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Beowulf

Beowulf is the oldest known work of English literature. It is an epic poem about a warrior named Beowulf King Hrothgar of Denmark, a descendant of the great king Shield Sheafson who defeats multiple powerful monsters. Through this epic poem of Beowulf, you will find the major theme is heroism; which is great bravery or someone who shows great courage. Beowulf has the exact traits of a hero which are bravery, strength, and honor. During his journey, he must fight Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a fire-breathing dragon. Beowulf is a hero who uses his strength, courage, and collaborating with other great men to fight off people and monsters to overcome his challenges.

The first attribute Beowulf has that makes him a hero is his strength, which he uses to overcome the many trials he faces throughout his journey. Even the Danes say he is the strongest man they have ever seen. This is demonstrated when Beowulf says, “And best of them, that my duty was to go to the Danes’ Great king. They have seen my strength for themselves, have watched me rise from the darkness of war, Dripping with my enemies’ blood. I drove Five great giants into chains, chased All of that race from the earth” (*Beowulf* lines 125- 130). Beowulf is showing how he uses his strength to fight monsters and how he can not only fight for himself, but also to other great Danes. He also uses his strength in many battles against evil. One example is when he is fighting Grendel, “[Grendel] twisted in pain, and bleeding sinews deep in his

shoulder Snapped, muscle and bone split and broke. The battle was over” (256- 259). He is showing how he does not just use his swords for strength he also uses his arm power to rip Grendel’s arm off. This is a very impressive feat, as it means Beowulf does not even need weapons to defeat his enemies. The power of his arms is strong enough to defeat monsters without a weapon.

However, strength is not the only attribute Beowulf possesses, he also shows great bravery throughout the story. Even the soldiers of Beowulf say he is very brave when they say these few lines, “would take then his soldiers sailed, returned with tribute and obedience. There was a brave king!” (10-11). Beowulf had to be courageous to fight all the powerful monsters of his time. He is not scared to fight alone even though he is just one man himself. As Beowulf says, “I’ve never known fear; as a youth I fought in endless battles. I am old, now, But I will still fight again, seek fame still, If the dragons\ hiding in his tower dares to face me” (484-488). He does not fight for fame or for honor he fights for himself and his great people. Bravery is more than just a feature it is also a concept that not everyone has. Beowulf shows his bravery when he is fighting the monster and, “Quickly, he cut the beast in half, slit it apart. It fell, their courage had killed it, two noble cousins had joined in the dragon’s death.” (627-630). This quote shows us how powerful and brave he really is, and how much damage he can do to a monster that is great and bigger than him.

Along with strength and courage Beowulf knows how to collaborate with other great men to fight off monsters and overcome his challenges. Beowulf does not always fight these monsters alone; he sometimes brings his soldiers with him. When he cannot do all his fighting by himself, he teams up with great men from the Danes to help him defeat these monsters. This is shown when Beowulf mentions, “His name is Wiglaf, he was Wexstan’s son and a good soldier; his

family had been Swedish, once. Watching Beowulf, he could see How his king was suffering, burning. Remembering everything his lord and cousin had given him.” (575- 579). Beowulf cannot do this all alone, so he gets Wiglaf to help him fight the monsters, and Wiglaf helps encourage him that he is the strongest man alive. Along with Wiglaf, Beowulf gets his band to join in the Battle between Grendel and him. As it states, “To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf’s Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral Swords raised and ready, determined to protect their prince if they could. Their courage Was great, but all wasted: they could hack at Grendel from every side,” (235- 240). If Beowulf had not gotten his band or Wiglaf he would have lost the battle between Grendel and himself. Thankfully, Beowulf had these men to not only help him win these battles but also encourage him to never give up. As Wiglaf says, “Beloved Beowulf, remember how you boasted, Once, that nothing in the world would ever Destroy your fame: fight to keep it, Now, be strong and brave, my noble King, protecting life and fame together.” (586-591). Without Wiglaf and his band Beowulf would not have had enough strength or power to fight all the monsters he had to battle against. The overall demeanor of Beowulf before Wiglaf and his band and after them makes you realize how much a person can help you but also how much they can pick you up and encourage you to always do your best.

Throughout the story, you can determine how Beowulf uses his strength, courage and collaborating to overcome all the challenges he had faced in his battles. The overall key point of this epic poem is to show you how you must always believe in yourself and never give up on something you have worked for. Beowulf shows us that if you work for what you want you will receive wonderful things back in return for all the work you have done.

Beowulf

Beowulf. Mirrors and Windows: Connecting With Literature- British Tradition pages 25 – 48.

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