

English 4 Honors

Summer Reading Questions: *Beowulf*, *Dracula*, *Into the Wild*

The following contains questions to help you in your understanding of your summer reading. During the course of the 2009-2010 year, we will study each of these: *Beowulf*, *Dracula*, and *Into the Wild*, so the summer reading activity is not a “meaningless activity”—you will be responsible for having completed these activities; these questions are a foundation upon which we will build.

Please read the introductions before each reading assignment; they explain how to approach the reading assignments. A quick overview is as follows:

Beowulf—Questions for Guided Reading and Annotation of the Text

Dracula—Study Guide Questions (Short Answers)

Into the Wild—Ten Short Essay Questions

Warning: Do not ignore nor wait until the last minute to do this work. Most English 4 Honors students who seek to find a fast route through this material or think that watching a movie is the same as reading the text tend to do poorly in the course. Those who read the actual texts and respond to the questions, reflecting on the answers, tend to do very well. As an honors class, it has been designed for students who enjoy reading and writing.

Unlike other texts assigned during the year, you will have read *Beowulf*, *Dracula*, and *Into the Wild* by the start of the fall semester; therefore, you will only have a few days to review these texts prior to our studying them in class. Please keep all questions and your responses so that you may refer to them when that time comes.

Beowulf

The following is an extensive list of questions. ***Do not feel overwhelmed***; if you sit down with the poem and refer to these questions as you read, you will be able to understand the material much more readily.

These questions assume you have the Seamus Heaney translation (line numbers are based on his translation).

The questions are broken down into sections; you may want to read the lines indicated first, then go back and re-read, answering the questions. Or you may want to use these questions as a guide as you read through the epic.

How to answer the questions: For this assignment, I expect you to annotate *Beowulf* (write in the margins, underline / highlight significant areas) and to use these questions to help you annotate. You ***might*** want to keep either a handwritten journal or a typed journal to develop answers to questions that need more than the area provided within the margins of the book. Some questions may not require you to respond with an “answer”—they may just be helpful with your understanding of the material. I understand that some questions might be too difficult for you to answer. That is fine; make a note of those questions. I do ***NOT*** expect you to have typed answers for the following questions. I ***DO*** expect you to use these questions and interact with them; I expect you to work with the text and annotate it. By the end of this activity, you should have gained a solid understanding of the text and the ability to navigate through the more difficult passages of the poem. Students who have completed this activity have told me that it opened up the poem and helped them tremendously.

Please note that we will be studying *Beowulf* during the first quarter. The course begins with the understanding (at the start of the fall semester) that you have read *Beowulf* (not *Spark Notes* or a similar summary) and that you have worked with these questions as you read through the epic poem. Make certain that you complete this activity: You will be required to bring these questions and your annotated text / written responses during the summer reading exams / activities check.

FYI —Reading *Spark Notes* and other such works might help you to a certain extent; however, they do not replace reading the epic poem. Furthermore, the following questions were generated by your NDP instructor and do not rely on any of these works; reading *Spark Notes* et al., may actually complicate this exercise.

Also, several movies based on *Beowulf* are interesting but are not faithful to the work. By all means view them, (*Beowulf*, *Beowulf and Grendel*, *Thirteenth Warrior*) if you like, but do not ignore the poem—all assignments and tests are based on the poem not the movies. At times students become confused between the movie and the story, so make certain to focus on understanding the poem. (I hope to be able to discuss with you the various movies and their interpretations; this is only “fun” if you’ve read the actual poem.)

A good source to help you learn about *Beowulf* is “Resources in the Study of *Beowulf*.” Please feel free to consult it at <http://greenehamlet.com/beowulf.html>. It will be of greater use to you than Wikipedia.

Denmark, Grendel, and the Coming of Beowulf Lines 1-498

1. The recount of Scyld Scēfing's (Shield Sheafson's) starts the poem. What type of man is he? What evaluation does the poet make in line 11?
2. Where had Scyld come from?
3. What is Scyld's son's name and what type of man is he?
4. Describe Scyld's funeral.
5. How is Scyld's coming and going from this world similar? How is he a bit like King Arthur in his death?
6. Why do you think he bothers with the brief biography of Scyld's life? (Think of following in answering this question: What mood does the poet create by introducing this individual and the brief tale of his life? What might the themes of this epic be? What qualities might the coming hero (Beowulf) have?)
7. There is a section of genealogy—what might we infer about this epic?
8. Hrothgar is a descendent of Scyld who builds a mead hall. Before he builds it, what has he finished? What is the name of this mead hall?
9. What type of place does Hrothgar intend it to be? How is this place similar/different to Camelot?
10. What foreshadowing occurs in lines 81-85?
11. Grendel threatens Heorot—what words are used to define him?
12. What did he hear that disturbed him so much?
13. Where does Grendel live?
14. What is significant about his being a descendent of Cain? Why would joyful noises and the songs of the creation disturb him so?
15. According to the poet, what creatures sprang from the curse of Cain?
16. What does Grendel do?
17. Describe the morning after Grendel's visit to Heorot.
18. Describe Hrothgar's kingdom—his thanes, the state of affairs, etc.
19. How does Grendel's outcast status perpetuate the feud?
20. How do other clans and tribes hear about Hrothgar's 12-year problem?
21. Look over the pages you've read—underline strong examples of alliteration.
22. Where does Grendel spend his nights? What significance might this have?
23. What can't Grendel touch and why?
24. What do the Danes, in desperation, do—in an attempt to solve their Grendel infestation?
25. The voice of the poet comes through here—what commentary does he give on these actions by the Danes? What warnings does he give the reader?
26. In what you've read, find examples of what the poet admires about this culture—mark them/list them.
27. The introduction of the hero in the poem begins with the line, "When *he* heard about Grendel. . ." How is "he" described/defined? Why aren't we given his name yet?
28. What do his elders do once he's decided to go help Hrothgar?
29. As captain of his boat—how is he described?
30. Look at the language the poet employs describing the journey to Denmark from Sweden. What does this tell you about the poet's world?
31. We learn that these men are Geats (Geatland is in southern Sweden).

32. Who sees them arriving? How does he greet them? Why is he a bit absurd?
33. How does the poet draw the hero out of the group of new arrivals in the speech by the Danish watcher?
34. What is a “word-hoard”? (The literary device is a kenning: swan’s way; spear-tree; whale’s road are other examples. But what do you think this is referring to?)
35. Now we learn of the lord these Geats owe their allegiance—who is he?
36. We learn of the name of the hero’s father Ecgtheow. This name is also a kenning—Edge-Servant: what might this mean?
37. What tone does the hero take with the coast-guard? What promises does he make?
38. The coast-guard replies with “Anyone with gumption and a sharp mind will take the measure of two things: what’s said and what’s done.” What does he mean?
39. As they march together to Heorot, we are given more descriptions of the mead hall—Describe the hall. Why does the poet give this description here?
40. Why is rather comical that the coast-guard heads back to the coast to be on “alert against enemy raiders”?
41. What colors, sounds do you see and hear in lines 320-330? What does this tell us of the culture? How does the poet describe these things—with praise or disdain? How is this significant?
42. In line 340—what is the hero called?
43. Finally in line 343, we learn his name is Beowulf. Why doesn’t the poet just tell us the name of the hero at the start? The names of Scyld, Hrothgar, Grendel, etc., were given at their entrance into the story. Why wait?
44. What procedure must Beowulf and his thanes follow before meeting with Hrothgar?
45. What do we learn about Beowulf from Hrothgar in what he says to his retainers?
46. Does Hrothgar know why Beowulf has come? What is his response?
47. What must Beowulf and his thanes leave before meeting face to face with Hrothgar? What type of culture is this?
48. Describe Beowulf’s introduction of himself. How is it different than Gawain’s speech to Arthur? What does this difference tell us about the Anglo-Saxon culture?
49. What request does Beowulf make of Hrothgar? How does he make certain that his success—if he succeeds—will be even greater than succeeding at the quest he has just asked permission to begin?
50. Beowulf tries to reassure Hrothgar that the king won’t need to worry about funeral expenses if Beowulf fails—why?
51. What “obligation” exists between Hrothgar and Beowulf? How was Hrothgar able to solve things? How are things different now?—why is he reticent to “burden” Beowulf with his own troubles?
52. Who are the only ones who remain in the mead hall to protect it at night? What happened to them? What does this show us about the value this culture has about of keeping one’s word?
53. Has Hrothgar formally accepted Beowulf’s aid? Has he explicitly given him permission to get involved with his troubles yet?
54. What do the Danes provide for the Geats?

1. Who is Unferth and where is he sitting? What might this signify; in other words, how might he be a part of the protocol of the Anglo Saxon court? What makes Unferth sick with envy? How does Unferth start his verbal attack?
2. Compare the difference between Unferth's account of the swimming contest and Beowulf's—Use a chart to compare points. Beowulf makes very specific points—Note them.
3. When Unferth speaks of Grendel, what does he claim? (Why not just start with this insult? Why bother with the swimming contest?)
4. After responding to Unferth's verbal attack, Beowulf verbally attacks Unferth—what are Beowulf's points? List them.
5. Does Beowulf know specific details about Unferth? Why is that important in this warrior culture?
6. When Beowulf speaks of Grendel, what claims does he make? (Why not just start with this insult?—why begin as he did?)
7. What is Hrothgar response? Is he upset that Unferth was rude? What is going on here? How does the entire court respond? Is Unferth mentioned as sulking or being hurt or angry? What does this suggest about the entire incident?
8. Describe Wealhtheow—how does she play an important role at this feast?
9. To whom does Beowulf give his formal boast? Do you find this odd? What appears to be the protocol of “getting permission” from Hrothgar to stay and fight Grendel?
10. Who stays and leaves the Mead Hall. Does Hrothgar take his leaving Beowulf lightly? What promises does Hrothgar make?
11. According to line 665, who has sent Beowulf to the Danes?
12. What does Beowulf trust in—lines 670?
13. As Beowulf removes his chain mail, etc., why do you think it's important that he repeats his boast to them?
14. Line 691 describes the feelings/thoughts of his warriors—that they stay with Beowulf demonstrates *communitas*. (What does this say about both Beowulf and these thanes?)
15. According to the poet, who is in charge of fate? Line 696.
16. Describe how Grendel comes to Heorot.
17. All of Beowulf's men fall asleep—why? What happens to one of them—Why does Beowulf allow it to happen?
18. Describe Beowulf and Grendel's fight—how is this struggle different for Grendel?—notice feelings/thoughts.
19. What inspires Beowulf to get a firm hold of the monster?
20. Describe what is happening to Heorot—what foreshadowing does the poet make again about this building?
21. What do the Danes hear?
22. Why does Beowulf have no pity?
23. How do Beowulf's thanes help him—what does the reader learn about Grendel and weapons?
24. What is ironic in Beowulf's boast of using no weapons?
25. Describe how Grendel gets away—and where does he flee and what happens to him there?
26. What does Beowulf do to display his victory?
27. In the morning who comes to the hall—what do they also do? What do they find?

28. Describe the Dane's return to the hall on their horses. (lines 852-919)
29. The Tale of Sigemund—give a brief plot synopsis: (lines 884-914)
 - a. Note—what is a dragon called (line 886). In this culture, why would a dragon, therefore, be necessarily evil?
30. What are the main points of Hrothgar's speech in the mead hall? What are the main points of Beowulf's response?
31. Why can no Dane boast? (Unferth as well as others?)
32. Describe Grendel's hand, arm, and shoulder.
33. What is the one thing in Heorot not damaged by Grendel and Beowulf's fight?
34. Lines 1001-1007 are ominous—what is the poet foreshadowing? What do you think is going to happen?
35. The poet again hints in lines 1014-1018 about an upcoming feud. Look at all the scenes of celebration in the lines above—after each description, the poet hints at or discusses things that bring sadness and grief. Why can't the poet simply state the good things? Why is there always something lurking—like death or betrayal or destruction—on the edges of joy?
36. Is Hrothgar generous? Be specific.
37. During the feasting, the scop sings about the saga of Finn and his sons. Read the notes in the margins for synopsis. (Read lines 1101-1125 and answer this question: How is this burial scene different than the one of Scyld Scēfing?)
38. After the saga (line 1158), how is Unferth described?
39. Wealhtheow speaks to her husband and king—what is her concern? (Note—Hrothulf is nephew to Hrothgar.) After the hints and clues the poet has introduced, is Wealhtheow's shrewd or naïve?
40. Beowulf receives from Wealhtheow: More gold and gifts and a torque, which is a neck band. Beowulf will give this to his hlaforð and uncle Higelac, who will wear the rest of his life. The torque is a symbol of loyalty between her tribe and Beowulf's. Immediately after receiving these items, what does the poet discuss?
41. Once again, Wealhtheow speaks to Beowulf of her greatest concern—what is it?
42. Women have a limited means for advancement and protection in this culture, and yet she is functioning “independently” within Heorot. What must she do for her own protection and protection of others? How is her involvement in the court important? Is her reliance on the favors and good will of others much different than those of the males around her? What can't she do that men can?

Second Battle and Feast Lines 1232-1905

1. After the feast, who stays in Heorot? What is the poet foreshadowing to the reader? What tone/mood does this constant reminder of death create in reader?
2. Are these Danes unprepared—sleeping without weapons, etc? What's the poet's opinion of them?
3. Who comes in the night and why? How are her actions completely compatible with Anglo Saxon culture?
4. What words does the poet use to describe her (lines 1251-1259 and 1277-1279)?
5. What do the Danes do when she enters? How is her response different than Grendel's?
6. Who does she kill and what does she take? Where is Beowulf this night?

7. Why does the news of the loss of life bother Hrothgar so much?
8. Beowulf is summoned; what does he ask Hrothgar? How is that humorous in a dark way?
9. What is the name of the man murdered by Grendel's mother?
10. In lines 1331-1340, what does he claim Grendel's mother is doing? Who does he hold responsible? Is this fair?
11. At this point (lines 1345 and following), Beowulf receives new intelligence from Hrothgar. What is it? If you were a Geatish hero, would you have liked to have known this earlier? (Explain.)
12. The haunted mere is described as well—how is it haunted? (Give specifics)
13. In line 1380, what does Hrothgar promise?
14. What words does Beowulf use to cheer up the grieving king? How comforting do these words sound to you? Why might they have sounded more comforting to the readers of this poem?
15. How does Beowulf rebuke Hrothgar? Is this arrogant of him or not? (Think of the culture in which they exist. Note Hrothgar's response.)
16. Where does Hrothgar lead Beowulf, his men and the Danish thanes? Describe the place.
17. What does one Geat chief do? While the men are examining the catch of the day, what does Beowulf do?
18. What are the differences you note between his preparation for swimming in the mere to do battle with Grendel's mother and his preparation for battling Grendel? (Be specific.)
19. Bān-cofan or "bone cage" is a kenning—What does it mean?
20. Unferth lends him a sword—what's the sword's name? (Unferth is willing to loan Beowulf an important sword—is he a "bad guy" or not?) What is an important attribute of the sword—something a warrior might like to know?
21. What does Unferth lose at the mere?
22. Beowulf's speech—what are his main concerns?
23. What are his last words (line 1491)?
24. Immediately after he jumps in, Grendel's mother captures him. What does she try to do to him? Where does she take him? What protects him from her and other creatures?
25. Lines 1512-1517 describe Grendel's mother's lair—is like an underwater one of these. (What is it similar to?)
26. What happens when Beowulf heaves Hrunting down on Grendel's mother's head? How is he failing to keep his word (line 1491)—what does he remember in line 1529?
27. Is Grendel's mother as easy to fight in arm-to-arm combat as Grendel was? Why is this odd?
28. What saves Beowulf's life several times in the mere and in Grendel's mother's lair?
29. What is the only motive Grendel's mother has?
30. What ancient heirloom does Grendel's mother have? What does he do with it?
31. After her death, what happens to the atmosphere in the hall? What is the significance of this?
32. What else does Beowulf find in the den—what does he do?
33. The men (Danes and Geats) watching for Beowulf at the surface of the mere see blood in the waves; what do the Danes suspect? What do they do? What do the Geats do?

34. What happens to the sword Beowulf used to behead Grendel? As he looks around Beowulf sees a lot of treasure, but he doesn't take it. What does he take?
35. As he swims to the surface, what is different in the mere? Why?
36. How do the Geats behave on their return to Heorot? How do they bring back Grendel's head? Once at Heorot, what do the Geats do with the head so that all can see it?
37. What are the main points of Beowulf's speech?
38. What engravings are on the gold hilt that Beowulf brought back from the mere? How are those engravings significant?
39. Hrothgar praises Beowulf; then, speaks to him about Heremod—List three things that brought about Heremod's downfall (Lines 1709-1724).
40. Hrothgar then gives a very long speech, warning Beowulf about the dangers that come with having power and about the fleeting nature of life. Why does he speak to Beowulf about great power? Why does he warn Beowulf against pride?
41. Professor Bjork always said, "This is lecture is a lousy reward for Beowulf who just saved Hrothgar twice." Do you agree?
42. Hrothgar also tells Beowulf that Grendel came when he least expected it. What does this foreshadow for Beowulf? for any reader?
43. After the lecture, what do the Geats and Danes do? Who goes to bed first and why? Why do the Geats rise early?
44. How does Beowulf treat Unferth and Hrunting—what does this say about their relationship?
45. In his farewell speech, what does Beowulf praise Hrothgar for and what promises does he make Hrothgar?
46. What has Beowulf's deeds and Hrothgar's rewards done for these two tribes? Have relations between these tribes always been good?
47. What further praise does Beowulf receive from Hrothgar in his final speech—list main points.
48. Why does Hrothgar cry when he embraces Beowulf?
49. How is Beowulf described as he leaves Denmark? (line 1881) How is Hrothgar described—what "evil" finally does him mortal harm?
50. Their exit from Denmark is similar to their entrance—what items are repeated? What does this device signify to the reader?

Return Home, Last Battle and Farewell Lines 1906-3183

1. Upon his return home, Beowulf and his men are greeted by the harbor guard; then, the reader is introduced to Higelac and his queen Hygd. The poet makes a comparison between a good queen (Hygd) and a bad one (Modthryth)—How is a queen supposed to act / not supposed to act?
2. Another kenning—line 1966—the "world's candle." What does that mean?
3. Upon his arrival, what does Higelac do? What questions does he ask of Beowulf?
4. As Beowulf re-tells the story, what new information does the reader get?
 - a. About a proposed marriage between the Danes and Hethobards—does he think it will work out? Why/why not?

- i. What might the wedding guests notice that the hosts are wearing?
 - b. About the sleeping man who died—Who was he? What is Beowulf’s attitude about this?
 - c. About a pouch—what’s it for? What is it made of?
 - d. About Aeschere’s body—what had happened to it?
5. What does Beowulf give Hrothgar? (List the items—2151-2165)
6. The poet praises Beowulf’s behavior—why? (Lines 2165-2171)
7. What does he give Hygd from Wealhtheow?
8. How had Beowulf had been regarded formerly by the Geats? (lines 2177-2189)
9. How does Higelac reward Beowulf?
10. How does Higelac die? How long does Beowulf rule?
11. What begins to dominate the dark? (Line 2211)?
12. What do dragons (wyrms) “do”?
13. What did a slave do that awakened the dragon’s anger?
14. Where did all the treasure in the dragon’s barrow originate?
15. What did the keeper of that treasure say when he put it all into the earth?—main points (2247-2267). What might be the poet’s thesis here?
16. When the dragon found the hoard, how many years did it guard it?
17. In the original, (Old English), line 2287 reads, “then the wyrm awoke and its wrath was rekindled.” The wyrm is different than Grendel and Grendel’s mother. Both of them had a “legitimate grievance” with the Danes—what were those grievances? The dragon’s flagon is stolen, but that re-awakens its wrath. Why is the dragon angry with the Geats / humans?
18. Many see the dragon as a symbol—what do you think that it might symbolize?
19. What does the dragon do in response to the theft? What time of day does he take action?
20. What does Beowulf hear about the attacks of the dragon on Geatland?
21. How is this situation of Beowulf’s similar to that of Hrothgar’s in Denmark more than fifty years ago?
22. What does Beowulf order?
23. What is he too proud to do? (Is he listening to Hrothgar’s advice about pride? Is he making a mistake or is this what he should be doing as a lord of his people?)
24. Why doesn’t he fear the dragon that much?
25. After Higelac death, what does his queen want Beowulf to become—why? What does Beowulf do instead? (He most likely married Hygd at this point.)
26. What happened to Hygd’s son Heardred?
27. How does Beowulf settle the feud between his tribe and Onela’s?
28. How many go to reconnoiter—to find the dragon’s underground barrow? (Who is the 13th man?)
29. In lines 2425-2509, Beowulf gives an autobiography (read the margin notes—you can skip the lines themselves.) Blood feuds and destruction / death are the main subjects. What does this tell us about this hero? Notice how only the fights with the monsters (Grendel, Grendel’s mother, the dragon) are discussed in detail—why is that?
30. In lines 2510-2515, Beowulf makes his final boast—what is it?
31. What does he tell his thanes to do—main points?

32. What reason does he give for having chain mail and a shield instead of facing the dragon like he did Grendel?
33. Notice how the fights with the monsters grow in difficulty—what might the poet be telling the reader?
34. Notice too how in each fight Beowulf needs more weapons/protection—why is that?
35. Also, notice how, as Beowulf relies more on weapons, his words fail him—what he says and what he accomplishes are not the same. (Grendel—he kills as he boasts he will; Grendel’s mother—he kills but not as he boasts—the sword fails him; the shield, etc., does not protect him against the dragon, for he is mortally wounded; furthermore, he doesn’t kill him as he boasts instead Wiglaf must come to his aid and help kill the dragon.) What might be the point the poet is making?
36. How does Beowulf get the dragon’s attention in line 2550? How does the dragon respond?
37. What happens to Beowulf’s shield?
38. What does the poet claim Beowulf struggles with in lines 2587-2591?
39. During the second assault—how strongly does the dragon attack? What do Beowulf’s thanes do? How is this *very* different from the action of his men at the mere in Denmark?
40. Who does not like how he and his fellow warriors have acted? What does he remember that causes him to run to Beowulf’s aid?
41. What does this thane say to the others who are not doing their duty? What does he remind them of?
42. What does he say in lines 2663-2668 to encourage Beowulf? How is he protected from the dragon?
43. Once again Beowulf is inspired by his thoughts of glory—where does he strike the dragon? What happens to his sword? (What’s the sword’s name?)
44. What happens when the dragon attacks the third time?
45. Who sank the sword into the dragon’s belly? Who struck the deadly blow into the dragon’s flank?
46. What is the wound Beowulf received from the dragon doing to him?
47. What does Beowulf boast about regarding his being a king? What has been denied him that he grieves over?
48. What does he ask Wiglaf to do? Why?
49. What type of treasure trove does Wiglaf discover?
50. When he returns to Beowulf, king of the Weather-Geats is dying. What is Beowulf’s last request to Wiglaf? Be specific. What does he give to Wiglaf?—What does this signify?
51. Who is Wiglaf in relation to Beowulf? What does Beowulf say about his entire clan?
52. In the end, Beowulf has won treasure for his people—this is important because of the constant feuds between the Geats and the Swedes. What can he provide the Geats with to secure their future?
53. Who suddenly comes out from hiding in the woods?
54. Wiglaf rebukes them—essentially calling them cowards, etc., and what does he predict will happen to their nation because of their actions? Why will this happen? Why can’t Wiglaf lead them?

55. Wiglaf orders that a rider inform Beowulf's people of the outcome of the battle. What are the main points of the rider's words—skim through the long account of wars; what is he telling the people?
56. He tells they must hurry to do this—line 3007.
57. The rider also tells the Geats that the treasure will be used in this manner. How is this action suicidal? Why is this done? Why isn't it used for wergild? What reasons are given—are any reasons given? Has Beowulf failed as a leader/provider? Or have those who served failed to protect?
58. Notice that when the people find the body of the dragon, it becomes “part of this world”—its otherness has been diminished. They measure it—how long is it? Compare how it once looked and how it looks now.
59. When the Geats enter the dragon's barrow, the reader learns something new about the treasure. What is that new information? And what new light does it shed on Beowulf's last attempts to save his people.
60. When Wiglaf speak about Beowulf's action and fate—what questions/concerns/comments does he have? (Lines 3076-3109)
61. When Wiglaf speaks of the funeral pyre, how does he describe the pyre and Beowulf?
62. What do the men do with the dragon? They then cart the dragon's treasure to the funeral barrow, which is being built for Beowulf.
63. Describe the funeral pyre (lines 3137-3149)
64. Describe the mound/tomb—in lines 3166-3169, the poet discusses the dragon's treasure. Of what use is it?
65. The people lament—list their lamentations.

Finally, Beowulf is “buried” (after cremation, etc.) in the mound with a cursed treasure—do you think this is a good thing? Remember, the poet is writing about a pagan people, a lost people—does this fit with the poet's view? Look at line number 3156—Is there hope? Why the ambiguity? Also—what thesis does the poet have? In other words, what argument is he presenting to *his own people*? How is *Beowulf* a “tragic epic” (not a *tragedy* but a *tragic epic*)?