

Kate Whitman

Mrs. Graning

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### *Beowulf*

The timeless, fictional Anglo-Saxon poem, *Beowulf*, written by an unknown poet, explores the fine points of Anglo-Saxon literature. Anglo-Saxon literature also known as Old English literature written in the mid-5th century to 1066 consists of genres such as sermons, Bible translations, chronicles, epic poetry, and more. Most of Anglo-Saxon literature is based on tribal history and values, Pagan and Christian beliefs, and old stories. It has said it has been passed down by oral tradition. *Beowulf* introduces the fictional character “Beowulf”, who is said to exhibit the best traits of an epic hero. An epic hero, in this setting is described as respectable warriors who are agile, audacious, dutiful, and willing to sacrifice for their honor and lof.

*Beowulf* exhibits the qualities of a true epic hero, embodying the virtues of honor, loyalty, and courage, guiding him to perform heroic deeds despite a world in moral turpitude.

Beowulf upholds and displays many honors for himself including loyalty, honor, and courage. Honor is defined as “high respect; great esteem” or “respect and esteem shown to one”. Beowulf is thought of as one of the highest lords of their land, often requested in fighting off monsters. King Herot, king of the great Danes shows his immense respect for Beowulf. When calling upon him with this line, “My lord, the great king of Danes, commands me –To tell you that he knows of your noble birth –And that having come to him from over the open –Sea you have come bravely and are welcome.” (100-104). The poet shows that Beowulf is called upon to

help fight; various kings know of his “noble” birth and wish to have him fight off their monsters. This demonstrates that Beowulf is held to a high honor with high regards. Loyalty is defined as “a steadfast faithfulness that is upheld during temptation to renounce, betray, or abandon.”. Beowulf’s loyalty allows him to face many battles and temptations all the while staying completely faithful to his ideology and followers. Beowulf especially follows through with his adherence when challenged mightily in fights. He always seems to be the one who stays and finishes them off, even to his death. Beowulf fights for his land even when he passes; he dedicates what he has fought for to his people. This is shown in his last words, “For this, this gold, these jewels, I thank –Our Father in heaven, Ruler of the Earth–For all of this, that His grace has given me, –Allowed me to bring to my people while breath –Still came to my lips. I sold my life –For this treasure, and I sold it well. Take –What I leave, Wiglaf, lead my people, –Help them; my time is gone.” (686-693). This exhibits Beowulf’s true passion for his people, his last words and fight dedicated to them. Courage is defined as “strength in face of pain or grief.”. Beowulf is called upon many times to fight off heinous beasts that a lesser man would flee from. Once, Beowulf fights without his armor, only with his bare hands to justify his strength. The story shows this when Beowulf states “My lord Higlac –Might think less of me if I let my sword –Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid –Behind some broad linden shield: my hands –Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life –Against the monster. God must decide –Who will be given to death’s cold grip.”(144-150). As shown, Beowulf does not use a sword or shield, but instead his bare hands to maintain fair play and honor.

Beowulf’s courage shows his true morale and bravery, both of which are steadfast. At the beginning of the story, you notice Herot, the king of the Danes, calls upon Beowulf. He asks for him to fight the horrible monster Grendel, after he fights Grendel’s mother, his last and final

battle is the Dragon when it all comes to an end. He is called upon in the beginning to aid the Danes in the terrorizing actions of Grendel, the monster who has troubled them. For 12 years the Danes could not fight off Grendel, Herot summons Beowulf as their last resort in hopes of the killing of the beastly monster. Beowulf followed through and killed Grendel with his bare hands; boasting of his kill by hanging Grendel's arm by the Herod rafters. After killing Grendel, his vicious mother comes back for revenge. She lurks in her fiery lake the depths of hell, lurking for vengeance. The Danes plead once more for Beowulf's brave help, "Our only help, –Again lies with you. Grendel's mother –Is hidden in her terrible home, in a place –You've not seen. Seek it, if you dare! Save us, –Once more and again twisted gold, –Heaped-up ancient treasure, will reward you –For a battle you win!" (357-363). Beowulf follows through with his courageous actions, defeating and killing the twisted evil mother. After Beowulf's great victories he reigns as a mighty king for 50 years, valuing loyalty, respect, and peace. After 50 winters a dragon arose out of its sleep– his anger, raging. Beowulf knew this could be his last and final battle, "...And Beowulf uttered his final boast: –'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 in his tower dares –To face me.'"(483-488). Beowulf knows this could be his last fight, but for his lof and kingdom he does what he must.

Beowulf stays true to not only himself, but his cultural identity in his actions, battles, and words. Beowulf's culture is largely influenced by the Anglo-Saxon time period, the unknown poet most likely largely based his story off of tribal, religious, and personal beliefs. Often in the Anglo-Saxon time period they believed in Lof; Lof is defined as "glory" or "fame after death". In this time period they believed to live on in an afterlife you must be remembered; you must have been known-famous. Beowulf is greatly praised after his tragic death, "So should all men

–Raise up words for their lords, warm –With love, when their shield and protector leaves –His body behind, sends his soul –On high. And so Beowulf’s followers –Rode, morning their beloved leader, –Crying that no better king had ever –Lived, no prince so mild, no man –So open to his people, so deserving of praise.”(750-758). As the story seems to end, Beowulf is greatly praised and remembered as a true hero. Beowulf fulfilled the perfect example of an epic hero, a great leader, warrior, and powerful king. He stayed true to the Anglo-Saxon culture, building up his fame and fortune; he is forever remembered.

In the epic tale of *Beowulf*, the reader explores honor, loyalty, and courage. Beowulf soon transforms from a warrior to an unforgettable king; as he faces not only physical battles but morals. Beowulf even sets an example of good and evil, not being drawn in by temptation and staying loyal to your beliefs. Beowulf is an unforgettable tale that has embarked a great reflection on the battle between good and evil.