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English

27 September 2024

Beowulf

Beowulf, the protagonist of the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, is an ideal example of the epic hero. In the poem, Beowulf fights different monsters using his incredible strength. The actions, character traits, and values he embodies make him larger-than-life and a true representation of the Anglo-Saxon virtues and ideals. From his unmatched physical strength and courage in the face of danger to his unwavering sense of duty and loyalty to his people, Beowulf's heroism is evident in every aspect of his being. Additionally, his relentless pursuit of fame and glory not only highlights his desire to be remembered but also reflects the cultural importance of legacy and honor in Anglo-Saxon society. Through his extraordinary deeds and noble qualities, Beowulf stands as a timeless symbol of the epic hero, inspiring admiration and reverence across generations.

Beowulf's extraordinary strength and bravery set him apart as an epic hero. His physical ability is unmatched, allowing him to perform superhuman feats. For example, he defeats Grendel, a monstrous creature terrorizing the Danes, with his bare hands. "He twisted in pain, and the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder snapped, muscle and bone split and broke" (Beowulf, 256-259). This quote illustrates Beowulf's incredible strength, as he manages to tear off Grendel's arm without any weapons. Furthermore, Beowulf's bravery is evident when he

chooses to fight Grendel without any armor or weapons, relying solely on his strength and courage. "I have heard, Too, that the monster's scorn of men Is so great that he needs no weapons and fears Nor will I. My lord Higlac Might think less of me" (Beowulf, 141-145). This decision showcases his confidence and willingness to face danger head-on. Beowulf's strength and bravery make him an exemplary epic hero, demonstrating his larger-than-life qualities.

Beowulf's sense of duty and loyalty to his people highlight his heroic nature. He consistently puts the well-being of others above his own, showcasing his selflessness and dedication. When Beowulf hears of Hrothgar's plight, he immediately sets out to help, despite the dangers involved. "Now Grendel's Name has echoed in our land: sailors Have brought us stories of Herot, the best Of all mead-halls, deserted and useless when the moon Hangs in skies the sun had lit, Light and life fleeing together. My people have said, the wisest, most knowing And best of them, that my duty was to go to the Danes' Great king." (Beowulf, 118-126). This quote emphasizes Beowulf's unique status and his willingness to aid those in need. Additionally, Beowulf's loyalty is evident in his relationship with King Higlac, whom he serves faithfully. "What I mean to, here, no man but me Could hope to defeat this monster. No one Could try " (Beowulf 506-508). Here, Beowulf expresses his determination to protect his king and people, even if it means risking his own life. His sense of duty and loyalty are key aspects of his heroic character, embodying the Anglo-Saxon ideal of unwavering allegiance.

Beowulf's pursuit of fame and glory reflects the Anglo-Saxon cultural values of honor and reputation. In Anglo-Saxon society, a hero's legacy was of utmost importance, and Beowulf strives to ensure his name is remembered. After defeating Grendel's mother, Beowulf returns with her head as a trophy, solidifying his heroic status. "Beowulf ruled in Geatland, took the

throne he'd once, And held it long and well" (Beowulf, 466-470). This quote underscores Beowulf's desire for recognition and the importance of maintaining a heroic reputation. Furthermore, Beowulf's final battle against the dragon is driven by his desire to protect his people and secure his legacy. "I've never known fear; as a youth I fought In endless battles. I am old, now, But I will fight again, seek fame still" (Beowulf, lines 484-486). Even in his old age, Beowulf's pursuit of glory and honor remains unwavering, highlighting the Anglo-Saxon emphasis on a lasting legacy.

Beowulf is the prototype of the epic hero due to his extraordinary strength and bravery, his sense of duty and loyalty, and his pursuit of fame and glory. These qualities not only make him larger-than-life but also embody the Anglo-Saxon virtues and ideals. Through his heroic deeds and unwavering dedication, Beowulf ensures his name is remembered for generations, solidifying his status as an epic hero. His battles against formidable foes like Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon showcase not only his physical abilities but also his willingness to sacrifice for the greater good. Beowulf's legacy is a testament to the enduring power of heroism and the timeless appeal of epic tales. His story continues to inspire and captivate audiences, reminding us of the values and characteristics that define true heroism.

Owens, Brenda et al. *Beowulf. Mirrors and Window: Connecting With- British Tradition* pages 25-48. EMC Publishing 2012

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