Beowulf 1.1-3

Hwaet we Gar-Dena in gear-dagum
þeod-cyninga þrym gefrunon,
hu ða aethelingas ellen fremedon.

So. The Spear-Danes in years gone by
and the kings who ruled them had courage and
greatness.
We have heard of those princes' heroic
campaigns.

Beowulf 18-24

Shield had fathered a famous son:
Beow's name was known through the north. And
a young prince must be prudent like that, giving
freely while his father lives
so that afterwards in age when fighting starts
steadfast companions will stand by him
and hold the line. Behavior that's admired
is the path to power among people everywhere.

Shield was still thriving when his time came and
he crossed over into the Lord's keeping. His
warrior band did what he bade them
when he laid down the law among the Danes:
They shoultered him out to the sea's flood,
the chief they revered who had long ruled them. A
ring-whorled prow rode in the harbor,
icce-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.
They stretched their beloved lord in his
boat... ...and launched him alone out over the
waves. And they set a gold standard up
high above his head and let him drift
to wind and tide, bewailing him
and mourning their loss. No man can tell,
no wise man in hall or weathered veteran knows
for certain who salvaged that load.

Men ne cunnon
secgan to sode hwa þaet hlaeste onfeng.
And soon it stood there finished and ready, in full view, the hall of halls. Heorot was the name he had settled on it, whose utterance was law. Nor did he renege, but doled out rings and torques at the table. The hall towered, its gables wide and high and awaiting a barbarous burning. That doom abided, but in time it would come: the killer instinct unleashed among in-laws, the blood-lust rampant.

The Venerable Bede (627-735 CE), *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

It seems to me that the life of man on earth is like the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting hall where you are sitting at dinner on a winter’s day with your captains and counselors. In the midst there is a comforting fire to warm the hall. Outside, the storms of winter rain and snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one window of the hall and out through another. While he is inside, the bird is safe from the winter storms, but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. So man appears on earth for a little while – but of what went before this life, or what follows, we know nothing.
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finished and ready, in full view,
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and torques at the table. The hall towered,
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but in time it would come: the killer instinct
unleashed among in-laws, the blood-lust rampant.

Then a powerful demon, a prowler through the dark,
nursed a hard grievance. It harrowed him
to hear the din of the loud banquet
every day in the hall, the harp being struck
and the clear song of a skilled poet
telling with mastery of man's beginnings,
how the Almighty had made the earth
a gleaming plain girdled with waters;
in His splendor He set the sun and the moon
to be earth's lamplight, lanterns for men,
and filled the broad lap of the world
with branches and leaves; and quickened life
in every other thing that moved.

So times were pleasant for the people there
until finally one, a fiend out of hell,
began to work his evil in the world.
Grendel was the name of this grim demon haunting
the marshes, marauding around the heath and the
desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time
in misery among the banished monsters,
Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed
and condemned as outcasts. For the killing of Abel
the Eternal Lord had exacted a price:
Cain got no good from committing that murder
because the Almighty made him anathema,
and out of the curse of his exile there sprang
ogres and elves and evil phantoms
and the giants too who strove with God
time and again until He gave them their reward.

Sometimes at pagan shrines they vowed
offerings to idols, swore oaths
that the killer of souls might come to their aid
and save the people. That was their way,
their heathenish hope; deep in their hearts they remembered hell. The Almighty Judge of good deeds and bad, the Lord God, Head of the Heavens and High King of the World, was unknown to them. Oh, cursed is he who in time of trouble has to thrust his soul in the fire's embrace, forfeiting help; he has nowhere to turn. But blessed is he who after death can approach the Lord and find friendship in the Father's embrace.