

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #1
Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Social Organization

Highlight and annotate any traits you find that reveal how Anglo-Saxon society was organized.

Questions to consider:

- Was there a class system?
- What was the role of women?
- What was the role of men?

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #2

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Burial

Highlight and annotate any traits you find that reveal Anglo-Saxon burial practices.

Questions to consider:

- How were high-ranking officials buried?
- What does this suggest about their culture?

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #3

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Lifestyle

Highlight and annotate any traits you find that reveal how Anglo-Saxons lived.

Questions to consider:

- What kind of territory did they live in?
- What kind of dwellings did they have?
- What kind of lifestyle did they have?

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #4

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Values and Beliefs

Highlight and annotate any traits you find that reveal what Anglo-Saxons valued.

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #5

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Art and Entertainment

Highlight and annotate any traits you find that reveal what the Anglo-Saxons did for entertainment or art.

Questions to consider:

- How did this culture celebrate victory?
- What was considered art in this culture?

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #6

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Ideal Behavior

Highlight and annotate any evidence that suggests what was considered model, ideal behavior during the Anglo-Saxon time period.

Questions to consider:

- What traits were considered admirable?
- What behavior/ actions were considered model behavior?

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #7

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Language

Highlight and annotate any observations you make about the Anglo-Saxon language.

Questions to consider:

- What observations can you make about the language of the Anglo-Saxons (given the translation)?
- What literary techniques did they use & why might this be?

Beowulf Culture Discovery Group #8

Today, your group will read the Prologue & Parts 1 and 2 from *Beowulf*. You will play the role of an archaeologist to uncover traits of Anglo-Saxon culture introduced in the text. Your group will present your findings to the class. Be sure to use textual evidence to support your findings.

Evil

Highlight and annotate any evidence of how the Anglo-Saxons viewed evil.

Early History of the Danes

Listen:

You have heard of the Danish Kings
in the old days and how they were great warriors.
Shield, the son of Sheaf, took many an enemy's chair, terrified many a warrior, after he was found an orphan. He prospered under the sky until people everywhere listened when he spoke. He was a good king!

Shield had a son,
child for his yard,
sent by God
to comfort the people,
to keep them from fear--
Grain was his name;
he was famous
throughout the North.
Young princes should do as he did--
give out treasures
while they're still young
so that when they're old
people will support them
in time of war.
A man prospers
by good deeds
in any nation:

Shield died at his fated hour,
went to God still strong.
His people carried him to the sea,
which was his last request.
In the harbor stood
a well-built ship,
icy but ready for the sea.
They laid Shield there,
propped him against the mast
surrounded by gold
and treasure from distant lands.
I've never heard
of a more beautiful ship,
filled with shields, swords,
and coats of mail, gifts
to him for his long trip.
No doubt he had a little more
than he did as a child
when he was sent out,
a naked orphan in an empty
boat.

The wisest alive can't tell
where a death ship goes.

Grain ruled the Danes
a long time after his father's
death,
and to him was born
the great Healfdene, fierce in
battle,
who ruled until he was old.
Healfdene had four children--
Heorogar, Hrothgar, Halga the
Good,
and a daughter who married
Onela, King of the Swedes.

Hrothgar Becomes King of the Danes

After Hrothgar became king
he won many battles:
his friends and family
willingly obeyed him;
his childhood friends
became famous soldiers.

So Hrothgar decided
he would build a mead-hall,
the greatest the world had
ever seen, or even imagined.
There he would share out
to young and old alike
all that God gave him
(except for public lands and
men's lives).

I have heard that orders
went out far and wide;
tribes throughout the world
set to work on that building.
And it was built, the world's
greatest mead-hall.
And that great man
called the building
"Herot," the hart.

After it was built,
Hrothgar did what he said
he would: handed out gold
and treasure at huge feasts.
That hall was high-towered,
tall and wide-gabled
(though destruction awaited,
fire and swords of family trouble;
and outside in the night waited
a tortured spirit of hell).

the joy of people echoed.
The poet told how the world
came to be, how God made the
earth
and the water surrounding,
how He set the sun and the
moon
as lights for people
and adorned the earth
with limbs and leaves for
everyone.
Hrothgar's people lived in joy,
happy until that wanderer of the
wasteland,
Grendel the demon, possessor
of the moors,
began his crimes.

He was of a race of monsters
exiled from mankind by God--
He was of the race of Cain,
that man punished for
murdering his brother.
From that family comes
all evil beings--
monsters, elves, zombies.
Also the giants who
fought with God and got
repaid with the flood.

Grendel Attacks

One night, after a beer party,
the Danes settled in the hall
for sleep; they knew no
sorrows.

The evil creature, grim and
hungry,
grabbed thirty warriors
and went home laughing.

At dawn, when the Danes
learned
of Grendel's strength,
there was great weeping.
The old king sat sadly,
crying for his men. Bloody
footprints were found.

That was bad enough,
but the following night
Grendel killed more--
blinded by sin,
he felt no remorse.
(You can bet the survivors
started sleeping elsewhere.)
So Grendel ruled,
fighting right,
one against many,
and the greatest hall
in all the earth
stood empty at night.

Twelve years this went on,
Hrothgar suffering
the greatest of sorrows.

Poets sang sad songs
throughout the world,
how Grendel tormented
Hrothgar;
how no warrior,
no matter how brave,
could kill Grendel.
How Grendel wasn't
about to stop,
or pay damages.
Grendel kept ambushing
from his lair,
the moors which lay in
perpetual darkness.

Then, the cruelest of all
injuries,
he moved into the hall--

to actually touch the throne).

Hrothgar was broken;
council after council
proposed
what to do against the
attacks.
They even went to heathen
temples,
worshipped idols, and called
to the Devil for help.
The Danes forgot God.
(Woe be to those who go
to the fire's embrace,
even in great distress--
There is no consolation
there.)

No counselor, no warrior
could destroy the evil.
They wept and seethed.

Beowulf Hears of Grendel

But a warrior of Hygelac's
heard of Grendel's doings;
he was the strongest of men
alive in that day,
mighty and noble.
That man called for a ship,
said he would cross the
ocean
and help the king who
needed help.
Wise men urged him
to that adventure
though he was dear to them.
They examined omens
and whetted him on.

So the good Geat chose
the bravest warriors,
fourteen of them,
and that crafty sailor
led them to the land's brim,
to the ship.
They readied the ship
on the waves under the cliffs
and the warriors stood at the
prow
as the water wound against
the sand.
The warriors bore
into the ship's bosom
bright weapons,
fitted armor.

out on the journey
they'd dreamed of.
The foamy-necked ship
went out like a bird
so that the next day
its curved prow
had gone so far
that the seafarers saw land,
shining shore cliffs
and steep mountains.
Their journey was already
over
and the Geat warriors
pulled their ship to the shore
and stood on land
in their rattling shirts,
their war-clothes. They
thanked God for an easy
trip.

From his wall the sea-guard
of the Danes,
protector of the cliffs,
saw bright shields
and ready war dress
coming over the gang plank
and he wondered
who those men were.
Hrothgar's warrior rode
to shore on his horse.

Shaking a mighty spear, he
spoke:
"Who are you, in armor,
who come over the sea-road
in that steep keel?
Listen: I guard here
so that no forces
hostile to the Danes
may raid. Never has
one so openly brought
a ship's army, warriors,
without the permission of my
kinsmen.
And never have I seen
a greater man on earth,
any man in armor,
than is one among you.
Unless I'm wrong,
that is no hall-man,
just wearing armor--
his stature is peerless.
I wish to know your lineage
now
so I know you are not spies
going into the land of the
Danes.

Beowulf, leader of the host
unlatched his word-hoard:
"As to kin, we are of the
Geat nation,
Hygelac's hearth-
companions.
My father was a leader well
known
among the people:
Edgtheow.
He stayed many winters
before he went away,
aged, from the court.
Every wise man readily
remembers
him throughout the earth.
We have come with friendly
hearts
to see your lord, Healfdene's
son,
protector of the people.
Be good counsel to us:
we have come on a great
errand
to the king of the Danes.
I think it foolish
to keep secrets. You know
if it is true what we have
heard,
that a dark enemy in the
nights
works violence and
slaughter
on the Danes. . . . Perhaps
in kindness I may advise
Hrothgar
how he, wise and famous,
may overcome this enemy--
if change will ever come,
relief from this evil--
and how this seething
sorrow
might become cool.
Otherwise, he will suffer
tribulation
as long as he lives in that
high place,
the best of houses."

The protector of the coast,
still on his horse, spoke
(a wise shield warrior,
one who thinks well,
must judge two things:
works and words):
"I see that you are a band

equipment.
I will guide you. Also,
I will order my men
to protect your ship,
that new-tarred boat on the
sand,
until it bears you again
back over the water streams
with its curved wooden neck,
back to the land of the
Geats--
if it be granted that you
endure the battle."

They left then the well-made
ship
pulling at its rope.
On the gold-adorned
helmets
figures of boars shone,
those guards over war-like
minds.

The men excitedly marched
until
they saw that ornamented
hall,
the finest building on earth,
that glittered light over many
lands,
where the mighty one
waited.

The one brave in battle
pointed
toward the resplendent hall;
the guard of the coast turned
his horse and said after
them:
"It is time for me to go.
May the Father Omnipotent
hold you
safe and sound in kindness!
I will go back to the sea
to hold against hostile
bands."