

Beowulf paper

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In the poem *Beowulf*, translated by Seamus Heaney, Beowulf is the ultimate hero who places himself at great risks to perform multiple acts of courage. Beowulf is the typical heroic story of good versus evil. He has great amounts of physical strength in which he uses to put his life on the line for the entire kingdom. Beowulf's pursuit moves him from Geatland to Denmark on a quest to help Hrothgar's kingdom that had been plagued of attacks by an evil monster named Grendel. He also goes on to defeat Grendel's mother and battles a fire-breathing dragon.

Eradicating Grendel and Grendel's mother bring justice and peace to the Scandinavian society, while Beowulf receives much fame. The story goes on to define his pursuit of fame through his three main battles, moving from a warrior perspective, to one of a king. Beowulf's quest brings him to change his responsibilities. The ideals of a once young warrior develop into a more experienced man that comes to rule the community of Geatland. A warrior trying to establish himself in the world ultimately has a goal striving for fame.

One seeks fame through bravery in the face of danger, having much strength, despising death, and boasting about their accomplishments (SparkNotes Editors). Beowulf searched for individual fame and glory for his entire life. His pursuit to become a hero was strong enough to take on the evils of the world. He was able to achieve individual fame upon hearing of Hrothgar's troubles with Grendel. He set sail to gain personal fame and to help the community of Heorot. The people of Hrothgar's land found Beowulf to be a hero for he was about to rid them of their enemy.

But Unferth thinks differently and challenges Beowulf's stating "no matter therefore, how you may have fared in every bout and battle until now, this time you'll be worsted; no one has ever outlasted an entire night against Grendel" (37). Unferth challenges Beowulf's heroic character. Unferth bitterly attacks Beowulf, which clearly reveals Unferth's jealousy towards him. Unferth feels below Beowulf. He cannot protect his own land because he is afraid of Grendel. Unferth will not be a warrior who obtains fame nor will he be a heroic warrior.

No one will remember Unferth as a great legend; rather he falls into a category of one who is bitter (SparkNotes Editors). This goes to show that the quest for fame can lead to harm. In Unferth's case, the quest for fame led to pride, which involved a desire to be great no matter what. Beowulf desired to be great but his desire for fame was associated with the desire to bring strength and power to one's people. Beowulf connected fame with generosity and community while Unferth mixed pride up with greed and selfishness, for he wanted to succeed.

Beowulf ultimately succeeds in killing Grendel and Grendel's mother in two heroic battles in which he used his bare hand strength to defeat the two monsters. Beowulf is ultimately a great example of what a hero is. A hero will always fight to win a battle, but does so in a fair manner. Beowulf, for example does not use a sword in the midst of the battle between Grendel and he. "He began to remove his iron breast-mail, took off the helmet and handed his attendant the patterned sword, a smith's masterpiece, ordering him to keep the equipment guarded.

And before he bedded down, Beowulf, the prince of goodness, proudly asserted: ‘ when it comes to fighting, I count myself as dangerous any day as Grendel. So it won’t be a cutting edge I’ll wield. He has no idea of the arts of war, of shield or sword-play, although he does possess a wild strength. No weapons, therefore for either night; unarmed he shall face me if face me he dares’” (47). Instead he uses his very own strength, courage, and ability to kill the enemy. Beowulf is so strong, courageous, faithful and loyal that it can be questioned whether he is truly man or myth.

He posse’s hero like strength that is superior to the normal human man. He truly did do whatever he needed to save and protect the people (Beowulf Papers). Death was not a fear that crossed his mind for he was not afraid of it! A hero is one who is not seen very often and there are only a few great heroes that come about in time (Beowulf Papers). They are a step above the average. A hero brought peace to situations that were before seen as impossible and bring joy to many people. A task such as defeating Grendel’s mom’s grip in battle, is one that only a hero could perform for it was impossible for others (SparkNotes Editors).

What others deem impossible, a hero makes possible (Beowulf Papers)! Beowulf can ultimately be defined as a hero. Can the reward of fame for being a brave warrior only be achieved through worldly success? It seems that this is true but Hrothgar tries to advice Beowulf of eternal rewards. “ O flower of warriors, beware of the trap. Choose, dear Beowulf, the better part, eternal rewards. Do not give way to pride. For a brief while your strength is in bloom but I fades quickly; and soon there will follow illness or the sword to

lay you low, or a sudden fire or surge of water or jabbing blade or javelin from the air or repellent age.

Your piercing eye will dim and darken; and death will arrive, dear warrior, to sweep you away”(121). Hrothgar become a father figure to the young Beowulf. He does not want to see Beowulf give way to pride. This piece of advice is jarring with the culture of boasts and reputation that other parts of the poem emphasize (SparkNotes Editors). Life is also brief and he should look towards those rewards that may be eternal rather than the reward of fame. This passage portrays a fragile outlook on Beowulf’s delicate life that can be taken away at any time and the fact that his youth will indeed fade quickly (SparkNotes Editors).

He may not only be stabbed which will wound, but he will also lose his youth as time goes on. Beowulf needs to focus on honor, nobility, and leadership, not just on his physical skill and strength (SparkNotes Editors). Beowulf had no fear, and desired personal praise, while Hrothgar had much to lose and valued protecting his people. Each of these two roles filled two different sets of shoes, and each character acted as society expected. With that said, over the course of the poem Beowulf does grow from a courageous warrior to a wise leader.

Hrothgar’s speeches emphasized stability and security for his people and this was shown through him building the mead hall for the people to gather. He also demonstrates loyal service to his warriors by giving them lavish gifts and much praise. Beowulf transitions from a young warrior into the King of the Geats and he does exemplify much of the characteristics and values of

Hrothgar. At the end of the story though, after fifty years of serving his people, Beowulf encounters a battle with a dragon and this battle conflicts with his warrior and king duties for he was a king and the state needed him.

Beowulf, old and tired, defeats the dragon that was frightening all the people, but he does lose his life, leaving the Geats open for attack. Was this the wrong act? It is hard to decipher between the two roles for they were conflicting and the tension between the two was inevitable. Even near death, Beowulf did wish for a lighthouse that be built so people could find there way back from sea showing his never ending concern for the Geats. Beowulf was not afraid of death and before any battle he made a wish that his assets be given to the people. In life or death, Beowulf will be glorified.

Epic battles, terrifying monsters, extraordinary strength, and great leadership; these characteristics and encounters are what make up the epic hero that is Beowulf (Definition Of Hero On The Web). The heroism exemplified by Beowulf is defined by many different qualities. A hero is again defined by his willing to put himself at great risk for the greater good. The monsters that invaded the Heorot land were all outsiders that existed beyond the boundaries of human realms. Beowulf was forced to kill the two beasts in order to restore order because Grendel and his mother had infringed upon human society.

Fame was a theme touched based on throughout the poem. Fame was part of Beowulf's quest, but Hrothgar left an impression on Beowulf's values. He reminded him that his fame and strength are not always going to be available to him. His life is fragile and he could not only be killed, but his

youth clock is ticking. Beowulf is painted as a perfect hero in the form of the protagonist in the poem. The poem consists of three central conflicts, which include Grendel's rage of Heorot Hall, Grendel's mother becoming vengeful because of her sons death, and the dragon's rage over Geatland.

The difference between a good warrior and a good king was also a theme in which was observed through the poem. What others deem impossible, Beowulf made possible! References Heaney, Seamus. *Beowulf: a New Verse Translation*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000. Print. SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on Beowulf." SparkNotes. com. SparkNotes LLC. 2003. Web 22 Apr. 2010. Definition Of Hero On The Web. GoogleSearch. Web. 20 Apr. 2010. Paradine, Gerald. "Hero Paper." Beowulf Papers. Web. 19 Apr.