

Study Guide for *Beowulf* and associated readings

Know the following terms from Hunt & Class:

Nicene Creed	Saxons	tonsure
<i>Vulgate Bible</i>	the ordeal	Synod of Whitby
Gibbon	<i>Laws of Aethelberht</i>	Green martyrdom
historiography	Anglo-Saxons	Merovingians
hagiography	Sutton Hoo	Carolingians
Huns	Writs	vassalage
Franks	Charters	
	Celts	

Know the following terms from *Beowulf*:

Grendel	Hrothgar	Ordeal
Unferth	Geat	Feud
<i>Comitatus</i>	Dane	Wiglaf
Heorot	<i>Scop</i>	Finnsburg episode

Intro & General

What modern country is the home of the Geats? (see map p. 97).

Why would a Christian Anglo-Saxon author have any interest in writing about Scandinavian pagans?

Describe Beowulf's relationship with Hrothgar and Hygelac.

Explain how the relationship between Beowulf and his *comitatus* influences the outcome of the poem.

Identify Beowulf's extraordinary physical feats. How do they affect his self-perception and reputation?

Explain how the *scop*'s Finnsburg episode addresses the customs of Germanic culture.

Compare Beowulf as a warrior to Beowulf as a king.

Consider the *Beowulf* poem as evidence of medieval fusion of Christian and Germanic cultures. How does the poem illuminate certain elements of that fusion?

Heorot

At what points in the poem do funerals occur?

Where does most of the first third of the poem take place?

Briefly interpret the meaning of Beowulf's conflict with Grendel.

Describe the combat between Beowulf and Grendel.

How does the poem characterize Hrothgar? How does Grendel threaten Hrothgar's status?

In what sense does the conflict between Beowulf and Grendel resemble the bilateral ordeal?

How is Hrothgar's description as the "ring giver" related to the cohesion of the *comitatus*?

What does the poem suggest the concerns and activities of women in Anglo-Saxon society?

Briefly describe the advice imparted in "Hrothgar's sermon."

Geatland

What does Beowulf do when he returns to Geatland?

Describe his relationship with Hygelac.

Examine the Christian symbolism behind Beowulf's abandonment by his followers in the face of the dragon.

Who incites the dragon's wrath?

What is the relationship between the Geats and Swedes.

What happens when Beowulf fights the dragon?

Explain Beowulf's tragic flaw and how it affects the story's narrative.

How does the poem end?

What evidence does the poem contain about the misguided or limited knowledge of pagan people?

Use evidence from the poem to explain how the poet treats the Danish pagans? See Frank and Hill articles.

