Beowulf Study Guide:

1. What makes a epic poem a legendary story? Long, fictitious, orally passed down, elevated language

2. List the four traits of an epic hero: boastful self-confidence, victories in battle, feats of strength, uphold the values of culture (loyalty, honor, courage, etc.)

3. List the qualities of the oral tradition: spoken not written, passed from generation to generation, caesuras and kennings aid in remembering

4. Who is the author of Beowulf? unknown

5. Why does Beowulf boast to Hrothgar and before each fight? Boastful self-confidence; Beowulf is an Epic Hero, and will therefore follow that pattern of boasting

6. Characters and objects: Describe the characters and their role in the story:
   a. Beowulf:
      Epic Hero, eventual king of the Geats
   b. King Hrothgar:
      King of the Danes, ruler of Herot
   c. King Higlac:
      Beowulf’s uncle, king of the Geats
   d. Geats
      Beowulf’s people and Higlac’s followers; terrorized by the dragon
   e. Danes:
      Hrothgar’s people, terrorized by Grendel and his mother
   f. Edgetho:
      Beowulf’s father, warrior
   g. Grendel:
      First villain of the poem, descendant of Cain; attacks Herot over twelve years, killed by Beowulf
   h. Unferth:
      Challenges Beowulf, claiming Beowulf cannot defeat Grendel
   i. Grendel’s Mother:
      Monster and mother of a monster, attacks Herot, killed by Beowulf
   j. Dragon:
      Final monster, attacks Geats, killed by Beowulf, kills Beowulf
   k. Wiglaf:
      Follower and successor of Beowulf
   l. Brecca:
      Friend of Beowulf, opponent in swimming competition
   m. Hrunting:
      Beowulf’s magic sword, fails to kill Grendel’s mother
   n. Herot:
      Home of Hrothgar, terrorized by Grendel and his mother

7. How does Beowulf fight each of these characters? What is used to kill each one? What is his motivation for each battle? What trophy does he get from each one?
   a. Grendel:
      i. Kill: arm ripped off by Beowulf
      ii. Fight: hand-to-hand combat
iii. Motivation: Grendel attacks Herot, Beowulf defends it
iv. Trophy: Grendel’s arm and (eventually) head

b. Grendel’s Mother:
   i. Kill: Beheaded
   ii. Fight: Weapons (dagger and sword)
   iii. Motivation: GM attacks Herot to avenge Grendel’s death
   iv. Trophy: her head

c. The Dragon:
   i. Kill: stabbed by Beowulf and Wiglaf
   ii. Fight: sword/shield and fire
   iii. Motivation: Dragon attacks Geatland because a cup had been stolen from its horde
   iv. Trophy: Dragon’s gold/ treasure

8. In the chart below, list some examples from instances of each religion from the story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Paganism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Almighty God”</td>
<td>Mention of “heathen” rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Heaven”</td>
<td>References to other gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions of Cain</td>
<td>Desire to be remembered and achieve eternal life through honor (tower tomb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions of Hell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Why is there a mix of religions in this text?
   Pagan story written down and influenced by Christian scribes.

10. There are two biblical allusions repeated in the story. List them and describe each allusion:
   - Cain- Grendel is descended from Cain—makes him evil
   - Almighty God—grants protection to Hrothgar

11. Describe Grendel. How is he impulsive? How do you know?
   He doesn’t have community and therefore attacks Herot multiple times.

12. How does Beowulf respond to Unferth’s challenge?
   He tells him the “true” story, shutting down any challenge to his abilities as a hero.

13. What protects BW in the fight with Grendel's mother?
   His chainmail shirt

14. Why is Wiglaf honorable? How does Beowulf reward him?
   Wiglaf aided BW in his fight with the dragon instead of fleeing like the other Geats. BW rewards him by making Wiglaf his successor and giving him his armor.

15. How is Beowulf buried?
   Buried on a cliff over the water in a tomb that is made into a tower

16. What is ironic about the tower that is built for Beowulf’s remains?
   Beowulf has been cremated, so the tower holds no real remains and memorializes one who no longer exists.

17. What is done with his treasure?
   It is buried with BW, since Wiglaf believes the Geats are not worthy of it.
18. Define alliteration:
Repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of a word

19. Define assonance:
Repetition of a vowel sound anywhere in a word

20. Define caesura:
The pause in the middle of a line of Anglo-Saxon poetry, used to show the speaker where to breathe

21. Define kenning:
A two-word phrase used to replace a single word in a more poetic manner

22. List and label 5 different kennings in the text:
- “mankind’s enemy” - Grendel
- “ring-giver” - king/liege lord
- “sea-road” - ocean
- “hell’s captive” - Grendel
- “water-witch” - Grendel’s mother
- “graybeards” - old men
- “Edgetho’s son” - Beowulf

23. Describe the mood/tone for each section that we read:
- “Wrath of Grendel” - angry, isolated, outsider
- “Coming of Beowulf” - confident, proud
- “Battle with Grendel” - intense, suspenseful, victorious
- “Monster’s Lair” - suspenseful, tense, fearful
- “Battle with Grendel’s Mother” - intense, suspenseful, victorious
- “Last Battle” - intense, suspenseful, sorrowful
- “Spoils” and “Farewell” - mournful

24. Make a list of themes for each section that we read:
- Cycle of violence
- Clash between good and evil - good wins
- Epic hero → violence

25. Does Beowulf seek glory and fame throughout the text? Use examples to support your answer:
He seeks glory through his battles. That is why he fights so many that are not really his to fight (like Grendel and his mother). He also fights a dragon in his old age for the glory of the fight, even if it leads to his death. He seeks to be remembered through his glory from his heroic acts.