

Applied Practice
in

Beowulf

PRE-AP/AP**

Translated by Burton Raffel

RESOURCE GUIDE

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APPLIED PRACTICE
Resource Guide
Beowulf
Pre-AP*/AP* Version

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GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

- absolute**—a word free from limitations or qualifications (“best,” “all,” “unique,” “perfect”)
- adage**—a familiar proverb or wise saying
- ad hominem* argument**—an argument attacking an individual’s character rather than his or her position on an issue
- allegory**—a literary work in which characters, objects, or actions represent abstractions
- alliteration**—the repetition of initial sounds in successive or neighboring words
- allusion**—a reference to something literary, mythological, or historical that the author assumes the reader will recognize
- analogy**—a comparison of two different things that are similar in some way
- anaphora**—the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of consecutive lines or sentences
- anecdote**—a brief narrative that focuses on a particular incident or event
- antecedent**—the word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers
- antithesis**—a statement in which two opposing ideas are balanced
- aphorism**—a concise statement that expresses succinctly a general truth or idea, often using rhyme or balance
- apostrophe**—a figure of speech in which one directly addresses an absent or imaginary person, or some abstraction
- archetype**—a detail, image, or character type that occurs frequently in literature and myth and is thought to appeal in a universal way to the unconscious and to evoke a response
- argument**—a statement of the meaning or main point of a literary work
- asyndeton**—a construction in which elements are presented in a series without conjunctions

VOCABULARY LIST FOR *BEOWULF*

Note: Vocabulary from the literary passage is listed first, followed by vocabulary from the questions and answers.

Passage 1

tribute
mail
spoils
gabled
spawned
brood
lair
laments
reparation
plundering
heathen
solace

meticulousness
dispassionate
fawning
laudatory
elegiac
pedantic
obsequious
maudlin

Passage 2

prow
sentinels
smith
mead
linden

rash
arduous
impudent

Passage 3

furrows
reprisal
afflicted

discursive
didactic
anecdotal
expository
terse
groveling
strident
magnanimous
diffident
concession
rebuttal
equivocation
exposition
digression

Directions: This part consists of selections from *Beowulf* and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question.

Note: Pay particular attention to the requirement of questions that contain the word NOT, LEAST, or EXCEPT.

Passage 1, Questions 1-8. Read the prologue and sections 1 and 2, beginning “Hear me!” and ending “and seek our Father’s peace” (pages 23-29) carefully before you choose your answers.

1. The primary effect of the details presented in the prologue (lines 1-52) is to
 - (A) demonstrate Shild’s uniqueness as a ruler
 - (B) suggest that Beo would be a greater leader than his father
 - (C) create a sense of suspense in the poet’s audience
 - (D) provide insight into the values of a culture
 - (E) show the objectivity and meticulousness of the poet
2. The tone of the prologue progresses from
 - (A) dispassionate to emotional
 - (B) fawning to realistic
 - (C) laudatory to elegiac
 - (D) pedantic to obsequious
 - (E) exuberant to maudlin
3. A controlling rhetorical device in the prologue is
 - (A) metaphor
 - (B) alliteration
 - (C) personification
 - (D) apostrophe
 - (E) simile
4. Lines 53-85 (“Then Beo was king . . . Herot to burn”) suggest that war
 - I. is inevitable
 - II. affords opportunities to win glory
 - III. is not governed by codes or rules
 - (A) II only
 - (B) III only
 - (C) I and II only
 - (D) II and III only
 - (E) I, II, and III
5. Hrothgar’s building the hall primarily reflects his
 - (A) desire for personal glory
 - (B) insistence on absolute obedience
 - (C) determination to be invulnerable
 - (D) prideful quest to reach Heaven
 - (E) generosity to his followers
6. In lines 86-114 (“A powerful monster . . . again defeated”), Grendel is characterized as all of the following EXCEPT
 - (A) persecuted
 - (B) envious
 - (C) dangerous
 - (D) rebellious
 - (E) bitter
7. The description of Grendel’s tyranny, as “sung in all Men’s ears” by poets across the seas, is developed primarily by the use of
 - (A) Biblical allusions
 - (B) parallel structure
 - (C) understatement
 - (D) foreshadowing
 - (E) hyperbole

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes)

In the final line of the Burton Raffel translation of *Beowulf* used for this resource guide, Beowulf is described as “deserving of praise.” However, in many other translations, the final phrase refers not to Beowulf’s meriting praise, but to his desiring, or seeking, it (“desirous of praise,” “keenest for praise,” “fondest of honor”). In a well-organized essay, discuss the significance of the differing characterizations of Beowulf and, based on your reading of the entire poem, explain which characterization (Beowulf as deserving praise versus Beowulf desiring and seeking praise or honor) is most consistent with the title hero. Use specific examples from *Beowulf* to support your points.

ANSWER EXPLANATIONS
PASSAGE 3

16. (A) chronological and discursive. Hrothgar's speech proceeds chronologically, beginning with the account of Beowulf's father finding refuge and help in the land of the Danes when Hrothgar was "new to the throne," progressing to the present time in which Grendel is wreaking havoc on Hrothgar's people, and concluding when Hrothgar refers to the immediate present, when he and Beowulf will feast and "toast your victories, and talk of the future." Although the speech is presented in chronological order, Hrothgar allows himself to digress and include details about his brother's death, his own place as second son to Healfdane, his paying off Edgeth's enemies, and the fact that his men tend to confront Grendel when they have had too much ale, always disastrously. Hrothgar's heaviness of heart is justified and not "maudlin."

17. (B) synaesthesia. The mead is described as "that bright sweetness," thus characterizing a taste in terms of appearance. This combination of two different senses is an example of synaesthesia.

18. (D) magnanimous. Unferth speaks "harshly/And sharp," referring to Beowulf as a "Boastful fool" and attributing any success he has had in battles to luck. As Beowulf begins his response, he generously attributes Unferth's bitter words not to Unferth's jealousy (which the poet said was his motivation) but to having drunk too much. He addresses Unferth as "my friend" and says "your tongue has tried" but failed to get the story straight because "your face/Is hot with ale." Beowulf is being a gracious guest at Hrothgar's feast, not rising to Unferth's bait by becoming enraged but answering him calmly and even politely in the beginning.

19. (B) the setting in which he is speaking. The rules of hospitality are an important motif in *Beowulf*, and in this scene, Beowulf is discussing his exploits as he sits at Hrothgar's banquet table. He ironically describes his slaughter of the sea monsters in terms of a gracious host serving his guests ("I treated them politely,/Offering the edge of my razor-sharp sword") and comments wryly that "the feast, I think, did not please them." "By morning," he says, his "guests" had "decided to sleep on the shore/Lying on their backs, their blood spilled out/On the sand." It is an amusingly ironic description, and it is particularly apt because of the context in which Beowulf is speaking: a feast in his honor.