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In this image, from an 8th-Century Vesparian Psalter, we see an Anglo-Saxon lyre. Although the image itself is from a religious work depicting David, the psalm-writer-performer, it is helpful to see an Anglo-Saxon lyre which *scops* (storytellers) would likely have used during a *Beowulf* performance. Image online via Swarthmore College.

Scholars think the story of Beowulf takes place near the present-day city of <u>Roskilde</u> on the island of <u>Zealand</u> (<u>Sjaelland</u>) not far <u>from</u> Copenhagen.

If the Geats lived in the southwestern part of Sweden, as experts believe, <u>not much sea</u> separated the Danes from the Geats. Under normal conditions, it would have taken about a day to sail from place to place.

<u>Roskilde today</u> would not have looked the same during the mid-sixth century. One of Denmark's oldest towns, it was first established as a Viking trading post more than a thousand years ago. Remnants of <u>Viking ships</u>, discovered during modern times, are preserved in a local museum.

During the time of Beowulf, people in Denmark had not yet been converted, so there were no Christian churches or monasteries. <u>Hrothgar</u>, then King of the Danes, would have ruled over people living in small dwellings not <u>large homes</u>. Bodies of kings would not have been placed inside <u>royal coffins</u>, then housed inside <u>a cathedral</u>, as they are now.

<u>Lejre</u> is the larger municipality where <u>Roskilde is situated</u>. Once the capital of an <u>iron-age kingdom</u>, ruled by a legendary dynasty called Skjöldung (in Old Norse) and "Scylding" (in Old English), Lejre has archaeological sites which are important to the Beowulf story.

<u>Reconstructed villages</u> and <u>burial mounds</u>, from various time frames in Danish history, help us to glimpse what life and <u>living conditions</u> may have been like in <u>historical Denmark</u>.

There is something else about Lejre, a primarily <u>rural environment</u>, which ties it to the Beowulf story. Kings, like Hrothgar, built "long halls" in which to congregate with their warriors. Archaeologists have uncovered <u>such a</u> <u>place</u> in Lejre.

Was it once Heorot, the <u>mead-hall</u> where Grendel - the monster - attacked the Danes? Let's take a look.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-STORY-SETTING-Beowulf

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-STORY-SETTING-Beowulf

THE STORY SETTING



Media Stream







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Sweden - Map Locator

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Roskilde - Ancient Church

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Royal Sarcophagus at Roskilde

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Coffins at Roskilde Cathedral

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Roskilde Cathedral - Gothic Style

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Ancient Lejre - Living Conditions

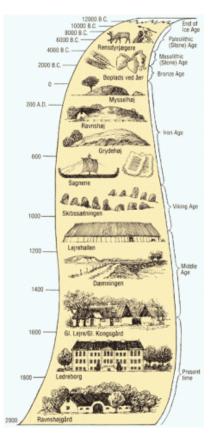
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Burial Mounds at Lejre

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Lejre - Capital of an Iron-Age Kingdom

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<u>Lejre - Map Locator</u>

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<u>Lejre - Primarily a Rural Environment</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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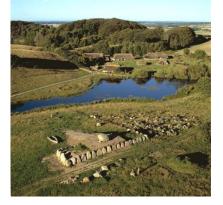
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Lejre Today - Rural Setting

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Reconstructed Villages at Lejre

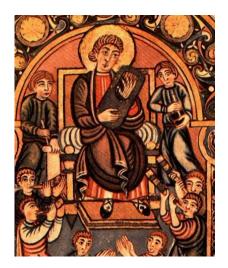
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