Sibi,⁶ Soumaoro once again raised a powerful army. The two prepared to meet in a final battle.

Sundiata and his mighty army stopped at Sibi for a few days. The road into Mali lay open, but Soumaoro was not yet vanquished. The king of Sosso had mustered a powerful army and his sofas were numbered by the thousand. He had raised contingents⁷ in all the lands over which he held sway and got ready to pounce again on Mali.

With scrupulous care, Sundiata had made his preparations at Sibi. Now he had sufficient sofas to meet Soumaoro in the open field, but it was not a question of having a lot of troops. In order to defeat Soumaoro it was necessary first of all to destroy his magical power. At Sibi, Sundiata decided to consult the soothsayers, of whom the most famous in Mali were there.

On their advice Djata⁸ had to sacrifice a hundred white bulls, a hundred white rams and a hundred white cocks. It was in the middle of this slaughter that it was announced to Sundiata that his sister Nana Triban and Balla Fasséké, having been able to escape from Sosso, had now arrived. Then Sundiata said to Tabon Wana, "If my sister and Balla have been able to escape from Sosso, Soumaoro has lost the battle."

- 5. Nana Triban (nä' nä tri' bän)
- 6. Sibi (si' bē)
- 7. The sofas are soldiers or warriors, and contingents are additional troops.
- 8. Djata (dyä' tə) is a shortened form of Sundiata.

Reading Strategy Identifying Genre Which items in this summary indicate that the legend will include exaggerated elements?

scrupulous (skroo' pyə ləs) adj. thoroughly attentive to even the smallest details; precise

Leaving the site of the sacrifices, Sundiata returned to Sibi and met his sister and his griot.

"Hail, my brother," said Nana Triban.

"Greetings, sister."

"Hail Sundiata," said Balla Fasséké.

"Greetings, my griot."

After numerous salutations, Sundiata asked the fugitives to relate how they had been able to **elude** the vigilance of a king such as Soumaoro. But Triban was weeping for joy. Since the time of their childhood she had shown much sympathy towards the crippled child that Sundiata had been. Never had she shared the hate of her mother, Sassouma Bérété.

"You know, Djata," she said, weeping, "for my part I did not want you to leave the country. It was my mother who did all that. Now Niani is destroyed, its inhabitants scattered, and there are many whom Soumaoro has carried off into captivity in Sosso."

She cried worse than ever. Djata was sympathetic to all this, but he was in a hurry to know something about Sosso. Balla Fasséké understood and said, "Triban, wipe away your tears and tell your story, speak to your brother. You know that he has never thought ill of you, and besides, all that was in his destiny."

Nana Triban wiped her tears away and spoke.

"When you left Mali, my brother sent me by force to Sosso to be the wife of Soumaoro, whom he greatly feared. I wept a great deal at the beginning but when I saw that perhaps all was not lost I resigned myself for the time being. I was nice to Soumaoro and was the chosen one among his numerous wives. I had my chamber in the great tower where he himself lived. I knew how to flatter

9. When Nana resigned herself, she gave in without resistance or complaint.

Literary Element Dialogue What does Nana Triban wish to convey to her half-brother?

elude (i lood') v. to avoid or escape, especially through cleverness or quickness

him and make him jealous. Soon I became his confidante and I pretended to hate you, to share the hate which my mother bore you. It was said that you would come back one day, but I swore to him that you would never have the presumption 10 to claim a kingdom you had never possessed, and that you had left never to see Mali again. However, I was in constant touch with Balla Fasséké, each of us wanting to pierce the mystery of Soumaoro's magic power. One night I took the bull by the horns and said to Soumaoro: 'Tell me, oh you whom kings mention with trembling, tell me Soumaoro, are you a man like others or are you the same as the jinn¹¹ who protects humans? No one can bear the glare of your eyes, your arm has the strength of ten arms. Tell me, king of kings, tell me what jinn protects you so that I can worship him also.' These words filled him with pride and he himself boasted to me of the might of his Tana. That very night he took me into his magic chamber and told me all.

"Then I redoubled my zeal to show myself faithful to his cause, I seemed more overwhelmed than him. It was even he who went to the extent of telling me to take courage, that nothing was yet lost. During all this time, in complicity¹² with Balla Fasséké, I was preparing for the inevitable flight. Nobody watched over me any more in the royal enclosure, of which I knew the smallest twists and turns. And one night when Soumaoro was away, I left that fearsome tower. Balla Fasséké was waiting for me at

- 10. Here, presumption means "excessive boldness".
- 11. In Arab folklore, a jinn, or genie, was an angel-like spirit that had magical powers and could take on other forms.
- 12. People acting in complicity are involved together, as accomplices in a crime or, as here, in secret activities.

Big Idea Acts of Courage What risks does Nana Triban take while staying with Soumaoro? What does the legend imply about how one should act in times of danger?

confidante (kon' fə dant') n. a person who is entrusted with secrets or private affairs

Archer Figure Inland Delta Region, Mali. Ceramic. Height 61.9 cm (243/8) inches. Museum Purchase, 86-12-1, National Museum of African Art

the gate to which I had the key. It was thus, brother, that we left Sosso."

Balla Fasséké took up the story.

"We hastened to you. The news of the victory of Tabon made me realize that the lion had burst his chains. Oh son of Sogolon, I am the word and you are the deed, now your destiny begins."



Sundiata was very happy to recover his sister and his griot. He now had the singer who would **perpetuate** his memory by his words. There would not be any heroes if deeds were condemned to man's forgetfulness, for we ply our trade to excite the admiration of the living, and to evoke the veneration¹³ of those who are to come.

Diata was informed that Soumaoro was advancing along the river and was trying to block his route to Mali. The preparations were complete, but before leaving Sibi, Sundiata arranged a great military review in the camp so that Balla Fasséké, by his words, should strengthen the hearts of his sofas. In the middle of a great circle formed by the sofas, Balla Fasséké extolled¹⁴ the heroes of Mali. To the king of Tabon he said: "You whose iron arm can split ten skulls at a time, you, Tabon Wana, king of the Sinikimbon and the Djallonké, 15 can you show me what you are capable of before the great battle is joined?"

- 13. To evoke veneration is to call up feelings of deep respect.
- 14. Balla highly praised (extolled) the heroes.
- 15. Sinikimbon (si' në kim' bōn), Djallonké (jä lôn' kā)

Literary Element Dialogue What do you think Balla Fasséké means by this remark?

Vocabulary

perpetuate (pər pech' \overline{oo} \overline{a} t') v. to cause to continue to be remembered



Bearded Male Figure. 1300/1400 AD (14th century) Djenne (African) Terra-cotta H: 38.1 cm. The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI.

The griot's words made Fran Kamara leap up. Sword in hand and mounted on his swift steed he came and stood before Sundiata and said, "Maghan Sundiata, I renew my oath to you in the sight of all the Mandingoes gathered together. I pledge myself to conquer or to die by your side. Mali will be free or the smiths¹⁶ of Tabon will be dead."

The tribes of Tabon shouted their approval, brandishing their weapons, and Fran Kamara, stirred by the shouts of the sofas, spurred his charger and charged forward. The warriors opened their ranks and he bore down on a great mahogany tree. With one stroke of his sword he split the giant tree just as one splits

a paw-paw. 17 The flabbergasted army shouted, "Wassa Wassa . . . Ayé . . . "

Then, coming back to Sundiata, his sword held aloft, the king of Tabon said, "Thus on the Niger plain will the smiths of Tabon cleave those of Sosso in twain."18 And the hero came and fell in beside Sundiata.

Turning towards Kamandjan, the king of Sibi and cousin of the king of Tabon, Balla Fasséké said, "Where are you, Kamandjan, where is Fama Djan? Where is the king of the Dalikimbon Kamaras? Kamandjan of Sibi, I salute you. But what will I have to relate of you to future generations?"

Before Balla had finished speaking, the king of Sibi, shouting his war cry, started his fiery charger off at full gallop. The sofas, stupefied, watched the extraordinary horseman head for the mountain that dominates 19 Sibi. . . . Suddenly a tremendous din filled the sky, the earth trembled under the feet of the sofas and a cloud of red dust covered the mountain. Was this the end of the world? . . . But slowly the dust cleared and the sofas saw Kamandjan coming back holding a fragment of a sword. The mountain of Sibi, pierced through and through, disclosed a wide tunnel!

Admiration was at its highest pitch. The army stood speechless and the king of Sibi, without saying a word, came and fell in beside Sundiata.

Balla Fasséké mentioned all the chiefs by name and they all performed great feats; then the army, confident in its leadership, left Sibi. ∾

- 17. Paw-paw is a banana-like fruit.
- 18. To cleave in twain is to split in two.
- 19. The mountain dominates Sibi because it towers over it.

this question?

Literary Element Dialogue Why does Balla Fasséké ask

Reading Strategy Identifying Genre What characteristic of legends is found in this passage?

^{16.} The Mandingoes were various peoples who inhabited the upper and middle Niger River valley. Smiths make or repair metal objects, such as swords, but Fran Kamara is speaking figuratively, referring to his sword-bearing troops.

RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY

Respond

1. What do you think might happen next in this story? Share your predictions with your classmates.

Recall and Interpret

- **2.** (a)What does Sundiata first plan to do in order to defeat Soumaoro? (b)Later, what does he do before leaving Sibi? What do his methods suggest about him as a leader?
- **3.** (a)What astonishing deeds do Fran Kamara and Kamandjan perform at the urging of Balla Fasséké? (b)Why do Balla Fasséké's words cause the warriors to react as they do?

Analyze and Evaluate

- **4.** Why do you think Sundiata has such a strong desire to be remembered by future generations?
- **5.** (a)What knowledge of human nature does Balla Fasséké reveal through his speeches? (b)Does our society today have any methods comparable to Balla Fasséké's for making people famous? Explain.

Connect

6. Big Idea Acts of Courage At one point, the story says, "There would not be any heroes if deeds were condemned to man's forgetfulness." How would you interpret this statement?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Literary Element Dialogue

In this legend, **dialogue** helps to advance the plot and to develop the characters. Dialogue brings characters to life by showing what they are thinking and feeling as they react to other characters.

- 1. (a) Why do you think Nana Triban mentions that she "knew how to flatter [Soumaoro] and make him jealous"? (b) From her words, what impressions do you have of Nana Triban? Explain.
- **2.** What does the king of Tabon means when he says, "Thus on the Niger plain will the smiths of Tabon cleave those of Sosso in twain"? Explain.

Interdisciplinary Activity

The heroes of legends usually embody the qualities their particular culture values. Who are some heroes of recent times about whom you could imagine a legend developing? In a small group, list heroes from the recent past or the present day, including political figures, athletes, or others who exemplify skill, strength, or courage. For each name on your list, write two or three sentences explaining why audiences might enjoy hearing stories about that person.

Web Activities For eFlashcards, Selection Quick Checks, and other Web activities, go to www.glencoe.com.

READING AND VOCABULARY

Reading Strategy Identifying Genre

Legends are part of folklore's oral tradition—the stories and histories that storytellers have retold for generations. Usually, legends celebrate the heroic qualities of a national or cultural hero.

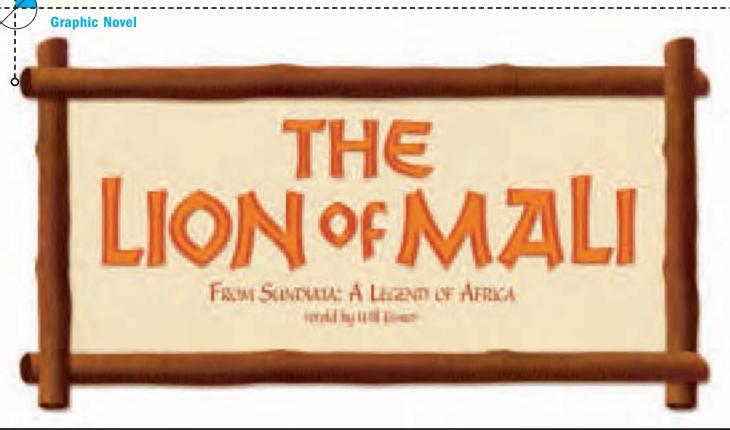
- **1.** Identify three exaggerated or fantastic details in this legend. Which detail did you consider most entertaining or inspiring? Explain.
- **2.** From this legend, what traits or qualities would you say the Mandingo people valued in a person?

Vocabulary Practice

Practice with Word Parts Use your knowledge of word parts to answer these questions.

- **1.** Which of the following words contains a prefix that means "with"?
 - **a.** elude
- c. confidante
- **b.** captivity
- **2.** Which of the following words contains a suffix often found in verbs?
 - **a.** inhabitant
- c. perpetuate
- **b.** glee

VISUAL PERSPECTIVES on Sundiata



Building Background

The tale of Sundiata is based on the real person Sundiata, a monarch who established the Sudanese empire of Mali. According to oral tradition, he had eleven brothers, who were heirs to the kingdom of Kangaba in Mali. Sumanguru, ruler of the adjacent land of Kaniaga, ravaged Kanagaba, killing all of Sundiata's brothers. Sundiata, who was already ill and weak, was spared.

Will Eisner, an acclaimed graphic novel artist most famous for the character the Spirit, depicts the beginning of this tale in this graphic novel version of "The Lion of Mali." Eisner grew up in the tenements of New York City, where his first work was published in his Bronx high school's newspaper. His budding career in comics art was interrupted by service in the U.S. army during World War II; however, the army did make good use of his talents—he created illustrations for posters and comic strips to entertain the troops while serving. Eisner went on to enjoy a sixty-year career in comics, winning seven awards from the National Cartoonist Society, including the prestigious Reuben award in 1988. So influential was his art that an award even has been created in his honor: the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards.

Set a Purpose for Reading

Read to discover similarities and differences between the graphic-novel and text versions of the tale of Sundiata.

Reading Strategy

Comparing and Contrasting Versions of a Story

There are many different versions of the tale of Sundiata. When you compare and contrast versions, you identify similarities and differences between them. This graphic-novel excerpt and the prose excerpt by Niane cover different portions of Sundiata's story, but there are still many points of comparison between them. As you read, think about how plot, setting, and characters are conveyed in each excerpt. How is reading each format similar and different? Take notes to help you keep track of the similarities and differences.

	and Differences between ic Novel and Prose
Similarities	Differences







RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY

Respond

1. Does the graphic-novel version of the tale of Sundiata enhance your understanding of the text version? Why or why not?

Recall and Interpret

- **2.** (a) What are two examples of simile in this graphic novel? (b) How does Eisner illustrate the similes?
- **3.** (a) How do the men of Mali plan to outsmart Sumanguru's army? (b) What happens when they execute their plan? Explain.

Analyze and Evaluate

- **4.** Do you think Eisner's illustrations tell the tale of "The Lion of Mali" in an effective way? Explain.
- **5.** What comment about Sumanuguru's powers is Eisner making in the last three panels of the selection?

Connect

6. What characteristics of legends are demonstrated in the graphic-novel retelling of the tale of Sundiata?

OBJECTIVES

- Compare and contrast literary works.
- Evaluate the use of different media to tell a story.
- Read to enrich your understanding of different cultures.