

Learning Objectives

For pages 1–18

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Literary Study: Analyzing literary genres.

Reading: Identifying sequence. Analyzing historical context.



from **BEOWULF**

translated by Burton Raffel

from *Beowulf*

Connect to the Epic

Beowulf is a hero. How does that make him different from everyone else? What do you think he may have done in the past? What might others expect from him in the future? What might he expect from himself? On the lines below, freewrite for a few minutes about a hero.

Build Background

Read the following information about *Beowulf*.

- *Beowulf* is the first great poem in the language that will become English.
- The poem's hero, Beowulf, is a great warrior of the Geats (gêts), a people who lived in what is now southern Sweden.
- The setting of *Beowulf* is Scandinavia. Beowulf and his followers sail to Denmark to help the Hrothgar (rôth' gâr), the ruler of the Danes, fight off a monster named Grendel.
- In the warrior society depicted in *Beowulf*, a ruler and his followers formed a close-knit group.
- Rulers rewarded the bravest of their followers with treasure, such as weapons and gold.

Now, in your own words, describe the cultural background of *Beowulf*.

Set Purposes for Reading

Read to find out why Beowulf is the best man for the job of monster-killing and how he plans to fight his enemy, Grendel.

Literary Element Conflict

Conflict is a struggle between two people or things. Sometimes, characters have **external conflicts**—they struggle with other people, nature, or some other outside force. Sometimes, characters have internal conflicts. An **internal conflict** takes place within the character's mind. With a partner, name conflicts that you have viewed, read about, or can imagine. Decide whether each conflict is internal or external.

Reading Strategy Identify Sequence

Identifying sequence is recognizing and using time order. When you identify sequence, you tell what happens first, second, next, and last. Imagine you hear about a serious problem facing a friend or relative who lives far away. Use the lines below to list a sequence of three events that might follow in your life, including traveling to the faraway place. Write the events in time order.

Vocabulary Analogies

An analogy is a comparison. On a vocabulary test, an analogy item asks you to find a relationship between two words. To solve the analogy, you apply the same relationship to a second set of words. As a result, when you compare the two sets of words, you see that they have the same relationship. Examples of relationships in analogies include the following:

- synonym or antonym
- part to whole or whole to part
- person and place, object, or action
- object and quality, material, characteristic, or use
- action and result

Study the vocabulary words to the right. Then identify the kind of relationship that exists between each set of words below.

purge : cleanse _____

afflict : suffering _____

sentinel : fort _____

shroud : cloth _____

Vocabulary

afflict (ə flikt') *v.* to cause great suffering and pain to

sentinel (sent' ən əl) *n.* a guard; someone who keeps watch

purge (purj) *v.* to cleanse or to rid of whatever is unclean or undesirable

shroud (shroud) *n.* a cloth, sheet, or simple sack that is used to cover a body that is to be buried

from *Beowulf*



Literary Element

Conflict Reread the headnote and lines 85–97. What struggle is occurring? Write your answer on the lines below.

Circle the term that identifies the type of struggle or conflict here.

- internal conflict
- external conflict



Read and Discuss

As you read, underline details that help you get to know Beowulf. With a partner, decide on the best three words to describe him. Write your response on the lines below.

The following episode, *Beowulf*, takes place shortly after the beginning of the poem. The monster Grendel has come repeatedly by night to the stronghold of Hrothgar, ruler of the Danes, and slaughtered his men. When Beowulf hears this, he crosses the sea to rescue the Danes.

The Coming of Beowulf

- So the living sorrow of Healfdane's son^o
Simmered, bitter and fresh, and no wisdom
Or strength could break it: that agony hung
On king and people alike, harsh
And unending, violent and cruel, and evil.
- In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's
Follower^o and the strongest of the Geats—greater
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world—
Heard how Grendel filled nights with horror
And quickly commanded a boat fitted out,
Proclaiming that he'd go to that famous king,
Would sail across the sea to Hrothgar,
Now when help was needed. None
Of the wise ones regretted his going, much
As he was loved by the Geats: the omens were good,
- And they urged the adventure on. So Beowulf
Chose the mightiest men he could find,
The bravest and best of the Geats, fourteen
In all, and led them down to their boat;
He knew the sea, would point the prow^o
Straight to that distant Danish shore.
- Then they sailed, set their ship
Out on the waves, under the cliffs.
Ready for what came they wound through the currents,
The seas beating at the sand, and were borne
In the lap of their shining ship, lined
With gleaming armor, going safely
In that oak-hard boat to where their hearts took them.
The wind hurried them over the waves,
The ship foamed through the sea like a bird



Literary Element

Conflict Underline the words associated with Grendel in line 93. Keeping these words in mind, how might you describe the conflict between Beowulf and Grendel? Write your answer on the lines below.

85 **Healfdane's son:** Hrothgar.

90-91 **Higlac's Follower:** Higlac, king of the Geats, is Beowulf's uncle. Higlac's follower, then, refers to Beowulf.

104 **prow:** the bow, or forwardmost part of a ship.



Literary Element

Conflict The *Beowulf*-poet was a Christian writing about a pagan past, and his poem mixes pagan and Christian elements. Which action in lines 120–124 reflects Christianity? Write your answer on the lines below.



Reading Strategy

Identify Sequence Reread lines 120–132. Then read the events below. Write 1 next to the one that happens first, 2 next to the one that happens second, and 3 next to the one that happens last.

- _____ A Danish watcher speaks to the men.
- _____ The men moor their ship.
- _____ The men give thanks for their easy crossing.

- 110 Until, in the time they had known it would take,
 Standing in the round-curved prow they could see
 Sparkling hills, high and green,
 Jutting up over the shore, and rejoicing
 In those rock-steep cliffs they quietly ended
- 120 Their voyage. Jumping to the ground, the Geats
 Pushed their boat to the sand and tied it
 In place, mail shirts° and armor rattling
 As they swiftly moored their ship. And then
 They gave thanks to God for their easy crossing.
- 125 High on a wall a Danish watcher
 Patrolling along the cliffs saw
 The travelers crossing to the shore, their shields
 Raised and shining; he came riding down,
 Hrothgar's lieutenant, spurring his horse,
- 130 Needing to know why they'd landed, these men
 In armor. Shaking his heavy spear
 In their faces he spoke:
 "Whose soldiers are you,
 You who've been carried in your deep-keeled ship°
- 135 Across the sea-road to this country of mine?
 Listen! I've stood on these cliffs longer
 Than you know, keeping our coast free
 Of pirates, raiders sneaking ashore
 From their ships, seeking our lives and our gold.
- 140 None have ever come more openly—
 And yet you've offered no password, no sign
 From my prince, no permission from my people for your landing
 Here. Nor have I ever seen,
 Out of all the men on earth, one greater
- 145 Than has come with you; no commoner carries
 Such weapons, unless his appearance, and his beauty,
 Are both lies. You! Tell me your name,
 And your father's; no spies go further onto Danish
 Soil than you've come already. Strangers,
- 150 From wherever it was you sailed, tell it,
 And tell it quickly, the quicker the better,
 I say, for us all. Speak, say
 Exactly who you are, and from where, and why."

122 **mail shirts:** a type of flexible body armor usually made of linked metal loops.

134 **deep-keeled ship:** a ship that possesses a deep bottom—the keel being the main piece of timber that runs the length of the bottom of the ship to support the ship's frame.



Read and Discuss

Reread the highlighted text. Put yourself in the watchman's place. Would you be friendly to these men in armor who land on your shore? Talk with a partner about what you might say or do. Decide why you would or would not act just as the watchman does. Write your response on the lines below.

Vocabulary

afflict (ə flɪkt') v. to cause great suffering and pain to

Literary Element



Conflict In lines 173–181, Beowulf says Hrothgar has two choices. What are they? Write your answer on the lines below.

Their leader answered him, Beowulf unlocking
Words from deep in his breast:
“We are Geats,
Men who follow Higlac. My father
Was a famous soldier, known far and wide
As a leader of men. His name was Edgetho.
His life lasted many winters;
Wise men all over the earth surely
Remember him still. And we have come seeking
Your prince, Healfdane’s son, protector
Of this people, only in friendship: instruct us,
Watchman, help us with your words! Our errand
Is a great one, our business with the glorious king
Of the Danes no secret; there’s nothing dark
Or hidden in our coming. You know (if we’ve heard
The truth, and been told honestly) that your country
Is cursed with some strange, vicious creature
That hunts only at night and that no one
Has seen. It’s said, watchman, that he has slaughtered
Your people, brought terror to the darkness. Perhaps
Hrothgar can hunt, here in my heart,
For some way to drive this devil out—
If anything will ever end the evils
Afflicting your wise and famous lord.
Here he can cool his burning sorrow.
Or else he may see his suffering go on
Forever, for as long as Herot towers
High on your hills.”

The mounted officer
Answered him bluntly, the brave watchman:
“A soldier should know the difference between words
And deeds, and keep that knowledge clear
In his brain. I believe your words, I trust in
Your friendship. Go forward, weapons and armor
And all, on into Denmark. I’ll guide you
Myself—and my men will guard your ship,
Keep it safe here on our shores,
Your fresh-tarred boat, watch it well,
Until that curving prow carries
Across the sea to Geatland a chosen
Warrior who bravely does battle with the creature
Haunting our people, who survives that horror
Unhurt, and goes home bearing our love.”



Read and Discuss

As you read, think about how Beowulf reveals that he is someone special. With a partner, talk about how Beowulf gains the watchman's trust. Write your response on the lines below.



Reading Strategy

Identify Sequence What happens after Beowulf and his men leave their boat behind? Circle the letter in front of the correct answer.

- a. Beowulf explains why he has come.
b. The watchman says that words and deeds are not the same.
c. The watchman brings them to Herot.

Vocabulary

sentinel (sent' ən əl) n. a guard; someone who keeps watch

Vocabulary Skill

Analogies Context clues can be used to create the comparison that helps form an analogy. In line 201, what is the relationship between guards and sentinels? Check one.

- antonyms
person and action
synonyms

Which pair of terms might follow guards : sentinels ::? Circle it.

- robins : eggs
doctors : physicians
professors : students

Then they moved on. Their boat lay moored,
Tied tight to its anchor. Glittering at the top
Of their golden helmets wild boar heads gleamed,
Shining decorations, swinging as they marched,
Erect like guards, like sentinels, as though ready
To fight. They marched, Beowulf and his men
And their guide, until they could see the gables
Of Herot, covered with hammered gold
And glowing in the sun—that most famous of all dwellings,
Towering majestic, its glittering roofs
Visible far across the land.
Their guide reined in his horse, pointing
To that hall, built by Hrothgar for the best
And bravest of his men; the path was plain,
They could see their way.

READING CHECK

Summarize

On the lines below, summarize the events of the epic from the moment when Beowulf and his men reach the shore to this point. Write only the main events in your own words.

Blank lines for summarizing the events of the epic.



Literary Element

Conflict In this epic, the path to goodness is clear, visible, and repeatedly associated with the light. Underline words on this page that link good people, good places, and good deeds with things that shine.



Literary Element

Conflict Reread lines 230–237. How has Beowulf won the battle against evil in the past? Underline the answers.



Read and Discuss

Reread lines 238–247. With a partner, decide what tone you hear in Beowulf’s voice. Write your response on the lines below.

Beowulf arose, with his men
Around him, ordering a few to remain
With their weapons, leading the others quickly
215 Along under Herot’s steep roof into Hrothgar’s
Presence. Standing on that prince’s own hearth,
Helmeted, the silvery metal of his mail shirt
Gleaming with a smith’s high art, he greeted
The Danes’ great lord:
220 “Hail, Hrothgar!
Higlac is my cousin° and my king; the days
Of my youth have been filled with glory. Now Grendel’s
Name has echoed in our land: sailors
Have brought us stories of Herot, the best
225 Of all mead-halls, deserted and useless when the moon
Hangs in skies the sun had lit,
Light and life fleeing together.
My people have said, the wisest, most knowing
And best of them, that my duty was to go to the Danes’
230 Great king. 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
235 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. Now Grendel and I are called
Together, and I’ve come. Grant me, then,
240 Lord and protector of this noble place,
A single request! I have come so far,
Oh shelterer of warriors and your people’s loved friend,
That this one favor you should not refuse me—
That I, alone and with the help of my men,
245 May **purge** all evil from this hall. I have heard,
Too, that the monster’s scorn of men
Is so great that he needs no weapons and fears none.
Nor will I. My lord Higlac

221 **cousin:** in this case, used broadly to mean any relative.

Vocabulary

purge (purj) v. to cleanse or to rid of whatever is unclean or undesirable



Reading Strategy

Identify Sequence Read each pair of events below. Circle the letter of the one that happens first.

- a. Grendel attacks the mead hall.
- b. Beowulf kills sea monsters.
- a. News of Grendel reaches the Geats.
- b. Beowulf greets Hrothgar.
- a. Beowulf enters Herot for the first time.
- b. Beowulf asks to fight Grendel with his bare hands.



Literary Element

Conflict According to the highlighted passage, who truly decides whether good or evil will win? Circle the letter of the correct answer below.

- a. Grendel
- b. God
- c. the Danes



Reading Strategy

Identify Sequence In lines 255–268, what sequence of events does Beowulf think will occur if Grendel wins the battle? Write your answer on the lines below.

Might think less of me if I let my sword
 250 Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid
 Behind some broad linden° shield: my hands
 Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life
 Against the monster. God must decide
 Who will be given to death's cold grip.
 255 Grendel's plan, I think, will be
 What it has been before, to invade this hall
 And gorge his belly with our bodies. If he can,
 If he can. And I think, if my time will have come,
 There'll be nothing to mourn over, no corpse to prepare
 260 For its grave: Grendel will carry our bloody
 Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones
 And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls
 Of his den. No, I expect no Danes
 Will fret about sewing our **shrouds**, if he wins.
 265 And if death does take me, send the hammered
 Mail of my armor to Higlac, return
 The inheritance I had from Hrethel, and he
 From Wayland.° Fate will unwind as it must!"

READING CHECK

Clarify

Beowulf focuses on some different ideas on this final page than he brings up earlier. What are they?

251 **linden:** made from the wood of a linden tree.

267–268 **inheritance . . . Wayland:** The inheritance is the armor that Wayland, a blacksmith of Germanic legend, forged for Hrethel, Beowulf's grandfather and former king of the Geats.

Vocabulary

shroud (shroud) *n.* a cloth, sheet, or simple sack that is used to cover a body that is to be buried

Vocabulary Skill

Analogies Reread lines 259–266 and underline the context clue or clues that suggest a relationship between a shroud and a dead body.

From Beowulf

Connect to the Epic

Look back at your freewriting about a hero on page 2. Which qualities of a hero did you name that apply to Beowulf? What qualities does Beowulf have that you did not name? Write your answer on the lines below.

Literary Element Conflict

Beowulf has an external conflict with Grendel and with the evil that Grendel represents. Does Beowulf have any internal conflicts? Put a check in the box next to the best answer below.

- Yes; Beowulf does have internal conflicts, because he's not sure whether God or Fate rules events.
- No; Beowulf does not appear to have any internal conflicts. He seems very sure of himself.
- Maybe; Beowulf might have some internal conflicts because he seems a bit troubled about the outcome of the fight.

Reading Strategy Identify Sequence

Write the numbers 1–7 before each event to show the order in which they occur in the epic.

- _____ Beowulf selects fourteen Geats to join him.
- _____ Beowulf admits that God will decide the battle and that fate must determine what happens.
- _____ A watchman asks Beowulf to tell who he is, who his father is, where he has come from, and why he has come.
- _____ Beowulf explains that Higlac is his cousin and asks to be given the task of fighting Grendel.
- _____ Beowulf hears about Grendel's attacks.
- _____ Beowulf sails for the Danish shore.
- _____ The watchman takes Beowulf and his men to see Hrothgar at Herot.

Tom Beowulf

Vocabulary

A. Word Meaning Circle the answer that best fits the meaning of the boldfaced vocabulary word in each sentence.

- The diseases that **afflict** the people of the village can be cured.

a cause great suffering for	c affect the future of
b create a challenge for	d defy the wisdom of
- The **sentinel** questioned everyone who approached the castle.

a politician	c soldier
b guard	d king
- The dictator decided to **purge** the news of all criticism of her party.

a credit	c influence
b rewrite	d rid
- The **shroud** covered the woman from head to toe.

a nasty rumors	c burial cloth
b sailing ship	d foggy vapor

B. Analogies For each item below, decide what the relationship is between the first pair of words. Then identify the answer choice that creates the same relationship with the third word. Circle your answer. In each expression, : means "is to" and :: means "as." The first one has been completed for you.

- beach : sand :: thicket : branches** **Relationship:** object/material

a leaves	c lumber
b branches	d fruit
- shroud : cover :: shovel : _____** **Relationship:** _____

a earth	c garden
b dig	d tool
- purge : cleanse :: cease : _____** **Relationship:** _____

a stop	c stain
b rid	d infer
- sentinel : guard :: editor : _____** **Relationship:** _____

a publish	c book
b writing	d proofread
- afflict : comfort :: depart : _____** **Relationship:** _____

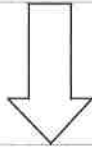
a leave	c arrive
b compassion	d difficulty

From Beowulf

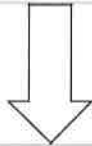
Sequence Chart

Beowulf provides information about Beowulf's past and present, and it gives hints to Beowulf's future. Complete the first two rows of the chart below by listing details from the epic that tell about Beowulf's past and present. Complete the final row of the chart with a prediction about what will happen to Beowulf. Support your prediction with evidence from the epic.

Beowulf's Past



Beowulf's Present



Beowulf's Future