

BEOWULF: Examination

Short Identifications: Write a complete sentence which will clearly identify and explain each of the following terms:

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| 1. Wyrð | 6. Scop |
| 2. Wergeld | 7. Comitatus bond |
| 3. Atheling | 8. Kenning |
| 4. Ordeal | 9. Compurgation |
| 5. Pagan | 10. Epic |

Identification of Passages: Clearly identify FOUR of the following passages by writing a paragraph about each of the four you select. Place the passage within the context of Beowulf and explain its significance to the story. Consider -- What is happening? When and where is it happening? Who is involved? What does it reveal about the Anglo-Saxons? What does it mean? Why is it important?

1. . . . And sometimes a proud old soldier
Who had heard songs of the ancient heroes
And could sing them all through, story after story,
Would weave a net of words for Beowulf's
Victory, tying the knot of his verses
Smoothly, swiftly, into place with a poet's
Quick skill, singing his song aloud
While he shaped it. . .
2. . . . But Beowulf's heart was heavy:
His soul sensed how close fate
Had come, felt something, not fear but knowledge
Of old age. His armor was strong, but his arm
Hung like his heart. Body and soul
Might part here; his blood might be spilled,
His spirit torn from his flesh. . .
3. She and the ripening soldier will be married,
The Danes great lord and protector has declared,
Hoping that his quarrel. . . can be settled
By a woman. He's wrong: how many wars
Have been put to rest in a prince's bed?
Few. A bride can bring a little
Peace, make spears silent for a time,
But not long. . .
4. And sometimes (he) himself, with the harp
In his lap, stroked its silvery strings
And told wonderful stories, a brave king
Reciting unhappy truths about good
And evil--and sometimes he wove his stories
On the mournful thread of old age, remembering
Buried strength and the battles it had won.
Winters, remembering what he'd done, once,
What he'd seen, what he knew. . .

5. A gnarled old woman, hair wound
Tight and gray on her head, groaned
A song of misery, of infinite sadness
And days of mourning, of fear and sorrow
To come, slaughter and terror and captivity.
And Heaven swallowed the billowing smoke.

6. . . . They have seen my strength for themselves,
Have watched me rise from the darkness of war,
Dripping with my enemies' blood. I drove
Five great giants into chains, chased
All of that race from the earth. I swam
In the blackness of night, hunting monsters
Out of the ocean, and killing them one
By one; death was my errand and the fate
They had earned. . .

7. Take these treasures, earth, now that no one
Living can enjoy them. They were yours, in the beginning;
Allow them to return. War and terror
Have swept away my people, shut
Their eyes to delight and to living, closed
The door to all gladness. No one is left
To lift these swords, polish these jeweled
Cups: no one leads, no one follows. . .

8. . . . At night that lake
Burns like a torch. No one knows its bottom,
No wisdom reaches such depths. A deer,
Hunted through the woods by packs of hounds,
A stag with great horns, though driven through the forest
From faraway places, prefers to die
On those shores, refuses to save its life
In that water. . .

9. And now the giving of swords, of golden
Rings and rich estates, is over,
Ended for you and everyone who shares
Your blood: when the brave Geats hear
How you bolted and ran, none of your race
Will have anything left but your lives. And death
Would be better for them all, and for you, than the kind
Of life you can lead, branded with disgrace!

10. Let your sorrow end! It is better for us all
To avenge our friends, not mourn them forever.
Each of us will come to the end of this life
On earth; he who can earn it should fight
For the glory of his name; fame after death
Is the noblest of goals. . .

Essay Question: Demonstrate what you have learned about Anglo-Saxon social customs and values by referring to specific information given in Beowulf.