From ***Beowulf***: (Class Set: Please don’t write on this.)

Imagine a time when tribes from northern Europe regularly raided one another’s shores to loot and burn each other’s settlements; when great warriors feasted, drank, and bragged of their bloody conquests in huge mead halls-banquet hall named after the fermented honey (or mead) wine drunk there; when kings bestowed riches upon their braves warriors to retain their allegiances; and when people believed in monsters and dragons. That time was the sixth or seventh century- the period in which ***Beowulf*** is set.

***Beowulf*** is the oldest known English literary work and it was first told in Anglo-Saxon England sometime between the 8th and 11th Centuries, but it's not about that time and place. It's actually set several hundred years earlier, in the 5th or 6th Century. And it doesn't take place in England. The story, however, is set in Scandinavia. During the 500s and 600s, Scandinavian tribes, later known as the Anglo-Saxons invaded and settled in the territory that would become known as England. Wherever they settled, stories like ***Beowulf*** traveled with them. Although, much that is written about the creation of the story of ***Beowulf*** is speculation, it is known that the only manuscript that remains is from circa 1000AD. The author of ***Beowulf*** is a mystery. Some scholars believe that a scop (storyteller) may have written this down sometime in the 700s. This person might have also been a court poet, or a monastic poet.

The first part of ***Beowulf*** takes place in Heorot, King Hrothgar's glorious mead hall. At the time this poem took place, research proves that the Danes held their throne on Sjaelland Island at Lejre. Archeologists who have worked there have discovered a number of magnificent halls that were built around the 500s and onward, any of which could have been Heorot. Although there is no knowledge that Beowulf was a true man, there is certainly a great deal of Germanic history incorporated in the poem

“***The Epic and the Epic Hero***” (p. 42)

1.Define Epic:

2.Characteristics of an epic hero:

3.The earliest epics date back to a time when few people \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4.Some epics were eventually \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5.The epic hero usually embodies\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. “The Anglo-Saxons, in their primitive and harsh environment, demanded of their heroes,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**Kenning**: Look for Kennings as you read. A kenning is a compound noun, usually hyphenated, that renames another person, place, or thing in a metaphorical or cleverly descriptive manner

* “a cruel ravager dragged me down to the sea-bed” (bottom of the ocean)
* “the dark death-shadow lurked in ambush… men do not know where such hell-whisperers shrithe in their wanderings” (monster/devil)
* “the sea-beast lay on the shore, slain by battle-blades” (shark or whale/ swords)
* “onto one was strapped a saddle, inlaid with jewels, skillfully made. That was the war-seat of the great king” (seat of the king during battle)
* “my closest counselor and my comrade, my shoulder-companion” (best friend)

Not every set of hyphenated words is considered a kenning. The two linked words must be both NOUNS… not an adjective and a noun. Must also be a metaphor…

* Golden – friend= adj. + noun….NO!!!!
* Gold-friend (king)= noun+noun….YES!!!!

***“Grendel Attacks the Danes”***

Geats = Sweden (Beowulf) Danes = Denmark (Hrothgar)

***Note***: The conflict between the Danes and Grendel is symbolic of good versus evil. Goodness is shown in the songs that echo through Hrothgar’s hall. Evil smolders in Grendel’s hatred for humankind.

1. What was life at Herot like before Grendel began attacking warriors?

2. Where was Grendel born and why is it significant that he was a descendent of Cain? What can we infer about Grendel from this information?

3. What are the men doing when Grendel first attacks? What had they been doing prior to this that may assist Grendel’s plans?

4. Who is Hrothgar and why were there twelve winters of grief for him?

5. Write the entire passage on your paper and fill-in-the-blanks:

“That shadow of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ hunted in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

Stalked Hrothgar’s warriors, old

And young, lying in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, hidden

In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, invisibly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ them from the edge

Of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, always there, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6.Who is the “that shadow of death” and why is this an appropriate name?

7. Why didn’t Grendel attack Hrothgar’s throne?

“***The Coming of Beowulf***”

Healfdane’s son = Hrothgar (Danish…from Denmark)

Higlac’s Follower = Beowulf

Beowulf is a Geat (from Sweden)

8. What do we initially learn about Beowulf and how does this relate to him being an Anglo-Saxon epic hero?

9. Where is Beowulf going, why is he going there, and who is coming with him? Does it seem like a low number? What does can you infer about the type of people coming if there are only fourteen?

10. At first, what does the Danish watcher suspect of Beowulf and his men?

11. What is Beowulf’s father’s name and what history do we learn about his father?

12. What offer does Beowulf make to the Danish watcher?

13. What promise does the Danish watcher make about the men’s boat?

14. Describe the Geats’ helmets. Note: The early Anglo-Saxons were wanderers who changed their homes –and even boundaries of their kingdoms-often. They led simple rustic lives. The only real luxury they allowed themselves was gold, and they used it lavishly.

15. Boasting is a common feature of epic poetry. It allows the hero to recount his exploits, not for self-praise, but to show that he has already won fame and intends to seek it again. Tis was especially important to Anglo-Saxon heroes because their pagan religion offered no hope of reward in an afterlife; thus fame was the best prospect that they had for immortality. What does Beowulf boast about when he meets Hrothgar?

16. What is the one thing that Beowulf asks of Hrathgar?

17. What type of weapons will Beowulf use? Why? What does this show about him?

18. How is the term “death’s cold grip” personification?

19. What does Beowulf want done with his armor if he dies? What about his body?

“***The Battle With Grendel***”

20. From where did Grendel come (2 places) and what was he hoping to do?

21. In line 289, personification is used? What is the personification and what does the line mean?

22. In lines 293-295, what explain what the lines mean and what is being foreshadowed?

23. What impact did Beowulf’s soldiers have on Grendel?

24. Historians agree that the poet who first recorded ***Beowulf*** in written form was a Christian who explained the Germanic ideas of the original story in Christian terms. Previously, when it was just recited, it contained only pagan themes. By the time it was written, early in the eight century, The Anglo-Saxons had already been converted to Christianity. The epic, therefore, combines Ancient Anglo-Saxon believe and ideals with Christian allusion and imagery. Even though the initial story was told by Pagans, most scholars think the first writing was by a monk. What Christian elements of good vs. evil do we see in the battle?

25. What “trophy” is left as a remembrance of the battle? What purpose does it serve? Is it a fitting tribute to a hero?

26. What did the people do the next morning?

27. Where did Grendel die?

“***The Battle With Grendel’s Mother***”

28. What happens to Grendel’s arm and what is Beowulf’s reaction to this?

29. Where does Beowulf go to find Grendel’s mother and how long did it take him to reach the bottom?

30. What is Beowulf wearing and how does this assist him when he sees Grendel’s mom and the others?

31. What does Beowulf fight Grendel’s mom with no helmet and no sword? Lines 470-472 suggest that Beowulf has his limits and he’s in real peril. He is perhaps at his lowest point. Think about movies you’ve seen where heroes are at this point. What usually happens just after this low point?

32. “So fame / Comes to the men who mean to win it / And care about nothing else!”

What message does this quote send about Beowulf’s attitude? Why is it important that this line comes after Beowulf’s low point?

33. What is ironic in the way that Grendel’s mother is killed?

34. What is the symbolism of the “brilliant light” that shines just after Grendel’s mother is killed?

35. After Grendel’s mother’s death, we see Beowulf go through the halls of Grendel’s mother’s dwelling searching for more vengeance against Grendel who killed Hrothgar’s sleeping men. How does this image of him seeking vengeance for others reinforce him as a hero and how does he get vengeance?

36. Why are all the graybeards around the lake? What do they assume?

37. How does the mood change?

38. What “treasures” did Beowulf bring back from the monster’s hall?

39. Another characteristic of the epic is the triumphal procession after the hero’s victory. In Greek and Roman literature, the procession was a parade that featured the hero’s chariot, wagon, loads of treasure, and scores of captives. In ***Beowulf***, however, an epic from a more violent time the procession was gruesome. Describe the procession we see in ***Beowulf***.

40. Based on Beowulf’s behavior, what traits did Anglo-Saxons consider heroic? What are three qualities that they may have valued? Explain your answer.

**Possible Ideas**:

\*Who are today’s heroes? What traits do they display to make them heroes? When people look back at our society 100 years from now, what will they infer about our values as a society because we chose to make these people our heroes?

\*\*How might Beowulf behave in our society? Re-write ***Beowulf*** and place him in today’s times with a certain theme.

\*\*\*Multi-modal presentation

\*\*\*\*With a small group, choose a section of Beowulf to perform to the class.