

## Honors English IV Summer Assignment 2012

Your summer assignment is to read *Beowulf*. There are various translations of this epic poem. Please choose the translation done by Burton Raffel. The author is anonymous. We would prefer that you get the Penguin/Signet Classics addition. This will be available at most bookstores (including Books A Million) and is on Amazon's website. The ISBN is as follows: 0451530969 or 978-0451530967. This version on Amazon is \$4.95. Do bring this book with you to school during the first two weeks of school. Please do not purchase an online version for this reason. In other words, don't use a Kindle, Nook, etc.

*Beowulf* is an epic poem that first began by word of mouth, told in the oral tradition in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Around the year 1000 the poem was first written down. It is a work written by an unknown person who was likely either a monk or a scop. The poem deals with two groups of people, the Geats and the Danes. The poem itself was written originally in Old English.

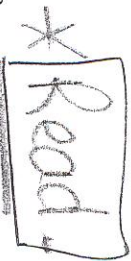
Read the translated poem carefully. Then, the following assignments go along with the reading:

1. Three "quizzes" (Included in this packet; do write answers on the quizzes)
2. Study questions on the background and ancestry of the characters (Included in this packet; do write answers on the handout)
3. Vocabulary sentence completion (Use the list of words; both included in this packet; do write the entire word in the blank on the handout. You are required to look up the definitions and know them for the vocabulary test. )
4. Literary terms handout (Use the terms and definitions that you are given in this packet. Do write on the handout.)  
\*The above written work is due on the first full day of school. No work will be accepted late. Please separate the written work that is listed above and staple it. You need to keep the rest of the packet for the tests.
5. A unit test during the first full week of school---This test will include the plot of the poem, characters, background information and literary terms.
6. A vocabulary test during the first full week of school---Look up the definitions and be ready for a test that will include matching and sentence completion.
7. An in class essay during the first two weeks of school---The prompt for this essay will be announced after school begins but it will likely focus on the traits of an epic hero.

If you have any questions while working on this assignment, contact either Mrs. Smith at [angela.smith@cmcss.net](mailto:angela.smith@cmcss.net) or Mr. Wilson at [sean.wilson@cmcss.net](mailto:sean.wilson@cmcss.net). Both of us also have websites that you can access to gain more information about the assignment and *Beowulf*. Mrs. Smith's website can be reached at [www.mrsmithsenglish.shutterfly.com](http://www.mrsmithsenglish.shutterfly.com) and Mr. Wilson's website is [www.wilsonenglishrhs.shutterfly.com](http://www.wilsonenglishrhs.shutterfly.com) Should you lose your printed copy of this assignment, it is available on the RHS school website. We look forward to seeing you all in August as you begin your senior year.

Mrs. Smith and Mr. Wilson





## Overview

### Background for *Beowulf*

#### About the Author—

Little is known about the author of *Beowulf*. Most critics agree that the epic is the work of a single author. He was probably a Christian man who lived in the eighth century. He might well have been a contemporary of the Venerable Bede, therefore making the date in the early eighth century. The author also was apparently familiar with classical literature such as Virgil's *Aeneid*, which denotes that he was well educated.

The single remaining copy of *Beowulf* was found preserved in the library of Robert Cotton (1571-1631). This manuscript was recorded about the year 1000. In about 1700 a descendant of Cotton gave the manuscript to the British Museum. The manuscript was damaged at the top and outer edges in a fire in 1731, obscuring letters and, in some instances, entire words. A Danish scholar, Grimm Thorkelin, made a copy of the manuscript 1786-87. About 95 percent of the original content has been saved. The epic was given a title in 1805 and printed in 1815. The manuscript is on display in the British Museum in London, England.

Use for handouts.

## Overview



#### Background of Time Period—

*Beowulf* was based on legends set in the homeland of the Germanic tribes that invaded England. The Angles and the Saxons came from different areas of present-day northern Germany; the Jutes came from Denmark's Jutland Peninsulas. All these people shared a common cultural and linguistic background with the Danes. *Beowulf*, a Geat, was from southern Sweden and also shared this cultural background. Anglo-Saxon audiences loved to hear stories of their heritage. The banquet table was, and still is, the place where the Germanic people loved to congregate, eat, and socialize.

The time period of the epic's action and time of its composition are much debated. The popular consensus is that the action takes place in the early sixth century, because of the date of Higlac's death. *Beowulf* was probably composed in the early eighth century, because the author seems to be a contemporary of the Venerable Bede, who died in 735. The exact dates are not important; the outstanding epic is one to enjoy, and this is its importance.

Read

Use for  
Characters

## Student Handout 1A—Characters

**Beowulf—**

hero of the poem; a Geat

**Beo—**

son of Shild; father of Healfdane

**Brecca—**

Beowulf's companion in a youthful swimming contest

**Esher (Aeschere)—**

Hrothgar's counselor, killed by Grendel's mom

**Geats—**

people of southern Sweden

**Grendel—**

an evil monster; descendant of Cain by the way of Noah's son Ham

**Healfdane—**

father of Hrothgar; son of Beo

## Characters

Read

**Herot—**

mead hall built by Hrothgar for his warriors

**Higlac—**

king of the Geats; uncle of Beowulf

**Hrothgar—**

Danish king; builder of Herot

**Hrunting—**

sword given to Beowulf by Unferth

**Shild—**

legendary Danish king who arrived mysteriously as a child in a drifting boat and began a new dynasty

**Unferth—**

one of Hrothgar's courtiers; challenger of Beowulf in a duel of words



\* Read

Walthow—

Hrothgar's queen

Wiglaf—

young warrior who helps Beowulf kill the dragon; kinsman of Beowulf

Wulfgar—

Hrothgar's herald who welcomes Beowulf and his men to Herot

## Literary Devices

Read + use for handout 7 21

## Student Handout 2A—Literary Devices

**Alliteration** is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning or middle of words.

Example: *Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel  
Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors*  
(ll. 115-116)

**Allusion** is a reference to a person, place, event, or thing from literature, history, art, or religion.

Example: Abel and Cain from the Bible.

**Caesura** is a pause or break in a line of poetry.

Example: *So Grendel ruled, fought with the righteous* (l. 144)

**Elegiac** is poetry expressing sorrow or lamentation.

Example: Beowulf's battle with the flying dragon, Episode C

**Epic** is a long, narrative poem about a hero of noble birth.

Example: *Paradise Lost*

**Foreshadowing** is the use of clues to hint at what is going to happen later in the plot.

Example: *He*  
*Would keep them safe from evil...* (ll. 704-705)

Read's use for handout

**Irony** is a contrast between expectation and reality; between what is said and what is really meant.

Example: Beowulf describes himself as being courteous to the monster when in reality he is not; he kills it.

**Kenning** is a phrase or metaphor composed of two words for a specific object.

Example: "world-candle" for sun; "battle-flasher" for sword

**Symbol** is a person, place, or thing that stands both for itself and something beyond itself.

Example: Armor represents God's protection or power; Grendel represents evil.

Read

Student Handout 3A—Vocabulary

comitatus— code of honor; a leader looks after his followers

lof— desire for worldly fame

mail— armor made of metal links

mead hall— meeting place for warriors

runes— early alphabet introduced into Britain by the Anglo-Saxon people

retainer— servant

scop— storyteller

thane— royal vassal of some importance, a land owner

wergild— a person who suffers damages through the killing of a relative might exact a sum of money from the murderer

wyrd— fate, destiny

Read & use for  
handout

## Literary Terms

1. Kenning – In Anglo-Saxon poetry, a metaphorical phrase or compound (often hyphenated) word used to name a person, place, thing or event indirectly. Beowulf has “whale-road” for the sea and “shepherd of evil” for Grendel.
2. Caesura – A pause or break within a line of poetry, usually indicated by the natural rhythm of the language. I divides a 4-beat line in half
3. Alliteration – the repetition of the initial consonant in a line of poetry. Alliteration is an essential feature in Anglo-Saxon poetry. In most lines, 2 or 3 of the four stressed syllables alliterate.
4. Litotes - an ironic understatement. A common feature of Old English poetry.
5. Archetype – a pattern that appears in literature across cultures and is repeated through the ages. An archetype can be a character, a plot, an image or a setting. Beowulf is a hero archetype.
6. Motif – In literature, a word, a character, an object, an image, a metaphor, or an object that recurs in the work.
  - a. The monster
  - b. The oral tradition
  - c. The Mead Hall
  - d. Biblical references
  - e. Arm(s)
  - f. Swords
7. Themes
  - a. Good vs. Evil
  - b. Importance of establishing an identity
    - i. Kinship or one’s pedigree is an important part of identity
      1. Beowulf is “the kin of Hygelac,” “the son of Ecgtheow”
      2. Coast guard requests Beowulf’s lineage before allowing him to approach Heorot
      3. If a person has no pedigree, he must build his reputation through personal accomplishments.
    - ii. Beowulf seeks fame through individual accomplishments (glory and fame)
      1. Swimming 5 days in the sea and killing sea monsters
      2. Defeating Grendel, Grendel’s mother, and dragon

X Road!

Use for handout.

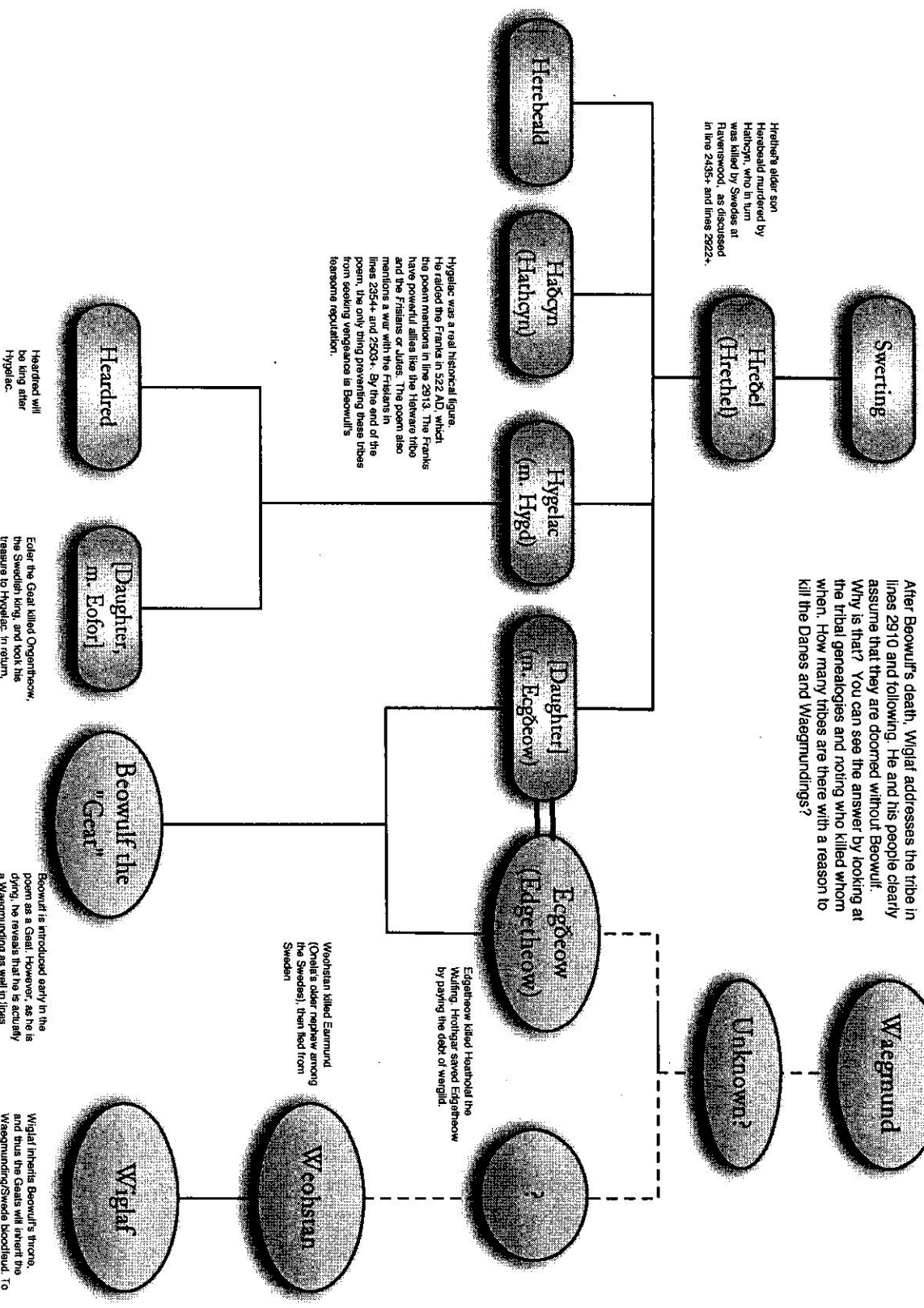
# BEOWULF'S GENEALOGY 1:

## (OR WHY THE TRIBE IS UTTERLY DOOMED WHEN BEOWULF DIES)

### The Geats (Wegers)

After Beowulf's death, Wiglaf addresses the tribe in lines 2910 and following. He and his people clearly assume that they are doomed without Beowulf. Why is that? You can see the answer by looking at the tribal genealogies and noting who killed whom when. How many tribes are there with a reason to kill the Danes and Waegmundings?

### The Waegmundings



Hrethel's elder son Herebeald murdered by Hathyn, who in turn was killed by Swedes at Ravenswood, as discussed in lino 2435+, and lines 2622+.

Hygelac was a real historical figure. He raided the Franks in 522 AD, which the poem mentions in line 2913. The Franks have powerful allies like the Hettware tribe and the Frisians or Jutes. The poem also mentions a war with the Frisians in lines 2354+ and 2503+. By the end of the poem, the only thing preventing these tribes from seeking vengeance is Beowulf's fearsome reputation.

Heartred will be king after Hygelac.

Elder the Geat killed Ongenbeow, the Swedish king and took the treasure to Hygelac. In return, Hygelac gave the unnamed daughter to Eclor to wed, as discussed in lines 2405 and 2395.

Egðeow killed Heathofa the Welling. Hrothgar saved Egðeow by paying the debt of wergild.

Wobstan killed Earmund (Olof's older nephew among the Swedes), then hid from Sweden.

Beowulf is introduced early in the poem as a Geat. However, as he is dying, he reveals that he is actually a Waegmunding as well in lines 2813-16. That is the same tribe as Wiglaf. He then decides to leave the throne to Wiglaf. However, his absence is no longer a deterrent to other tribes, and the blood-feud against Wiglaf's father will now fall upon the Danes, since they are led by a Waegmunding.

Wiglaf inherits Beowulf's throne, and thus the Geats will inherit the Waegmunding/Swede bloodfeud. To rub the point home, the poet has Wiglaf use the same sword to kill the dragon that Wobstan used to kill Earmund.



X Read + use for handout.

# BEOWULF'S GENEALOGY 2:

(OR WHY THE TRIBE IS  
UTTERLY DOOMED WHEN  
BEOWULF DIES)

## The Shielding Danes

Scyld Scefing  
(Shield Sheafson)

--- Finnsburg Shieldings? ---

Beow  
(the Dane)

Halfdane

King Hoc

**The Frisians or Jutes**  
The Frisians or Jutes are enemies of the Danes and they are allied to the Franks (who have been ancient enemies of the Geats and Waegmundings).

Gnæf

Hildeburh

Finn of Jutes

Ongenþeow  
(Ongentheow)

## The Swedes

Ongentheow killed Hæthcyn, Hygelac's older brother at Ravenswood. Hygelac took vengeance, attacking Ongentheow, and Eotil the Geat killed Ongentheow. Onther, his son, is looking for a spot at vengeance against the Geats, as discussed in line 2435+ and lines 2922+. Wiglaf in fact tells us that Swedish scouts will soon report Beowulf's death, and then the Swedes will cross the border.

Onther

## The Helmings

Helm

Halfdane's daughter (Yrs)

Onela

Halga

Eanmund

Eadgils

Heorogar

Hroðgar  
(Hrothgar)

Weoltheow

## The Heatho-Bards

King Frodo

Hreðric  
(Hrethric)

Hrothmund

Freawaru

Ingeld

The Heatho-bards' old king Frodo was killed fighting the Shielding Danes. Hrothgar sent Freawaru as a peace-weaver, but the marriage failed. When Beowulf took the throne, his reputation was all that temporarily prevented the feud from continuing.





Answer on this paper.  
**Student Handout 4A—Episode A Quiz**

1. What is Grendel's origin?
2. How long has he terrorized Herot?
3. Why does Grendel not attack the throne?
4. What is the name of Beowulf's country?
5. Why does Beowulf come to Denmark?
6. Who first greets Beowulf at Herot?
7. Who is angry at Beowulf and speaks harshly to him at the banquet?
8. Who serves ale to the guests at the banquet?
9. How does Beowulf kill Grendel?
10. Why are the warriors of no benefit during the fights?

---

9

Name \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>28</sup> Do Answer on this paper.

## Episode B Quiz

### Student Handout 5A—Episode B Quiz

1. How does Beowulf prepare for the battle with Grendel's mom?
2. Who loans Beowulf a sword?
3. What weapon does Grendel's mom use?
4. What does Beowulf see hanging on the wall of the cave?
5. How does Beowulf kill Grendel's mom?
6. What unusual thing happens next?
7. What does Beowulf do next?
8. What does Beowulf carry out of the lake?
9. How long has Hrothgar ruled over the Danes?
10. What does Beowulf say of Hrunting when he returns it?

Do Answer on this paper. Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Handout 6A—Episode C Quiz**

1. What does Beowulf give the king of the Geats when he returns?
2. What does the king give Beowulf?
3. What happens to Beowulf after 50 years?
4. How does Beowulf find the dragon?
5. Who remains to help Beowulf fight the flying dragon (drake)?
6. How does the dragon injure Beowulf?
7. What requests does Beowulf make as he is dying?
8. What gifts does he give Wiglaf?
9. How many Geats ride horses around the mound?
10. Who will be Beowulf's successor?



Do

Directions: Use the background information sheets to answer the following:

1. Who wrote *Beowulf*?
2. In what year was the poem written (recorded) for the first time?
3. From what area was Beowulf, the character?
4. During what century does the story likely take place?
5. Beowulf is a/an \_\_\_\_\_ poem or one that tells the story of a hero.
6. A poem that expresses loss or mourning is called \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The poet utilizes specialized metaphors called \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Beowulf, as a hero and a leader, would be expected to follow his \_\_\_\_\_ and come to the aid of others.

Use the family tree to answer the following:

9. Who are Beowulf's parents?
10. How is Hygelac (Higlac) related to Beowulf?
11. In the end, the reader learns that Beowulf and Wiglaf are related. How so?
12. Who is Halfdane (Healfdane)?
13. Who is Hrothgar's wife?
14. From what tribe (land) is Hrothgar?
15. Who are Hrothgar's three children?
16. How is Hrothulf related to Hrothgar?
17. Why is it suggested that the Geats were "doomed" after Beowulf's death?



"Beowulf" vocabulary ws

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The following words will be on the vocabulary test:

- |                   |                |               |                |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. tribute        | 2. Spoils      | 3. Fiend      | 4. Spawned     |
| 5. lair           | 6. Cavernous   | 7. Mail       | 8. Reined      |
| 9. herald         | 10. Scorn      | 11. Gorge     | 12. Mead       |
| 13. surged        | 14. Reprisal   | 15. Purge     | 16. Marsh      |
| 17. threshold     | 18. Taut       | 19. Murky     | 20. Vile       |
| 21. rank          | 22. Brooded    | 23. Forged    | 24. Sluggishly |
| 25. relic         | 26. Impervious | 27. Averted   | 28. Malice     |
| 29. supple        | 30. Roused     | 31. Cavernous | 32. Hoard      |
| 33. reparation(s) | 34. Solace     | 35. Writhing  |                |

Use each of the words above in the following sentences. Words will not change form and will not be used more than once.

1. After the war, the losing country was forced to pay \_\_\_\_\_ to those it had plundered before.
2. The lake was \_\_\_\_\_ as I could not see to its bottom.
3. The wolf returned to its \_\_\_\_\_ with its kill.
4. The alarm clock \_\_\_\_\_ me too early this morning.
5. The dragon kept its \_\_\_\_\_ of treasure hidden in the back of the cavern.
6. Florida has a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ areas that are wet and filled with alligators.
7. During the summer, I spend a lot of time working on a \_\_\_\_\_ of all of our closets, ridding them of those things we don't use any more.
8. The child \_\_\_\_\_ angrily after he was sent to the corner for talking back to his mother.
9. During the horror movie, Amy \_\_\_\_\_ her eyes to the bloody scene that she wanted to ignore.
10. Because Tony was tired, he walked \_\_\_\_\_ into the room this morning.
11. At Thanksgiving we often take a nap after we have \_\_\_\_\_ on all of the delicious food.
12. The most popular form of drink during the Anglo Saxon period was \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Warriors during the Dark Ages often wore \_\_\_\_\_ as a way of protecting themselves from weapons.
14. During the battle, the wizard had put a charm on the warrior that made him \_\_\_\_\_ to man made weapons that could not harm him.
15. The victors returned home with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the war including jewels, art, and other valuable items.
16. The door marks the \_\_\_\_\_ to the room that everyone must cross in order to enter.

Do

17. The leather smith had worked the leather saddle for many weeks, which made it quite \_\_\_\_\_.
18. When the English came to America, they thought the Native Americans were \_\_\_\_\_ because they did not believe in one god.
19. The blacksmith \_\_\_\_\_ many iron weapons for the battle.
20. The smell that came from the chemistry lab was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to my nose.  
(2 different words)
21. The monster \_\_\_\_\_ its offspring and sent them to attack the village.
22. The underground cave is quite \_\_\_\_\_ with many hidden passages and rooms.
23. When the bully took away the child's toy, this was an act done with a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.
24. I have several items that belonged to my grandmother, but the one \_\_\_\_\_ that I cherish the most is the desk.
25. After the storm, the water from the river \_\_\_\_\_ into the city streets.
26. Hold the reins \_\_\_\_\_ when riding the horse or it may run away from you.
27. In Hamlet, Osric is a messenger, otherwise known as a \_\_\_\_\_.
28. Expect some \_\_\_\_\_ from your friend if you play a practical joke on him.
29. The player was \_\_\_\_\_ in pain on the field after breaking his leg during the play.
30. Often quiet time alone can bring you \_\_\_\_\_ if you are emotional or have had a bad day.
31. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ others with cruel words unless you are willing to accept the same treatment yourself.
32. The wild Mustang was \_\_\_\_\_ in carefully by the trainer, as it was not used to being handled.
33. The winning team received \_\_\_\_\_ from the coach.
34. In most artwork, Satan is often depicted as some sort of \_\_\_\_\_ with horns and a tail.



Review Sheet - The Language of Beowulf Answer on this paper.

1. The monster was not disposed to delay;  
But, for a start, he hungrily seized  
a sleeping warrior, greedily wrenched him,  
bit into his body, drank his blood,  
from his veins, devoured huge pieces;  
until in no time, he had swallowed the whole man,  
even his feet and hands.

example of alliteration in the above lines \_\_\_\_\_

2. There, night after night, a fearful wonder may be seen--  
fire on the water; no man alive  
is so wise as to know the nature of its depths.  
That is not a pleasant place.

example of understatement in the above lines \_\_\_\_\_

3. The ship drew forward, butted the waves in deep waters;  
it drew away from the shores of the Scyldings.  
Then a great sea-garment was fastened to the mast.  
The ship swept over the waves.

example of kenning and its meaning in the above lines \_\_\_\_\_

4. The shadow of night  
settled over the retainers; the company arose;  
the gray-haired man, the old Scylding,  
wanted to retire, and the Geat, the shield-warrior,  
was utterly exhausted, his bones ached for sleep.

example of formula in the above lines \_\_\_\_\_

5. "I will not give an inch  
to the guardian of the mound, but at the barrow  
it will befall us both as fate ordains,  
every man's master."

...  
We cannot doubt that Mighty God  
has always ruled over mankind.

example of Christian element in above lines \_\_\_\_\_

example of pagan element in above lines \_\_\_\_\_

6. The protector of warriors, leader of men,  
instructed the smith to make a curious shield,  
made entirely of iron. The eminent prince,  
was doomed to see the end of his days on earth,  
his life in this world.

example of foreshadowing in above lines \_\_\_\_\_