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English

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Beowulf

The heroic epic poem *Beowulf* is a poem that discusses a hero, Beowulf, and his life journeys of defeating monsters and being a ruler. Beowulf is from Geatland, where he occasionally ventures out to defeat supernatural beings in order to save people. The main battles mentioned and discussed in this poem were those of Beowulf defeating Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a fiery dragon. He is a very strong and willful character that uses his capabilities for the benefit of others while staying generous and caring. Beowulf is the prototype of an epic hero, a larger-than-life character, and the embodiment of numerous Anglo-Saxon virtues and ideals.

The prototype of an epic hero is someone who is larger-than-life with superhuman capabilities like those of Beowulf. He is a very courageous hero, with the bravery to fight with his bare hands and do whatever it takes to save people. Beowulf tells Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, "I have heard, Too, that the monster's scorn of men Is so great that he needs no weapons and fears none. Nor will I." (lines 141-144, canto 6) He is a very strong person mentally and physically and is aspiring with his abilities and his confidence within himself to fight nobly. Furthermore, towards the end of this epic poem, Beowulf passes while in battle with a fiery dragon, telling his soldier Wiglaf to take the jewels and give them to the kingdom to use for good.

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.” (686-690, canto 38)

Says Beowulf, referring to the treasures he has just received for defeating the dragon. Even on his deathbed, Beowulf is still concerned about the people he rules over, showing just how much he cares about his people.

Beowulf has abilities that are not accessible to other humans, making him a larger-than-life character. When facing Grendel’s mother, Beowulf was too strong for his sword, causing it to break and for him to use something no ordinary person could even pick up.

Then he saw, hanging on the wall, a heavy
Sword, hammered by giants, strong and blessed with their magic, the best of all weapons
But so massive that no ordinary man could lift
Its carved and decorated length. He drew it
From its scabbard, broke the chain on its hilt...(lines 429-434, canto 23)

Without Beowulf’s strength, he would not have been able to win all the battles that he had to face. For example, how he was able to kill a giant monster, Grendel, with nothing but his bare hands.

He was happy,
Now, with that night’s fierce work; the Danes
Had been serve as he’d boasted he’d serve the; Beowulf,
A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
Forced on Hrothgar’s helpless people

By a bloodthirsty fiend. (lines 268-274, canto 12)

says the narrator. Beowulf had incredible and completely unnatural strength, and he used it to fight bad monsters.

Through Beowulf's generosity and the way he used his strength, he has many Anglo-Saxon virtues and ideals. His values of honor and loyalty show that he is not cowardly and that he is a perfect fit for an epic hero. Beowulf says

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. (lines 144-150, canto 6)

to Hrothgar. His courage to stay loyal to his king by respecting what his wishes would be shows some of his Anglo-Saxon virtues. Beowulf was also extremely brave when fighting each monster he had encountered in order to protect his people and people that were not even his to protect.

I've never known fear; as a youth I fought
In endless battles. I am old now,
But I will fight again, seek fame shrill,
If the dragon hiding in his tower dares
To face me. (484-488, canto 35)

states Beowulf as his last and final boast. He was a great warrior and hero who sought out monsters in the refuge of others.

The heroic poem *Beowulf* shows great examples of being brave and stepping out for the benefit of not only yourself but in the greater good for others. His people and soldiers and those that he helped showed great appreciation for all things he did for them. Even in his final battle, he continued to fight for them after being impaled by a poisonous tooth. His people honored him by constructing a tower in his name and burying the jewels collected by him underneath. By showing his embodiment of Anglo-Saxon virtues through his larger-than-life character and his different strengths and abilities, Beowulf is the prototype of an epic hero.

