



BEOWULF

LITERATURE OF
THE ANGLI-SAXONS

EPIC: a long narrative poem that celebrates the deeds of a legendary heroic figure
Ex. The Odyssey, Gilgamesh, The Aeneid

FOLK EPIC: epic that has been recited or sung as entertainment and passed down orally from one generation to the next; written down long after they were first composed; author is unknown

Elements of an Epic:

- **EPIC HERO:** main character of an epic
 - * Battles evil & fights for the good of society; represents the values of a culture
 - * Undertakes a quest (long, dangerous journey or mission to prove heroism)
- Mention of supernatural beings
- Divine intervention
- Describes "larger than life" events & deeds

Epic Conventions:

- Use of descriptive, elevated language
- Serious tone used throughout
- Begins *in medias res*: in the middle of things
- Use of **kennings**

KENNING: two-word metaphorical name

Ex. sea road=ocean

Ex. shepard of evil=Grendel

"A pagan story told by a Christian poet"

- At the time the Beowulf was being composed, England was changing from a pagan (mythology) to a Christian culture
- Reflects the ideas of both traditions

Classic tale of good triumphing over evil