

# Beowulf and his eternal quest for fame



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Andrew Strauss Mrs. Erami English 2H Period 7 February 2012 Beowulf and His Eternal Quest for Fame In our modern age, those who possess great talent in any given skill frequently attract a lot of attention; thus they generally become famous. Once the underdog, who usually embraces a humble attitude, starts to become popular and well-known, their personality makes a drastic shift; this new personality develops an egotistical and over-confident attitude, and their desire for fame and glory multiplies exponentially.

Regarding the epic poem, Beowulf, the concept of the “the out-of-towner” is thoroughly exemplified by the hero Beowulf; especially acknowledging the matter of Beowulf’s (slightly unequal) balance between his deserving and desiring of praise, glory, and fame. The fact that Beowulf is an epic hero cannot be denied, but this does not mean that he is perfect; his flaw lies in his arrogant ways and his longing for praise.

Beowulf certainly deserves the praise he receives (given that he slays two supernatural beings), and yet, even though he is glorified by the Danes, he still aggrandizes himself by telling stories of his bravery and courage (which may or may not be true); Beowulf also dramatically, and unnecessarily, announces that he will fight Grendel without sword or shield. By doing this, Beowulf confirms that he is seeking praise, especially when he brags about his accomplishments: They [The Danes] have seen my strength for themselves Have watched me rise from the darkness of war Dripping with my enemies' blood.

I drove Five great giants into chains. Chased All of that race from the earth. I swam In the blackness of night, hunting monsters Out of the ocean, and killing them one By one. Death was my errand and the fate They had earned. (151-159) From this speech, it can be derived that Beowulf is very obviously trying to impress the Danes and King Hrothgar by telling dramatic tales of his “ adventures”. Specifically, the last two lines of this excerpt reveal that Beowulf thinks (or at least wants everyone else to think) that it is his responsibility and obligation to kill the demons of the earth.

When he uses the term “ errand”, he suggests that he was sent by another being, possibly hinting that he considers, or believes, himself to be some form of a theocrat sent by God or divine figure. He again demonstrates his arrogance when he brags: “ That I, alone with the help of my men, will purge all evil from this hall...my hands alone shall fight for me. ” (165-66, 172-73). Beowulf says that he alone will complete this task, with the help of his men; this shows that he thinks of his men as insignificant and that he can do anything without any help.

This is what will eventually lead to his demise. Beowulf not only possesses characteristics of arrogance and ostentation, but also of great gallantry and nobility. These characteristics, however, are not evident until the later years of Beowulf’s life due to the self-absorption that he suffered from in his younger years. These new morals of selflessness and heroism are perfectly portrayed as Beowulf says to Wiglaf: “ Lead my people, help them; My time is gone. ” (808-09). Beowulf has only a few breaths left, and he uses them to designate an heir to protect the people that he cares so much about.

However, his selflessness is short-lived; for after he says those words, he then proceeds to request that Wiglaf: “ Have the brave Geats build me a tomb...build it here...so sailors can see this tower, and remember my name, and call it Beowulf’s tower. ” (809-15). Before he dies, Beowulf once again returns to his prideful and self-absorbed ways and requests a tower be built in his name. These last two quotes prove that Beowulf is neither fully selfish, and therefore does not always think of how he can receive praise, nor fully selfless, and so he cannot help but to strive to acquire praise from his people.

Beowulf’s personality has an interesting type of balance, one that seems to fluctuate back and forth throughout the poem. By the end of his life, Beowulf reaches a level of balance that seems to lean more towards his vain personality than his caring and generous personality. Nonetheless, this uneven sort of equilibrium is what allows Beowulf to be such a mighty warrior while maintaining his composure as a gentle king. In conclusion, 70% of Beowulf’s personality is composed of a materialistic way of life based on his quest for respect, admiration, and praise.

Beowulf’s other 30% is made up of a gentle, loving, and chivalrous king. The hero archetype does not necessarily always have to follow this balance between the desiring and deserving of praise. Beowulf is different from many heroes, and is the same as many other heroes; whether or not the hero deserves praise (opposed to simply desiring it) is dependent on the morale code, attitude, and ability to withstand the temptation to obsess over earthly ideals (such as the praising of the hero) which the hero may or may not have. Bibliography Excerpt from Beowulf. " Docstoc – Documents, Templates, <https://assignbuster.com/beowulf-and-his-eternal-quest-for-fame/>

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