

Beowulf (Elements of Literature) Group Work

Remember, **make sure that your group has a timekeeper.** The timekeeper should, while the rest of the group begins with question #1, go through the questions and develop (and write down) a timetable so that the group will finish in time – it is then the timekeeper’s job to let the group know when they need to move on or if they have more time to complete any given question. Timekeepers, please note you will need more time for question 3b than the other questions here.



In this group you will find line numbers within each question to help you answer the question (in the specific manner that I require). You should NOT necessarily limit yourself to these lines finding your answer – and if the question requires quotes they may come from outside the line numbers that I give you.

1. Why do you believe that Unferth speaks up against Beowulf and his “foolish boasts”? What or how has Beowulf brought about such a reaction – find at least one quote from yesterday’s reading and discussion that may have led to Unferth’s defensiveness.
2. Ha! Lines 263-264 are undoubtedly the funniest in the entire story (“Unferth, my friend...”). How, specifically, does Beowulf answer Unferth’s accusations? Find at least 3 arguments that he refutes. These must include why the race through the sea with Brecca was *even close*. Why was the race close (lines 275-278). Is Beowulf’s decision heroic? Explain.
3. 275-279 – In my mind, these lines are the strongest (emotionally) in this entire translation. They also reveal a more subtle (especially for what we imagine the Anglo-Saxon ideal to be) of heroism. Why did Beowulf stay with Brecca – how is this aspect of his endeavor a failure – explain with specifics.
- 3b. Quickly skim through the text on the back of this page: How can you relate, specifically, M Washington-Montagne’s actions to what you described as Beowulf’s heroism in question 3 – **time keepers: make sure you stay on track.**
4. How do lines 305-306 contain a paradox – explain with specifics.
5. In lines 315-323, what does Beowulf accuse Unferth of? Does he give a reason for Unferth’s actions? Ok – now the question is going a little deeper (more interesting I hope too) – Look at lines 328-331. How does this accusation echo (metaphorically perhaps) the first (found in lines 315-323). Be specific and use at least 2 quotes (1 from each accusation) in answering your question. Remember this incident when you are reading the novel, *Grendel*.
6. lines 345-363: Who is Wealtheow? How does she calm and encourage the warriors? Be specific. Why would she need to? Take a look at your answer to question 5.
7. Look closely at lines 418-431. In fact, have someone in your group read them aloud. What exactly occurs here – How is Beowulf able to be so successful in his battle with Grendel? Why was he able to react so quickly? What was the price? How does it echo actions by Grendel towards the beginning of the story (supply at least one quote). Be specific in your answer. For your own discussion: Did everyone in your group “get this” when you did the reading? Why or why not.

Name: Yvette Washington-Montagne

Age: 46

Residence: Brooklyn, New York

Story: A 911 operator for the last 21 years, Yvette Washington-Montagne and her colleagues handled 55,000 calls on September 11 from people trapped in the World Trade Center, distraught family members and others injured in the terrorist attacks. She stayed on the job for 16 hours, leaning on her co-workers to recover from the emotional turmoil of that day.



September 11, 2001, began as an especially pleasant day for Yvette Washington-Montagne. The sun was shining, the phones were relatively calm, and she was set to receive an award for attendance and service at her office's annual 911 event.

Then, about 20 minutes before the ceremony's start, reports came in that a plane had struck the World Trade Center's North Tower.

"We're told to grab out headsets and everybody just prepared for an onslaught of calls," said Washington-Montagne.

In the first 18 minutes after the first attack, 50 police communication technicians received 3,000 phone calls. New York's 911 operators handled a total of 55,000 calls on September 11, each seemingly more hellish than the next.

She solicited detailed information, offered impromptu counseling and coolly reassured those trapped in the towers who were screaming, pleading, praying to escape and see their families again.

She and her colleagues faced their toughest test, personally and professionally, on September 11. Their offices, located just across the Brooklyn Bridge in north Brooklyn, had a view of the World Trade Center. Many operators lived a few miles from Ground Zero and had friends and relatives working nearby. And no past crisis or exercise prepared them for the volume, logistics or emotion of the calls they received that day.



Most operators handled a call, cried, and then put on a calm facade as they answered another call -- some, like Washington-Montagne, doing so for 16 hours straight -- according to Bruce.

"Most people didn't want to leave the operational floor," said Butler, praising the courage and resiliency of his staff. "They almost had to be pulled away."