

Episodes



P. S. Langeslag

Major Episodes

1. Scyld Scefing (1–52)
2. Unferth and Breca (499–603)
3. Sigemund; Heremōd (871–915)
4. Finnsburg (1066–1159)
5. Hygelac's Frisian expedition (1197–1214)
6. Heremōd (1709–1722)
7. Mōdþrýðo (1931–1962)
8. The Ingeld and Heathobards episode (2024–2069)
9. The Lament of the Last Survivor (2247–2266)
10. Beowulf's return from Frisia; the succession; the second Swedish war (2354–2396)
11. Hrēpel; the first Swedish war; Dæghrefn (2426–2509)
12. Weohstan's killing of Eanmund in the second Swedish war (2602–2625)
13. Hygelac's death; the battle at Ravenswood in the first Swedish war (2910–3007)

Minor Episodes

1. The fate of Heorot/the feud between Hrothgar and Ingeld (82–85)
2. Creation (90–98)
3. Cain's kin 1 (106–114)
4. Beowulf's fight against the giants (419–424)
5. Ecgþeow's killing of Heaðolāf and subsequent exile (459–472)
6. Cain's kin 2 (1261–1266)
7. Beowulf's inglorious youth (2183–2189)

What Is the Poem About?

[J]ust by line-count, the poet seems to have taken more trouble over the historical background (seventy percent plus) than he did over the fantastic foreground (thirty percent minus). (Shippey 15)

What Is the Poem About?

[J]ust by line-count, the poet seems to have taken more trouble over the historical background (seventy percent plus) than he did over the fantastic foreground (thirty percent minus). (Shippey 15)

(Fact check: the digressions discussed in Bonjour come to 730 lines, or 23 percent of the poem. Shippey's 30/70 division contrasts the actual fights with everything else (and categorizes the Grendel material before the hall-fight with the latter but the speeching after Grendel's mother's attack with the former), but in fact a lot of space is taken up by speeches, troop movements, and landscape descriptions, so “historical background” vs “fantastic[al] foreground” is a false dichotomy.)

Bibliography I

- Bjork, Robert E. "Digressions and Episodes." In *A "Beowulf" Handbook*, edited by Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, 193–212. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997.
- Bonjour, Adrien. *The Digressions in "Beowulf"*. Medium Ævum Monographs 5. Oxford: Blackwell, 1950.
- Ramey, Peter. "Beowulf as Frame Narrative: A Reassessment of the 'Digressions'." *Neophilologus* 109, no. 4 (2025): 519–37.
- Shippey, Tom. *"Beowulf" and the North Before the Vikings*. Past Imperfect. Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2022.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *Finn and Hengest: The Fragment and the Episode*. Edited by Alan Bliss. London: Allen; Unwin, 1982.
- Wentersdorf, Karl P. "Beowulf's Adventure with Breca." *Studies in Philology* 72, no. 2 (April 1975): 140–66.

Bibliography II

Williams, R. A. *The Finn Episode in "Beowulf": An Essay in Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924.