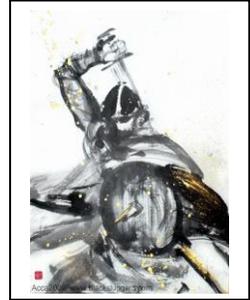


## English 137: Essay #1

**Assignment:** Respond to one of the topics below and write an analytic essay that makes an argument about one or two of the major works we have read so far. Strive for a well-organized, well-supported essay that gives thoughtful attention to the implications of textual details.

**1. The Medieval Hero:** Analyze the heroism of the main character in either or both stories. You might build upon Joseph Campbell's general concepts about heroism and argue whether or not Beowulf (and/or Sir Gawain) is a spiritual hero. In studying the virtues of the hero, you should also point out the cultural ideals those virtues imply. You will also want to consider how the narrator may add complexity to your assessment of heroism. Another approach to this topic is to compare and contrast Beowulf and Sir Gawain to make an argument about what their differences suggest about the cultures writing about them.



**2. The Role of Women:** Analyze the role of women in either or both poems. It may be interesting to note that both heroes, Beowulf and Sir Gawain, are challenged by powerful women. Look at how one female character, or a couple or a few female characters are portrayed and make an argument about what their depiction suggests about their culture's values. It will help to consider whether those characters are portrayed in a negative or positive light (or some shade in between) and to explain how those impressions are conveyed to the reader, and why.



**Note:** If you are interested in developing ideas on another topic, please check with me.

**Main Objectives:** This assignment is designed to encourage you to think more critically about our readings and to communicate your insights in an effective and credible manner. For this assignment, your key goals are these:

- Make a clear and direct argument. Provide a thesis statement (an arguable claim) in your introduction.
- Support your argument with developed body paragraphs that draw out the implications of textual details.
- Organize your argument by creating assertive topic sentences, unified paragraphs, and smooth transitions.
- Establish credibility by presenting a convincing and professional-looking paper. Quote and cite according to MLA format, and carefully proofread your essay.
  
- Avoid plagiarism; essays will need to be submitted to turnitin.com.

**Grading Criteria:** Papers will be evaluated upon the effectiveness and clarity with which they address the essay topics and meet the stated objectives of the assignment. More specifically, papers will also be evaluated according to a detailed grading rubric posted on our class website.

**Percentage of Course Grade:** 15%

**Format:** 5-6 complete pages, MLA style, typed, double spaced.

**Due Date:** Please see the Course Reading and Assignment Schedule.

### **The Following Resources Are Available on Our Class Website:**

- My Correction Symbols linked to writing tips from various online resources
- MLA Format Tutorial (YouTube)
- Purdue OWL Online Writing Lab, MLA Format
- Avoiding Plagiarism, The Writing Center at UNC
- MLA Style (Bedford/St. Martin's)
- Citation Builder, MLA Format Tool (UNC)
- Avoiding Dropped Quotes

### **The Anglo-Saxon Age**

- Resources for the study of *Beowulf* (Araby Greene)
- Interactive illustration and pdf file of J. Campbell's stages of the Hero's Journey (UC Berkeley)
- Quotations about Heroism from Joseph Campbell's interview with Bill Moyers

### **The Middle English Period**

- Resources for studying *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Luminarium)
- Chivalry and Courtly Love (David L. Simpson, DePaul University)
- Morgan le Faye: Texts and Images and background information (U of Rochester)
- **These books are available on reserve at the East Campus Library:**
  - Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*
  - *The Anglo-Saxons*
  - *Culture in Early Anglo-Saxon England*
  - *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
  - *Critical Studies of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*