



SATURDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM: FALL 2017

DRAMATIC READING OF TOLKIEN'S BEOWULF

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Course Description

Hwæt!! "Lo! The glory of the kings of the people of the Spear-Danes in days of old we have heard tell, how those princes did deeds of valor."

Let us gather together weekly for nigh upon an hour in our given location in the depths of our illustrious university and read aloud, as 'twas meant to be proclaimed, the epic poem *Beowulf*, as translated from the original Anglo-Saxon by J.R.R. Tolkien. As each of us has a turn reading, so will we discuss the plain meaning of the text, and harken to the legend of the great knight Beowulf, renowned yet for his deeds, his battles with monsters and dragons. We will rejoice together in the strange language and olde sentence syntax and grow comfortable and confident in uncovering the tale that inspired Tolkien's Middle Earth. (No, be foresworn: we will NOT be reading the *Lord of the Rings*. But may ye harken to strange portents of that saga.) We will read this challenging tale of ancient lore together! Aloud! Discussing as we go! Join us! *Hwæt!!*

Essential Questions

What is the culture of the characters in *Beowulf*? What parts of its culture do we share?

Why do men (and women?) seek glory? Are deeds of valor still done today? How do we celebrate them?

Do you want to be remembered after you die? Why or why not?

Is fame a fair substitute for glory?

Why read an epic poem that was written over a century ago? Is it still engaging? If so, why?

Learning Outcomes

What students will know:

- What makes this an epic poem worth reading

What students will understand:

- The main themes of the poem

What students will be able to do:

- Be comfortable reading difficult language

Instructional Strategies

Read aloud, discuss as we go. Compare translations. Keep a vocabulary journal. Have a peak at Anglo-Saxon (Olde English.)

Student Assessment

Students will assess their own understanding of this epic poem

Resources and Materials

Please bring the following each day*:

- *Beowulf* (provided)
- Notebook and pen

*All other material will be provided by the instructor

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	In-Class Activities
Week 1	Read aloud: Lines 1-400	Compare the beginning with other translation Write a few lines of poetry Discuss
Week 2	Read aloud: Lines 400-779	Discuss. Continue Vocab diary
Week 3	Lines 780-1180	Discuss. What's going on?
Week 4	Lines 1181-1561	Discuss and build.
Week 5	Lines 1562-1954	Discuss. Why do men seek glory? Do women? Fame vs. Glory
Week 6	Lines 1955-2305	The Importance of Dragons
Week 7	Lines 2305-2665	Compare the three endings Review major themes
Week 8	Read aloud: The Lay of Beowulf, by Tolkien	Why did Tolkien re-write this? Let us celebrate this king who was "most generous and to men most gracious, and to his people most tender and for praise most eager."