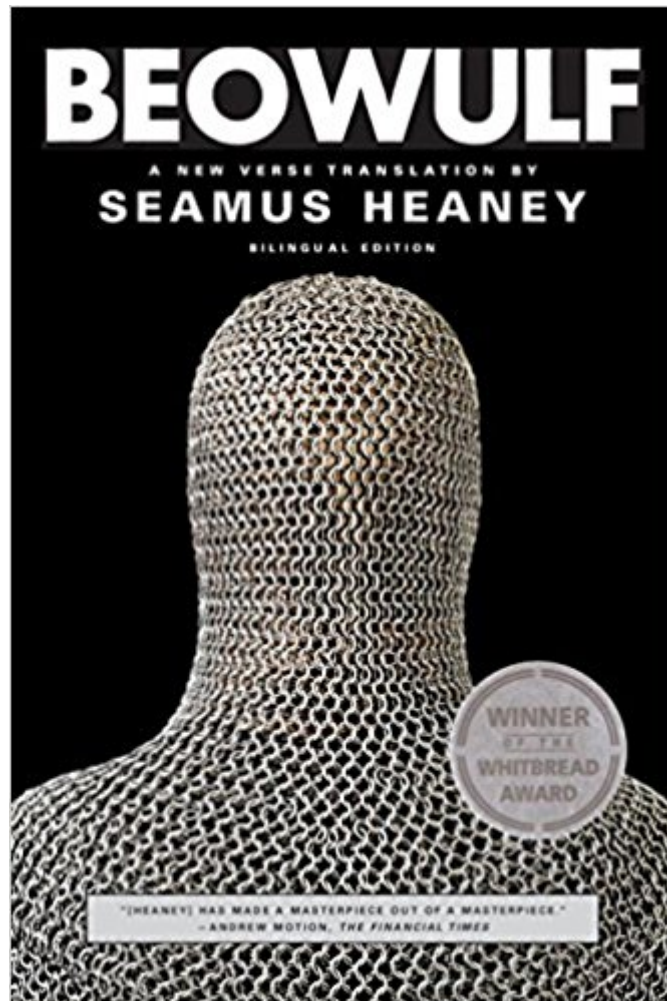


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Beowulf: A New Verse Translation (Bilingual Edition)



Synopsis

New York Times bestseller and winner of the Whitbread Award. Composed toward the end of the first millennium, Beowulf is the elegiac narrative of the adventures of Beowulf, a Scandinavian hero who saves the Danes from the seemingly invincible monster Grendel and, later, from Grendel's mother. He then returns to his own country and dies in old age in a vivid fight against a dragon. The poem is about encountering the monstrous, defeating it, and then having to live on in the exhausted aftermath. In the contours of this story, at once remote and uncannily familiar at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney finds a resonance that summons power to the poetry from deep beneath its surface. Drawn to what he has called the "four-squareness of the utterance" in Beowulf and its immense emotional credibility, Heaney gives these epic qualities new and convincing reality for the contemporary reader.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm posting this review as a warning to buyers that although is presently listing the audio CD as UNABRIDGED, it's actually marked "Unabridged Selections" by the publisher in what is obviously an exercise in marketing double talk. The audio CD version omits many lines and even some sizable chunks of the original work. The only word for that is "Abridged" and the publishers should be ashamed of themselves for calling it anything other than "Abridged". should update the listing accordingly. I'm giving the edition a 1 star rating simply to call attention to the deceitful packaging. I have no other complaint aside from that.

I have the physical book edition of this wonderful work, and wanted to have it also with me on Kindle. However, without any indication at all, the Kindle edition is abridged. It is only the modern English translation and does NOT include the Anglo-Saxon text. It's selling you half a book on Kindle, not the entire book. This is very deceptive and one wonders how many other Kindle books have been butchered by .

I enjoyed listening to the CD audio version more than reading the translation. But BEWARE. The CD is advertised as UNABRIDGED. When you read the cover carefully, it says, UNABRIDGED SELECTIONS. There are passages omitted. That was the major disappointment, and one has to assume a deliberate attempt to mislead on the part of the publisher. Otherwise, why not call it what it is, ABRIDGED?

I am no scholar of Beowulf, but Seamus Heaney's version is the fourth or fifth version I've read, and in comparison to those it is by far the most superior. Any prose translations should be discredited by that account alone, but Seamus Heaney doesn't just make it poetic, as it should be, he uses his personal experiences, as indicated in the Introduction, when choosing the best word for the meter. When he uses these Irish local colloquialisms, it's not out of sheer desperation but of sheer love for the music of poetry, and when no other words sounds right, he chooses these words to emphasize the poetry and the plot. I have read other reviewers at this site discrediting Seamus Heaney due to this very reason, but in my view if a translator doesn't add passion to his translation then it is a waste of time to translate at all. It may not be exactly true to the text, but true enough. One thing I love most about his translation is the fact that he stays true to the meter. With four alliterations per line, he provides the feel of the original text upon the reading. Another thing I loved about this translation is the very first line. He makes (a true) comment that while previous versions begin the entire text with a "Lo!" or a "Hark!" or a "Behold!", Seamus Heaney starts off with the simple yet modern "So." -- with a period -- not even an overused and ecstatic exclamation mark. Finally, for those who don't dabble in the egoism of stuffy "scholarly" expectations will also enjoy glancing at the original text that displays directly next to the translation. Here you get the feel of Seamus Heaney's decision to translate the way he did. You won't understand the original text, yet with the translation sitting next to it, you will.

This is the new verse translation of this first millennium text, which was written sometime between

the seventh and tenth centuries by an unknown English author. Translated by Seamus Heaney, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995, and read by him on this audio cd, he breathes new life into this mythic epic. This is the story of the heroic Beowulf, and his timeless story is stark in its simplicity, made sonorous by the poetic reading given by Seamus Heaney. It is, in its simple narrative, a story that was meant to be read aloud. After all, between the seventh and the tenth centuries, few people could read. Seamus Heaney gives a remarkable reading, his soft brogue and cadence capturing the dark, epic mood of the piece. His verse translation gives the story an accessibility that should make it a much more enjoyable experience for many who may have shied away from this early English work. What is there not to like about this story? It is about a hero who vanquishes monsters and lives to fight another day in the quintessential battle between good and evil. Its message, undoubtedly relevant when written, is still relevant today. Those who are new to this work should consider purchasing the audio cd and listening to Seamus Heaney's rendition of this ancient work.

My career is as far removed from classical literature as you can get, but boy do I love epic poems. I've read multiple versions of Beowulf (including 2 comic adaptations), and Heaney's version is by far the most accessible. The man has a true command of English, and he manages to present the poem in more straightforward language without a feeling of talking down to the reader. That said, if you want a real treat, check out the audio version of Beowulf. Heaney's translation is good enough on page, but to hear him read it is marvelous. It makes you feel like you're sitting around a campfire, listening to an elder spin some wild yarn. Be warned, however: even though this page says "UNABRIDGED", the audio versions are really unabridged SELECTIONS. You don't get the full text of the poem, but you get the necessary parts - enough to make it enjoyable.

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