

11 Children's Versions of *Beowulf*: A Bibliography

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This book began with my discovery of a *New York Times* review by Charles McGrath¹ of not just one, but three versions of *Beowulf* adapted for children² published in 2007, that annus mirabilis for Beowulfiana. Once I purchased these, and, in particular, saw James Rumford's intelligent and moving adaptation of the poem in watercolours, I decided to become a collector. From there, I bought illustrated versions of the poem as I found them in Syd Allan's rich online catalogue of *Beowulf* translations,³ with its chronological listing and cover and frontispiece reproductions, and then moved on to methodical searches through the scanned volumes of archive.org, listings of online vendors, and the scholarly bibliographies of Stanley B. Greenfield and Fred Robinson,⁴ Marijane Osborn,⁵ and John William Sutton.⁶ I am greatly indebted to each of these archives, and more recently, to the pilot version of the *Beowulf's Afterlives Bibliographic Database*.⁷

The primary purpose of the following bibliography is to catalogue adaptations of *Beowulf* with children as their intended audience. This includes traditional picture books with illustrations, Edwardian-era anthologies of Nordic and medieval English legends that favour short retellings in nationalist context, comic book and graphic novel versions appropriate for younger audiences, didactic materials such as plays and songbooks performed by children, and even a colouring book. One set of texts not included is the assigned schoolroom anthology, which typically features a heavily abridged version of the poem, or simply a brief excerpt for historical purposes. The sheer profusion of such anthologies over the

past century is untraceable without systematic effort beyond my means, as a reworking of *Beowulf* in one can be a mere half-page in a volume of five hundred pages or longer, and not be listed in any bibliographical record. To track these down and assess them is nevertheless a valuable future project.

The listings include adaptations of the poem not identified at first as written for a children's audience, such as Gareth Hinds's 1999 three-part graphic novel, later reissued by a children's publishing imprint, Candlewick, then reviewed by McGrath in 2007, so canonizing it as a children's book. In reverse fashion, William Ellery Leonard's 1923 verse translation, for "Fireside and Classroom," was reprinted in subsequent editions with remarkable lithographs by Rockwell Kent for Random House and Lynd Ward for the Heritage Press; these prestigious reworkings of Leonard's text are included in the bibliography, even though they elevate his original edition from the classroom to the presses of serious book collectors, for not only are they in the lineage of that version for younger readers, they are part and parcel with the poem's reception and cultural work in the modern era. If I have a bias, it is to aesthetically pleasurable retellings, not to highbrow or lowbrow distinctions; the entries run from a turn-of-the-century pennybook, to deluxe, gilt-edged art nouveau treasures, to mass-produced readers keyed to particular grade levels in the United Kingdom, even to a multilingual series of translations for teaching English as a foreign language rendered with fantastical illustrations.

Each bibliography entry marks subsequent reprintings with new publishers, reworkings, and translations with use of an indentation; if there is a further edition based on a change made at the second level, such as an excerpting or a new set of illustrations, this is marked by a second indentation to show the two levels of its derivation. I have not tried to reflect every unaltered reprinting of a source adaptation; instead, I aim to record change of publisher, new page assignment, new illustrator (or illustrator removed), and so on – in general, any information that reformats or recontextualizes the original edition, and whose lineage I can be sure of. In a very few cases, where I am uncertain of date or place of publishing, especially where WorldCat⁸ and the HathiTrust Digital Library⁹ are not of help or seem unreliable, I include the estimated date or location in square

brackets, e.g., [1903]. The illustrator for a larger anthology is only noted if the adaptation of *Beowulf* within the anthology is itself illustrated.



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NOTES

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- 10 The long, complex history of this version in Danish public schools is surveyed in Busbee’s chapter in this volume.
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