

## Reading Response Prompts:

1. Compare and contrast Beowulf with absolutely any other hero (fictional or not, and found at any time in history). What are some of the heroes' traits and what might they suggest about the conditions and/or values of their societies?
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2. Choose one:

- A. In your own words, sum up Joseph Campbell's key points with regard to what he calls "The Hero's Journey." What do you think about Campbell's psychological and symbolic approach to interpreting mythic tales of adventure?
  - B. Suppose someone said this: "Are you kidding? There isn't really a dragon and there isn't really any cursed treasure in *Beowulf*--those things are just metaphors! Why get caught up in the make-believe parts? You've got to go beyond those to get to the point of the story--those made-up things are just sorts of symbols meant to represent deeper feelings, concerns, and morals." Using this line of thinking, explain how some extraordinary or supernatural part of *Beowulf* might signify something deeper and might resonate with most anyone.
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3. Choose one:

- A. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is told as a third-person narrative, not as a first-person narrative. The difference is that a third-person narrative presents the main character (the protagonist) to us in the words of a narrator rather than from the words of the main character himself. That is to say, the story contains descriptions such as "Sir Gawain did this" or "Sir Gawain said that," but it's not as if the character Gawain himself is telling everything from his perspective. Of course, sometimes Gawain speaks in the story, but he does not get to tell the story.

Prompt: Use this journal entry to try to get into the mind of the character. Be imaginative and creative. Pretend you are Gawain writing in a private journal while you are on your adventure. As a knight, Gawain is expected to present a courtly image of himself to all around him, but in your journal entry you can put down whatever thoughts Gawain might have absolute frankness and honesty. Write in response to any part or parts of the story you wish, but do it as if you were Gawain just being himself.

- B. Find a passage in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that you find striking, interesting, or noteworthy for some reason. Think of a passage as being anywhere from about five to fifteen lines. Write out the passage (though the passage doesn't count toward the required

length of your journal), and then comment on what captures your interest in this part of the text.

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4. Consider the following remarks and then choose one writing prompt on Chaucer:

To many readers, the great thing about Chaucer is his ability to portray characters without seeming too heavy-handed or judgmental. Careful readers pick up on little “telling details” dropped like hints throughout his text, and these details are “telling” insofar as they suggest a lot, for Chaucer’s art lies more in showing than really telling; in other words, the message of his text tends to be implicit rather than explicit, hinted at rather than made obvious. He has a close eye for observation, but he tends to refrain from editorializing, leaving readers with the pleasure to put things together for themselves.

- A. Pick a character Chaucer describes in “The General Prologue,” and explain how Chaucer sends readers a message about that character without saying things too explicitly.
  - B. Pretend you are Chaucer but without his style. Instead reserving judgment and using the light touch of implication, be very judgmental and be heavy handed in letting readers know exactly what Chaucer seems to be saying about any one character in “The General Prologue.” You don’t need to write in poetic form (but you could if you want to); write in any form you’d like just so long as you speak openly about one character, holding nothing back, being as frank and judgmental as possible.
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5. Choose one:

- A. Queen Elizabeth was imprisoned by her half sister Queen Mary when Elizabeth refused to deny her protestant faith. Would you have treated Elizabeth the same if you had been in Queen Mary's shoes? Explain why or why not.
  - B. What attitude comes across in Elizabeth’s 1571 poem “The doubt of future foes” (see pg. 758 and see background on pg. 749-750), and what parts in the poem convey that attitude? Also, how does the picture of Queen Elizabeth on the cover of *The Norton Anthology* match (or not match) in some ways with impressions her poem gives?
  - C. Sir Walter Raleigh was a lot of things, a privateer being one of them. As such, he would have kept a log book describing what he was doing and where. Write what you imagine would be a log book entry for a typical day of his as a privateer.
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6. Choose one:

- A. How does Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* compare and contrast with Petrarch's works?
- B. Write your own sonnet to Stella or Astrophil.

----- **Set One Ends Here & Set Two Begins** -----

7. Choose one:

- A. William Shakespeare's plays are often very poetical in nature, utilizing the same literary techniques he used in his sonnets, such as iambic pentameter. Pick a section from *King Lear* that you enjoyed and describe any of the literary techniques you observe.
- B. Recount a time of betrayal in your life. How did it make you feel? Compare your situation with King Lear's.
- C. There are many cases of deception, dishonesty, and disloyalty throughout the play. Which betrayal do you believe to be the wickedest? Why?

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8. Choose one:

- A. Donne was a man of juxtaposition and many talents. Discuss how various works of his reflect this.
- B. Write a short creative piece utilizing the literary device known as conceit. You can ignore rhyme and meter if you'd like to focus more on the use of the device.

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9. Herrick was a royalist and a Cavalier poet; he is also considered one of the "Sons of Ben" (admirers of Ben Jonson). According to *The Norton Anthology*, many of Herrick's poems depict matters that "were at the center of the culture wars between royalists and Puritans" (1756). Read "Literature and Culture: 1640-60" on pages 1364-1365, and explain this "culture war." Then, point out a couple of examples from the poems that serve well to illustrate this controversy.

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10. For many modern readers, Milton's *Paradise Lost* isn't exactly at the top of their must-read list; even so, what aspects of the poem might have made it a sort of block buster in its day?

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11. Choose one:

- A. How does “Mac Flecknoe” qualify as a satire? Give examples.
- B. Write your own satirical poem. Focus on a well-known celebrity or political figure. Write at least 18 lines and use "heroic couplets."

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12. Describe something in particular that Pope appears to be satirizing or having fun with in the poem, and quote a passage from the text (perhaps a couplet or perhaps several lines) as support. When quoting a passage as support, also pick out at least one specific word, image, and/or poetic device that you think enhances the effect of that passage and explain what it adds to the poem.

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13. Choose one:

- A. Gray writes in an elegiac and nostalgic mode. He writes of loss. Write a poem about Modesto (or some town or spot nearby) and try to imitate his style and sense of loss. The poem should be at least twelve lines.
  - B. Gray and Goldsmith express some similar key ideas in their poems. What’s one similar interest of theirs that you noticed? Explain it and identify at least one example in each poem to illustrate that point of common interest.
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