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Beowulf

The story of Beowulf is regarded as the literary masterpiece of the Anglo-Saxon people. Thought to be composed in seventh century Great Britain, there is no known author. The setting of the actual story is in the 6th century in the southern part of Sweden. Where the Home of Beowulf lays "Geatland". Son of Ecgtheow, nephew of King Hygelac. Beowulf himself is a stereotypical epic hero in a story, he is also an ideal representation of an Anglo-saxon warrior, while also being a larger than life character, but how exactly does he show this throughout the story.

Everybody knows what a hero is, but what exactly makes an epic hero. There are a few necessary requirements to be an epic hero story, First off the hero can't just be a regular everyday person, they have to have some sort of larger than life abilities, we see this represented when Beowulf tells the story of how he killed nine sea dragons as a young boy (Cantos 7-10). Another thing that is mandatory is a quest, we see in the story of three quests that Beowulf takes part in. His first quest is being asked by King Hrothgar to travel to Denmark to help him and his warriors defeat Grendel, who has been attacking and killing the people of Denmark for the past 12 years.

The second being his fight with Grendel's mother who came for revenge for Grendel. The third being a dragon which awoke in Beowulf's homeland due to miners being too noisy. Another thing a hero needs is a weapon. In the story Beowulf wields three different swords. Hrunting which was given to him to fight Grendel's mother which was ineffective. The second weapon he used was The Giant's Sword, which he also used on Grendel's mother except this time he managed to kill the monster using the sword. The third weapon he used was Naegling, this weapon was given to him by the king. This sword like Hrunting also proved ineffective in the fight when it was melted by the Dragon's fire breath. All these different things prove exactly why Beowulf was a stereotypical epic hero. Although he dies in the end it's not all bad he died fighting for his country as the greatest and most powerful king Gealand has had. The people of Geatland showed great appreciation for their king of 50 years, by building him a tower so that his ashes may watch over his kingdom after he was gone.

Not only was Beowulf a stereotypical epic hero, he was also the true embodiment of what it meant to be an Anglo-Saxon. As an Anglo-Saxon Beowulf only idealized certain things such as treasure, power, fame, and companionship. Beowulf shows these ideologies many different times in the story. But first we need to understand why these ideologies are so important to Anglo-Saxon culture. They had three main virtues: *Lof*, *Wyrd*, and *comitatus*. *Lof* was the closest thing they had to an afterlife as they didn't believe there was a life after death, *lof* was a way they could live on through their story, which they would tell to friends who then would tell others. They also believe in the concept of *Wyrd* which was fate, they believed that whatever was destined for them at birth they couldn't know what happened to them. *Comitatus* was the most important, this was how they made friends that were loyal so that their story may be passed on and they could live on through fame and remembrance. Beowulf accomplished all these virtues;

he had loads of treasure, supreme power which he showed through his fifty year reign, where every nation dared not attack them. His name was recognized throughout the land and had a great tower built for him after his death by his companions, which they filled with treasures. Beowulf checks all these boxes with extreme measures, which makes him an Ideal Anglo-Saxon.

Beowulf's larger than life character is shown many times throughout the story. He is boastful, while knowing his limits, he cares for his people, but will also sacrifice them. We see these qualities shining throughout the book. Some of these qualities are not as dominant as the others, but above all his desire to win is the most predominant. We see this trait in lines 177-178 where it states "human eyes were watching his evil steps, waiting to see his swift hard claws". We see in these lines that Beowulf is waiting for Grendel to attack one of his men so that Beowulf can see how he fights, this shows his willingness to win as he lets one of his men die just so he may have a better chance of winning. Throughout the story he boasts many times to his men about his previous battles, up until his final boast where he foreshadows his potential death, knowing he will probably not make it back after his fight with the dragon. This boast in particular tells about his many achievements and his life being great, this final boast located in lines 655-663:

"I've worn this crown for fifty winters: no neighboring people have tried to threaten the Geats, sent soldiers against us or talked of terror. My days have gone by as fate willed, waiting for its word to be spoken, ruling as well as I knew how, swearing no unholy oaths seeking no lying wars." This shows the great reign of Beowulf.

In conclusion Beowulf is a great hero, great leader, and great person, the story of Beowulf portrays this in all aspects. He is a great role model for warriors.