

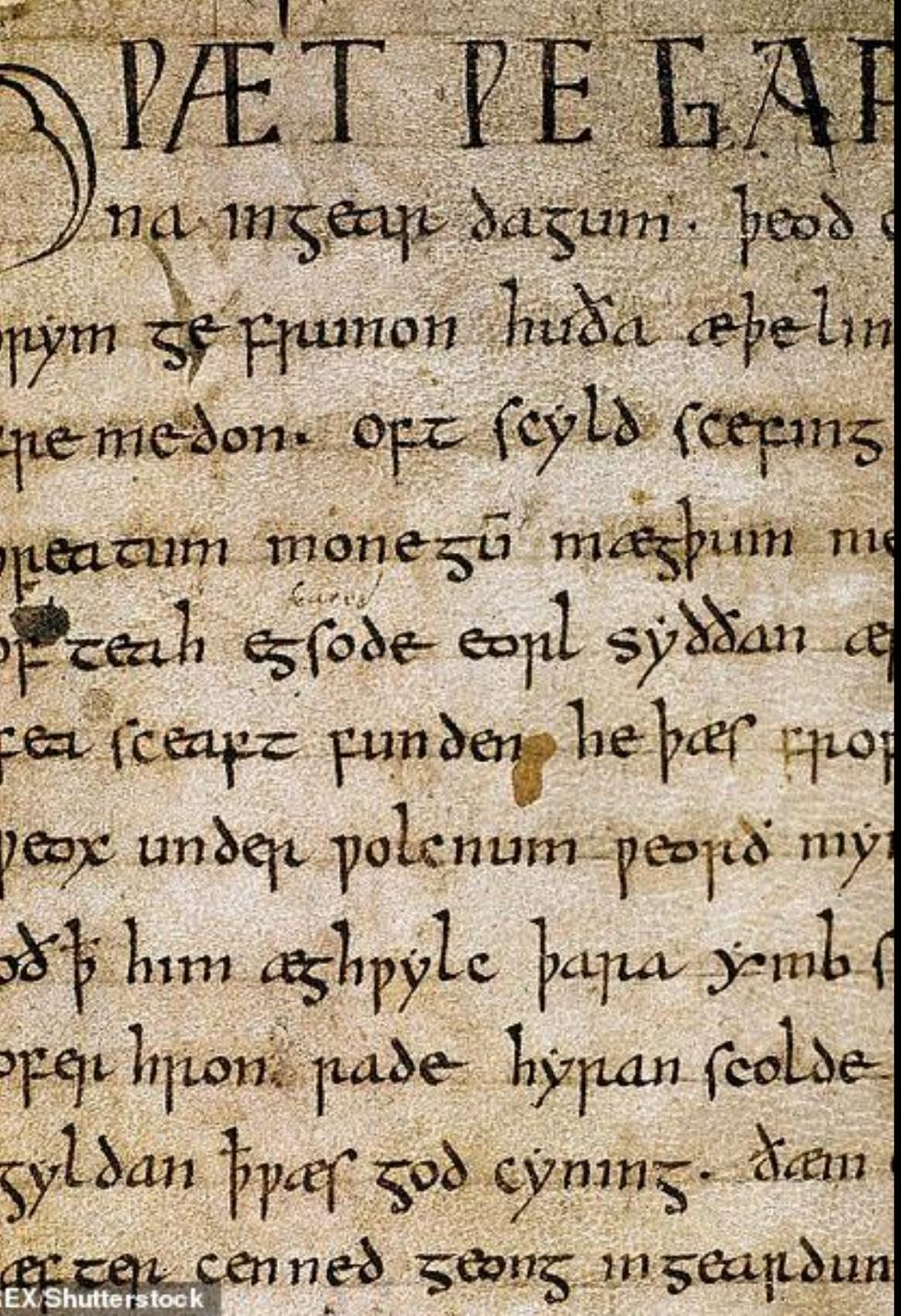


Beowulf

Early Medieval Times

Lesson 3





Why Beowulf?

- Very famous poem, written in **Old English**
- Author/poet is unknown
- Possibly written in 8th century AD

- About lords and retainers, kings and their servants, warriors
- Loyalty until death

How?

- **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
- Intricate style (see page 8, halfway)



Alliteration and Caesura

- Instead of rhymes, Anglo-Saxon oral poets used alliteration along with carefully placed pauses called caesura 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.

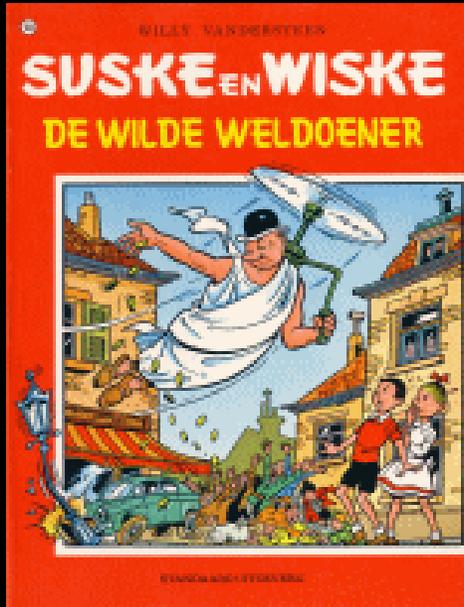
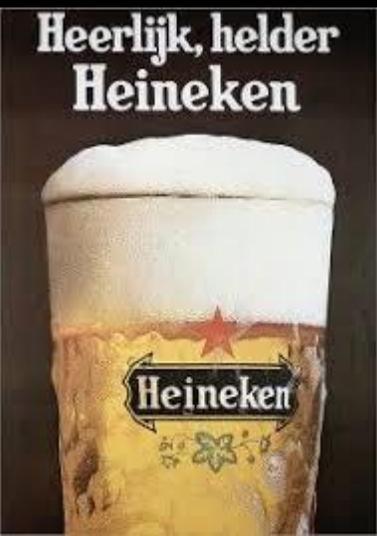
Example

Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors (caesura after Herot)

Would do in that hall when their drinking was done.”

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-road* 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 literature was part of an oral tradition. Poems, songs, and stories were passed from one generation to another orally.
- Anglo-Saxon poets and storytellers used **alliteration and kennings** because these devices:
 - aided memory
 - created sound effects
 - pleased the audience

Now... How did that sound?

- <https://vimeo.com/40671018> – watch start / watch 1.05.25



Exercise

Work in a group of 3 or 4

Create your own poem, use an Alliteration!

Write at least 6 lines

Prepare to read them out loud in class.

Film trailer 2007



Bibliography

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