



Beowulf

Author unknown, Translated by Francis Barton Gummere (1855 - 1919)

Read by:	Tad E.	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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Beowulf is the title of the oldest surviving epic poem of Old English and the first to be written in the English vernacular. Beowulf, the title character, is a hero of the Geats in Scandinavia who travels to Denmark to help vanquish a monster from the swamplands known as Grendel who has been attacking the mead hall of Hrogar, king of the Danes. He slays the demon and is then attacked by Grendel's mother, who he also slays. He returns to Geatland a hero and later becomes king. After a prosperous reign of fifty years, he is attacked by a dragon but is mortally wounded in the contest. The poem ends with his cremation on a funeral pyre at sea and the interment of his ashes in a burial mound in Geatland.

The author of *Beowulf* is unknown. Experts believe the work was composed sometime between the 8th and 11th centuries. The manuscript was largely ignored for centuries and was damaged in a fire in London in 1731. It was first published in entirety in 1815 in a Latin translation by Grímar Jónsson Thorkelin, a Scandinavian scholar, that was funded by Johan Bülow. Bülow later supported a Danish translation in 1820 by N.F.S. Grundtvig entitled *Bjovulfs Drape*, marking the first translation and publication in a modern language. It has since become a classic, most recently popularized in a new translation by the Irish Nobel prize winning poet Seamus Heaney.

Francis Barton Gummere (1855 - 1919) was Professor of English in Pennsylvania. He was a scholar of poetry and a translator of classical works.