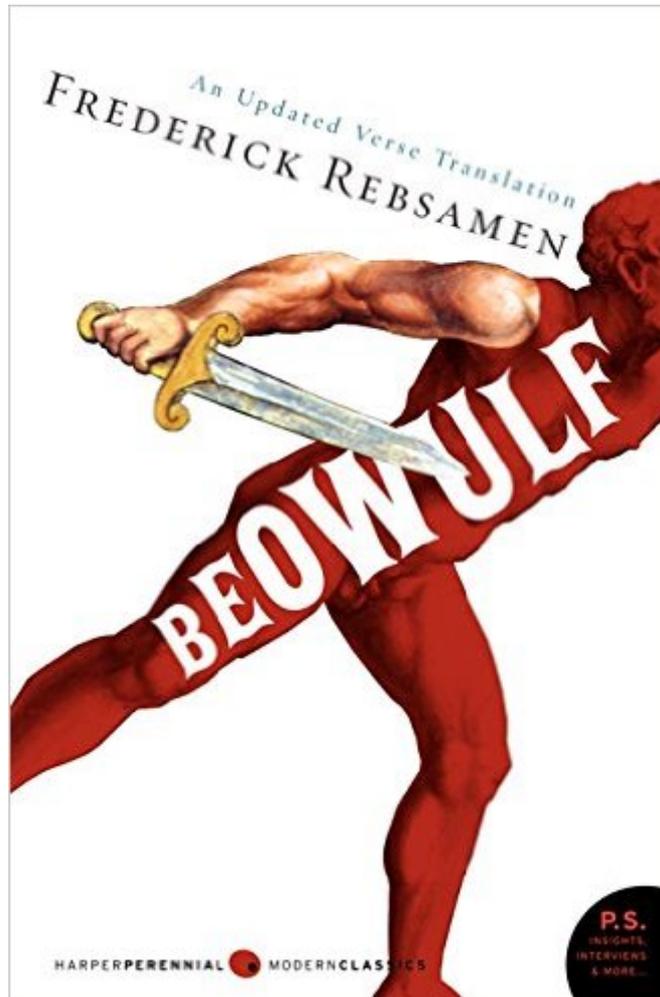


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Beowulf: An Updated Verse Translation (Perennial Classics)



Synopsis

A verse translation of the first great narrative poem in the English language that captures the feeling and tone of the original.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Frederick Rebsamen's recently revised translation of Beowulf stands out from the crowd. Having read the poem dozens of times, both in Old English and in translation, I have to say that this is certainly the most literal rendering of the poem in modern English that I've yet read. Rebsamen states in his introduction and notes that he set out to produce a translation that would not only recreate the exciting story of the epic, but would give the reader a feel for the poetry and rhythm of the original. He has succeeded remarkably. Where most modern English editions of Beowulf are set in blank or free verse, Rebsamen follows the original four-stress pattern of Anglo-Saxon poetry and goes so far as to include the caesura or pause in the middle of each line. The language of the original also shows through very clearly. Beowulf includes scores of kennings, and Rebsamen translates many of them literally. The translation is not without flaws, of course. Owing to the lilting, stop and start rhythms typical of Old English poetry and Rebsamen's faithful translation, the phrases sometimes seem to run over one another. The unique style also takes some time to get used to, but it's certainly worth it. Recommended.

Rebsamen's Beowulf is a great translation. It's poetic and really captures the alliterative force of the Anglo-Saxon (Old English) original. Reading it aloud is pure fun and you really need to do this to experience how good Rebsamen's translation and poetry is. The 3 contemporary translations that I like most are Rebsamen's, Dick Ringler's, and Seamus Heaney's - in that order. All are fine and are qualitatively different. If you have ever tried to translate poetry from Old English or German you will understand the challenge and you'll likely agree that Rebsamen has translated in the right style and with passion. When read aloud, this translation is mesmerizing. The language is beautiful and the rhythms haunting. There is a short but insightful introduction, a glossary of names at the back, genealogies, and recommendations for further reading and study of Anglo-Saxon language, Beowulf studies, and Anglo-Saxon history. I just love this period and its literature and Rebsamen has added to the pleasure. (For another alliterative delight, check out, "The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun", by that famous Anglo-Saxonist and fantasy author, J.R.R. Tolkien)

After doing some research on different translations of Beowulf, I decided to read this one. I was not disappointed. Rebsamen attempts to translate the poem into modern language while still keeping the rules of alliterative verse from the original. He also includes descriptions of some of the background episodes so that the events in the poem have their full context. I'm by no means a Beowulf expert and cannot speak to the fidelity of the translation, but Rebsamen offers a good explanation of the original and his methods of translation at the beginning of the book, which seemed perfectly reasonable and acceptable to me, given what he was trying to accomplish. This translation brought the poem to life more than any excerpts that I had read in a classroom setting, and I felt compelled to read it aloud to get the full effect. An excellent choice if you are seeking to enjoy reading a modern translation of a classic without worrying too much about studying the original. A small warning: the image given for the book and the cover of the book I actually received were very different. I don't know if anyone else has experienced this. My copy was white with an image of a warrior from some Italian painting spread across the front and back of the cover. It still looked attractive and I did not mind, but I can see how some people would be bothered by this.

I would rate this as the best English translation of Beowulf, better than Chickering by a hair. He uses Old English half lines and strings them together well with alliteration. Sounds great read aloud and is there any other way to read poetry? A must have for Beowulf fans.

A great translation of a great work. Unfortunately, the Kindle edition doesn't have the spaces

between the half lines, which I think is integral to what makes this translation so compelling. Had to return it. If they fix that, or if you're looking for a printed version, this is a great choice. For me it surpasses the famous Heaney version.

[note: this is a review of the poem generally, not this particular translation] Beowulf is one of those Medieval works of literature that many have heard about but few have read. However, it's worth reading, if only to experience a story so different from modern sensibilities. The poem extols Beowulf's physical courage and bravery against monsters and dragons. It's an odd mix of early Christian and warrior ethos. Beowulf is not a modern hero. There's not much to recommend him to modern readers - he's boastful, relies on brawn not brains, and his search for glory ends up putting his kingdom at risk. Still, it's fascinating to read this type of story and realize how far away it is from our own times. Because this is a translation of an Anglo-Saxon poem, it's worth saying a word about the text itself. It's readable, but isn't smooth reading for the uninitiated. I'd say this - if you don't like reading English-language poetry, you probably won't enjoy reading this poem. If you do make the effort, I'd recommend really making the effort. Go slow and make sure you understand the story. Don't skip over a few lines thinking they're not as relevant.

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