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English

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Unit 1: Heroism Unit Project

# Introduction

There are different myths attached to the character of an epic hero. He is often referred to as a God or the son of a God, like Zeus; although he spends his life among mortals. Epic heroes contrast a general image of God as they don’t possess such powers. They are smarter and stronger compared to their contemporaries. The epic hero normally spends his life in voyages or quests, during which he faces detentions, trials and new adversaries. Epic heroes develop their morals and values from the experiences of voyages and expeditions. Beowulf, Hercules, and Odysseus are some examples of epic heroes.

# Discussion

The primary attribute attached to an epic hero is loyalty to his people and the land, which remains consistent irrespective of the circumstances. Beowulf displays these characteristics of loyalty when he decides to sail for the land of Danes. The family relation between Hrothgar and Beowulf are enough that Beowulf and his men must risk their lives for the people (Alexander). This incident is enough to illustrate Beowulf’s loyalty and to understand the meaning of loyalty during those times. These values of loyalty and courage represent the beliefs and ideas of Anglo- Saxon times in England, the time when Beowulf is believed to have lived in (Bloom). After arriving at the bank of Denmark, he announced “We belong by birth to the Great people, and owe allegiance to Lord Hygelac (Bloom)”. During the fight against Grendel, loyalty drives Beowulf’s attitude. Beowulf fights that physical menace and confronts him by extraction and loyalty, which stampede that hostile force. Edward Foster mentions “Beowulf required to stay loyal to Hrothgar for protecting his repute and family. After Beowulf’s fight with Grendel, he stated to Hrothgar “If ever I hear from across the ocean, which people on your borders are threatening battle, as attackers have done from time to time, I shall land with a thousand thanes at my back.”

Different from Beowulf, Grendel also had heroic traits, however, in a contrasting way. Grendel was the representation of evil in the story, whereas the Beowulf reflected the goodness. The heroic nature of Grendel clashed with Beowulf in myriad ways. First and foremost, he was the one infamous for propagating evil in the land instead of good. He was the malicious character who killed and slaughtered people ruthlessly. Secondly, Beowulf lost the battle against evil Grendel which cemented the heroism of Grendel in this poem (Ringler). When Beowulf managed to inflict damage on Grendel, he was unconquerable as he had his mother- even more malignant-to rescue him. This shows that Grendel is the real powerful character for the people as he was much tactful and courageous. Grendel showed resilience in the sense that he hindered all the means and methods of Beowulf in various ways and in different battles. The depiction of Grendel displays a unique kind of heroism which is fierce, dominating, but has evil nature as the quote mentions “Grendel was spawned in that slime, conceived by a pair of those monsters born Of Cain, murderous creatures banished By God, punished forever for the crime Of Abel’s death (Puhvel)”. Hence, Grendel is uniquely different from the other character Beowulf.

# Conclusion

To summarize, the concept of heroism is not limited. It is an encompassing term which explains that real heroism is about fighting for a noble cause against all kinds of odds. Being heroic is not about perpetuating evil or chaos, instead it is about the promotion of peace and tranquility in the lives of people. This is the real sense of heroism as heroes are generally considered the leaders in communities. This theme is reflected in the poem that evil Grendel was powerful at first, but the force of goodness- Beowulf- succumbed him. As a result, the noble Beowulf in heroic poem proved himself a hero and established the fact that good forever succeeds despite the countless obstacles.

Works Cited:

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