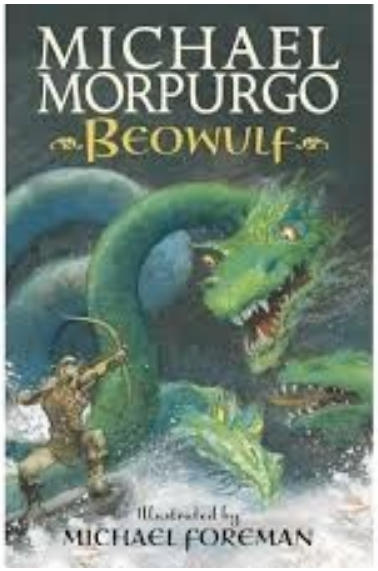
Beowulf Knowledge Organiser (Michael Morpurgo)



Blurb:

Hear and listen well, and I will tell you a tale that has been told for a thousand years and more. It may be an old story, yet it troubles and terrifies us now as much as it ever did, for we still fear the evil that stalks out there in the darkness and beyond.

Key Information:

Plot: In fifth-century Denmark, a murderous monster stalks the night, and only the great prince of the Geats has the strength and courage to defeat him. Beowulf's terrifying quest to destroy Grendel, the foul fiend, a hideous sea-hag and a monstrous fire-dragon is the oldest surviving epic in British literature.

Setting: Fifth-century Denmark

Themes: Legends, war, heroes, fulfilling a destiny, love, loyalty and right from wrong

Key Characters:

Beowulf	The hero—Prince of the Geats
Grendel	the beast who wanders among the great Thanes of Denmark
Sea-Hag	Grendel's mum (the sea-witch)
King Hrothgar	King of the Danes
The Death-Dragon	The third battle is against this dragon

Author Voice:

"I spend months, sometimes years, doing what I call dreamtime, weaving it together inside my head. But when I actually feel that the egg of my story is ready to hatch, then I can write it in three months. Then I know the landscape and the people well and from the inside, but I don't necessarily know where the story is going to take us."

Sir Michael Andrew Morpurgo, OBE, FRSL is the author of many books for children, five of which have been made into films.

Key Vocabulary:

adorned	make more beautiful or attractive
ancestors	a person, typically one more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended
condemn	sentence (someone) to a particular punishment, especially death
enthralled	capture the fascinated attention of
hideous	Extremely ugly or unpleasant
lamented	conventional way of describing someone who has died or something that has ceased to exist
grapple	engage in a close fight or struggle without weapons; wrestle
prospered	flourish physically; grow strong and healthy
teeming	be full of or swarming with

Key Quotes:

- "kind, to gaze in triumph at his gory head. So, remembering all this, let us all rejoice and feast together tonight. And in the morning I shall give you all your promised treasure."
- "You and yours will be condemned to wander the world as beasts, homeless and friendless for ever."

Discussion Points:

- What motivated Beowulf?
- Should we call Beowulf a king or hero?
- Why has this poem become part of our heritage?