

Summer Reading Assignment #1 – *Beowulf*

Read the following items and provide detailed responses. All work must be typed. Each response will be graded on a 1 – 5 basis, with a “5” being complete, detailed, and supported by evidence and a “1” being . . . well . . . less than stellar.

- 1) Do some basic research on the poem. When, approximately, was it written? In what language? Why is it considered such an important piece of literature?
- 2) Define the term “juxtaposition” and explain how the author’s use of this effectively shows the contrast between Herot Hall and Grendel’s home. (pages 6 – 7)
- 3) Grendel is said to be a descendant of Cain. Research the Bible story of Cain and Abel, and explain how this story serves to portray Grendel as a hideous monster.
- 4) Explain multiple ways in which Beowulf proves to be noble and heroic in Chapter 6.
- 5) Contrast the character of Unferth with Beowulf. (Chapters 8 and 9)
- 6) Describe the battle between Beowulf and Grendel. (Chapters 11 and 12)
- 7) Explain the meaning of Beowulf’s quote to start Chapter 21. What does it reveal about his character?
- 8) Describe the battle between Beowulf and Grendel’s mother. (Chapters 22 and 23)
- 9) Beowulf’s last battle is against a dragon. Explain some of the major differences between this fight and the fights against Grendel and Grendel’s mother.
- 10) Look up the meaning of the term “epic hero” and provide several specific examples from the story that support the idea that Beowulf fits this archetype.

