

AP Literature and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

All 12th grade AP Literature and Composition students will read:

Beowulf

ISBN: 978-0-393-33010-6

AND

Grendel

ISBN: 0-679-72311-0

In AP Literature, most of your reading selections (poetry, short stories, novels, plays, and nonfiction) will focus on myth, truth, and the heroic journey. We will focus on the idea of a necessary heroic figure as part of a cultural norm. In preparing for the AP Literature Exam, you will need to familiarize yourself with how and why those cultural norms shift. The following summer assignment, a study of the heroic figure, will provide a basis for discussions we will have throughout the year.

1. The first part of your summer assignment is to read *Beowulf*, a poem committed to print long after being passed down orally through many generations. It is the story of the quintessential, traditional, and dominating heroic ideal. The poem clearly distinguishes differences between good and evil (dualism). **As you read, note the “writer’s” attitudes toward the following: Beowulf and Grendel, religion, bravery, fear, and heroism in general.** The structure of *Beowulf* is poetic, and the poem is a translation from Nordic/Old English. Do not expect to understand everything you read. Just do your best.

2. The second part of your summer assignment is to read *Grendel*, John Gardner’s modern retelling of *Beowulf* (sort of). **Annotating as you read, consider Gardner’s attitude toward Grendel, Beowulf, Unferth, and Hrothgar. Also, take note of shifts in setting; characters’ attitudes; shifts in point of view; use of literary devices and vocabulary; and anything else that seems significant to you.**

This assignment will be due on the first full day of class in August. The basis for our first formal discussion (and essay) will come from your notes and the comparisons and contrasts you find between and within these two texts. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

I hope you have a great summer...see you in August.

Mrs. Clark

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