

The literary works,  
layer upon layer. the  
literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The epic poem Beowulf, whose author is unknown, not only captures a readers attention and opens up new doors to his imagination, it gives an extensive background to a significant period in history. Being one of the first major works of England, Beowulf introduced British Literature. The epic tells the adventures of a courageous hero named Beowulf. This renowned poem functions as a building block to British literature. Beowulf, serving as a prologue to British literature, introduced many new concepts that has been built upon and altered throughout the centuries; Two of these concepts include the rhythm and the fact that history and literature correspond. The rhythm of Beowulf, from the Anglo-Saxon age, depended upon accent and alliteration. Through four stressed syllables alternating with an indefinite number of unstressed ones and an abrupt pause within the middle of lines, the careful ear detects a musical effect.

Alliteration, the recurrence of the same first consonant sound in a line of poetry, commonly occurred in three out of four of the stressed syllables (Encarta). These methods of early rhythm set the basis for the accentuation for many subsequent British works. Writers in later times modified these new concepts to fit their own style and the technique of their time. Beowulf truly played a role in the cadence of British literature. Beowulf is an accumulation of preceding centuries, as in history and other literary works, layer upon layer. The literature of Anglo-Saxons stems directly out of their lifestyles. It gives characteristics to an ancient civilization, allowing present people to have an insight into the values, dreams, and ideals of men from the Anglo-Saxon time.

Concepts of the era included: fame, fate, and having a hero. The epic poem Beowulf exemplifies these attributes. Beowulf was known all over for his triumph of ridding many lands of evil fiends. His name and reputation traveled through word of mouth. He possessed the qualifications of a hero, being braver and stronger than anyone anywhere in this world (Raffel 27). Beowulf depicts the theme of fate in the words: God must decide who will be given to death's cold grip (Raffel 32).

The weakening of the ultimate power, Beowulf, is a result of destiny. If the Battle of Hastings never occurred, Britain would not be as man knows it today since a vital part of history was omitted. Literature follows the same guidelines. If Beowulf never existed, British literature would have taken on a different course.

History and literature work hand in hand, paralleling each other. British literature was prefaced by Beowulf, a story that presented concepts of literature that was added on to as time progressed; The repetition of accents and the similarity between history and literature are two examples. British literature is much like a ladder that continues growing. Each step is vital to the progression up the ladder. Beowulf serves as the first rung. In the absence of the initial step, advancing to the next level would be an impossible task.