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Beowulf

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Beowulf

Beowulf is a mighty and brave king and warrior. In this heroic poem Beowulf was challenged to save the Danes from three terrible monsters. Grendle and Grendle's Mother, the first two monsters, he handled with ease. After he proved his strength and loyalty he became king for 50 years. He was so confident he decided to fight with his bare hands. However, by the power of fate he did not have the same luck with the last monster. His beloved cousin came to the rescue, and was the only soldier who didn't flee. Beowulf wanted a tower built in his memory that would hold all the treasure from the dragon's lair. The Danes thought it would be better to spread the wealth to all the people with Wiglaf as their king. Beowulf's traits of loyalty, bravery, and honor proves him to be the epic hero and protagonist among the other characters in this heroic poem.

Beowulf's traits of loyalty, bravery, and honor make him a great leader who has the respect for all of his people. Beowulf excels in his loyalty for his people. He shows this first by going to help the Danes from a horrible monster. By traveling to help the Danes he is repaying his Father's debt. By getting rid of Grendel and her mother he proves his loyalty once more showing his people this trait of loyalty. Because Beowulf was so loyal to them in turn they showed their loyalty to him. "Wiglaf then ran to his king, crying encouragement as he drove

through the dragon's deadly fumes”(Canto 36). Beowulf did not only give his loyalty to his people but he also received it.

One of Beowulf’s most important traits is his bravery and courage. Throughout the poem you can almost feel his bravery coming out of the book. No matter who he is fighting he has absolutely no fear. He fights three monsters in this poem who were all bigger than him. He was so confident in his abilities that he decided to fight them with his bare hands. “I’d use no sword, no weapon, if this beast could be killed without it” (canto 35). In all of his battles he fights alone because he knows he is the only person who can save them. He believes in himself in everything he does.

Beowulf’s trait of honor is something special. He bleeds honor in everything he does. One way he shows his honor is giving others the respect they deserve. He honors Hrothgar not only with his words but with his actions too. He shows honor in his words by praising to his own king, Higlac, about Hrothgar’s generosity. He shows his honor in his actions by leaving the weapons of his soldiers at the door to show Hrothgar he means peace. His honor sheds off on Wiglaf when he is in an intense fight with the dragon. When Beowulf’s soldiers flee, Wiglaf’s honor can be seen as he decides to help his cousin in battle. He states that he would rather die in battle than go home a coward without protecting his leader. The tribe honors Beowulf with a tower to remember him and all the things he has done for them. Beowulf honor is a strong trait that makes him an amazing warrior and leader.

Beowulf’s fate ultimately leads to the death of the amazing warrior. Fate in the poem is contrasted with the thought of God. For the negative things like Beowulf’s last battle and his death the poem uses the term “fate”. For the positive things like the battles Beowulf wins the poem refers to God. Beowulf’s fight versus Grendel is the concept of an omniscient and

powerful God who strengthens him. Beowulf needed no weapons and easily took care of the mighty Grendel. By the power of God Beowulf needed no weapons and could trust that he was in good hands.

In Beowulf's second fight with the mother of Grendel was the same. By the power of God and his courageousness he would not need weapons to succeed. This fight takes place in Grendel's mother's lair under a lake. After he kills her he beheads Grendel as a repayment for all of the lives Grendel took.

Fate finally comes into play before his last battle. "as Beowulf Uttered his final Boast"(canto 35). It foreshadows his death and shows us how fate plays a huge role in the poem. Fate is against him in his last battle where he ultimately dies to the dragon. The dragon's venom got the best of Beowulf which leads him into death. Wiglaf avenges his cousin by stabbing the dragon in the stomach to finish it off. The contrast of fate and God shows the Anglo-Saxon ways of belief.

Fame is a way to ensure that what they did in the world would carry over to the afterlife.

In Old English the word for fame is Lof. The way to achieve fame is to do brave things and to make good decisions. Beowulf gained his fame by protecting his people against the terrible monsters. His bravery and courageousness lead him to fame in the after-life.

Overall the message of the poem is people should fight the good fight with courage, dignity, and honor no matter the outcome. Because Beowulf was all of these things he is portrayed as a great leader, warrior and companion. Beowulf proves to be the protagonist and his traits make him respected among all of his people.

Owens, Brenda et al. *Beowulf. Mirrors and Windows: Connecting With Literature - British Tradition* pages 25-48. EMC Publishing, 2012

Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (2024, September 17). *Beowulf*. Encyclopædia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Beowulf>