

Chivalric code in beowulf

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



The Importance of the Retainer and King in the Heroic Code Members of the Anglo-Saxon warrior society subscribed to an ethos that celebrated the heroic code. In the passage from *Beowulf*, the poet's interest in the duties of a loyal retainer and the duties of a great king are evident in the specific language he uses to describe Beowulf's encounter with the dragon. In one specific passage of this poem, Beowulf is portrayed as an ideal retainer by the loyalty, courage and fealty to the king he possesses.

At the beginning of this passage, Beowulf reflects on King Hygelac and the many sacrifices and deeds he provided to Beowulf during his youth. A sorrowful mood is brought upon this specific text, as Beowulf reminisces on the death of Hygelac, " I marched ahead of him, always there/ at the front of the line; and I shall fight like that/ for as long as I live..." (Beowulf 2497-2499). Beowulf acknowledges how privileged he is to have a life of luxury and obtain such wisdom inherited by Hygelac.

If it was not for Hygelac, Beowulf would not have survived such a long, prosperous life, mentoring Hygelac's son and soon holding the throne himself. As Beowulf prepares to fight the dragon, he easily allows the warriors to stand their place and not go any further. Demonstrating his courage, Beowulf states: This fight is not yours, nor is it up to any man except me to measure his strength against the monster or to prove his worth.

I shall win the gold by my courage, or else mortal combat, doom of battle, will bear your lord away. (2532-2535) He believes that terminating the dragon is the duty only he can accomplish as well as longing for a feeling of satisfaction as he seeks the glory of winning the battle and knowing he has

demolished the risk of danger his people will have to face. Based on the duration of this poem, Beowulf is accustomed to the warrior duties and later on the lifestyle of a king. These two titles have very distinct roles in Anglo-Saxon society.

Beowulf, as a young warrior need not much to worry about status and having the knowledge that his people are safe and satisfied. He then gains wisdom as he witnesses Hygelac's form of generosity towards him and his people, "The treasures that Hygelac lavished on me...He gave me land/ and the security land brings, so he had no call/ to go looking for some lesser champion," (2490-2494). Beowulf demonstrates Hygelac as a loyal lord, true to his people; in return Beowulf brings himself forward as a tribute to fight the dragon.

As Beowulf earns the chance to hold the throne as king later on in the poem, it is evident that the responsibilities he held were much to his advantage when the time of battle arose against the dragon. His full awareness, "...as king of the people I shall pursue this fight/ for the glory of winning, if the evil one will only/ abandon his earth-fort and face me in the open. '" (2513-2515) Beowulf, as king and warrior only interprets as a right-doing to go into battle with the dragon, knowing his life is at risk.

Towards the conclusion of this passage, Beowulf falls and has no choice but, "to give ground like that and go/ unwillingly to inhabit another home/ in a place beyond;" (2588-2590). Beowulf is true to his fellow citizens and attempts to provide to their needs even if it means losing the battle and sacrificing his life, which was the case in this poem. From this passage, it is evidently shown that Beowulf can not only hold a title of a loyal retainer with

his endless amount of courage but also a grand lord, with unlimited sacrifice to his citizens. Word Count: 578