

***Beowulf*: Heroic Poem**

Starting Steps

- 1) Pick a hero from your life, a story you've read, a film you've seen, one of your own creation – or yourself (with the provision that you write about yourself in the third person). This is your “who,” so to speak.
- 2) Take some time to think about two things: something the hero has done that's noteworthy, and the reason you respect this figure – not what he/she has done, but why he/she is worthy of respect. For example, it's impressive that Beowulf beats something in battle (the “what” he/she does and “how” he/she earns our respect), but that battle is meant to demonstrate his courage, strength, and goodness (the “why” he earns our respect). In other words, it's not what the hero does – it's what the hero is. You may need to adjust your “how” once you select your “why,” but you may choose/establish these in the order you prefer.
- 3) Once you've selected your “who,” “how,” “what,” and “why,” establish a “where” and a “when.” Is this a contemporary tale? How much of a role will environment and geography play in your tale? Will the land/landmarks have symbolic value, as Heorot Hall does in *Beowulf*? How much time will you spend on description? Are cultural values a factor in your tale?
- 4) Once you've covered the who/what/where/when/how/why, decide on the type of tone you want to convey through your words. Should this be exciting? Quiet? Triumphant? Tragic? Does the hero ultimately fail or succeed? What is the “moral” you want us to take away? (This is probably the “why” from #2.)
- 5) Now that you've established these things, write out your tale in a couple of paragraphs – however many it takes. You want a prose version of this story so you can a) spot gaps in your logic or plotting more easily and b) draw from a “word/idea bank” when it's time to write your poem.
- 6) Finally, start writing your poem. **Remember: Rhyme scheme is not important.** I am much more interested in your meter and your use of the poetic techniques we discussed – alliteration, assonance, consonance, enjambment, etc. This will not be perfect in the first draft, so you shouldn't try – edit *after* everything's been finished.
- 7) After completing a couple of drafts, read the poem aloud. Are the stressed syllables in the right place for a verbal performance to work? Do the acoustic effects do what you want them to do, tone-wise? How's your diction?
- 8) Finalize the poem and submit that final draft to me.

Requirements

The poem should be typed in final-draft form. It should be a minimum of forty lines long, with “line” roughly defined as a collection of seven or more words (within reason, of course – use your own judgment and take initiative when in doubt). On Presentation Day, you'll recite the best “section” of your poem – roughly eight lines, although you have a little latitude – from memory. Wear the costume of your hero, and come prepared to perform!

***Beowulf*: Heroic Poem Rubric**

An "A"-level Heroic Poem:

- Clearly identifies and describes its subject; we know who the subject is, as well as both his/her accomplishments **and** the reason the subject deserves a poem in his/her honor
- Situates the action or narrative in a clearly-described setting
- Remains tonally consistent, or at least provides a rationale for intentional inconsistencies
- Demonstrates a clear command of – or willingness to experiment with – poetic techniques (acoustic repetition, enjambment, meter, structure, etc.)
- Is well-edited, with a minimum of mistakes; punctuation appears where it belongs, words are spelled correctly, and sentences make sense (considering poetic constraints)
- Meets the minimum forty-line requirement (with additional lines if some are shorter than seven words)

A "B"-level Heroic Poem:

- Clearly identifies and describes its subject; we know who the subject is, as well as both his/her accomplishments **and** the reason the subject deserves a poem in his/her honor
- Situates the action or narrative in a clearly-described setting
- Remains tonally consistent, or at least provides a rationale for intentional inconsistencies
- Demonstrates a developing command of – or willingness to experiment with – poetic techniques (acoustic repetition, enjambment, meter, structure, etc.)
- Is well-edited, with a small number of mistakes; punctuation appears where it belongs, words are spelled correctly, and sentences make sense (considering poetic constraints)
- Meets the minimum forty-line requirement (with additional lines if some are shorter than seven words)

A "C"-level Heroic Poem:

- Identifies and describes its subject; a deeper description of the subject, his/her accomplishments, **or** the reason the subject deserves a poem in his/her honor is required in order to improve the poem
- Situates the action or narrative in a setting; additional detail is needed in order to improve the poem
- Some tonal inconsistencies are present, seem unintentional, and require further explanation
- Demonstrates a somewhat problematic command of – or willingness to experiment with – poetic techniques (acoustic repetition, enjambment, meter, structure, etc.); writer is making an effort
- Is inconsistently edited, with more mistakes than one prefers in a final draft; command of punctuation, spelling, **or** sentence structure may be problematic
- Meets the minimum forty-line requirement (with additional lines if some are shorter than seven words)

A "D"-level Heroic Poem:

- Does not clearly identify or describe its subject, and a deeper description of the subject, his/her accomplishments, **and** the reason the subject deserves a poem in his/her honor is required
- Does not clearly describe the setting
- Remains tonally consistent, or at least provides a rationale for intentional inconsistencies
- Demonstrates little evidence of the author's knowledge of "poetic techniques"; effort level is unclear
- Is inconsistently edited and too short, with more mistakes than one expects in a final draft; command of punctuation, spelling, **and** sentence structure are problematic

An "F"-level Heroic Poem:

- Lacks a subject, or barely describes him/her; accomplishments and rationale for attention remain unclear
- Lacks a setting
- Lacks tonal consistency, and inconsistencies are unintentional
- Demonstrates no evidence of the author's knowledge of poetic techniques
- Is poorly edited and too short