Beowulf marched with the warriors back to Heorot. The men cheered and joked as dawn blazed across the sky. The great hall looked more beautiful than ever. Its golden roof sparkled in the sun.

Chapter 8
King Beowulf

Beowulf returned to the land of the Geats, where he ruled for fifty years. He led warriors in battles against fierce beasts and savage monsters. All of his enemies feared him – Beowulf, the killer of Grendel.
Beowulf grew old and tired of fighting. He dreamed of peace. But there was one last monster left to fight...

Across Beowulf's kingdom, villagers lived in fear of a terrible dragon. At night, the beast swooped over their roofs. Fire roared from its mouth. Houses burned. People ran screaming in the streets.
Beowulf rode to a village near the dragon’s lair, where he gathered his warriors in a huge stone hall.

“What can we do?” asked one.

“Fight back!” replied another.

Beowulf sat in silence, gazing around the hall. It reminded him of Heorot, all those years ago. Finally he rose, and the Geats fell silent.

“I will fight this dragon alone,” Beowulf declared.

The Geats looked confused. Only Beowulf’s cousin Wiglaf dared speak. “Beowulf,” he urged, “it is fifty years since you fought Grendel. You’re an old man now.”

“I am old,” Beowulf replied, “and I am tired too. But I have one more fight left in me.”

None of the Geats argued. But they were certain their leader would die.
Chapter 9
The last monster

The sun was setting as the warriors approached the dragon’s mountain. A huge roar rumbled down the dark slope. The beast had woken.

Wiglaf helped Beowulf into his chainmail. It was the same suit the king had worn to fight Grendel, but now it hung loose around Beowulf's chest.

"Cousin," Wiglaf pleaded to Beowulf, "let me go with you." Beowulf just stared up the hillside. "I must go alone," he said.
Beowulf clambered up the jagged rock face. The dragon emerged. Its eyes burned like coals. Its tail thrashed against the rocks. Beowulf knew this was the fiercest monster he’d ever faced.
The dragon attacked, spitting fire. Flames swirled around Beowulf’s shield.
“I wasn’t scared when I fought Grendel,” Beowulf cried. “I wasn’t scared when I killed his mother. And I am not scared of you.”

Just then, Beowulf heard a shout. It was Wiglaf, racing to help him. For a moment, Beowulf’s back was turned...
The dragon struck. Its vicious teeth sank into Beowulf’s neck.

He lunged at the beast. The dragon twisted and turned in the air. Beowulf dived across the rocks, slashing the monster with his sword.
Beowulf slumped to his knees, blood gushing from his wound. Just as the dragon pounced again, Beowulf lashed out, plunging his sword into the beast’s side. The dragon roared in pain. It writhed and wailed, and then finally fell dead on the rocks.

Wiglaf charged up the hill, catching Beowulf as he collapsed.

“Master,” Wiglaf cried, pulling off Beowulf’s helmet, “it’s dead! You have killed the last monster.” For a second, Wiglaf thought he saw Beowulf smile. Then the King of the Geats closed his eyes and died.
The next morning, the Geats carried Beowulf’s body to the highest cliff in his kingdom. Waves lashed the rocks below, and seagulls swooped in the sky.

The warriors placed the king’s body to be burned on top of a huge pile of wood. Some of the men cried, others told stories about Beowulf. They knew his name would live forever.

Wiglaf lit the fire and they all said goodbye to their king. The smoke filled the sky for miles, but the sun shone through, bathing the warriors in light.
Internet links

The story of Beowulf was first written over a thousand years ago in an early form of English, called Old English. You can find out more about the story and its origins by going to the Usborne Quicklinks Website at www.usborne-quicklinks.com and typing in the keywords “YR Beowulf”.

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Fearsome monsters stalk the moors of ancient Denmark, murdering anyone they catch. But then a warrior comes from overseas. His name is Beowulf. He kills monsters...

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