



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LitPlan Teacher Pack™

for

Beowulf

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SHORT ANSWER STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *Beowulf*
(The answer can be found in the chapter number in parenthesis)

Introduction

1. Why does the editor refer to the *Beowulf* epic as “essentially an aristocratic poem”? (I)
2. What were the basic virtues prized by Anglo-Saxon society? (I)
3. Account for the sharp descriptions of the scenes in *Beowulf*. (I)
4. How is *Beowulf* drawn from both the pagan and the Christian traditions? (I)

Prologue - Chapter 13

1. Why does Hrothgar decide to build a mighty hall? What does he call it? Describe this hall. (1)
2. Describe what transpires in the mead hall to evoke the anger of the monster. (1)
3. What is Grendel’s lineage? Why is he described as being “born of Cain”? (1)
4. Why has Grendel been exiled? (1)
5. What happens during Grendel’s first visit to Herot? When does this occur? Describe the scene. (2)
6. How long does Grendel haunt Herot? (2)
7. Why doesn’t Grendel attack Hrothgar? (2)
8. To what measures do Hrothgar and his nobles resort to rid themselves of Grendel? (2)
9. How does Beowulf react when he hears of the plight of the Danes and Hrothgar? (3)
10. How are Beowulf and his men received when they arrive on the Danish shore? (3)
11. Why does Beowulf describe himself by recounting his heritage? Why has he come? (4)
12. How does the watchman respond to Beowulf’s explanation of why they have come to the rescue of the Danes? (4)
13. Hrothgar’s herald greets Beowulf and his men. According to the herald, what distinguishes Beowulf’s visit from those of others who have come before him? (5)
14. Who is Wulfgar? What role does he play in this chapter? (5)
15. According to Wulfgar, why have Beowulf and his men come all the way from Geatland to help the Danes? (6)
16. Describe Beowulf’s boasts upon meeting Hrothgar, King of the Danes. (6)
17. What one request does Beowulf make of Hrothgar? (6)
18. If Beowulf loses the battle with Grendel, what are his instructions for after his death? (6)
19. How did Hrothgar become king? What is his past relationship to the Geats? (7)
20. What is the purpose of the feast that Hrothgar hosts in Beowulf’s honor? (7)
21. Identify Unferth. Why does he seem to be perplexed by Beowulf’s stories? How does he address Beowulf? (8)
22. Describe Unferth’s tale of the swimming competition between Brecca and Beowulf. (8)
23. What is Beowulf’s response to Unferth? (8)
24. Beowulf continues with his story, countering Unferth’s tale. How does his tale end? (9)
25. Describe Welthow. (9)
26. What is Hrothgar’s declaration to Beowulf at the end of Chapter 9? (9)

ANSWER KEY SHORT ANSWER STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS – *Beowulf*

Introduction

1. Why does the editor refer to the *Beowulf* epic as “essentially an aristocratic poem”?
Beowulf is concerned mainly with the large issues of kings and kingship. The other classes of society are not represented.
2. What were the basic virtues prized by the Anglo-Saxons?
Strength, courage, bravery, and generosity were the virtues prized by the Anglo-Saxons.
3. Account for the sharp descriptions of the scenes in *Beowulf*.
Beowulf began in the oral tradition—meant to be heard rather than read, therefore the early poet-singers felt compelled to use particularly graphic descriptions of scenes in order for the listeners to visualize the words.
4. How is *Beowulf* drawn from both the pagan and the Christian traditions?
Originally composed in pre-Christian England, the poem began as a pagan piece with interjections of monsters and ominous forces. The poem actually was first written by Christian monks who superimposed Christian sentiments over the largely pagan, supernatural story.

Prologue-Chapter 13

1. Why does Hrothgar decide to build a mighty hall? What does he call it? Describe this hall.
After Hrothgar led the Danes to victory, he commemorated his victory by building a mighty mead hall. He called the hall Herot. Herot is described as “the most beautiful if dwellings,” one that would reach high toward the heavens.
2. Describe what transpired in the mead hall to evoke the anger of the monster.
The monster dwelling down in the darkness is angered by the music in the hall, by the song of the poet retelling the history of the Danes, and by the sounds of rejoicing.
3. What is Grendel’s lineage? Why is he described as being “born of Cain”?
Grendel is described as being spawned in slime by two of the monsters who were descendants of the Biblical character, Cain, who was banished from God for committing the murder of his brother, Abel.
4. Why has Grendel been exiled?
Grendel has been exiled, together with all monsters, goblins, and forms of evil-by the Almighty—condemned to live beneath the earth.
5. What happens during Grendel’s first visit to Herot?
Grendel finds Hrothgar’s men asleep in the Herot. He snatched up thirty men, smashed them and ran out with their bodies.

6. How long does Grendel haunt Herot?
For twelve winters Grendel terrorizes Hrothgar's mead hall.
7. Why doesn't Grendel attack Hrothgar?
Grendel does not dare to touch Hrothgar as the king is protected by God.
8. To what measures do Hrothgar and his nobles resort to rid themselves of Grendel?
Hrothgar and his men resort to sacrificing to "the old stone gods" and "hoping for Hell's support" to rid themselves of Grendel.
9. How does Beowulf react when he hears of the plight of the Danes and Hrothgar?
Beowulf reacts to the news that Hrothgar and the Danes have been attacked by Grendel by selecting the bravest of soldiers in Geatland and traveling across the seas to help.
10. How are Beowulf and his men received when they arrive on the Danish shore?
The arrival of Beowulf and his men surprises Hrothgar's lieutenant who is guarding the shore. Because there is not prior announcement of their arrival, the lieutenant demands to know their business before they can proceed.
11. Why does Beowulf describe himself by recounting his heritage? Why has he come?
Beowulf draws a connection between himself and his present purpose and the Danish people by reviewing his ancestry which appeared in the oral tradition as common knowledge. Beowulf has come to help drive out Grendel.
12. How does the watchman respond to Beowulf's explanation of why they have come to rescue the Danes?
The watchman believes Beowulf and decides to escort him, himself, to the court of Hrothgar.
13. Hrothgar's herald greets Beowulf and his men. According to the herald, what distinguishes Beowulf's visit from those others who have come before him?
Beowulf's visit is distinguished from others by the fact that Beowulf acts freely and boldly, and very courageously.
14. Who is Wulfgar? What role does he play in this chapter?
Wulfgar was a noble Swede, known for his strength and wisdom. Wulfgar offers to introduce Beowulf and his men to Hrothgar, King of the Danes.
15. According to Wulfgar, why have Beowulf and his men come all the way from Geatland to help the Danes?
According to Wulfgar, God has sent Beowulf on his mission to help the Danes defeat Grendel.