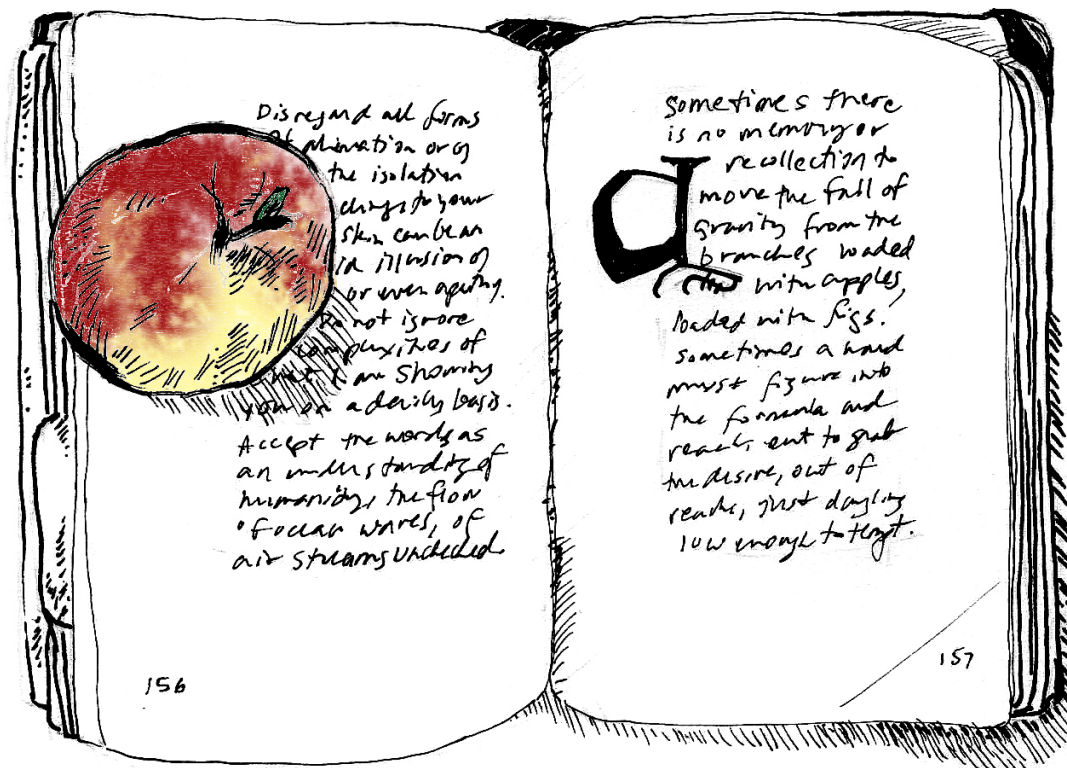


# Armory within the *Beowulf* Text

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# *Six Swords*

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**Armory and hereditary weapons play an obvious role in the epic.**

The story of *Beowulf* is set in a warrior-society after-all.

- A number of scenes mention helmets and shields and swords in a general sense.
- Only two hereditary swords are shown with names within the text however: Hrunting and Nailing; both of these play important roles within the plot.
- Hrunting has a traceable, mappable role in the story.
- Beowulf's own sword, Nailing, however has a less concise history.

There are numerous discussions and speculations on where Beowulf obtained this particular sword.

# *Six Swords*

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## **Sword One:**

Healfdane presents a nameless sword to Beowulf on the death of Grendel (p 59; l 1022).

## **Sword Two:**

Beowulf mentions his own (unnamed) inherited sword (p 70; ll1487-1490). It lacks an involved history and decorative epithets. It is never discussed again within the text.

## **Sword Three:**

Urfeth presents the sword, Hrunting, to Beowulf before he fights Grendel's mother in the mere (p. 69; 1454-1463). Since Urfeth will not go, his sword will serve as proxy. Unfortunately, the blade fails the hero (p 70-71; ll 1518-1527).

# *Six Swords*

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## **Sword Four:**

Beowulf finds a sword in the mere; it melts after the killing of Grendel's mother. Only a hilt remains (71, 72, 74; ll 1556-1568, 1604-1615, 1676-1697).

One critical argument states that Grendel's mother cannot be killed initially because Urfeth's sword is made by humans; the sword Beowulf ultimately uses was made by Giants.

## **Sword Five:**

The Geat king Hygelac presents Beowulf with yet another hereditary sword; this one was Hrethel's, his father's, weapon. It is elaborate with gold and laid in the hero's lap in a ceremony (p 85; ll 2189-2198).

# *Six Swords*

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## **Sword Six:**

Nailing is mentioned by name only in the middle of the fight with the dragon. It is broken in the heat of battle (p 96; l 2677).

What is relevant here, the sword fails, not because of superior might in the dragon, but because Beowulf's strength, even as an older man, forces the blade too severely into the dragon's flesh.

Keep in mind, Beowulf is comparable to other notable heroes of great strength who were inspired by a divine source:

Greek Herakles /Roman Hercules

Old Testament Samson

Germanic Siegfried.