

Lynlee Kingsafer

Mrs. Graning

English 11

27 September 2024

### The Way of a Great Warrior

The epic tale of *Beowulf* is a story filled with values of Paganism like bravery, lof, and loyalty. The main protagonist, Beowulf, is a great warrior who is very familiar with bravery, fame, and loyalty. Beowulf is a likable character who the Gaets and the Danes can rely on to help them in times of need. He is defined by his honor, strength, courage, and determination. When Beowulf is given a task to help people, he strives to complete it so he may gain the glory that comes with victory. This goes to show that Beowulf is a great example of an epic hero because of how he embodies the virtues and ideals of his culture with bravery, his strive for LOF, and loyalty.

One of the largest themes and values of Anglo-Saxon literature is bravery. Whether it is through acts or intentions, bravery can make a character's personality into a larger than life person. Beowulf acts on his bravery when he decides to fight the monster Grendel bare-handed. Beowulf is completely confident in his ability to take down Grendel the same way the monster has taken the lives of many Danes. Beowulf claims he is just as dangerous as Grendel, "When it comes to fighting, I count myself / As dangerous any day as Grendel" (677-678). Beowulf relies on his strength to kill the monster with his bare hands, showing his heroism and power in a more impactful way. Another way Beowulf shows his consistent bravery is when he goes to face the dragon that he knows he cannot beat. Beowulf knew it was his duty as king to protect his people

from even the most evil of villains. Beowulf declares that even though he is old, he will still fight this beast to defend his people.

“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,  
If the dragon hiding in his tower dares  
To face me” (484-488).

The dragon fight represents Beowulf’s final face-to-face with mortality, symbolizing the inevitable end that all heroes must face. Beowulf decided not to run or to send other men to fight the dragon but to face it himself. Both of the examples demonstrate how Beowulf is a brave and courageous leader.

Paganism believes in striving for fame to help you arrive into an afterlife when you die. Beowulf makes many attempts at trying to acquire Lof and glory. One of the more specific actions Beowulf takes is when he sacrifices one of his own men to Grendel when Beowulf first attempts to defeat the beast.

“But fate, that night, intended  
Grendel to gnaw the broken bones  
Of his last human supper. Human  
Eyes were watching his evil steps,  
Waiting to see his swift hard claws.” (175-179)

This route that Beowulf takes solidifies the belief that Beowulf will stop at nothing to acquire the glory that comes with victory, even if people lose their lives along the way. This is not the only

way that Beowulf can come off as a very self-righteous character; Beowulf acts out another virtue when frequently boasts about himself and his victories against his foes.

“My people have said, the wisest, most knowing  
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.” (124-128)

This is just another stepping stone of Beowulf’s plan to achieve glory and fame for the afterlife. However, boasting is not the only way Beowulf strives for glory; he also puts actions to his words and seeks out dangerous tasks and battles. Beowulf is extremely eager to take on the challenge of defending the Danes and fighting Grendel. “Beowulf, the hero of this epic, hears of Grendel’s deeds and vows revenge.” (Cantos 3-5). This shows that Beowulf is truly confident in his abilities to be a great warrior and future leader.

Once Beowulf becomes king, he is able to execute his leadership skills when he commands his own army of soldiers. Beowulf displays his loyalty to his kingdom when he is on the brink of death. Beowulf insists on giving the dragon’s riches to the kingdom even when his whole army abandoned him and Wiglaf in the fight: “Wiglaf, go, quickly, find/ The dragon’s treasure: we’ve taken its life,/ But its gold is ours, too.” (667-669). Beowulf shows that he truly cares about his people, even when they wrong him. Additionally, Beowulf shows his loyalty when he stayed to defeat Grendel’s mother when she came back to avenge her son after his death. Most would give up after one monster, but Beowulf decided to avenge Hrothgar’s slain friend and fought the monster, “Beowulf agreed to fight Grendel’s maker, “this lady monster,” and to avenge the death of Aeschere.”(Cantos 20-21). Beowulf’s actions show his true

determination and loyalty to those he cares for. Beowulf is able to make decisions that allow him to be a true leader who guides and inspires.

*Beowulf* is an inspiring poem, following a great and powerful hero who is determined to achieve ultimate success and glory. The poem gives a deeper sight into the attributes of a true hero. Throughout the tale, Beowulf demonstrates many traits that make him one of the best examples of an epic hero.