BEOWULF LITERARY ANALYSIS PAPER

(Wally--rev. term 2 2011)

1. IN GENERAL

For this paper you must develop a literary analysis illuminating significant themes, patterns, images, or relationships in Beowulf. To prepare your analysis, you should think deeply about Beowulf in standard areas of analysis such as: characterization, imagery, theme, content, and context (as well as other related elements).

This analysis should be based on your own deep reading and analysis of Beowulf.

Some reminders:

Literary analysis writing is persuasive writing. It supports YOUR opinion about the literature—an informed opinion based on the text.

* Your opinion should be about the THEME or some interpretive or stylistic aspect(s) of the literature.
* Always make clear references to Beowulf to prove that your point really is found in the text. Your writing should, of course, reflect careful thinking, analysis, and support of your thesis.
* Only a small portion of literary analysis may be summary, and summary must NEVER be the main aspect of the essay—nor does literary analysis consist of making critical judgments of the works. That falls under the area of "critical review." Your primary job is arguing for a particular interpretation. Assume that the reader is undeniably familiar with the text.
* Length is not the key; the paper needs to be sufficiently developed to prove your thesis.
* READ THE GRADING SHEET CAREFULLY WELL IN ADVANCE OF WRITING THE PAPER.

2. TOPIC CHOICE AND PRELIMINARY PLANNING

After carefully considering an array of possible thesis topics, select ONE upon which to base your paper. As soon as possible, write a thesis statement that clearly reflects what you are intending to prove. Do not use words in your thesis statement that refer to the paper such as: "The purpose of this paper is to prove . . . ." Also, carefully choose a verb in your thesis statement which effectively conveys what you are attempting to do in the paper.

To do literary analysis, the first and most important thing is to carefully reread and review Beowulf. As you do this, you should take notes recording your own questions and ideas. If you are planning to measure or compare Beowulf or the text to something, however, it is critical that you use supplementary materials for verification of whatever it is you are comparing Beowulf to.

As you reread the text carefully, look for situations, quotations, and other applicable examples which would support your thesis. I cannot stress enough how important it is to make as many notes and find as many examples BEFORE YOU WRITE. Many students think that they can easily plug in the examples later but are often mistaken about how difficult this really might be. As you look for examples, keep the Beowulf text close beside you. In addition, refer to the "Helpful Hints" hand-outs you were given as well as the "Significant Quotations in Beowulf" hand-out. Even the lays may be of some key importance.

Direct quotations are valuable—as long as you insert the quotation with adequate explanation of it. DO NOT ASSUME THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE INCLUDED AN IMPORTANT QUOTATION THAT THE READER KNOWS WHY IT'S THERE AND HOW IT SUPPORTS THE THESIS. ALWAYS DISCUSS THE QUOTATIONS! Remember to seamlessly integrate a quotation into your text with a preface or lead or explanation of why the quote was included. Direct quotations must never stand alone!
Careful preliminary planning and a rough outline will help you immensely before you begin drafting. Once you start drafting, is strongly advised that you find the textual support and document it correctly parenthetically as you write.

Because this is a paper of formal analysis, **Academic Voice** must be used. This means that the use of these personal pronouns—I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, we, us, our, and ours—and other informalities and colloquialisms are not permitted (unless they appear in direct quotations). The use of the literary present tense is expected in formal papers of literary analysis.

### 3. Citing Lines of Poetry

For information on how to cite lines of poetry, carefully read our *EPHS Survival Manual* pages PDQ 15-17 “Guideline 8: How to Quote Poems” and PDQ 41-42 “M. Citing Common Works of Literature: Poetry.”

Below is an example of a possible section of your paper. Note that the first parenthetical reference includes the words “lines.” Following that initial indication that the numbers in the parentheses are, indeed, line numbers, not page numbers, the word “lines” is dropped from further parenthetical references from *Beowulf*:

> Grendel is more than a monster. His mission comes from the devil himself. This is clear when the poet says, “So times were pleasant for the people there / until finally one [Grendel], a fiend out of hell, / began to work his evil in the world (lines 99-101). He even calls Grendel a “grim demon / haunting the marches, marauding round the heath (102-103). Both the words “fiend” and “demon” have been used throughout literary history as synonyms for “devil,” and there is no doubt that Grendel is, indeed, the arch enemy of good. Certainly, the association of Grendel and his forebears with Cain is undeniable. Grendel is said to have lived among “Cain’s clan” (106), and just like Cain, *Beowulf* characterizes Grendel as “anathema” (110).

**REMEMBER:**
- USE A SLASH (called a "virgule") / TO DIVIDE LINES OF POETRY.
- PUT A SPACE BEFORE [AND] AFTER THE SLASH.

### 4. Works-Cited Entry for Our *Beowulf* Text

For the Seamus Heaney translation of *Beowulf*, use this format:

5. USE OF SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL OTHER THAN A BEOWULF TEXT

If you use any supplementary material other than the text itself for your essay, use the parenthetical documentation and the works-cited section of the EPHS Survival Manual for assistance. When in doubt, consult your teacher. For the paper topic on heroes, consider using the supplementary information from newspaper/magazine articles or chapters on heroes that were given to you. Make sure the article has all the bibliographic information you need. Consult your teacher for assistance.

**NOTE:** Any pages from where you found material in supplementary sources must be photocopied and attached to your paper. Please highlight the actual sections on the photocopies that you used.

**Examples of supplementary material from the Norton Anthology of English Literature:**

Some of you will want to use the introductory chapter "The Middle Ages" from the Norton Anthology of English Literature, volume 1, 5th edition. This chapter has been reproduced for you in our Beowulf packet.

Here’s what the parenthetical documentation would look like:  
(Donaldson and David 4)

Your works cited entry for this chapter would look like this:


Note that even if you only used information from page 4 (which would appear in your parenthetical reference), you write the inclusive page numbers of titled chapters in the works-cited page.

6. ABOUT THE REQUIRED OUTLINE

You must turn in a properly formatted outline for this paper. You will lose 5 points for not turning in an outline. An outline should be a "road map" of the paper. Make sure that it follows the main points of the paper exactly and that they are presented IN THE SAME ORDER THEY APPEAR IN THE PAPER ITSELF.

Consult pages MSF 6-11 in our EPHS Survival Manual for the proper MLA format for an outline. Formatting can be very tricky.

**NOTE: YOU MUST SUBMIT AN OUTLINE AT LEAST ONE WEEK BEFORE THE PAPER IS DUE!**

7. ADDITIONAL IN-CLASS NOTES AND REMINDERS
**BEOWULF ANALYTICAL PAPER TOPICS** (rev. 2011)

**Topic 1:** In the long quote below, Wright suggests Beowulf is partially a document of historical importance. When we read Beowulf, we learn a lot about the Anglo-Saxon life and the values held important during that time period. In your essay, prove that Beowulf, as much an important document of historical importance as it is a good story of fiction.

**NOTE:** Make sure that you make use of a fair amount of credible supplementary sources to confirm what you say is "true" about the Anglo-Saxon values and lifestyle.

**Topic 2:** In the long quote below, Wright implies that Beowulf has a message for us in the twentieth century just as it did for the Anglo-Saxon and early English people. Look carefully at the last section of Wright's statement. (By the way, what does Wright mean by "the dark"?) He seems to say that Beowulf is the universal story of our journey from adolescence to adulthood to old age and the growth in wisdom about self and the world gained through the pain and triumph of experience. Prove it is true that most people are really little Beowulfs.

**NOTE:** You must use a fair amount of credible supplementary sources to confirm what you say is "true" about stages of adolescence to adulthood to old age.

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**DAVID WRIGHT'S QUOTE TO INSPIRE TOPIC 1 AND TOPIC 2**

David Wright, a translator of Beowulf (not the version we read), states: Beowulf is one of the longest as well as one of the most important of complete poems in Old English. It is not a relic of savage hygiene, nor is it merely a document of historical importance. It is the only native English heroic epic, and one of the finest products of the Dark Ages of Europe. . . .

Its theme is the conflict of good and evil. It is an expression of the fear of the dark, an examination of the nature and purpose of heroism, and the great statement of the Anglo-Saxon outlook and imagination . . . .

It affirms the human being in a world where everything is transient, whether life, happiness, power, or splendor; where darkness too quickly follows upon light, just as the long northern winter overwheels the brief season of spring.

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**Topic 3:** A significant amount has been said about what constitutes a hero—both in the Anglo-Saxon times as well as in our times today. The story of Beowulf is an epic which focuses, of course, on the struggles and triumphs of an epic hero—namely Beowulf. But is he all he's cracked up to be? When all is said and done, does he measure up? Does he deserve the honor of being called a hero? In this essay, discuss whether or not Beowulf ultimately deserves to be called a hero. Concentrate, first, on whether he would have been considered a hero in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxons. Next, discuss whether he would have heroic stature in our society today. Finally, discuss whether you think, taking into account your personal definition of hero, Beowulf is a hero.

**NOTE:** You may use the personal pronoun "I, me, my, mine" only in the 3rd section of the essay. **NOTE:** Make sure that you make use of a fair amount of credible supplementary sources to confirm what you say is "true" about the Anglo-Saxon and Modern views of what constitutes a hero.

**Topic 4:** Much has been said of the Anglo-Saxon concept of the so-called "HEROIC-IDEAL." The story starts out with Shield introduced as the model of this ideal. As translator Seamus Heaney indicated about Shield, "that was one good king." Yet, Raffel translated this same idea another way. "there was a brave king." Of what stuff is the ANGLO-SAXON HERO made? What traits does he possess? How does Beowulf differ, say, from Hrothgar and Ulfith? Ultimately, would Beowulf be considered the penultimate Anglo-Saxon hero?

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**Topic 5:** J. R. R. Tolkien has suggested that the theme of Beowulf deals with "man alien in the world, engaged in a struggle which he cannot win...". Agree with or refute this idea.

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**Topic 6:** Some say, "it's a man's world." But there are women in Beowulf (some who participate in the actual storyline and others present in the lays). Think about the role of women in this epic poem. Are these inclusions significant to development of theme? Is the world of Beowulf clearly "a man's world"? Do the women's roles help our understanding of the poem's world and themes and enrich the events of the poem? Agree with or refute the idea that the inclusions of women in the poem are important and help our understanding of the poem's world, themes, as well as enrich the events of the poem.

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**Topic 7:** Beowulf is steeped in a pagan tradition that depicts nature as hostile and forces of death as uncontrollable. Blind fate picks random victims; man is never reconciled with the world. Beowulf ends a failure. Agree with or refute this idea.

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**Topic 8:** Beowulf is the story of a dual ordeal: an external battle with victorious opponents and an equally important internal battle with human tendencies. Agree with or refute this idea.

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**Topic 9:** Beowulf derives much of its flavor from the ingenious manner in which the heroic qualities of pre-Christian Germanic civilization (the pagans) are brought into harmony with Christianity.

**The integration of the two worlds (pagan and Christian) is quite successful.** Agree with or refute this idea.

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**Topic 10:** Is Beowulf a Christian work of literature or a pagan work of literature? Is the message ultimately a Christian one? Is it God or Fate who rules the universe of this poem? If all the references to Christianity were cut out of the poem, would the spirit and point of the poem change at all? If the poem is written by a Christian, why are there no references to Jesus and the story of salvation? What kinds of values/attitudes does the poet especially seem to hold? Agree/refute some of these ideas.

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**Topic 11:** Think about the *lays and the other extensive speeches* in Beowulf. Prove that the lays and/or other extensive speeches are vital to develop major themes/characters in the poem or that we could just as well have done without them.

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**Topic 12:** How does Beowulf develop the theme of the importance of *interconnectedness*? How many times can you spot the word *alone* in the poem? What about references to *weaving*? What does the importance of the giving of *gifts* throughout the poem and *treasures*—treasures that are given and treasures that are selfishly hoarded—have to do with stressing the importance of being connected with others? (Remember the biblical question, "Am I my brother's keeper")?

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**Topic 13:** Take a close look at *Hrothgar's parting words to Beowulf*. Some have called his closing speech a "sermon" on pride and mortality. Is it a sermon? A Christian sermon? or a pagan lesson on kingship? Why is this "sermon" so critical to Beowulf's life? Does Beowulf become like Hrothgar? What does this epic poem say about the concept of *PRIDE*?

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**Topic 14:** Create your own thesis based on something of importance that came to mind after reading Beowulf or after considering the above essay questions. This question must be submitted beforehand for instructor approval. In order for me to consider it, you must write a *preliminary thesis statement* and rough outline at least ONE week prior to the due date of the paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Unique and effective title</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Overall effectiveness of the intro/opening remarks</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Identification of the poem and its translator</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Thesis statement identifies a clear line of analysis connected to the text(s)</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Overview of three main areas of analysis is clear and concise</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Areas of analysis are put into a coherent and &quot;motivated&quot; order</td>
<td>-1 to -2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Overall organization intrinsically contributes to and complements the analysis</td>
<td>-1 to -2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AREA of ANALYSIS #1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Statement of the area of analysis is clear and coherently linked to the thesis</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This area of analysis is well-developed, in-depth, effective, convincing, accurate</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Area of analysis is significant and logically connected to thesis and its line of reasoning</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Sufficient, focused support from the appropriate text(s) is provided</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Unity is present: All material present contributes effectively to the analysis</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. This section is organized logically, is balanced, and coherent (transitions plentiful)</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AREA of ANALYSIS #2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Statement of the area of analysis is clear and coherently linked to the thesis</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AREA of ANALYSIS #3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Statement of the area of analysis is clear and coherently linked to the thesis</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<td>2. This area of analysis is well-developed, in-depth, effective, convincing, accurate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Paper transitions smoothly into conclusion</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reviews fully the major significance of the analysis of the text(s).</td>
<td>-1 to -2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Closing statements logical and conclusive</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sense of closure present (beyond summarizing) with interesting, finalizing &quot;closing statement/discussion&quot;</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conclusion is organized logically. Summary is balanced.</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. DOCUMENTATION/CITATIONS

**BEOWULF CITATIONS**

DOCUMENTATION / CITATIONS are provided for virtually all material that needed to be cited. Credit is given when and where credit is due.

ALL DIRECT QUOTATIONS ARE DONE CORRECTLY

-1 to -35

**PROBLEMS (circle):**

- Direct quotation isn't quoted exactly as it appeared in the original.
- Quoted material stands alone. No effective lead-in statement is present. (Lead-ins should seamlessly integrate quoted material into the paper.)
- In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of direct quotations not given proper credit.
- Material isn't found in the original.
- Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
- Other problem(s): ___________________________________________________________________

All paraphrased material is done correctly.

-1 to -3

**PROBLEMS (circle):**

- Paraphrasing of the original material raises suspicion of plagiarism. Wording is too close to the original.
- Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
- In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of paraphrased material is not given proper credit.
- Material isn't found in the original.
- Other problem(s): ___________________________________________________________________

**SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES OTHER THAN BEOWULF**

**PROBLEMS (circle):**

-1 to -5

- Sources are highlighted and attached as well as clearly highlighted and referenced in paper.
- Authoritative sources are used; no use of print or online encyclopedias.
- Choice of supplementary sources is valid and integral to the thesis.
- Credibility of authors/sources is well-established in the paper.
- Supplementary sources integral to the thesis were NOT used.

8. STYLE

1. LANGUAGE

-1 to -2

**Diction (word choice) reflects a sophisticated tailoring of message to a clear academic audience.**

**PROBLEMS (circle):**

- Diction is not precise and/or often incorrect.
- Use of overly simple word choices; vocabulary is not near "college level."
- Use of slang, colloquialisms, cliches, idioms, and other informal speech mannerisms.
- Overt use of linking verbs or passive voice.
- Verb tenses are inconsistent.

The literary and other terminology must be used precisely, correctly, appropriately, and effectively.

-1 to -2

**Terminology must be clarified.**

Literary present tense is not used consistently

-1 to -2

Do not use (except in direct quotations) first person or personal pronouns:

**EXAMPLES:**

- I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, your
- the use of the "understood you"
- we, us, our, ours

2. VOICE/TONE

-1 to -2

**Author's voice is confident regarding assertions in the analysis of the text(s)**

-1 to -2

**Author's voice is distinct from the sources' voices.**

-1 to -2

**Author's voice/tone is sophisticated, precise, and appropriate to a near college level.**

-1 to -2

**Author's depth of understanding and appreciation of the traits is conveyed.**

-1 to -2

3. SENTENCES

-1 to -2

**Sentence structure is purposeful, technically correct, well-crafted, and sophisticated.**

**Simplified use of subordination and sentence complexity is appropriate to academic writing.**

**Sentence structure must clearly differentiate student author's voice and style from the authors' voices and styles.**

**Complex sentence structures are used over simple sentence structures.**

-1 to -2

**Sentence variety reflects a sophisticated tailoring of message to a clear audience.**

-1 to -2
You can buy back up to 20 "writing convention" pts. by making corrections by ________________.

"Writing Conventions" consists of two areas: 

- MANUSCRIPT FORM (msf) 
- POINTS OF FOR TECHNICAL ERRORS

DIRECT QUOTATIONS PROBLEMS
- Incorrect msf of direct quotations (DQ) 
- Incorrect msf of the parenthetical documentation of direct quotations 
- Incorrect use of ellipsis points in square brackets [...] for omissions, square brackets for interpolation, [sic] for errors in the original 
- Incorrect msf when quoting from a poem—see special requirements and the proper use of slashes (/) 
- Other problems:

PARAPHRASED MATERIAL PROBLEMS
- Incorrect msf of paraphrased citations 
- Incorrect msf of paraphrased documentation of paraphrased citations 
- Other problems:

WRITING CONVENTIONS: POINTS OF FOR TECHNICAL ERRORS

Specific errors:

- AWKWARD word choice (aw -1) 
- AGREEMENT faulty subject-verb agreement or pronoun-antecedent agreement (ag -1) 
- CAPITALIZATION cap/c (c -1) 
- DECLARATIVE—Erasure (d -1) 
- EXACT WORD—word chosen is not precise or correct to convey clear meaning (ew -1) 
- FRAGMENTS frag (f -2) 
- HOMONYM ERRORS H -1) AND H no excone (-2) 
- MISPLACED MODIFIER mm (m -1) 
- PUNCTUATION—COMMAS pc (p -1) 
- PUNCTUATION—APROACHES pa (-1) 
- PUNCTUATION—OTHER (ped & (ped) & (ped) & (ped) & (ped) & (ped) (all -1) 
- PRONOUN CASE pro-case (c -1) 
- REFERENCE UNCLEAR ref (-1) 
- RUN-ONS rc (r -3) 
- SPELLING sp (s -1) AND sp no excone (-1) 
- TENSE t (-1) 
- WORD MISSING mw (-1)

EXTRA CREDIT
You may earn up to one extra credit point on this paper for using five extra-credit vocabulary words/aphorisms correctly. BOX, bold, or highlight them in the paper.

-1 off total NO SECURITY COPY

-1-3 off total NO OUTLINE submitted in advance or at due date

TOTAL = ___ PRELIM. GRADE

However, if you receive full credit for buybacks your new score would be ___ /70 = ___ grade

Do buybacks carefully! Your buybacks are due on ___________ and cannot be redone!

TEACHER COMMENTS:

+ positives

- suggestions