

Beowulf as the ideal epic hero

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Beowulf as the Ideal Epic Hero Beowulf is an epic poem written back in the Anglo-Saxon time period. In this story the main character, Beowulf, is characterized as arguably the ideal epic hero thus fitting the standard of readers in its time. He is equipped with superhuman strength seen countless times within the text. He is fearless and oversaturated with bravery and courage even when the threat of death lingers around every monster slain. His leadership skills are made evident through his people. And he is larger than life throwing his into the hands of fate countless times for the good of others and immortal glory. Beowulf is the ideal epic hero through his superhuman physical strength, much idolized by the people of the Anglo-Saxon time period. He fought in numerous battles with the odds clearly against him. In his argument with Unferth, Beowulf explains the reason he "lost" his swimming match with his youthful opponent, Brecca. Not only had Beowulf been swimming for seven nights, but he had also stopped to kill nine sea creatures in the depths of the ocean. Beowulf's strength is palpable in his battle with Grendel as well. In this epic battle of good versus evil, Beowulf refuses to fight with weapons or clothing in order to avoid disgracing his King's name with such unfairness. With pure strength and brutality he rips the "arm, claw, and shoulder and all" right out of Grendel proving that "[Beowulf] who of all the men on earth was the strongest." Shortly after this epic battle, Beowulf is faced with yet another challenge, the wrath of Grendel's mother. And when pursued Beowulf's only way out of the fight alive is to slay the monster with a sword crafted for giants hanging on the wall in the dwelling of the battle. Using the giant's sword he acquires the head of the monster, carrying it from the dwelling with ease. The same head

took four men to lift and carry back to Herot. All of these examples happen in just the first half of the book defining Beowulf's strength, which is a key trait to any epic hero of Anglo-Saxon creation. Beowulf is the ideal epic hero through his fearlessness and bravery. Upon request, Beowulf sails out to Denmark to aid Hrothgar in defeating the evil monster, Grendel. The fact that Grendel had been terrorizing Herot for twelve years taking no mercy upon its inhabitants didn't even phase the epic hero. He marches in and fails to even hesitate in declaring his challenge to Grendel. And although countless attempts on Grendel's life had been tried, Beowulf prepares for battle shedding his armor and sword claiming that if Grendel fought with his hands then so would he. In the conclusion of the epic poem, Beowulf, old and wise, still fights for his people against that of most vicious creatures, the dragon. He feels the end of his days and decides to still do right by his people and slay the dragon that had torched down so many homes. This fearlessness and bravery gives Beowulf another critical trait to epic heroism. Beowulf is the ideal epic hero through his superb leadership. He ruled his home of Geatland for fifty winters. Before this though, the reader learns that Beowulf had refused the crown once before. His people came to him before the next in line by blood because of his superb leadership! Beowulf put his people even before his own life when it came time to slay the dragon. And he demanded that his assets be delivered to his people if he were to die in the battle. We see more evidence of his leadership in his absence after his death when a woman foretells of bad times ahead of Geatland without mighty Beowulf. She insists that it was his leadership that kept the land together and his fights that drove back the enemies. This leadership and ability to put

the greater good ahead of even his own life is yet another classic trait of the epic hero. Beowulf is the ideal epic hero in every way. His quest for glory and fame is admirable. His strength is amazing. His bravery is remarkable and fearlessness defining. His leadership is everlasting. Such words are words to describe Gods and lords not mere men. Beowulf is characterized as much more than mortal though. His superhuman abilities make him larger than life and his glory allows him to live forever. Beowulf is an ideal epic hero of epic proportions.