

Beowulf essay example

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



The epic poem Beowulf is one of the most well-known and outstanding poems which keeps its own important place within the borders of the Old English literature. It is a heroic, epic poem, which means that both its context and form follow the rules of epic poetry. It consists of 3182 verses and like most epic poems, it begins its story in 'media res', which means that it begins in the middle of things. The thematic core of this epic poem is the heroic actions and performance of the main leading male figure of the poem. There is a warrior who is called Beowulf and he is responsible to fight against the monster Grendel who is terrorizing the area. The poem is considered to have been written approximately in the 7th century and it is based on a real historical event. The invasion of King Hygelac in Frizia is the real historical event on which the hypothesis of the epic poem is based. All the events of the poem take place after the establishment of the Anglo-Saxons in England. Therefore the poem depicts the main characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon society and the mentality and ideology of the social norm of that era. It has been considered that the main leading idea of the poem is the bond between the lord and his retainer(s). The aim of this essay is to demonstrate the truth lying in the following statement: 'Beowulf demonstrates that the relationship between a lord and his retainer(s) was perhaps the most important bond in the Anglo-Saxon society.' The essay will present you with an analysis of this relationship as depicted through the hypothesis of the poem and will conclude in showing that this is its main thematic core around which all events evolve and develop.

Since the poem is a constant narration of the on-going battles which are performed on behalf of Beowulf, it is easy to realize that the main ethical and

heroic values depicted in the poem are the values of a society which is based on the heroic ideology. Men are supposed to be brought up in such a way that they become heroes. The definition of the hero is the man who is willing to sacrifice his life in the name of his country's protection. Courage, loyalty and generosity are the main ethical principles upon which males were brought up. They were brought up so that they would have the courage to fight against any kind of an enemy who would endanger the protection of their country and their leaders. It is clear through this poem that at that times the country was identified as the area which was ruled by a certain, particular king. The opening passage of the poem introduces readers to the main principle concerning identity in that era of the narration. Every male was recognized and known as the son of his father. As a result the family bonds were of great importance since the history of each one's family was the living proof of the family's history and continuance in time. Therefore, the king was the lord, the leader of all the greatest family which was considered to be the race representing a nation's and a country's identity. The closest bond developed within a man's soul, ever since each man was born, was the bond between this man and his lord. A man meant nothing if there was not loyalty on his behalf towards his lord. A man knew nothing of what or who he was if he did not recognize himself as the retainer of his king. This had nothing to do with slavery or blind obedience. This was an internal belief which was burning inside each man's soul like a fire. The relationship developed between a man and his master was the belief that this master, the king was the reason why the man had to fight for. The king was not a single person. He was the symbol which represented the nation's

identity.

Both parts of the poem, the first and the second one focus on the heroism of Beowulf but under a different aspect. In the first part of the poem, readers witness the heroism of Beowulf in his youth. So, readers witness the loyalty which Beowulf has for his lord. It is this strong bond which reinforces the young warrior to overcome his fears, his hesitations and his human nature. This strong bond turns into the source of his heroism. This bond turns into the most powerful bond in the Anglo-Saxon society. This is clear in all the poem. In the second part of the poem, Beowulf has become the king himself. He shows his heroism as a king who is committed to offering his services in the name of his people and retainers. The strong bond developed between the lord and his retainers is the main characteristic of the poem and the Anglo- Saxon society it depicts.

As a result, it is clear that the most important bond in the Anglo-Saxon society is the bond which is developed between the lord and his retainer. This is a bond which turns into the foundation of an interactive relationship which is the powerful source for any kind of action within the borders of the Anglo-Saxon society. It is a bond which turns into the faith which motivates any kind of action and behavior. People of the Anglo-Saxon society live and act according to what this strong feeling leads them to do.

Works cited

Baker, Peter. Peter S., *The Beowulf, Reader: Basic Readings*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.