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## Beowulf

Beowulf is a brave and heroic soul who helps save his people from many monsters, until one day he meets his match and is defeated. In the epic poem *Beowulf*, readers are shown the qualities it takes to be a hero. Throughout the story Beowulf shows the qualities of bravery, honor, courage, and loyalty to his people. In the city of Heorot there is a monster named Grendel who for twelve years found and killed Hrothgar's men. Beowulf, who is famous for defeating giants and sea monsters all with his bare hands, hears of this problem and decides to go help Hrothgar who is king of the Danes. While at Heorot he defeats Grendel, Grendel's mom and is then made king of the Geats after their king dies. Beowulf reigns for fifty years with no problems until one day a slave decided to steal a jeweled cup from the dragon's lair which in turn angers the dragon causing Beowulf to have to fight the dragon. The fight against the dragon is the first fight Beowulf is defeated in. He kills the dragon, but this battle does end in death for Beowulf. Before he dies Beowulf asks that the treasure be given to his people as a reward for their loyalty. The Geats don't take the treasure, but bury it with Beowulf in a tower to honor him and his loyalty to them all these years. Beowulf is a larger than life hero who embodies the qualities of honor, bravery, and loyalty to his people.

In everything Beowulf does he shows bravery, he is so confident in his abilities that he boasts about the things he's done. When he arrives at Heorot and talks to Hrothgar he brags about all the giants and sea monsters he's slayed; his boasting proves to Hrothgar that he's not scared of Grendel, and is ready to brave the fight, as he states

Dripping with my enemies' blood. I drove  
Five great giants into chains, chased  
All of that race from the earth. I swam  
Out into the blackness of night, hunting monsters  
Out of the ocean, and killing them one  
By one (128-133).

Beowulf wasn't asked to fight Grendel, but volunteered to go to Heorot and help Hrothgar and his people. No one in the town ever attempted to fight Grendel. Beowulf, going to a foreign land and willingly fighting a monster that no human has ever attempted shows how brave he truly is.

A single request! I have come so far,  
O shelterer of warriors and your peoples loved friend,  
That this one favor you should not refuse me —  
That I, alone and with the help of my men,  
May purge all evil from this hall (137-141).

Beowulf's bravery helps him win all these fights because he isn't timid or nervous going into battle. He knows what he is capable of doing and he does it.

Beowulf, in many ways throughout the story, shows that he's an honorable individual. The first being that he chose to fight Grendel without any weapons. Since Grendel didn't use any weapons Beowulf thought it would only be fair if he didn't either, so he tells Hrothgar;

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. 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 linen shield: my hands  
Alone shall fight for me" (141-148).

In Anglo Saxon culture they don't believe in heaven so while on earth they try to gain LOF which is fame. Beowulf does gain LOF before he dies which is why his people build him a tower to honor him and everything he's done for their community. He honored his community by putting them and their safety over his own, so they want to honor him by making him a tower so he is never forgotten.

Then the Geats built the tower, as Beowulf  
Had asked, strong and tall, so sailors  
Could find it from far and wide; working  
For ten long days they made this monument,  
And sealed his ashes in the walls. (732-736).

Being an honorable person means you're trusted, respected, and loved by others, which are all the qualities Beowulf possesses.

Beowulf demonstrates the quality of loyalty throughout the story by showing he truly cares for his people and would literally die for them. After Heardred dies Beowulf becomes king

of the Geats and reigns for fifty years until he is killed by the dragon. He is a faithful king who always looks after his people to make sure they're safe from anything that can hurt them.

I've worn this crown

For fifty winters: no neighboring people

Have tried to threaten the Geats, sent soldiers

Against us or talked in terror (655-658).

Beowulf and Wiglaf have a comitatus relationship, which in Anglo Saxon culture means the mutual respect of a king and his warrior or community and friendship. When Beowulf is fighting the dragon and is almost dead all the other soldiers run except for Wiglaf. He stays by his side and helps Beowulf until he dies. Before he dies Beowulf asks Wiglaf to bring him the treasure so he can see it at least once before he dies. Since Wiglaf was loyal to him, Beowulf returns the favor by handing down his kingship to him, and giving him his gold necklace, gold helmet, rings, and mail shirt.

Then that brave king gave the golden

Necklace from around his throat to Wiglaf,

Gave him his gold-covered helmet, and his rings,

And his mail shirt, and ordered him to use it well (701-704).

Over his fifty years of being king Beowulf has been a loyal ruler, king, and friend to all his people even up until his death.

*Beowulf* is an epic poem in which the characters demonstrate loyalty, honor, and bravery. It shows readers that putting others before yourself, and being a brave, honorable and respected person who everyone loves is always rewarding.

