

## Epic Beginnings Notes

- I. Gilgamesh:
  - a. Gilgamesh is part man and part god
  - b. His mother is a goddess.
  - c. The gods challenge Gilgamesh by sending Enkidu, an equally powerful man.
  - d. After battling each other, Gilgamesh and Enkidu become friends and set out on a journey to defeat Humbaba, a monster that guards the Cedar Forest.
  
- II. Elements of an Epic:
  - a. An epic poem is a long poem that tells the story of a hero.
  
  - b. Epics share features that help drive a plot, including:
    - i. A courageous hero who answers a call to adventure
    - ii. A journey filled with many challenges
    - iii. A vast setting of distant landscapes
    - iv. Supernatural forces, such as gods or monsters, that intervene
  
  - c. Epics are known for having a particular structure and style, as well as certain literary features. Some elements of structure and style are:
    - i. The use of poetic verse throughout the epic
    - ii. A narrative voice that tells the story
    - iii. Detailed descriptions
    - iv. Elevated or eloquent style
    - v. Compelling speeches
  
  - d. Repetition, the reappearance of words and phrases for effect, is an important part of an epic's structure because it:
    - i. Allows poets to remember and retell
    - ii. Helps the audience absorb the poem
    - iii. Creates a rhythmic pattern
    - iv. Emphasizes important ideas
  
- III. An epic hero is the main character of an epic.
  - i. The epic hero is considered an archetype or specific type of character with defining features.
  
  - ii. The epic hero has characteristics that are admirable.
  
  - iii. The epic hero also has the following traits:
    - is a strong warrior and leader

- is a compelling and confident speaker
- demonstrates courage and takes risks
- embarks on a long, challenging journey
- proves triumphant in battle
- receives help from a supernatural power.

IV. Theme is a message that a text conveys about a topic.

a. Examples:

<p>Theme: A good friendship reveals itself most clearly in difficult times.</p>	<p>Not a Theme: Friendship The two characters in this story are best friends who push each other to do better in life.</p>
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b. Because epics have many features in common, they also convey similar theme.

Epics explore themes that focus on these topics:

- i. Leadership
- ii. Loyalty
- iii. Perseverance
- iv. Mortality
- v. Personal growth
- vi. Fame and Glory

c. To determine theme, you must:

- i. Identify an important topic in the text
- ii. Determine the text's message about the topic
- iii. Write a single sentence that states the message.

d. Themes can interact, or connect, to build a story's message.

i. Example:

- A good leader values loyalty.
- Glory will come to those who bravely overcome a challenge.

V. Characterization is the way a character is presented and developed.

a. To analyze characterization, look for text that:

- i. Describes the character
- ii. Shows how the character acts
- iii. Tells what the character thinks or says
- iv. Reveals what others think about the character

b. After identifying the above elements, then form a conclusion about the character that states a characteristic.

VI. Character Analysis:

- a. The P.I.E. Strategy:
  - i. Make your POINT
    - State a specific conclusion drawn from analysis
  - ii. Provide an ILLUSTRATION
    - Give relevant examples from the text that supports the conclusion
  - iii. Include an EXPLANATION
    - Tell your readers how the illustration supports the specific point.
  - iv. To paraphrase a text means to put ideas and information in one's own words.

VII. The Angles and the Saxons - Background:

- a. Beginning in the 400's, Germanic tribes invaded Britain.
- b. The Angles and Saxons become the most powerful tribes.
- c. Germanic rules divided Britain into seven kingdoms.
- d. In 871, Alfred the Great become King of Wessex.
  - i. HE promoted Education and Christianity
  - ii. He defeated invaders and helped unite the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.
- e. Later, Anglo-Saxon Kings called their expanded kingdom England.
- f. In 1066, William of Normandy conquered England.

VIII. Features of Anglo-Saxon Culture:

- a. Warrior Tribes
- b. Lords and Thaness
  - i. Thaness were warriors that were loyal to one specific lord.
- c. Gift-giving
  - i. Lords/Kings were obligated to give gifts to the their thaness.
  - ii. Sometimes kings were called "ring-givers".
- d. Hospitality and feasts
  - i. Anglo-Saxon life was organized a great hall (large building) where all warriors ate and lived.
- e. Pagan and Christian beliefs
  - i. Christianity entered Britain around 600 AD, and Alfred the Great popularized Christianity around 800 AD.
  - ii. Many older Germanic tribes still followed traditional Pagan beliefs Rituals.

IX. Beowulf:

- a. is an Anglo-Saxon epic poem that was written down around 1000 CE.
- b. The story

- i. Is set in the sixth-century Scandinavia
- ii. Describes the heroic deeds of a warrior named Beowulf
- iii. Blends elements of Pagan and Christian culture.

c. The plot of the story:

- i. Hrothgar is the King of the Danes
- ii. Heorot, Hrothgar's hall, is under attack by a monster named Grendel.
- iii. Beowulf, a famous warrior, belongs to a tribe called the Geats.
- iv. Beowulf defeats Grendel and then defeats Grendel's mother.
- v. Beowulf becomes King of the Geats, and slays a dragon.

d. Beowulf was written in Old English.

- i. This language was spoken in Britain until 1100 CE.
- ii. Old English is a Germanic language, while modern English is heavily influenced by French.
- iii. Major feature of Old English is alliteration:
  - Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginnings of words in a line of poetry.

X. **Characterization in Grendel:**

- a. Point of View: is the position from which a story is narrated.
  - i. First Person Narrative: told from the perspective of a single character; uses pronouns *I, we, us, and me*.
  - ii. Third Person Narrative: told from the perspective of a narrator who refers to characters with the pronouns *he, she, or they*.
  - iii. Perspective: characters way of thinking about or seeing a situation.