Beowulf Study Guide
Complete all questions on a separate sheet(s) of paper.
**There are no wolves in Beowulf**

Part I: Epic notes
1. List the three parts of the epic cycle.
2. List three characteristics of an epic hero.
3. List three universal themes found in Beowulf

Part II: Identifications
Write down identifying characteristics/relationships/roles for the following terms.

1. Beowulf
2. Grendel
3. Edgitho
4. Higlac
5. Hrothgar
6. Herot
7. Grendel’s Mother
8. The dragon
9. Treasure
10. Wiglaf
11. Danes
12. Geats
13. Pyre
14. Lair

Part III: Literary Terms and Vocabulary
Define the following terms, and when possible, provide an example.

1. alliteration
2. caesura
3. kenning
4. foreshadowing
5. simile
6. metaphor
7. talon
8. infamous
9. affliction
10. purge
11. gorge
12. livid
13. loathsome
14. lair

Part IV: Written Responses
Answer in at least 2-3 Sentences

1. How does Grendel’s home reflect his evil nature? Use two details from the poem to support your response.
2. Would you agree or disagree that Beowulf fights his last battle for treasure? Use details from the epic poem to support your answer.
3. In what ways is Beowulf a model of leadership for our own times? In what ways do his traits and skills fail to translate to our own times? Support your response with details from the epic poem.
4. How does Beowulf represent Anglo-Saxon ideals/values?
5. Joseph Campbell states, “The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” Explain how this quote relates to the notion of an epic hero.

Part V: Questions to know from each section of the reading

Grendel (line 1-103)
- Why does Grendel terrorize Hrothgar’s men at Herot?
- Who is Grendel a descendant of?
- What is one thing Grendel will not approach in the mead hall? Why won’t he approach this?
- What do the Danes do to avoid Grendel?

Beowulf (line 104-232)
- How does Beowulf learn of the terror Grendel is afflicting on the Danes?
- Why does Beowulf choose to travel all the way to the land of the Danes?
- What is Beowulf’s lineage (who is in his bloodline)?
- What is Beowulf’s nationality?
- Who accompanies Beowulf on his journey to Denmark?
- Why does Beowulf choose to fight Grendel without any clothes, armor, and weapons?
- Beowulf boasts of all of his accomplishments as he meets Hrothgar. Why does he do this?

The Battle with Grendel (line 233-396)
- What weapons does Beowulf use to fight Grendel?
- When does Grendel first show fear in this battle?
- Explain, in detail, how Grendel dies?
- What does Beowulf do with Grendel’s arm? Why does he do this (2 reasons)?

Grendel’s Mother (line 397-449)
- Describe the living conditions of Grendel’s mother.
- What is the major motive for Grendel’s mother to attack Herot?
- Who does Grendel’s mother kill?
- Who is Grendel’s mother a descendant of?
- Who, specifically, wants revenge on Grendel’s mother?

The Battle with Grendel’s Mother (line 450-605)
What is Hrothgar’s challenge for Beowulf?
Who goes with Beowulf as he attempts to fight Grendel’s Mother?
Who helps Beowulf battle Grendel’s Mother?
Where does this battle take place? What is so unique (from Beowulf’s perspective) about the location of this battle?
What “trophy” does Beowulf keep from this battle?

Beowulf’s Last Battle (line 606-735)
- What does Beowulf do after his battles in Denmark?
- What circumstances allow Beowulf to take the throne as “King of the Geats”?
- How long does Beowulf rule as king?
- Why does the dragon terrorize the Geats?

The Death of Beowulf (line 736-870)
- Who accompanies Beowulf as he battles the dragon?
- What is destroyed as Beowulf battles the dragon?
- Who ultimately dies (multiple) as a result of this battle?
- What is Beowulf’s last message to Wiglaf?

Mourning Beowulf (line 871-897)
- What is Beowulf’s request for his own burial?
- Describe the funeral of Beowulf (use specific details).

Part VI: Sample test questions

1. What universal theme do the following lines best suggest?
   “The Almighty drove
   Those demons out, and their exile was bitter,
   Shut away from men; they split
   Into a thousand forms of evil—spirits
   And fiends, goblins, monsters, giants,
   A brood forever opposing
   the Lord’s
   Will, and again and again defeated.”

   A. Monsters are a reflection of Anglo-Saxon culture.  
   B. Good triumphs over evil.  
   C. Hrothgar’s throne will always remain protected.  
   D. Light outweighs the darkness of Sweden.

2. Which of the following quotes best supports Beowulf’s decline as an ideal hero and his change in character?
   A. “I drove five great giants into chains, chased all of the race from the earth.”
   B. “My lord Higlac might think less of if I were to let my sword go where my feet were afraid to...”
   C. “…his claws bound fast, Higlac’s brave follower tearing at his hands.”
   D. “I feel no shame, with shield and sword and armor, against this monster...”

3. Lines 59–64 show that Beowulf is an epic hero because he has
   a. incredible strength  
   b. superhuman eyesight  
   c. great intelligence  
   d. extraordinary hope

4. When Beowulf first speaks with Hrothgar, he says, “I have come so far,/ O shelterer of warriors and your people’s loved friend,/ That this one favor you should not refuse me [...]”.

   What device is Beowulf using in this quote and why is he using it?
   A. Beowulf is using alliteration in order to emphasize why he has come.
   B. Beowulf is using flattering epithets in order to convince the king to allow him to kill Grendel.
   C. Beowulf is using personification to emphasize the humanity of Hrothgar as a leader.
   D. Beowulf is using an apostrophe to show he is desperate for glory.