

First Name Last Name

Class name

Professor Name

Date

Literary Analysis Thesis and Outline for Beowulf task

- I. Introduction (the introduction should start with a hook or attention getter, a bridge that provides context about the author/time period/poem, then your thesis statement)
 - Hook: Beowulf is an ancient epic poem that delves into the inner world of heroism, the complexities of human life, the quest for glory, and the inevitable arrival of death.
 - Bridge: Beowulf, a poem written by an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet in the 8th-10th centuries, is a mixture of pagan themes and Christian themes. The poem takes place in the Anglo-Saxons period and tells about the exploits of Beowulf, a warrior, who overpowers monstrous creatures and then encounters the final demon, death.
- A. Thesis Statement: In Beowulf, the poet discusses the nuances of heroism by portraying Beowulf as a hero and an anti-hero, through his self-centeredness, speech, and irresponsible desire to gain fame and mortality through imagery, setting, characterization, historical, social and cultural context.
- II. Body (each body paragraph should have a topic sentence, evidence, explanation, analysis of the evidence, and then connect back to the thesis)

1. Imagery and Setting: The Fleeting Nature of Heroism in Beowulf

- The theme of the evanescent quality of heroism is supported by the imagery in Beowulf.
- The setting of Beowulf is early medieval Scandinavia, with cold, untrustworthy landscapes and bleak, shadowy lairs of the monsters, depicting the realities and ethical struggles the heroes in the stories encounter (Greenblatt et al., par. 3).
- The difference in the imagery of both the darkness and menacing scene of the mere and the light of the initial triumphs of Beowulf underlines the conflict between good and evil.
- The idealistic and proud nature of Beowulf is contrasted with the anarchic environment of the Grendel cave and the cave of the dragon, as a symbol of mortality and evil (Doris 63). His youthful arrogance leads to his somber final battle with the dragon, and the plot is used to show how he understands that glory is a fleeting thing.
- By the third-person point of view and figurative language, the poem brings out the certainty of death and the transient nature of heroism.

2. Characterization of Beowulf: From Heroic Arrogance to Somber Wisdom

- The characterization of Beowulf highlights the complexities of heroism.
- When he was young, he had a desire to be glorified, and he boasted that he would kill the fiend with his hands, displaying pride and invincibility. He is called with different names, like “*the son of*

Ecgtheow” to show that he had done remarkable deeds. (Greenblatt et al., par. 19).

- The personification, such as the description of the mother of Grendel as a wolfish swimmer, highlights the war against evil and death (Beasley 2).
- When Beowulf grows old, his personality changes. His last fight is recognition of his mortality as he says, “*I am firm to do an earl’s brave deed*”, and his intonation is somber as compared to his previous triumphant voice (The Poetry Foundation 115).
- The characterization change in Beowulf represents a larger idea in the poem, as it illustrates how the quest for glory, though noble, is ultimately short-lived.

3. Historical, Social, and Cultural Context: Death as the Ultimate Equalizer

- The historical, social, political, and cultural heritage of Beowulf adds to its discussion of heroism and mortality.
- The poem is an expression of warrior ethics, given that the Anglo-Saxon culture at the time placed importance on power, honor, and fidelity (Greenblatt et al., pars. 1–2).
- It is ironic that Beowulf, despite his status as a hero and his ambition for immortality, dies because of the inevitability of death.
- The dragon is an allegory and a symbol of the certainty of death, and Grendel and his mother are allegorical figures of forces of evil that

cannot be controlled (Buys 4). The allusion to Cain has a Christian touch, which symbolizes sin.

- The symbols, allegories, and allusions enhance the message in the poem that death, the ultimate equalizer, will come even to the greatest heroes.

III. Conclusion

- A. Beowulf employs imagery, characterization, tone, and symbols to pass on an elaborate message regarding heroism and mortality.
- B. The poet uses lively pictures and figurative language to explain how glory is temporary and death is inevitable. The transformation of a young and proud Beowulf to accepting mortality highlights the ambiguity of heroism, and the symbolic meaning of the dragon and the reference to Cain support the inevitability of death.
- C. In the end, Beowulf teaches us that the most tremendous heroes have to face the natural fate that awaits all mankind.

Works Cited

- Beasley, Haley. *Grendel's Mother: Defying the Feminine Gender Norms*. 2022. *Google Scholar*, <https://aquila.usm.edu/rgss/4/>.
- Buys, Kathryn Denise. *The Dragon as a Figure and Symbol in English Literature*. With John Ronald Reuel (1892-1973) Tolkien et al., 2022. California State University, Bakersfield, M.A. *ProQuest*, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2677027855/abstract/AC4FDBCA7F8C4883PQ/1>.
- Doris, Paschal-Mbakwe. "A Closer Look at Anglo-Saxon Masterpiece Beowulf: A Timeless Tale of Heroism and Mortality." *ESTAGA: JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2024, pp. 61–75.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Shorter 11th edition, vol. 1, 2024, <https://nerd.wwnorton.com/nerd/277293/r/goto/cfi/52!/4>.
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