

Beowulf Summer Reading Annotation Assignment – English 10 & Honors English 10

Tenth-Grade Students:

Do the following as your summer reading assignment. Write (print clearly and legibly) a one or two sentence summary at the top of each page of the *Beowulf* text that accurately summarizes the events, dialogue, or ideas found on that page. Use complete sentences and give the important details. I'll provide some examples of summary sentences that I've written on specific pages in my own copy of *Beowulf*.

Page 3 – *Famous Danes are mentioned from days gone by: Sheild Sheafson and his son, Beorn.*

Page 5 – *Sheild Sheafson's Funeral: A ship with its body is loaded with treasure and battle-gear and is set out to sea. No one knows who found it (if anyone).*

Page 7 – *Beowulf rules the Danes a long time, and his heirs are listed (Hrothgar, Heorgar, and Halga). Hrothgar builds a mead hall called "Heorot."*

Page 83 – *Wealthew encourages Hrothgar to give his kingdom to his nephew, Hrothulf (rather than to Beowulf).*

Page 97 – *Hrothgar calls on Beowulf to help. Beowulf tells him to have courage, and they leave to find the hiding place of Grendel's mother.*

Page 127 – *Hrothgar says that Beowulf would have been a great king and that Beowulf has brought the Danes and the Geats closer together in peace.*

Page 177 – *Wiglaf draws the ancient sword inherited from his father and enters the battle.*

Page 193 – *The 10 men who fled to the woods return, and Wiglaf rebukes the men. He says that the armor given to them was wasted on them.*

For these eight pages, just use the summaries I have given above. Your own annotation summaries for all the other pages need to have at least this much detail, and they need to be accurate. Your summaries must be your own, or they will not receive credit. This will be a test grade.

Beowulf is one of the greatest works of literature I've ever read. While there are many fine translations of the text (for example, J.R.R. Tolkien's translation that he worked on his entire life), this translation of *Beowulf* by Seamus Heaney is the best available for what we are doing. The text, as a work of oral tradition, is intended to be read out loud. However, one can still appreciate the rhyme structure of the lines in a silent reading of the text. The rhymes in this text occur within the lines at the beginning of the words (rather than at the ends of the lines). Here is an example with the rhymed letters in bold and underlined:

They knew too well the way it was before,
how often the Danes had fallen prey
to death in the mead-hall. But the Lord was weaving
a victory on his war-loom for the Weather-Geats. (lines 694-697)

Reading the text with emphasis on the alliteration rhymes creates a subtle rhythm that propels the text forward. Also, keep a lookout for *kennings* (words that are fused to together to refer to other things). For example, "word-*hoard*" (page 19) refers to one's *mind*, "battle-*dress*" (page 23) refers to *armor*, and "sky-*plague*" (page 159) means *dragon*. Keeping these two elements of the text in mind (namely, the rhyme-structure and the kennings) will (along with looking up words you are unfamiliar with) improve your comprehension and enjoyment of the text.

Best Regards,
Dr. Lee