

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*from Beowulf*, translated by Burton Raffel

## Literary Analysis: The Epic/The Legendary Hero

The **epic** *Beowulf* is a long narrative poem that recounts the exploits of the legendary warrior Beowulf. Like other **legendary heroes**, Beowulf represents good and earns glory by struggling against the forces of evil represented by several monstrous creatures. He represents the values of his nation, culture, and religion. *Beowulf* is a typical epic poem in its serious tone and elevated language, which portrays characters, action, and setting in terms larger and grander than life. The use of **kennings**, two-word metaphorical names for familiar things, is also a particular characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each passage from *Beowulf*. Then list the characteristics of epic poetry and the legendary hero represented in it.

1. So mankind's enemy continued his crimes, / Killing as often as he could, coming / Alone, bloodthirsty and horrible. Though he lived / In Herot, when the night hid him, he never / Dared to touch King Hrothgar's glorious / Throne, protected by God—God, / Whose love Grendel could not know. . . .

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2. "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 / 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' / Great king. They have seen my strength for themselves, / Have watched me rise from the darkness of war. . . ."

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3. "Grant me, then, / Lord and protector of this noble place, / A single request! I have come so far, / O 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, / May purge all evil from this hall."

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