



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Beowulf

as translated by
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A FEW NOTES ABOUT *BEOWULF*'S ORIGINS

Beowulf is widely believed to be the oldest surviving poem in any modern European language. It is most likely the sole survivor of what many scholars believe was a thriving epic tradition dating from the sixth and seventh centuries. Originally composed in the oral tradition, the *Beowulf* epic provides us with valuable insights into the traditions and values of the early Norse peoples of the North Atlantic region. It is assumed that the epic began as a pagan account of national history and heroism. Some time in the ninth century *Beowulf* was written down in the Old English dialect, recorded by Christian monks in England from that era. The poem exists today as a hybrid piece—retaining pagan and feudal remnants while assuming a language that is newly Christian. Epic poetry was the genre of choice for early Europeans, lending itself to oral repetition and storytelling.

A sole copy of *Beowulf* not only survived Henry VIII's destruction of the Catholic monasteries in the sixteen century, but also escaped serious harm during a 1731 fire that ravaged the British Museum, where it can be viewed today in the library of the British Museum in London.

The Burton Raffel translation is widely regarded as the definitive edition of the first English epic.

-From the Introduction to *Beowulf* by Burton Raffel

INTRODUCTION

This LitPlan has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Beowulf*. It includes 18 lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to the historical background of the time in which the epic, *Beowulf*, was composed. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is a **group theme project** in which students will work in small groups to discuss several of the important themes relating to Anglo-Saxon society and their manifestation in *Beowulf*. Using information they have acquired through reading assignments and class discussions, students will meet in groups to discuss the Anglo-Saxon societal influences in *Beowulf*.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to inform: students compose an essay in which they illustrate how *Beowulf* exemplifies the features of a literary epic. The second assignment is to persuade: students pretend to be Grendel's mother, writing a persuasive journal entry that describes the action and events from her perspective. The third assignment gives students the opportunity to express their personal ideas: they are to write a composition in which they identify what passions or qualities that they possess that if fostered could lead to them living in fame after their deaths.

There is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read articles or chapters relating to the time in which the epic, *Beowulf*, was written, and to gather information about the nature of the Anglo-Saxon people and how the history in this text relates to the accounts in *Beowulf*.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

UNIT OBJECTIVES – *Beowulf*

1. Through reading *Beowulf*, students will gain a better understanding of the importance of heroism, courage and camaraderie to the early Anglo-Saxon peoples, and how their views on these traits continue to inform western thinking.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will discuss the features of a literary epic and how these features are evident in *Beowulf*.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *Beowulf* as they relate to the author's theme development.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
 - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
 - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
 - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
 - d. To encourage logical thinking
 - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *Beowulf*

Date Assigned	Chapters Assigned	Completion Date
	Introduction	
	Prologue through Chapter 13	
	Chapters 14 through 25	
	Chapters 26 through 35	
	Chapters 36 through 43	

UNIT OUTLINE - *Beowulf*

1 Introduction	2 Introduction PVR “Raffel’s Introduction to <i>Beowulf</i> ”	3 Study Questions – “Raffel’s Introduction to <i>Beowulf</i> ” PVR Prologue through Chapter 13	4 Writing Assignment 1 Review literary terms Study Questions Prologue through Chapter 13	5 Quiz on Prologue through Chapter 13 Library Research PVR Chapters 14-25
6 Continue Library Research	7 Study Questions Chapters 14-25 PV Chapters 26-35	8 Quiz on Chapters 14-25 Present Library Research	9 R Chapters 26-35	10 Study Questions Chapters 26-35 PVR Chapters 36-43
11 Finish Oral Reading- Chapters 36-43 Assign Writing Assignment #2	12 Complete Writing Assignment #2	13 Study Questions Chapters 36-43 Extra Group Discussion	14 Extra Group Discussion and Library Research	15 Vocabulary Review
16 Writing Assignment #3	17 Review	18 Test		

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R= Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

1. To introduce the theme of heroism and the quest for heroic ideals and adventures
2. To brainstorm about the traits common to heroic individuals
3. To distribute books and other related materials

NOTE: Prior to Lesson One you need to have assigned for students to bring to class a list of modern day heroes and a short (1-2 sentence) rationale for each selection. Encourage the students to bring in pictures of these heroes to class. Also, you should have an empty bulletin board with just background paper and the title: *BEOWULF: INFLUENCING THE HEROES OF THE FUTURE*.

Activity #1

Tell students to take out the names and the pictures they were assigned to bring to class. On prepared 2"x5" pre-cut strips of colored paper, ask students to write the names of their modern day heroes on the paper strips, using markers that you have on hand. When they have finished, ask each student to post his picture(s) and the corresponding colored name strips on the bulletin board and, as he does so, to explain to the class why he has selected that person as a modern day hero.

TRANSITION: Explain to the students that *Beowulf*, the book they are about to read, is a tale about heroism, and what qualities are common among heroes—both from the modern day and the past.

Activity #2

Have the students scrutinize the names and faces on the bulletin board, and then have them brainstorm aloud in class—by way of a class discussion—the traits common to the heroes listed on the board. Have the students copy this list into their notebooks for further comparison as *Beowulf* is examined in the days ahead.

Activity #3

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *Beowulf*

PROMPT

Although you have read thus far only the first part of this tripartite epic, *Beowulf's* epic qualities are already self-evident. Using examples and quotations from the text to support your thesis, explain the ways in which *Beowulf* manifests the features of a literary epic.

PREWRITING

The first thing you need to do is to take out the paper we have discussed on THE FEATURES OF A LITERARY EPIC. Carefully review the sheet, and then write a corresponding list of how *Beowulf* fits the criteria of a literary epic.

After you have jotted down examples from your memory of the reading, re-visit the text to find quotations from the text to support your contentions.

DRAFTING

Decide on a plan of attack for this writing assignment. Do you want to organize your paper thematically or chronologically? Once you have decided on your approach, you can compose your rough draft.

PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your composition, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary. Ask your classmate what he/she thought of each of the characters/events you chose for your assignment.

PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.