

English 4 Honors/DE

Fall 2011

Beowulf Questions

Section 1 Homework Category: 25: points

BEOWULF AND GRENDEL (lines 1-1250)

[Prologue: The Rise of the Danish Nation] (lines 1-85)

1. Realize that this prologue introduces the Danes, not Beowulf or his people the Geats. What was unusual about the way Shield came to be ruler of the Danes? What was his funeral like? What relation is Hrothgar to Shield?

[Heorot is Attacked] (lines 86-188)

1. What magnificent work did Hrothgar undertake? Who attacked it, and with what result? How long did the attacks last? What was the response of the Danes?

[The Hero Comes to Heorot] (lines 189-490)

1. What does Beowulf do when he hears of Hrothgar's problems with Grendel?
2. Whom do the Geats first meet when they arrive in Denmark? What does he do, and what do they do?
3. They next meet Hrothgar's herald. Who is he? What does he tell them? What does he tell Hrothgar? What does Hrothgar respond? Are you surprised that Hrothgar knows Beowulf so well?
4. What does Beowulf tell Hrothgar when he enters? What did Hrothgar do for Beowulf's father?

[Feast at Heorot] (lines 491-661)

1. What does Unferth accuse Beowulf of? How does Beowulf answer him? How is this episode relevant to the poem as a whole? What does Beowulf accuse Unferth of?
2. What is Queen Wealhtheow doing during the feasting?

[The Fight with Grendel] (lines 662-835)

1. Heroic poetry normally has a scene in which the hero arms for battle. What is different about Beowulf's preparations for his fight with Grendel?
2. What happens when Grendel enters Heorot? How does Beowulf fight with him? What happens when Grendel tries to leave? Does Grendel escape? What does he leave behind?

[Celebration at Heorot] (lines 836-1250)

1. When the Danes and Geats return from following Grendel's tracks to the mere, someone sings in Beowulf's presence, comparing him to Sigemund and saying that he was not like Heremod (lines 883-914). How is Beowulf like Sigemund? How is

he not like Heremod? (Be alert for inserted stories such as this one. *Beowulf* contains many of them, most much more complex than this one.)

2. How does Hrothgar respond to Beowulf's deed? What does he offer to do for him? What does Unferth have to say now?
3. The singer sings of Finn during the feasting (lines 1070-1158). The exact details of the Finn story are not clear, but in general, what happens? What does it suggest about the wisdom of using a woman as bride to heal enmity between tribes?
4. When the feasting resumes, what does Wealhtheow ask Hrothgar not to do?
5. Wealhtheow gives Beowulf a large, broad necklace. What later happens to it? What does Wealhtheow ask Beowulf to do?
6. Why do so many men remain in the beer hall to sleep? Why is it a mistake?