



Beowulf

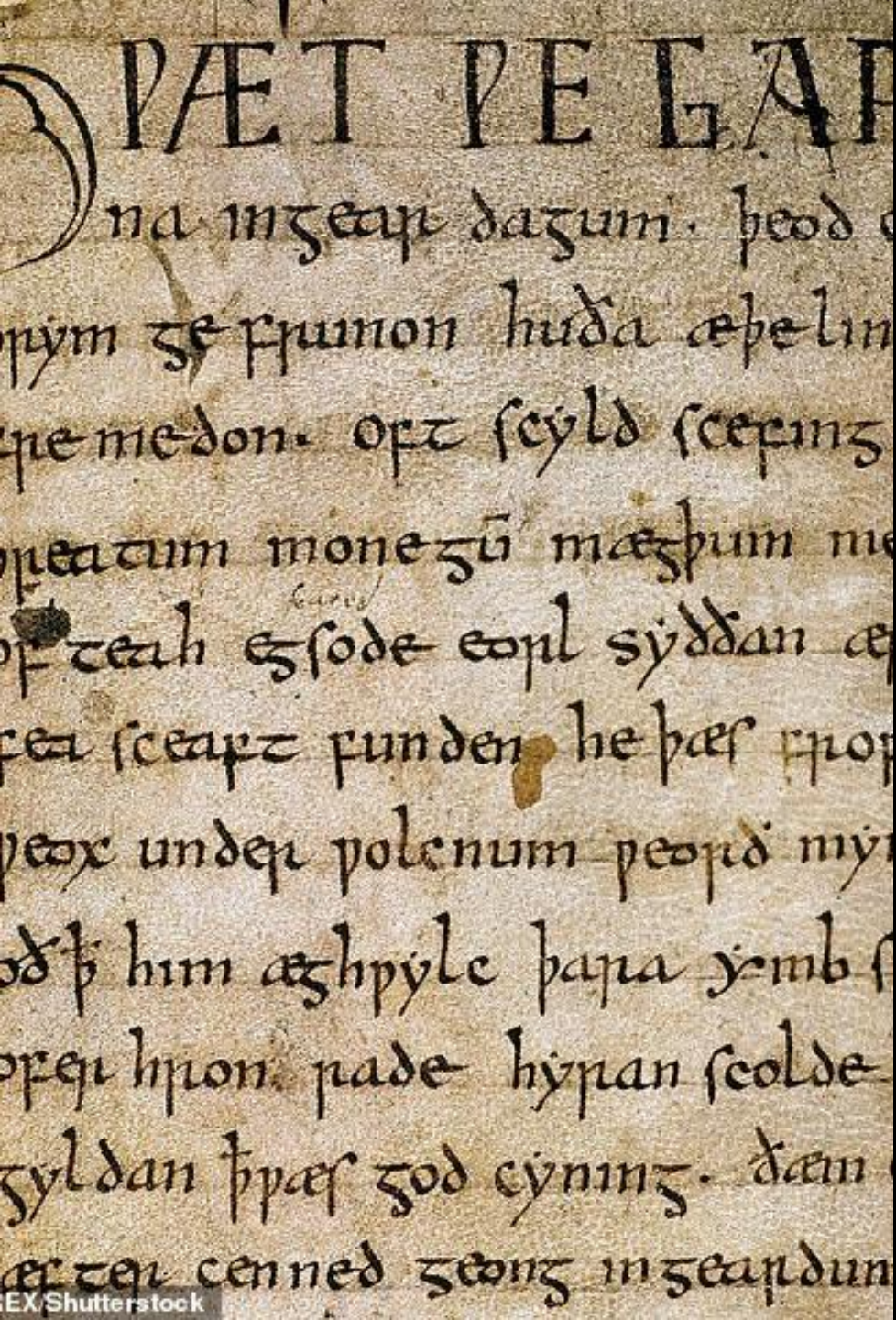
Early Medieval Times

Lesson 3



Questions

- Did you manage to find all the answers to the questions on Bede, page 5?



Why Beowulf?

- Very famous poem, written in **Old English**
- Author/poet is unknown
- Possibly written in 6th century AD

- About lords and retainers (=vassals), kings and their servants, warriors
- **Theme:** courage and loyalty until death

How?

- Anglo-Saxon literature was part of an **oral tradition**. Poems, songs, and stories were passed from one generation to another orally.
- **Scop** (Old English term): reciter of poetry, attached to court on a relatively permanent basis
- In time of peace
- Impressive achievement if one brought Beowulf to the table:
- Over 3000 lines



Now... How did that sound?

- https://youtu.be/CH-_GwoO4xl



Alliteration and Caesura

- Instead of rhymes, Anglo-Saxon oral poets used alliteration along with carefully placed pauses called caesurae to add music and rhythm to their poems.
- Lines of Anglo-Saxon verse often are divided into two halves separated by **a rhythmic pause**, or caesura.
- Some lines have three alliterative words—two words in the first half before the caesura and one word in the second half.
- Other lines have only two alliterative words—one in each half.

Examples

- "**G**reedy and **g**rim, he **g**rabbed thirty men" (the "gr" sound is repeated before and after the caesura)
- "Over the **w**aves, with the **w**ind behind her" (the "w" sound)
- "A **f**oundling to start with, he would **f**lourish later on / As his powers **w**axed and his **w**orth was proved." (the "f" sound and "w" sound)

Alliteration

- Words start with the same sound
- Are used frequently in a sentence
- The sound is usually a consonant



Kenning

- A kenning is a **metaphorical phrase or compound word** used to name a person, place, thing, or event indirectly.
- Kennings such as *whale's way* and *battle-dew* fill Anglo-Saxon poetry.
- Combining existing words from the relatively small Anglo-Saxon vocabulary helped poets to create alliteration.
- Kennings were memorable, ready-made phrases that bards could reuse and pass on to others.

The Use of Alliteration and Kennings

- Anglo-Saxon poets and storytellers used **alliteration and kennings** because these devices:
 - aided memory
 - created sound effects
 - pleased the audience

Film trailer 2007



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrE_Lc3c0LY

Bibliography

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