

# **British Literature**

## **Second Edition**

### **Teacher Edition**



**Oak Meadow**

**Oak Meadow, Inc.**

Post Office Box 615

Putney, Vermont 05346

[oakmeadow.com](http://oakmeadow.com)



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# Teacher Edition Introduction

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Prepare to dive into the worlds of heroes, monsters, fairies, and kings. This course presents a selection of works of British literature beginning with *Beowulf* and spanning through the twentieth century. You will explore classic stories written by some of the most widely read literary icons.

In this course, there are 36 lessons divided equally into two semesters. Each lesson represents one week of study (approximately five hours of work). This teacher edition can serve as your support as you guide and evaluate your student's work. In this teacher edition, you will find the full text for all assignments and activities. The teacher edition answers are seen in **orange** and student sample answers are shown in **green**.

You will also find student sample responses throughout this teacher edition. These are included to help you determine what to expect, to show examples of exemplary responses, and to provide inspiration and guidance to students who might benefit from a model to follow. The student responses appear as submitted, with few changes made. Simple corrections have been made to correct typos or fix punctuation to improve clarity, but for the most part, they have been left alone. These sample responses are not perfect in form, but they are authentic examples of student work.

You are highly encouraged to join your student in reading the literature selections whenever possible. This will make it easier for you to enter into deeper discussions about the material and to guide your student and assess student work in a more comprehensive manner.



# Coursebook Introduction

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Prepare to dive into the worlds of heroes, monsters, fairies, and kings. This course presents a selection of works of British literature beginning with *Beowulf*, the earliest written work of British literature, and spanning through the twentieth century. You will explore classic stories written by some of the most widely read literary icons.

## What to Expect in This Course

In this course, there are 36 lessons divided equally into two semesters. Each lesson represents one week of study (approximately five hours of work).

The following texts are used in this course:

- *Beowulf*
- *Pride and Prejudice*
- *Jane Eyre*
- *The Once and Future King*
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- *David Copperfield*
- *The Oxford Book of English Short Stories*

In each lesson, you will find sections to guide your studies and deepen your understanding of the material:

- **Digging Deeper** gives you background information that helps you interpret the literature within its historical and cultural background.
- **Along the Way** offers guideposts to refer to as you read, highlighting essential text and helping you to identify core themes and concepts. The questions asked in this section are for your thoughtful consideration and are not assignments that need to be completed or submitted to your teacher. You may want to read this before the assigned reading each week so you know what to keep an eye out for, or you can wait until afterward to read it (if you are worried it will spoil the story for you).

- **Writing Tips** gives timely reminders to help you improve and refine your writing skills.
- Definitions of unusual words can be found in a sidebar. Glance over these before each reading assignment.
- At the beginning of each lesson, you will find an **Assignment Checklist** that lets you see all your assignments at a glance. (Assignments will be fully explained in the lesson.)
- At the end of the lesson, you may find a section called **Share Your Work** that provides reminders and information for students enrolled in Oak Meadow School and that also explains how to send work to their Oak Meadow teacher.

The **appendix** contains important material that you will be expected to read and incorporate into your work throughout the year. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the information in the appendix.

## Academic Expectations

The written work for this course includes comprehension and critical-thinking questions, interpretive essays, a Reader's Journal, creative projects, and creative writing. Please follow the assignments in order and write out all your responses in full sentences, maintaining clear paragraph structure. Whenever possible, support your observations with examples, specific details, and direct quotations from the readings.

You are expected to perform your work with integrity and engagement. Your work should be original and give an authentic sense of your thoughts and opinions rather than what you think the teacher who is reviewing your work wants to hear. When you use other sources, you are required to cite them accurately. Plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, is a serious matter.

The appendix contains information regarding Oak Meadow's academic expectations and original work guidelines as well as information on plagiarism and citing your sources. It is your responsibility to make sure you understand the academic expectations and abide by them.

You will be reminded to submit your work to your Oak Meadow teacher after every two lessons. After you have submitted the first 18 lessons, you will receive a first semester evaluation and grade. At the end of 36 lessons, you will receive a final evaluation and grade.





# UNIT I:

## *Beowulf*

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### Lessons 1–7

We begin this course with the earliest written work of British literature, *Beowulf*. We will read a translation of this epic poem whose hero becomes a king by defeating a family of dreadful monsters.

In the following lessons on *Beowulf*, references will be made to J. R. R. Tolkien's essays on *Beowulf*, taken from his critical work "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." Published in 1936, the lecture expressed Tolkien's appreciation of *Beowulf* and brought the poem the attention and dignity it had long deserved.

Tolkien wrote,

In *Beowulf* we have, then, a historical poem about the pagan past . . . composed by a learned man writing about old times, who looking back on the heroism and sorrow feels in them something permanent and something symbolical. (26)

Tolkien's description of the *Beowulf* poet seems also to be an accurate description of the writer of *The Lord of the Rings*, and certainly Tolkien's lifelong scholarly study of Anglo-Saxon as well as his deep appreciation for *Beowulf*, influenced his own epic work.

Tolkien wrote that, for him, the poem was

. . . an opposition of ends and beginnings. In its simplest terms it is a contrasted description of two moments in a great life, rising and setting; an elaboration of the ancient and intensely moving contrast between youth and age, first achievement and final death. (28)

In this unit, we will read and analyze the underlying themes of this epic poem, answer questions, explore the Anglo-Saxon or Old English language, write short essays, and learn about the art and archaeology of the period.

So with *Beowulf* as a fitting first step on our journey into the worlds of heroes, monsters, fairies, and kings, let us begin.

## Lesson

# 1

# A Hero Is Born

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We will read *Beowulf* in three parts. We will be reading the version of *Beowulf* translated by Seamus Heaney, a contemporary Irish poet and Nobel Prize winner. This translation is an acclaimed masterpiece. Heaney's spoken reading of his translation can be listened to at the following link:

"Beowulf—Seamus Heaney: Part 1 of 2"

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaB0trCztMO](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaB0trCztMO)

## Learning Objectives

- Analyze the literary technique of foreshadowing.
- Study the effect of word choice on conveying tone.
- Summarize the sequence of story events.

### Digging Deeper

This story is in verse, honoring the historic oral tradition. Lines are numbered for ease of reference (e.g., line 41 or lines 41–45). For thousands of years, oral storytelling was the best way to preserve culture and history. Stories, songs, cultural myths, and personal histories were all handed down orally from generation to generation.

Verse is usually meant to be spoken aloud in the way a storyteller would have entertained crowds long ago. If you read this aloud, the pronunciation rules in "A Note on Names" (found in your *Beowulf* text on page xxvii) will be helpful. You can also read the poem to yourself as if you were reading aloud.

The first part of the poem takes place during Beowulf's youth, and for the most part the events occur in the land of the Danes, where the King's Hall has come under repeated attacks each night from the monster, Grendel.

### ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read the first three pages of the introduction.
- ☐ Begin reading *Beowulf*, lines 1–989.
- ☐ Define vocabulary words.
- ☐ Write a story summary using vocabulary words.
- ☐ Write two to five sentences about each question.
- ☐ Complete a project of your choice.

**anathema** (110) *n*:  
an abomination; a  
curse

**bothy** (140) *pl*:  
bothies, *n*: a small  
cottage or hut

**thane** (194) *n*: a  
man who held  
land granted by  
the king or lords

**stalwart** (494) *adj*:  
loyal, steadfast

**mizzle** (596)  
*n*: light rain or  
drizzle

**bawn** (721) *n*:  
a fortified wall  
surrounding a  
tower or castle

**ignominious** (842)  
*adj*: disgraceful,  
shameful

## Along the Way

While you are reading, keep notes about passages that feel significant to you. You can highlight or underline these passages in your book, bookmark them with sticky notes, make a note of the line numbers, or keep track in whatever way works best for you.

Consider the following:

- Note how the language in lines 212–227 conveys the temperament and demeanor of the warriors: “climbed eagerly up the gangplank”; “away with a will”; “vaulted over the side.” Even the way the ship and crossing are described sets the stage for recognizing the importance of their arrival.
- Notice how Beowulf states as evidence of his qualifications his former victories with beasts, trolls, and sea brutes (lines 420–422). Do you think Beowulf boasts foolishly (lines 453–440, lines 632–638, and lines 677–687), or is his righteous passion sincere?
- When the hero’s battle begins, it moves with dramatic speed and daring (lines 744–820). You may find yourself wanting to read it a second time because the excitement and immediacy of the scene encourages the reader to race through it.

# Assignments

## Reading

1. First read the initial three pages of Seamus Heaney’s introduction. (The remainder of the introduction is better understood when you have finished reading the poem.)
2. Begin reading *Beowulf*, lines 1–989. You may find that the rhythm and style of language feels unfamiliar at first, but as you continue reading, imagine you can hear the storyteller’s voice. Allow the words to wash over you and create their own world.

**Students should follow the Writing Tip guidelines (see below) in preparing and writing their essays. In the essay, students should explore each given question and, in conclusion, address what they hope to gain from the course. In this first writing assignment, the goal is to assess your student’s abilities at the beginning of the course. This will give you a sense of the areas that need work. You can begin to prioritize the writing skills that need the most attention**

and choose one or two to begin with. You have the entire year to work on writing skills. Don't overwhelm or discourage your student by pointing out every error or weakness at once.

Here is an excerpt of a student sample essay for this assignment:

I don't remember when I first discovered the magic of reading. I am not referring to the countless times a teacher held a book in front of me and told me to read the five-word pages aloud, struggling though each syllable. No, what I wonder is when I started picking up books because I knew they could transport me to a new part of my mind I'd never seen before, and simultaneously into the mind of an entirely different human being. Though I know it wasn't the first time, the earliest memory I have of this sort of occasion is when my parents would read to my sister and I before bedtime.

This excerpt shows an expressive personal perspective and presents a clear train of thought around the topic.

### Writing Tips

The standard writing guidelines that should be used throughout this course are as follows:

- Compose a rough draft.
- Revise for content (add details as necessary) and form.
- Proofread your essay.
- Make corrections and edit for clarity.
- Polish your final draft.
- Proofread again.

Follow all writing conventions regarding punctuation, grammar, spelling, capitalization, etc. When your work is complete, include a title to identify your topic if your writing is longer than two paragraphs. Your essay should be typewritten, or handwritten in ink, printed on one side of the paper only.

## Writing

1. Write brief definitions of the following vocabulary words. Be sure to include the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) in your definition. The line where each word first appears is noted so that you can see how the word is used in the context of the story.

mead (5) **n: an alcoholic drink of fermented honey and water**

foundling (7) **n: an infant abandoned by its parents and cared for by others**

torque (81) **n: a necklace consisting of twisted metals that was popularly worn by ancient Britons**

interlopers (253) **n:** people who become involved in a place or situation where they are not wanted or are considered not to belong

undaunted (286) **v:** not intimidated or discouraged by difficulty, danger, or disappointment

mettle (659) **n:** ability to cope well with difficulties or to face a demanding situation in a spirited and resilient way

baleful (726) **adj:** threatening harm; menacing

fen (763) **n:** a low and marshy or frequently flooded area of land

harrowed (767) **v:** cause distress to

2. Write a two- to five-sentence summary of what has happened so far in the story using all the vocabulary words above. Alternately, you may make up an original story line in the epic style of *Beowulf* and summarize it using the vocabulary words.

Summarizing a story in just a few sentences can be challenging. It requires students to focus on the main story elements, rather than get bogged down in details. In the samples responses below, you will see how the vocabulary words fit nicely into the context of the sentences.

#### Student sample summary A:

A prince who would be known throughout the land and the fen, and who stood undaunted in the face of the baleful mettle of evil interlopers, was born to Shield Sheafson of the Geats. Grendel, an evil and mighty creature who many thought may as well have been a foundling, harrowed the hearts of the Danes by entering their great hall every night and killing the people. The great prince, known as Beowulf, gladly left the land of the Geats with a group of allies and traveled to the Danes, where he agreed to protect them, making even for a boon that had been granted to his people by the Danes years before. Beowulf killed Grendel, and all praised him wholeheartedly, with the king of the Danes even giving him a magnificent torque to wear as a part of his reward. All were ready to celebrate with drinking mead!

#### Student sample summary B:

At the start of *Beowulf*, the land of the Danes is harrowed by the baleful demon named Grendel. The kings of the Danes were descended from a man called Shield Sheafson, who had been a 'foundling'. He made his name through acts of bravery. The current king, King Hrothgar, was very powerful, but could not rid his hall of the interloping 'demon'. A great hero, undaunted by the demon, arrives to the king's aid. Beowulf, after a few glasses of the King's mead, boasts about his own mettle. The hero's boasting pleased the well-dressed torque-wearing queen. That night Beowulf watched over the hall, and when the demon Grendel entered, he deprived the demon of his entire shoulder and arm. Grendel runs off to die in a fen.

3. Answer each of these questions with a two- to five-sentence short answer:

- a. Line 86 introduces the first monster. Pay careful attention to how he enters the story. What do we learn about him before he enters the action at line 115?

**This question asks students to make inferences based on the text. Rather than just report the relevant words, they need to explain what the words mean, as seen in the following student sample response:**

**Before Grendel enters the action of the story, the reader learns that there is a “powerful demon” (86) that nurses a “hard grievance” (87). This “fiend out of hell” (100) is jealous of the merrymaking in the hall, and is a demon that haunts the marshes, heath and fens. The reader learns that this demon is descended from “Cain’s clan” (106), and that God will give these descendants, in time, their just reward. So before he even enters the action, the reader knows that Grendel is a malicious, jealous demon that will, in time, get what he deserves for his actions.**

- b. Grendel wreaks havoc for “twelve winters, seasons of woe” (line 147). Notice how the use of this particular language expresses the bleakness of the time. How would this passage have felt if the author simply wrote “twelve years”?

**Students are asked to reflect on word choice and how it affects the story’s tone. They should elaborate on their answer. Rather than just saying, “It wouldn’t have been as effective,” students are encouraged to explore why it wouldn’t have worked as well, and discuss how words (and word associations) affect emotions.**

**Student sample response:**

**The passage would still have had a dismal effect, as even “twelve years, years of woe” does sound like a long time. But by calling those years “twelve winters, seasons of woe,” a bleak and helpless tone is added to the line. Winter is a time of vulnerability. A creature is exposed during those cold months, hungry, weakened, defenseless. Grendel is a demon who has no interest in fair play. He has no interest in meeting his opponents in the warm daylight, when both are at their best. Instead Grendel comes in the cold, dark nights when his opponents are at their weakest, just as he has come for the past twelve winters.**

- c. The hero is introduced in line 194 but remains unnamed, so we first come to know him by his reputation and actions. Line 248 again refers to the hero’s status before Beowulf finally introduces himself in line 343. What effect does this style of introduction have on your feelings about him before Beowulf enters the story?

**This question also focuses on word choice, looking at how characters are intentionally introduced and developed. These are questions that students may have never pondered before; if so, they may need some guidance as they delve into this analysis of literary style. Discussing the question and relevant passages with your student gives you a chance to ask guiding questions that can help your student look at the writing with a critical eye.**



**Student sample response A:**

There is something about a name that I cannot describe. It sounds odd but when you know a man's name, then he loses some of his mysteriousness. Had his name been uttered in the very beginning of his character description then I don't think that I would have been as enthralled as I was when I read it for the first time. The author created a very mysterious character in the beginning. The reader soon began to have a driving need to know this aloof hero's name!

**Student sample response B:**

The kind of introduction that Beowulf receives from his poet is greatly drawn out. The poet tells the reader of Beowulf's achievements, all the while giving an extremely impressive, almost superhuman impression of this individual. When Beowulf finally decides to introduce himself, the reader is very glad to meet him, just as the Danes are. The Danes and the reader are put in the same position; we are impressed by this hero's credentials. We are delighted to finally make his acquaintance.

4. Choose one of the following projects:

- a. Draw a picture of what Grendel's "home" might look like. Make it as detailed as you can (e.g., carcasses of half-eaten animals, human remains, bones, a nest, etc.).

**Student samples of artwork**

- b. Write a journal by one of the warriors accompanying Beowulf on his quest. Write multiple entries. Begin the journal before they set sail and end it after Grendel has been defeated.

**Writing journal entries gives students an opportunity to inhabit the story in a personal, direct way. The style and even content of the journal are not as important as the first-person journal writing experience itself. However, look for relevant historical content and references to the plot. Students who are able to imitate the writing style of the story and/or time period demonstrate a strong awareness of the tone and a flexibility in their writing.**

**Student sample of journal:**

Mighty is our leader Beowulf, kin of Hygelac. A terrible fury in war and good in times of peace. No man can rival him in strength or in character. And lucky are we who accompany him. He is set that we (himself and 14 men strong and brave) are off to stop a terrible monster that ravages a great and cursed hall night after night. To the land of the Danes we are to go.

The ship that will carry us is loaded with a rich cargo: weapons, mead, food etc. Eagerly we board her as her prow moves restlessly against the swelling sea, eager to be off. We eagerly go as well. To win glory and recognition in battle is most honorable, and should we die our names will be remembered.

An easy crossing. We kept to the shore. Cliffs rose above us and seagulls screaming their songs wheeled in the sky. The waves were gentle. Only a day did it take. When the prow struck the sand we thanked God and hurried onto this new land. Waiting was a watcher who challenged our intent. Our lord Beowulf put him at ease and he showed us to the mightiest building we ever had seen. The hall was richly decorated but an air of evil hung about it. Leaving our shields and spears we went to the benches. Beowulf talked long to the leader of the Danes, Hrothgar was his name, and we feasted.

- c. Write a ship's manifest for Beowulf's journey to Heorot. This manifest should include a list of the cargo and passengers. (Make up realistic names.) It should be a detailed account of what was brought on board for this particular trip. Remember to include weaponry and food. Try to make the list sound authentic.

**Student sample of project:****Beowulf's ship manifest for 17 crew****1. Foodstuffs:**

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. Mead                     | d. 8 kegs of drinking water |
| b. Ale                      | e. 20 pounds of dried meat  |
| c. 20 pounds of smoked fish | f. Barley oatcakes          |

**2. Weapons and armor**

- |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| a. Spears   | g. Battle-axes |
| b. Swords   | h. Daggers     |
| c. Shields  | i. Bows        |
| d. Pikes    | j. Arrows      |
| e. Knives   | k. Helmets     |
| f. Hatchets | l. Chain mail  |



**3. Misc. Supplies**

- a. Spare sail
- b. Extra rope (for rigging)
- c. Fishing net

- d. Carpentry tools
- e. Bucket of tar

**Ship's Roster:**

**Beowulf of the Geats**

**Erik the Sea-born**

**Bjorn Shatter-Shield**

**Harek Greylock**

**Ivar Most-beard**

**Ulg the Twice-pierced**

**Ulfrik Scarfoot**

**Sven the Black**

**Olaf the Grumbler**

**Leif Thorsson**

**Hjort Bone-hewer**

**Kjarten Rurikson**

**Ornolf Haldenson**

**Ragnar One-brow**

**Hallfred Finhara**

**Vigfus the Old**

**Beigarth the Eastman**

**Sam the Silent**

**SHARE YOUR WORK**

You will be sharing your work from lessons 1 and 2 after you have completed lesson 2.

## Lesson

# 2

# The Monster's Revenge

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During a hero's journey, one monster (or monstrous challenge) is never enough. While Beowulf has accomplished what he set out to do, his courage will be further tested.

## Learning Objectives

- Examine the use of archetypes in literature.
- Reflect on how the *story within a story* technique affects pace and flow.
- Determine what the text says explicitly.

### Digging Deeper

As translator, Seamus Heaney notes in the introduction that this poem “possesses a mythic potency.” Deadly monsters are needed to “show off Beowulf’s physical might and his superb gifts as a warrior” (ix, xiv).

In addition to the three agons (or struggles) Beowulf faces, he also finds himself in “three archetypal sites of fear: the barricaded night-house, the infested underwater current, and the reptile-haunted rocks of a wilderness.” As you read about Beowulf’s second challenge, think about how the use of these “archetypal sites of fear” lend added import and tension to the adventure.

### ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read lines 989–1905.
- ☐ Answer questions with a one- to two-sentence short answer.
- ☐ Answer three questions with a one- to two-paragraph essay.

**agon** *n*: a conflict between the protagonist and antagonist in a literary work

**archetypal** *adj*: representative of something common to the human experience

**mere** (1364) *n*: a sea or lake

**bulwark** (1389) *n*: a defensive wall; a person or institution that acts as a defense

**alacrity** (1825) *n*: eager and cheerful readiness

## Along the Way

- *Foreshadowing* is a literary technique that escalates the tension by hinting at what is to come. Notice how foreshadowing is used in lines 1233 and 1241, leading to the introduction of “an avenger,” Beowulf’s new foe (1257).
- Beowulf charges forth to meet his new foe, true to form in word and deed (1492). His character is consistently courageous and driven, as evidenced by line 1536: “Life doesn’t cost him a thought.” Consider how this story is character-driven (as opposed to plot-driven) and defined by Beowulf’s strong presence.
- Inspiring respect and loyalty in those around him is a quality of a true hero. Beginning at line 1840, Hrothgar speaks from his heart about his feelings for Beowulf. Consider how this further defines and solidifies Beowulf’s character.
- Several times the author tells a story within the story (see lines 884 and 1070) as previous legends are recounted. How do you feel about these legends? Do you find they interrupt the story’s flow? Do they give you clearer insight into the scene or characters?

## Assignments

### Reading

Read lines 989–1905. Be sure to make note of significant passages; this will help you answer the questions below. You may find it useful to read the questions beforehand to guide your reading and note-taking.

### Writing

1. Answer each of these questions with a one- to two-sentence short answer:

**The sample responses below show possible answers. Your student may have other ideas.**

- a. Beowulf came from an old folktale told in Britain, yet the events in the poem do not take place in Britain. If he were alive today, where would Beowulf live, and where would the great hall of Heorot be?

**Student sample response:**

The Great Hall of Heorot and most of the action so far takes place in Denmark. King Hrothgar is a Danish king, and he rules the Danes. On the other hand, Beowulf, in accordance with his character, sails toward the action. He comes from Geatland, which I think is part of Sweden, so that should make Beowulf a Swede.

- b. How is Heorot, Hrothgar's hall, described?

**Student sample response A:**

Heorot is described as being very grand. It is large, with a high ceiling. Heorot is a building to be admired, large enough to express the power of King Hrothgar.

**Student sample response B:**

Heorot is a huge mead-hall full of benches and tables for dining and often is a festive place with good food and lots of drinking. I picture it a bit like the Great Hall from Harry Potter, but with fewer wizards and more Vikings.

- c. Find at least five adjectives or descriptions of Grendel. What is your impression of Grendel based on these words?

**Student sample response:**

Several adjectives used to describe Grendel: "powerful" (86), "grim" (102), "God-cursed" (121), "greedy" (122), "merciless" (135), "stealthy and swift" (704), "spurned and joyless" (720). From these adjectives we get a sense of the sorry and monstrous being that is Grendel, who is not just evil but cursed and broken because of his descent from Cain.

- d. With what weapons does Beowulf propose to do battle with Grendel?

**Student sample response:**

Beowulf proposes to fight Grendel without sword, spear, or any other weapon besides his bare hands. He asserts, "When it comes to fighting, I count myself as dangerous any day as Grendel . . . No weapons, therefore, for either this night . . ." (677–685)

- e. Describe the haunted mere of Grendel's mother. What feelings does this place evoke?

**Student sample response:**

Grendel's mother lives in a mere, a haunted pool, in a frosty wood where the trees grow close and the roots are visible and twisted together. "At night there, something uncanny happens / the water burns, And the mere bottom / has never been sounded by the sons of men." (1365–1368) It is misty and eerie, the perfect setting for a cursed monster to make her home.

- f. What is the heroic code that Beowulf follows?

**Student sample response:**

The heroic code that Beowulf follows states that “It is always better to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning” (1384). Everyone is going to die eventually but it is better to die honorably.

2. Answer each of these questions with a detailed one- to two-paragraph essay. Use examples and direct quotations to support your observations.

**In these short essays, look for ideas to be presented in an organized manner with a clearly stated topic and supporting sentences that cite relevant, specific details. If text is quoted directly, it should include the line number(s) in parentheses. Sample responses are found below.**

- a. The poem begins (and ends) with a funeral. At the beginning, the funeral that is described is a Viking funeral for Shield. In your own words and citing passages from the text, describe this funeral.

**Student sample response:**

In the first few lines of *Beowulf*, a man named Shield Sheafson is described. He is a powerful and beloved king. His rise to power is described in a few lines. He is described as “still thriving when his time came and he crossed over into the Lord’s Keeping” (26–27).

His people then mourn his loss and set up a grand tomb for their king. They place Shield in a boat with a “ring-whorled prow” (32). His people surround him with war gear and treasures, very elaborately setting up their king for a journey. The people then “launch him alone out over the waves . . . let him drift to the wind and tide” (46–49). After painting this plaintive picture, the narrator returns the reader to reality, and proceeds with the telling of the lineage of the Danes. But before he does so the narrator speculates on who salvaged the load of treasures from the boat, which spoils the mood he had just created. The idea of putting the king out to sea for the final time and preparing him for a final journey is all very romantic. The narrator has no scruples about bringing the reader back to earth all too quickly.

- b. How does Beowulf prepare for battle with Grendel? How does Beowulf overcome the monster? What is the evidence of his success in battle?

**Student sample response:**

After hearing about the demon Grendel, Beowulf comes from across the sea to fight him. Believing himself capable of such a task, he presents himself to the King of the Danes as the perfect man for the job. After a good deal of mead and even greater deal of boasting, Beowulf settles down in the hall for the night. He and his men bed down and await the demons arrival. When Grendel arrives he wastes no time decimating a man. He then turns his attentions to Beowulf, is about to pitch in to him too, but is “forestalled . . . utterly” by Beowulf’s grasp (748).

A fierce battle ensues. It involves bashing into pillars, essentially wrecking the hall itself. The “timbers [of the hall] trembled and sang” (775). But the hall keeps standing throughout. Mid-battle the reader gets an admiring description of its structure. Once the narrative returns to the battle, the “howl of the loser” (786) is described and pretty soon Grendel makes his escape. But he left something behind, and that is the evidence of Beowulf’s triumph. Beowulf holds “the whole of Grendel’s / shoulder and arm, his awesome grasp” (834–835).

- c. Describe the battle that Beowulf fights underwater. Whom does he fight? Why? What weapons does he use? What is the outcome?

**Student sample response:**

When Beowulf defeats Grendel, the characters, and the reader, all think that the danger for Heorot has passed. But all soon learn even the worst of demons has a relative ready to avenge his death. Grendel’s mother, a formidable creature herself, comes stealthily into the hall and snatches one of King Hrothgar’s closest friends and most trusted advisor (1296–1299). This proved to be a mistake on her part. The following day Beowulf pursues her to her mere and, in a battle of fantastic proportions, defeats her.

Upon arriving at Grendel’s mother’s mere, Beowulf descends into the sea-monster infested waters. He carries with him a very special, ancient sword that is loaned to him by Unferth. The sword is said to have an iron blade with “ill-boding patterns” (1459). On Beowulf’s descent the reader hears that it was the “best part of a day” before the hero could see the bottom (1495–1496). Upon his arrival at the bottom, Grendel’s mother lunges and catches him. His mail shirt saves him from being crushed. After another deluge of sea monsters, Beowulf comes down on her head hard with his sword but it fails to do any damage. After more struggle, all described in great detail, Grendel’s mother tries to stab Beowulf. Again, his mail protects him. He then spies a sword; this one is a “blade that boded well” (1557). He uses the “ancient heirloom” (1558) to topple “the doomed house of her flesh” (1567–1568).

All underwater blood and gore aside, Beowulf returns to Heorot with two trophies. The first is the hilt of the sword he used to kill Grendel’s mother. The blade itself had melted in the “scalding” blood of the “poisonous fiend” (1616–1617). The second is Grendel’s head. With these spoils, the hero returns to Heorot triumphant.

### Writing Tips

When completing your **short answers**, use detailed, complete sentences. Your writing should be concise and succinct, and yet the questions need to be answered in a comprehensive way.

When completing your **essay answers**, use careful paragraph structure. Take the time to revise for clarity, and then proofread to polish it before submitting your work.

Good paragraphing skills include

- beginning with a focused topic sentence.
- developing supporting details.
- striving for flow and unity between sentences.
- ending with a concluding sentence (if the paragraph stands alone).

### SHARE YOUR WORK

When you finish lesson 2, please send lessons 1 and 2 to your teacher. Begin working on lesson 3. (Do not wait for comments on your first two lessons before beginning the next lesson.)

## Lesson

# 6

# Comparative Essay

Since *Beowulf* contains a theme common to many works of literature, you may have already drawn some comparisons with other books you have read or films you have seen.

### ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Write a two- to three-page comparative essay.

## Learning Objectives

- Examine the treatment of the classic story theme in modern film.
- Identify elements of the hero theme.
- Write a comprehensive comparative essay.

### Digging Deeper

Sometimes a book or film will intentionally do a modern retelling of a classic story. Often, however, a new work will parallel a classic tale without conscious effort. This is because classic themes are part of our culture and deeply rooted in the human psyche. Dozens of films have been created around modern retellings of classic literature, such as

*Clueless*, based on Jane Austen's *Emma*

*West Side Story*, based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

*Ten Things I Hate about You*, based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*

*Easy A*, based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

*Whatever It Takes*, based on *Cyrano De Bergerac*, a play by Edmond Rostand

*The Lion King*, based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

In even more instances, parallels can be recognized between plots that are very dissimilar but contain the same basic elements, in this case heroes and monsters. Try to find a story (print or film version) that tells of a hero's journey and the monstrous obstacles to the hero's goal.



# Assignments

## Writing

Write a two- to three-page essay comparing and contrasting *Beowulf* to a book or film with a similar theme.

### Writing Tips

When writing a comparative essay, there are two main approaches, a block format and an alternating format. For this comparison, it is suggested that you choose the alternating format, as shown below.

1. Introduce your topic with a thesis sentence, stating what you intend to prove or explain in a way that draws readers in.
2. Discuss the similarities between *Beowulf* and your chosen story.
3. Discuss the differences between them.
4. Summarize your argument and draw conclusions based on your opening thesis.

### Topics students have written about included:

**“Beowulf and Theseus: Monster Slayers”**

**“A Film and a Poem: *Contact* vs. *Beowulf*”**

**Beowulf and Lancelot**

***Beowulf* and *The Hobbit***

***Beowulf* vs. *The Lightning Thief***

**Beowulf and Harry Potter**

**Beowulf and Heracles**

### SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, send lessons 5 and 6 to your teacher.

## Lesson

# 17

# Critical Analysis

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## Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Summarize a critical literary essay.
- Identify points of agreement and disagreement.

## Assignments

### Reading

Some of the questions we have been exploring throughout these lessons are addressed and further developed through the contemporary critical essays that are included in the Norton edition. Each essay is worth reading for its depth of analysis.

Choose one of the following essays to examine more closely:

- Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gruber: From “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane’s Progress” (464–487)
- Susan Meyer: From “Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*” (488–505)
- Carla Kaplan: From “Girl Talk: *Jane Eyre* and the Romance of Women’s Narration” (506–529)
- Kelly A. Marsh: From “*Jane Eyre* and the Pursuit of the Mother’s Pleasure” (529–540)

### Writing

For this lesson on critical scholarship, you will summarize the main themes and arguments, the means through which they are explored, and the conclusion of the article you chose. You will also respond to the article according to the perspectives you have developed while reading the novel, expressing your own opinions about the ideas in the essay.

Assessing criticism is a valuable skill, in any field. But keeping in mind your own reading experience, and acknowledging the singular *Jane Eyre* that you have read, is essential, so feel free to disagree with the scholar’s views.

### ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Choose one contemporary critical essay to read.
- ☐ Summarize the thesis, key points, and conclusion of the critical essay.
- ☐ State your opinion on the points made by the author, and provide your reasoning.

1. First, read your chosen essay without stopping. Then, go back and read it again.

As you read the essay the second time, underline or make note of the parts that really stand out for you. This will enable you to cite strong textual evidence that supports your understanding of what the text says as well as to notice inferences drawn from the text, including any places where the material leaves matters uncertain.

One strategy is to go through the essay paragraph by paragraph, and clearly indicate the central ideas of each paragraph, which are often found in the first sentence of each paragraph. This will give you an idea of how the author is exploring the main thesis.

Next, answer the following questions.

- a. What is the main thesis or the topic of the essay?
- b. What are the strongest points made in the body of the essay?
- c. What is the conclusion?

After you address a, b, and c, write a summary of the article in one or two paragraphs. In your summary, try not to give any opinions about what you are reading—just describe what you find.

**Students will practice the skill of reading a critical essay by clearly summarizing its thesis and noting how the argument unfolds and concludes.**

2. What ideas in this essay do you agree with or disagree with? Based on your summary, address the points you agree with and those you disagree with in a full paragraph. State your opinion and reasoning for each point you address.

**Students will state their agreements or disagreements with the ideas presented in the essay and provide reasoning to support their opinions.**

## **SHARE YOUR WORK**

If you have any questions about your work or the lesson assignments, let your teacher know.

## Lesson

# 23

# Trials and Tribulations

## Learning Objectives: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

- Explore emphasis in spoken word.
- Research background of historical context.
- Analyze the complex story line and show how the subplots are related.

## Learning Objectives: *David Copperfield*

- Examine how language has changed over time.
- Summarize key story elements from a character's point of view.
- Explore the hero theme in depth.

### Digging Deeper

#### *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

You will notice that sometimes a word with an accent is included in the margin notes. For example, here is one note:

crowned: crownèd

This is a pronunciation guideline alerting the actor that this word needs to be pronounced with an extra accented syllable, in this case “crown-ed.” In order to make certain lines fit the meter of the verse, poets often use this technique. When you see a note like this in the margin, take a moment to reread the affected line, first saying the word as you normally would, and then with the accented syllable. See if you think adding the accent makes a big difference with how the words fit in.

#### ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST: *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

- ☐ Read acts 3–5.
- ☐ Read additional front matter.
- ☐ Give your interpretation of specific passages.
- ☐ Recap the audience's reaction to the play.
- ☐ Draw a web of the plot.

#### ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST: *DAVID COPPERFIELD*

- ☐ Read chapters 5–9.
- ☐ Add to your list of characters.
- ☐ Use vocabulary words to summarize events in letters to Peggotty or David's journal entries.
- ☐ Write a hero essay.

When you hear actors use these abnormally accented words, you may think they are putting on an affectation or that it sounds awkward, but if you really listen to how the word fits into the rhythm of the passage, you might start to think about it differently.

As the play continues, certain characters and scenes may be harder to comprehend than others. Remember to go back and read the commentary after you finish each scene. That will help clarify any questions you might have.

In act 4, when everything is put right, all the wrongs are forgotten as quickly as a dream. All of those who were enchanted, including the fairy queen, seem more than willing to believe it never really happened. This quirk of humanity—shared, it seems, by the fairy realm—that lets us be quick to wish away foolish behavior provides a fittingly silly sentiment to lead us into the end of the play.

***phlegmatic***

*adj*: calm and unconcerned

***corroborated***

*v*: confirmed

***exordium***

*n*: introduction or preamble

***crape***, also *crepe*

*n*: a type of fabric; black crape was used to signify mourning

***David Copperfield***

As David's life carries him out of the home and into the world, we see more of his inner strength and character shining through. In this section of the novel, David is cast out into the world, away from his mother and Peggotty and from anyone who loves and cares for him. Notice the tone of the story. While David is telling his story, which is full of atrocities that make our modern sensibilities cringe, he does not wallow in self-pity or seek to engender the pity of others. The tone that Dickens uses creates a very matter-of-fact atmosphere, which gives the story even more impact and realism and allows readers to fully consider and reflect on the story without being mired in sympathetic emotion.

David's age is not mentioned very often, but due to the slow pace of the novel, David is still a child of only ten during his time at school. Think back to when you were ten. How would your character have fared under the circumstances in which David finds himself? Does it make his personal strength seem more heroic when we measure it against our own capacities at the same age?

Because our vocabulary is not as large as that of Shakespeare or Dickens, there are many words that may be unfamiliar, so much so that reading these works can feel a bit like reading another language (albeit not as different as Anglo-Saxon or Middle English). All through this course, we have seen the English language change, and even something written in 1850 in England takes some getting used to. Often Dickens gives you enough information to work out the meaning of a word, but looking up words that you don't recognize or remember is a great way to expand your vocabulary.

## Assignments: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

### Reading

1. Read acts 3–5. Continue to take notes in your Reader's Journal as the ever-more-complicated events unfold. Pay particular attention to how different events connect the characters to one another.
2. After finishing the play, read “Of Imagination All Compact” (xix) and “Source, Text, and Date” (xxiii). These two short pieces will give you background that will help you further understand the play and appreciate its richness.

### Writing

1. In your own words, give your interpretation of the following two passages:
  - a. In act 5, Theseus speaks eloquently about the “poet’s pen” (5.1.12–22). What is he saying here?

#### Student sample response:

In lines 12–22 of the first scene in Act V, Theseus talks of the “poet’s pen” taking the “forms of things unknown . . . / [turning] them to shapes . . .” giving “airy nothing / A local habitation and a name.” (Shakespeare 5.1.15–17). Theseus is describing how a poet, or any writer really, can invent and make the fictional seem real. He is describing how a poet gives a reality to things that are dreamlike through the power of imagination. Theseus believes that the experiences of the four lovers the previous night don’t have a foundation in reality, but in imagination. His description of the writing process of a poet is simply a way to explain to Hippolyta the power of imagination.

- b. Just before the play begins, Theseus explains to Hippolyta why he wants to see the play despite Philostrate telling him that the actors are terrible (5.1.89–105). What is he telling her?

#### Student sample response A:

Theseus wants to see the play, despite Philostrate telling him that the actors are terrible, because he appreciates the effort of any man to please him. He is telling Hippolyta that even if they are an embarrassment in acting, it is kinder of the audience “to give them thanks for nothing” (5.1.89). Theseus concludes that he has encountered many instances in which modest men have come across as being rude to the Duke due to their nervousness, and in turn, he has learned to see true intentions of goodness beneath their awkwardness.

#### Student sample response B:

Theseus explains to Hippolyta that his reason for seeing the play is not to admire the skill of the actors (which Philostrate states is nonexistent) but rather to grace the actors with a kind audience that will applaud them for their effort, not just their talent. The audience’s entertainment, Theseus says, will lie in catching and accepting the actors’ errors.



2. Give a recap of the audience's reaction to the play. What do Theseus, Lysander, and Demetrius think of the play? Do they and their companions enjoy the play?

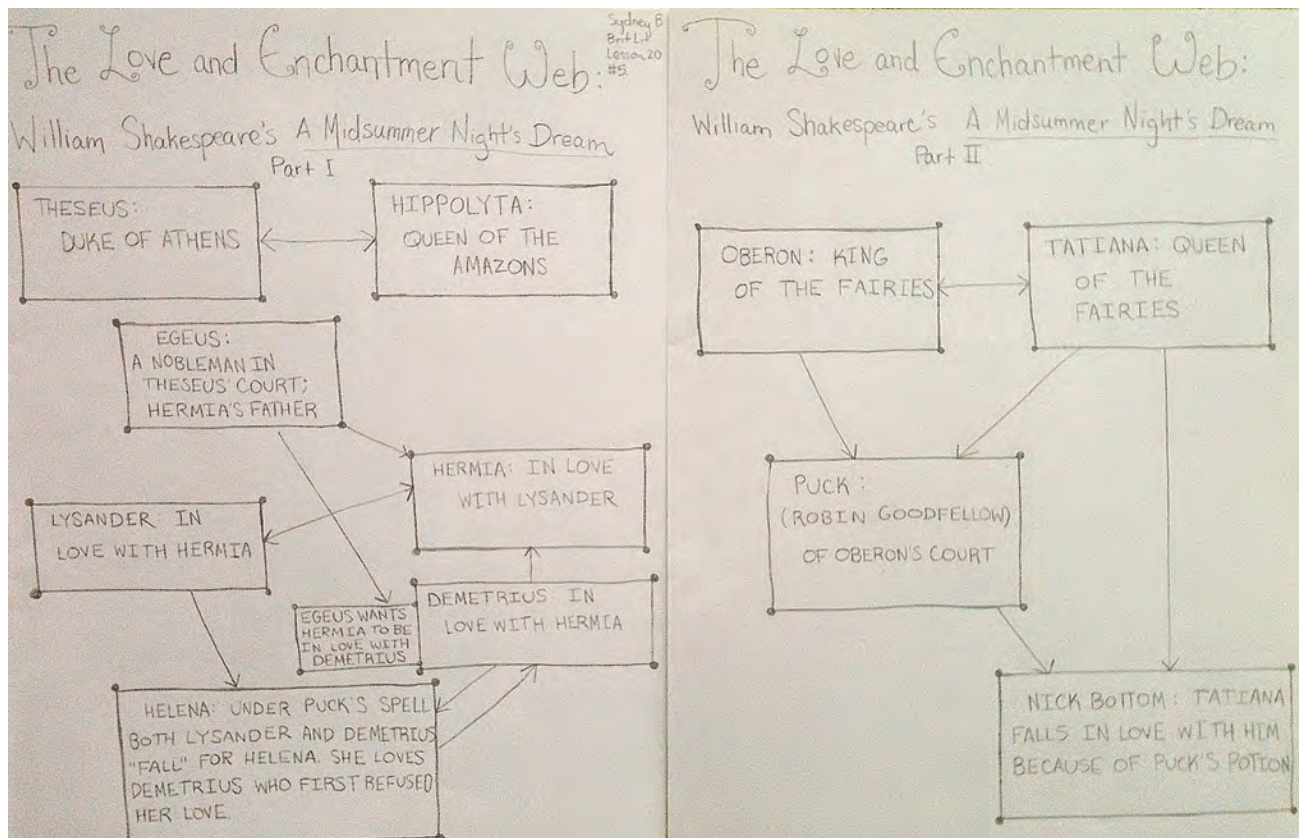
### Student sample response A:

Lysander, Demetrius and even Theseus make fun of the play which is "... tedious (and) brief ... (and) very tragical mirth" (5.1.56–57). They are nevertheless amused by the play: "This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd / The heavy gate of night" (5.1.350–351). It helps pass the time in an amusing way even if it is crude, and poorly done.

### Student sample response B:

The audience's criticism of the play starts with the prologue, which is delivered by Quince. I wouldn't say that they like the play, but they don't dislike it either; they enjoy how bad it is. Theseus, Lysander, and Demetrius spend the duration of the show trading jokes at the actors' and the play's expense, but good-naturedly.

3. Draw a web of the plot, showing the relationships between the characters. This is a tangled plot, with the lives of the characters mixed up in an intricate web. Just like an idea web that connects one idea to the next, draw a relationship web for this play. For instance, you might start with Oberon and draw a line connecting him to Titania, who connects to Bottom, who connects to Theseus, who connects to . . . You get the idea. Your web should end up very complicated! In addition to drawing the web, add brief explanations for each connection, like this:



# Assignments: *David Copperfield*

## Reading

Read chapters 5–9. Continue to keep track of story events and characters in your Reader’s Journal.

## Writing

1. Add to your list of characters. Describe four more characters, as in the previous lesson, and then choose one physical mannerism, trait, or turn of phrase that epitomizes each character.

**Students will continue to write brief character profiles, focusing on how Dickens uses language to present a distinct view of each individual. As one student commented, “Dickens does not skimp when introducing a character. He seems to introduce them all with equal attention; you can only guess which one will be important and who will simply vanish.”**

2. Summarize the events of each chapter in chapters 5–9, either in letters from David to Peggotty or in David’s journal entries. Use the following vocabulary words. Write in first person, from David’s point of view. Remember, in his letters to Peggotty, he would not let on how bad things were, but in his journal, he would be brutally honest. Include these vocabulary words as you write:

**Students will show the meaning of each word by using it in first-person writing (letter or journal format). There will be five separate letters/entries (one for each chapter summary).**

actuate **v. activate; motivate**

efficacious **adj. effective; producing a desired result**

jocular **adj. in a joking manner; jovial**

obdurate **adj. obstinate; unyielding**

alacrity **n. cheerful willingness; eagerness**

### Student sample response:

#### Chapter 5

My Dear Peggotty,

Mr. Barkis is very desirous that I communicate to you the statement that “Barkis is willin’.” I can’t imagine what he means by it, but hope you let him know that I delivered his message with alacrity. I am all settled in Salem House now, it has few inhabitants at present. It is only I, Master Mell who brought me here, and those servants waiting for the arrival of Mr. Creakle, the head of the school. I hope both you and my dear mother are well.

With Love,

David Copperfield



## Chapter 6

### My Dear Peggotty,

Since my last writing you, I have met all the residents of Salem house. Mr. Creakle is an imposing figure, but the boys themselves are as numerous as they are jocular. I rather dreaded their arrival at first, but I am now glad of it. The eldest student, a J. Steerforth, has been very kind and considerate of me. He is such a splendid young man; I wish you could meet him! He is so charming and well liked; it is a great honor to have him take so much notice of me. Please let my mother know that I am very sorry and trying to be a better boy.

Yours,

David Copperfield

3. Write a two- to three-page essay on the qualities of a hero. Consider the first line of the novel: “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show” (13).

Dickens raises some interesting questions on autobiography and heroism as he begins. In Dickens’s estimation, and in your own, what are the qualities of a true hero? What are the challenges that David, our young hero, faces? Be specific, and provide examples and direct quotations to back up your opinions as you explore this topic.

**This is a comprehensive essay. Students are expected to present their thoughts in an organized way, using specific story details and quotations to support their ideas. Students should include their own reflections on the topic as well, and compare these with Dickens’s ideas. The final essay should be polished, showing evidence of revision for clarity, editing for grammatical errors, and proofreading to correct any lingering typos.**

### Writing Tips

When writing journal entries, you are free to write in a realistic manner. Often journal writing becomes stream-of-consciousness writing, with long sentences that link ideas together freely. At other times, journal writing can be very emotional, without regard to sentence structure or grammar. Remember, you are writing from David’s point of view, not your own. If you choose to write journal entries for writing assignment #2, feel free to write by hand. Handwriting can be very revealing, and can be used to good effect to convey emotions: bold writing to show determination, tiny writing to show depression or uncertainty, underlining and exclamation points to show extreme emotion.

### SHARE YOUR WORK

If you have any questions about your work, the lesson assignments, or how to share your work, let your teacher know.



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