**Informational Essay: The Hero**

**Option #1**

Review the seven qualities of an epic hero and our definition of a modern hero.  **Then write an informational essay (report) that explains whether Beowulf is an epic hero or a modern hero--or both.**

**Option #2**

Review the seven qualities of an epic hero and our definition of a modern hero. **Pick a different character or person (not Beowulf) and explain how she/he is an epic or a modern hero--or both.**

**Options #3 Extension: Persuasive Essay (only with permission)**

**Pick two characters/people from the texts you’ve read. Who is the better hero--modern or epic--and why?**

**Option #4 Extension: Persuasive Essay (only with permission)**

**Convince me that Beowulf is not a hero at all.**

Introduction:

* Make sure your reader is prepared to understand your essay. Explain the definitions of epic and/or modern heroes, and summarize who the character/person you’re writing about is.
* Finish the introduction with a thesis statement that answers one of the prompts. The more specific your thesis/focus statement, the easier it will be to organize and stay focused.

Body Paragraphs:

* You must have ***at least*** two body paragraphs that each focus on a different supporting reason or argument. (i.e different reasons or ways Beowulf fits the definition of an epic hero, or different reasons this person is a modern hero.)
* Begin each body paragraph with a topic sentence that makes the focus of that paragraph clear. (i.e. Beowulf is an epic hero because he is a great warrior, capable .)
* You must use specific evidence--including ***at least*** two quotes--to support your thesis/focus statement.
* DO NOT try to address every single part of the definitions in great detail or in their own paragraph. Trying to do so might cause you to either repeat yourself or write a single sentence paragraph! Instead choose to focus on the parts of the definition that best fit your thesis.
* Don’t be afraid to address any ways in which Beowulf or this character does not fit the definition of an epic/modern hero. That can be part of your thesis/focus too!

Conclusion:

* Restate your thesis and summarize your points--briefly.
* Includes a “so what.” Why does this matter in our own lives?

Suggestions for organization:

* Use transitions to move between details and between paragraphs. Try not to start two sentences in a row the same way.
* You might try combining some parts of the definition into a single paragraph. For example, if one paragraph focuses on how a character is “larger than life” you might be able to discuss at the same time how the character fights a supernatural enemy or is admired for a great achievement.
* You might be able to organize the essay by achievements. For example, when Beowulf defeats Grendel, what parts of the definition does he fit? When he fights Grendel’s mother, does he still fit the definition? How so?
* Some parts of the definition might get more than one paragraph. For example, does Beowulf have more than one great achievement or more than one way he is “larger than life”?

**Seven Common Qualities of an Epic Hero**

1. Noble Birth

* Most epic heroes will have an above average station in life.
* They will be kings, princes, or nobles of some sort, or they may be a child of a god or goddess.
* Commoners usually do not become epic heroes.

2. “Larger Than Life”

* The hero is capable of great deeds (acts) of courage and strength well beyond what the average person can do.
* The hero has almost superhuman traits. S/he is braver, stronger, cleverer, etc., than the average person.
* Often the hero is also a great warrior who spends much time at war or in combat.
* The hero embodies the traits his/her culture valued.
* However, s/he does not have to be perfect or even “good.”

3. Admired for Great Achievements or Affected by Grand Events

* The hero often undertakes a journey or quest to accomplish something important to him/herself or his/her society.
* The hero accomplishes tasks and deeds the average person cannot.

4. Travels Over a Vast Setting

* Epic heroes do not live out their entire lives in their homes! They travel to different areas or countries to accomplish their goals.
* The hero’s actions aren’t selfish because s/he is also helping a different country or people.
* Traveling over a vast setting also causes the hero’s fame to spread.

5. Humility

* Even though the hero is recognized and admired for his/her deeds, s/he is not in it for “bragging rights.”
* The hero acts because s/he is simply doing what s/he thinks needs to be done.
* The hero may be rewarded and receive fame and fortune, but that is not the hero’s primary motivation.

6. Faces Supernatural Foes and/ or Receives Supernatural Help

* Heroes may get help from a god or goddess, or battle a superhuman enemy.
* The hero is “epic” because s/he is fighting something the average person cannot defeat.

7. Lives on After Death

* The hero is remembered for his/her great deeds even after death.

**See the board for our definition of a modern hero.**