

Beowulf

Reading Guide

First Assignment: Heaney—pp3-45; lines: 1-661

After reading the description of Shield's funeral and of the achievements of Hrothgar, what seem to be the characteristics of a good leader in this society?

Why do you think this poem begins with a funeral? Notice any ominous hints?

*Sutton Hoo is the site of ship burial from 6th or 7th centuries. It's near Woodbridge in Suffolk England and was first excavated by Basil Brown, self-taught archaeologist. Check out 2021 Netflix film **The Dig** with Ralph Fiennes and Carey Mulligan.*

What is the explanation for why evil enters the world? Why the connection of Grendel and his ilk with Cain?

After being challenged by the coast watcher, being escorted by Wulfgarto meet Hrothgar, Beowulf presents his credentials as champion. Certain details in this section give the reader a hint of everyday caution in the lives of these people. Note one or two.

Meanwhile, Hrothgar gratefully accepts Beowulf's help and gives us an even more salient reason for Beowulf's arrival. What is it? What is the function of Unferth in this section?

What is the role of Hrothgar's queen at the feast before Beowulf takes on Grendel?