Study Guide for *Beowulf*  Name:

Date:

Period:

**Beowulf**  - Pre-reading knowledge:

* Beowulf is a Geat from Geatland, a region that is now southern Sweden. He sets sail from his homeland – Geatland – to help the Danish King Hrothgar.
* Hrothgar is the King of the Danes who built a great banquet hall called Herot. It was used for celebrations for Hrothgar’s men. A monster has been ravaging Herot for 12 years, forcing a stop to all celebrations.
* Grendel is the enormous terrifying swampland monster who has been attacking Herot.
* Caesura is a feature of epic poetry that refers to a pause in the middle of the line of poetry.
* Kenning is a feature of epic poetry that is a colorful two-word replacement to rename something. Examples: Sea = whalepath; sword = battle-flasher; grave = earth-hall.
* Danes were Hrothgar’s people who were also referred to as Gar-Danes, Ring-Danes, Spear-Danes, and Scyldings.
* Geats were Beowulf’s people who were also called Sea-Geats, War-Geats, and Weather-Geats.

**Part I**

**INSTRUCTIONS: Using a separate sheet of paper, answer all of the questions with COMPLETE SENTENCES**

***Grendel***

1. According to the text, what did the poets' songs recall?

2. Why mention Grendel as a descendant of Cain?

3. What theme does "again and again defeated" suggest?

4. What is the tone in lines 44-49? (Point out tone words.)

5. How do Hrothgar's men try to protect themselves?

6. What does the kenning "hell-forged hands" mean?

7. Note the mention of "protected by God." It shows the influence of Christianity. However, notice there are still pagan influences too. What indicates these influences and why?

***Beowulf***

8. What effect does Grendel have on Hrothgar and his people?

9. Whom and how many did Beowulf select to go with him to fight Grendel?

10. According to Beowulf, why has he come to Hrothgar?

11. By his speech and his actions, what traits does Beowulf appear to possess?

12. How does Beowulf recommend himself to Hrothgar?

13. What is Beowulf's request? Why is it unusual?

14. How might Bewowulf's belief in fate influence his actions?

15. What did Hrothgar tell Beowulf that he had done for Beowulf's father?

16. How does the tone change at the mention of Grendel?

17. In lines 190-224, what values are reflected in Hrothgar's speech?

***The Battle with Grendel***

18. What did fate have in store from Grendel?

19. Describe the encounter between Beowulf and Grendel?

20. How did the sounds of the fight change?

21. Why were Beowulf's men of no help to him?

22. What details does the poet use to emphasize Grendel is a creature of evil? (Indicate particular language the poet uses.)

23. What happens to Grendel?

24. What are some of the vivid images the poet uses to describe the end of Grendel?

25. How does Beowulf gain a sense of immortality?

**Text Analysis**

26. (Analyze Motivation) In the beginning, what drives Grendel to attack so many men at Herot? How does his motivation change?

27. (Make Inferences) Why does Beowulf hang Grendel's arm from the rafters of Herot?

**Part II**

***Grendel's Mother***

1. Who has "reversed/ The bright vane of their [the Dane's] luck"?

2. Why does Grendel's mother take and kill one of the Danes, and why did she select her particular victim?

3. Look at the description of the battle and cite some of the verbs and adjectives that capture the ferocity of the battle. (This is near the beginning when Grendel’s mother attacks the men in the meadhall.)

4. Describe Gerndel's mother's home.

***The Battle with Grendel's Mother***

5. What details of the battle and its setting are characteristic of an epic?

6. Who observes the battle?

7. The poet explains that ". . .fame comes to the men who mean to win it/ And care about nothing else!" What does the poet mean with regard to Beowulf?

8. What failed Beowulf in his battle with the mighty water witch?

9. According to the poet, why was Beowulf victorious?

10. How and with what did Beowulf kill Grendel's mother?

11. What does the light described in lines 526-528 suggest about Beowulf's victory?

12. Why did Beowulf look for Grendel, and what did he do once he found the monster?

13. What do lines 549-555 suggest about attitudes toward fame in the Anglo-Saxon period?

14. Why do the Geats want the Danes to see Grendel's skull?

**Text Analysis**

15. Why does Hrothgar ask Beowulf to battle Grendel's mother?

16. Compare the two monsters. Does the behavior of Grendel's mother seem as wicked or unreasonable as Grendel's behavior? Support you opinion with evidence from the text.

Part III

***Beowulf's Last Battle***

1. What awakens the Dragon that begins to terrorize the Geats?

2. How does Beowulf defend his use of weapons against the dragon?

3. What imagery does the poet use to set the stage for Beowulf's climatic battle with the dragon?

4. Do you think the poet wants to depict the battle as a contest of equals, or does he view Beowulf as the underdog? Defend your answer.

5. What do lines 667-671 reveal about the qualities of an epic hero?

6. What values are implied in lines 691-696? What message about these values do the lines convey?

7. How does Wiglaf's speech show that he is different from his comrades?

8. Does Wiglaf qualify as an epic hero? Why or why not?

***The Death of Beowulf***

9. What has happened to Beowulf?

10. The poet writes that Beowulf knew "he'd unwound/ His string of days on earth" (lines 737-738). What view of fate does this image suggest?

11. What ideals are reflected in Beowulf's speech in lines 744-755?

12. Reread lines 768-778. What theme do the lines suggest?

13. Identify the kennings used in lines 789-794 to refer to the dragon and to Beowulf. What does the phrase used to describe Beowulf emphasize about the warrior?

14. Why does Beowulf want Wiglaf to build a tomb for him?

15. Why are Beowulf's followers referred to as "cowards and traitors" and "shamefaced jackals"?

16. What does Wiglaf say about the Geats who did not support Beowulf? (What are the consequences of that behavior?)

***Mourning Beowulf***

17. What do Beowulf's men do for him upon his death?

18. What happens to all the treasures found in the dragon's lair?