

English 10

Ideas for *Beowulf* Papers and Projects

Due dates:

Test (if you have chosen Option 1): Wednesday 14 November

Project: Monday 19 November

****We are having workdays in class all week and no additional homework. The work you produce should represent a little more than 6 hours of work, counting in-class time and 30 minutes of homework/night.**

Choose from either section I or II.

Option I. Take a test and complete a creative project. If you choose this option, the test will consist of 4 (of 5) passages, take about 20 minutes, and count 25% of your total grade for this project

1. Make a model of Heorot. This should be an artistically mature object (suitable for 10th grade) that sheds light on the ideas we have highlighted from *Beowulf*.
2. Recite a selection of Heaney's translation; choose for drama or importance; 25 lines minimum.
3. Study the Anglo-Saxon pronunciation, using a credible audio source. Recite the opening of the poem, at least the first 11 lines, in the Old English.
4. With a partner, make a video in which you reenact key scenes from the poem—you should have reasonable costumes and think about cinematography. Include an artists' statement in which you detail your choices (and what they add to our reading of the text) and establish the rubric by which you should be graded.
5. With a partner, make a video in which you reenact a key scene from *Beowulf* and juxtapose it with thematically related scenes from *The Iliad* or the Bible. Be sure that your choices add value to our reading of *Beowulf*. Include an artists' statement in which you make clear your intentions.

Option II. Write an academic paper about *Beowulf*. See the choices below. These topics are just to get you started; you are not obligated to hit all points of a prompt as long as what you are doing is sufficiently analytical and exigent. You'll check in with your thesis at any rate.

1. The Christianity passages. Consider the passages that make overt connections to the Judeo-Christian God or to Bible stories. What do they add to our sense of the values of the text? How do they affect our reading? Passages are (ll. 99-114, ll. 679-687, ll. 1260-1274, ll. 1840-1854, ll. 2724-2728) and you may use any combination of these or others.

2. Monsters and monstrosity. What does it mean to be a monster? What do Grendel, his mother, and the dragon symbolize? How do the values they embody contrast with the values of Heorot?

3. The purpose of treasure. What is the purpose of treasure within the social structure of the Geats and the Danes? When does treasure lose its meaning?

4. The role of the stories outside of the main narrative of Beowulf's conquests and death. What do you make of the stories we hear about King Heremod, Hildeburh, Queen Modthryth, Heardred, and so on? Choose to focus on one substantial story, or to consider several stories and their contributions to the overall epic.

5. The role of fate. What is the role of fate in the epic? What is the relationship of fate to Beowulf's boasts and to the various outcomes of Beowulf's battles? Does Beowulf fulfill his fate when he faces the dragon alone, or does he make a bad decision?

6. The role of the mead-hall. What is the symbolism of the mead-hall in the Dane-Geat society? What are the implications of Grendel's destruction of Heorot?

7. Style: kennings and/or alliterative verse. What do elements of style contribute to the epic as a whole? As mentioned in class, you should use kennings alone or kennings and alliterative verse (but not only alliterative verse, as the text is in translation). Be sure you are focused on the effects of the stylistic choices rather than their mere presence in the text (i.e., more the "how" than the "what").