

GENRE OF BEOWULF

Locate specific text passages illustrating each of the following characteristics:

I. Epic: a long narrative poem in which events are unified by their relation to a central hero, who experiences a challenge that has racial, social, national significance.

- a) hero is a figure of heroic stature
- b) setting is vast in scope
- c) action consists of deeds of great valor
- d) supernatural forces (gods, angels, demons)
- e) common elements:
 - genealogy
 - travel over sea
 - man against supernatural
 - oral composition
 - digressions
 - sacrifice to gods
 - feasting
 - concept of wyrd/ fate
 - battles
 - importance of weapons and treasure

II. Elegy:

- a) the expression of grief for the death of a valued personality
- b) general meditation on universal griefs:

- transitory nature of life
- glory ending in defeat
- inevitable ruin

c) contrast between present and past conditions:

- ubi sunt ("where are") theme.

d) general pattern of loss and attempted consolation

- Elegiac passages in Beowulf:
- Lay of the Last Survivor
- Wiglaf's speech to cowardly retainers
- Prediction of the fall of Geatland
- Burial of Beowulf