

Anglo-saxon period (449-1066) essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Major Works

* The Seafarer: tells the story of one man's struggles as he faces his fate of life on the sea * Elegy: genre of poetry that mourns a person's death or something lost * The ending of the poem has a shift in tone. Why? May be two poems put together (two different writers) * The first tone: no faith/no hope, loneliness

* The second tone: has faith, spiritual yearning, religious * The poem illustrates that one major life goal of the Anglo-Saxons was fame, so that they could live on after death. * The monk who copied down the poem and changed the ending to make it more Christian. * Beowulf: an epic poem that tells the story of the hero Beowulf, as he fights three enemies: Grendel, Grendel's mom, and a dragon. * Discuss 3 examples of imagery in the poem.

* Summer - being happy, together

* Angels in Heaven

* Funeral - death

Plot Outline for Beowulf

* Beowulf first comes to the aid of King Hrothgar, leader of the Danes, who lives at a mead-hall called Heorot. (this was set in modern-day Denmark) * Beowulf is challenged by Unferth, one of Hrothgar's men, who says he wasn't as great/heroic as he claimed to be (the swimming challenge) Brecca <— swimming challenge * Grendel is killing and eating Hrothgar's men

* Beowulf tears off his arm, and Grendel retreats to his underwater lair, where he dies. * Then, Grendel's mom comes to avenge his death by killing Aeschere <— Hrothgar's best friend * Beowulf chases after her, and dives

down into the lake to her underground liar. * There, his sword doesn't work, and she ruins it. But he finds a sword created by giants that has the power to hurt her, and he kills her. He also cuts off Grendel's head, takes it back to Hrothgar as proof that he killed them. (stabs her in neck) * Years later, Beowulf is King of Geats. A thief in his land angers a dragon by stealing his gold, so he goes to slay the dragon. * Beowulf is injured by the dragon, so Wiglaf comes to his aid, when all the other men run away. Wiglaf and Beowulf together defeat the dragon, but Beowulf is killed. * Beowulf gives Wiglaf: his shield (protection of the people), his golden-necklace (royalty), and his helmet (leadership) * The people bury Beowulf in a great tower (barrow) with all of the treasure he had found, as a sign of their respect for him. * Beowulf achieves the ultimate goal of an Anglo-Saxon warrior: fame and glory after death. Concepts and Vocabulary

* Scops – the bards, or story-tellers who would recite poems like Beowulf *
Kenning – a metaphor expressed as a compound noun to describe a person or place * Grendel – the terrible walker-alone

* Hrothgar – the old ring-giver (king)

* Sea – the whale-road

* Archetype – a pattern for plot, character, or setting in literature * Caesura – a pause or break in the middle of a line of poetry * Enjambment – a run-on line of poetry

* Alliteration – repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words *

Assonance – repetition of vowel sounds

* Consonance – repetition of consonant sounds in the middle of words Epic

Heroes: Characteristics

- * Epic Heroes had the power and status of a god.
- * They were still subject to human sadness and difficulties (challenges) * Is usually the founder of something new
- * He must go on a quest and leave his old life behind

Anglo Saxon Beliefs (found in their poetry):

- * The Afterlife: there is no afterlife. Instead the only way to live on after death was through fame (being remembered by others) * Heroes were valued for their strength and courage, rather than wisdom. * Kings were expected to be generous with their followers as a sign of their leadership ability. * Riches, gifts were a way of showing respect for others
- * Above all else, the Anglo-Saxon's valued community and stuck together.

What does an epic do for its culture?

- * Creates a common story to bind a culture together
- * Expresses the beliefs and values of that culture

The language:

- * Old English (Anglo-Saxon). Beowulf is the earliest (oldest) recorded work to be written in Old English, which makes it the first piece of English Literature.

Anglo-Saxon history

- * The Romans invaded England in 55 BC, but left by AD 409. * William the Conqueror defeated the Anglo-Saxons in 1066. * Country was originally called Britain; the first inhabitants were Celts or Britons (a group of Celts) *
- 55 BC: The Romans invade Britain and create a 400 year period of political

stability * 409 AD: The Romans leave (to defend their fatherland against Italy) * 410-448: Britain is “ free” from major invasion

* 449: The Angles and Saxons (from Germany) and Jutes (from Denmark) arrive; the country becomes known as Engla land or England. * Late 800s (9th century): King Alfred and his descendants unite Anglo-Saxon England (against the Danes), and Christianity provides a common faith. * 1066: William the Conqueror (Duke of Normandy) comes from France and defeats the Anglo-Saxons, introducing feudalism to Britain. Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon literature

* Sang about heroic deeds

* Often warriors

Main Anglo-Saxon genres

* Epics

* Elegies

* Riddles

Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon poetry

* Doesn't rhyme

* Alliteration

* Assonance

* Kenning

* Caesura

* Enjambment

* 4 strong beats per line

Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon people

- * Admired courage
- * Loyal to king and tribe
- * Liked to fight
- * Loved adventure
- * Believed in wyrd
- * Superstitious
- * Creative
- * Desired fame
- * Boastful