

# **English Literature Paper #1 – EXPOSITORY WRITING – Anglo Saxon Heroic Ideal**

## **EXPOSITION**

"Expository writing" or "exposition" is writing that explains.

In this assignment we will practice using the Expository Mode. Most writing done in the world today – in magazines, books, newspapers, on websites, and in owner's manuals, is expository writing. Expository writing does not sound like storytelling.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

This paper will focus on one piece of literature that we have read thus far and will explore Anglo-Saxon ideals of what constituted a hero, as found in the background in the anthology. Think about and explain what might constitute a hero according to Anglo-Saxon ideals. In what ways is the Anglo-Saxon ideal similar to the Christian ideal? In what ways is it different?

To do this paper you need to closely examine a character. This could be Beowulf, Arthur, or Christ (as portrayed in “The Dream of the Rood”). Explain by analysis -- breaking down this character into particulars and then for each particular give me at least one anecdotal illustration from the book.

Another very important aspect of your analysis comes in making connections with things you already know -- things from the Bible, from your life experience with people and human nature, or from your reading in other subject areas. You are welcome to engage your family and friends in discussion on this topic in order to broaden your own perspective.

**LENGTH** - Please write 750-1000 words on this topic.

## **ELEMENTS OF EXPOSITORY WRITING TO INCLUDE (use this as a checklist)**

- Explain by ANALYSIS -- breaking down into particulars. Don't just tell me that Beowulf was good; name his particular virtues.
- ILLUSTRATE. For each particular, give me at least one anecdotal example from the book. In other words, if you think Beowulf was brave, tell me that, but then also tell me of at least one incident from the book that led you to that conclusion. TIP: this is one element of expository writing that is a great

weakness among many students. Neglecting to illustrate makes for very weak and boring writing, so be sure to get in the habit of including it now. Also, make sure that you COMMENT on the example you choose. Do not merely put an example down and move on to the next paragraph. You should say twice as much about an example as you put down. Your comments should explain what the example reveals. Take some time to think about EVERYTHING you could possibly say about the example.

\*Citing your examples: You should internally cite lines you use from the text. This means that you do not need a bibliography or footnotes. If you are writing about Beowulf, give the line reference. For example, you have chosen to use line 15. You will quote line 15 and then cite it in a parentheses following it. For a single line, use a lower case "l" with a period and the line: l. 15. Let's say you wanted to use more than one line. You will cite this way: ll. 15-18.

\*Work on creative ways to implement quotes.

For example: you want to say that Beowulf was exceptionally strong. You want to use the lines, "The captain of evil discovered himself /in a handgrip harder than anything/he had ever encountered in any man/on the face of the earth." (ll. 749-752)

You can implement a phrase from these lines: Beowulf revealed that he was stronger than most men by putting Grendel " in a handgrip harder than anything he had ever encountered in any man..." (ll. 748-751)

You can use the entire quote to buttress your ideas: When faced with the hideous sight of Grendel, Beowulf's awesome physical strength encouraged him to defend Heorot. His power overwhelmed Grendel and gave him the realization that he was not dealing with an ordinary mortal: "The captain of evil discovered himself /in a handgrip harder than anything/he had ever encountered in any man/on the face of the earth." (ll. 749-752)

Whatever you do, make sure to use specific lines from the text and not merely recount what happened in your own words. You should always use some of the text, even if it is a word or a phrase.

- Make connections with things you already know from the Bible, from life experience or from your reading in other subject areas.
- Compare. Find the similarities between the Anglo-Saxon ideal and the Christian ideal.
- Contrast. Find the differences between the Anglo-Saxon ideal and the Christian ideal.

## **PREWRITNG TIPS:**

Expository writing needs to be organized so that your reader can easily follow your train of thought. Your basic structure should be:

- I. Title
- II. Introduction (with thesis towards the end of intro. paragraph)
- III. Body (You should have a minimum of three body paragraphs)
- IV. Conclusion

Your title and introduction should grab and focus the reader's attention on what your paper is all about. Your conclusion should "wrap up" your thinking and rephrase your main idea, not leaving the reader hanging.

In between your introduction and your conclusion, the body of your paper must be a step-by-step explanation of your thinking processes on the topic at hand. "Step-by-step" indicates a high level of specifics and an avoidance of generalities. Don't tell us that Beowulf was good; tell us how he was good -- in what particular area of character -- and give us an anecdote from the story to prove it.

To help you collect your thoughts before you begin composing the body of your paper, I would suggest you use one of these three options:

1. **OUTLINE** - This is probably what most of you have been taught, and it is the most organized approach. However, there are other ways to get the job done with shorter papers or younger students. Read on if you're not yet confident in outlining.
2. **LISTS** - For this paper, start with two lists: Anglo-Saxon Ideal and Christian Ideal. Under these two headings list descriptive, applicable words or phrases. You might tag each with a "proof" - an illustration from the text. When your lists are done compare the two of them.
3. **BUBBLES** - An option for artists! Draw a small circle, big enough to hold a couple of words, in the middle of a piece of paper. Write Beowulf in it. Now think of a character trait of Beowulf. Let's say Beowulf was brave. Draw a line about 1-2 inches out from the edge of the circle, kind of like a ray emanating from the sun or a spoke coming out of the hub of a wheel. Attach a new circle to the other end of it. Write "brave" in the new circle. Now think of another trait of Beowulf. Let's say he was loyal. Go back to the edge of your original "Beowulf" circle and draw another line out from the edge and inch or two, make a new circle and write "loyal" in it. After you have "bubbled" every one of Beowulf's traits, begin to think of what sections in the story illustrated each

trait. Go back to each trait bubble and draw a line out from it with a word or two reminding you of an illustration. When you are done with this, repeat the process on another sheet of paper, this time using "The Christian Ideal" as your central bubble.

Please see [Essay Guidelines](#) for more specific ideas about essay structure and pitfalls to avoid.

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