

Beowulf vs macbeth: compare and contrast essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Literature is full of different genres and specific styles that help create varied works. The pieces of literature are imaginative and various writings that may be united under the genres and styles. However, even when the genres differ, it is possible to come across some specific similarities. This short essay aims to make a comparison of Beowulf and Macbeth – two outstanding pieces of British literature. Reading Beowulf, an Anglo Saxon poem, and Macbeth by William Shakespeare, the first impression is that they are not alike.

However, when one reads and compares Beowulf vs Macbeth, it becomes clear that a tragedy, the genre of Macbeth, and the epic poem, Beowulf's genre, have several similarities. However, the differences are more numerous. Comparing and contrasting the styles of these two plays, the similarities are more interesting for consideration as they are more difficult for identification.

It is important to point to the similarities in the two pieces of literature analyzed. How are Beowulf and Macbeth similar? They are as follows: the presentation of the heroes, the consideration of the ethical themes, and the final stages of the plays – the latter help to draw some ethical conclusions based on the peculiarity of the actions of the heroes.

It is not a secret that the presentation of the characters differs from genre to genre, however, reading both these pieces of literature, it becomes obvious that both heroes in the epic poem and in the tragedy are notable people full of brave intentions and desire to act in favor of the society. Who can Macbeth be compared to? He is a tragic hero who is a leader in the

community, possesses some particular extraordinary features. Here is how the author describes him,

For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—

Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,

Which smoked with bloody execution,

Like valor's minion carved out his passage

Till he faced the slave;

Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,

Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps,

And fixed his head upon our battlements (Shakespeare 8).

The characteristics of Beowulf is as follows, “ the hero had acted with flawless courage... he was the most famous of exiles, a protector of warriors, acknowledged among men for his valorous deeds, his remarkable strength – after Heremod's struggles came to an end, the eclipsed that hero (Beowulf 26)”.

The above quotes from the texts show that similarity is undeniable. Being tragic and epic characters, they are resembling in being the protectors and hopes for their societies.

The author presented their main characters in different genres as similar to no other styles could perform. Therefore, one can conclude that tragic and

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epic genres are identical in describing the main characters, the heroes of their times.

These two pieces of writing, tragic and epic, help consider the ethical and moral side of the discussion. Macbeth makes a severe mistake. His pride and self-assurance do not allow him to see all the warnings, and in the end, the hero dies being combated and destroyed.

The death of the main character is the characteristic feature of the tragedy as the genre. Macbeth stands on the path of violence, “ seeing himself at a point of no return” (Beardwood and Macdonell 7).

Shakespeare presents this part in the text as follows, “ Returning were as tedious as go o’er” (Shakespeare 89). Beowulf is also concerned with human values and moral choices. The epic heroes “ are capable of performing acts of great courage; they are also capable of suffering intensely for their deeds” (Warsh and Spring 22).

Thus, the ethical concern of the heroes is one more similarity in two pieces of writing. However, the close consideration of the moral actions of each of the heroes helps conclude that pride was the failure in Macbeth, while Beowulf managed to conserve the positive attitude of the society by means of his actions. Struggling with dragons and other dangerous creatures, Beowulf showed himself as a person of great courage and fearless performance, ambitious and able to cope with difficulties.

Of course, the tragedy and the epic poem contain more common themes that are presented in the plays, more problems that are solved and more

conclusions which allow the audience to create a personal opinion about the main character as the heroes who are the leaders of the society.

The final scenes are significant in understanding the primary purpose of the discussion. Considering Beowulf as the character who kills monsters for the benefit of the mankind, the authors wants the audience to look at him as not as on the fighter, but as on “ a large scale of the human history” (Warsh and Spring 23), even though the epic poems do not have the aim to present the history in the chronological order. Several specific situations are considered, and a reader can conclude the whole of humankind.

Macbeth has different conclusions where his mistakes become apparent. The death of the main character is the main characteristic feature of the play that offers audience food for thoughts about what could be in case Macbeth performed in another way. The human actions are the basis for analysis, and the reader should get the main idea of the last speeches.

She should have died hereafter.

There would have been a time for such a word.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time.

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing (Shakespeare 146).

These lines are full of pain to Lady Macbeth. However, even her death does not make Macbeth look at life from another angle. He understands what the warning says when it is too late.

Therefore, one can conclude that tragedy and epic poetry are two different genres. However, having considered the examples of Beowulf vs Macbeth, the former an Anglo Saxon poem, and the latter by William Shakespeare, one can conclude that there are several similarities between these two plays.

The features of the main characters, their goals as the leaders of the society, the moral and ethical lessons, and the final scenes which are the most important in understanding the main idea of the plays are the things that make Beowulf and Macbeth similar. Tragedy and epic poems are different genres aimed at achieving various goals using particular methods; however, the plays under consideration help to conclude that the similarities are also possible even within multiple genres.

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