

Boast like Beowulf!

Beowulf had no shame about boasting. In fact, the Anglo-Saxons warriors saw nothing wrong with letting the world know who they were, who their noble parents were, what great feats they had accomplished, and what they planned to do next. This boasting was perfectly polite, even expected. So get ready to do some chest thumping, Anglo-Saxon style!

Excerpt from *Beowulf*:

“Hail! King Hrothgar! I am Hygelac’s thane,
Hygelac’s kinsman. Many a deed
Of honor and daring I’ve done in my youth...
The best of my people, prudent and brave,
Urged me, King Hrothgar, to seek you out;
They had in remembrance my courage and might.
Many had seen me come safe from the conflict,
Bloody from battle; five foes I bound
Of the giant kindred, and crushed their clan...
And now with Grendel, the fearful fiend,
Single-handed I’ll settle the strife.



Assignment

Your assignment is to write a formal boast about yourself in 12-15 lines. Tell us your deeds, who your daddy/mama are, what you plan to do, and how you’re not gonna’ take nothing from nobody. Your accomplishments may be academic, athletic, musical, social, artistic, etc. Lay aside your humility! Remember, you’ll be applying for college or a job and may need to do a bit of boasting.

Be creative! Include your genealogy, your acts of courage, your victories over enemies, and any other achievements and awards. Punctuate your poem. To end your boast, state your next great act.

Type your boast: double-spaced, 1” margins, 12 point Times New Roman (or similar font), black text, and title. You will write your name ON THE BACK only—create a **kenning** to rename yourself in your first line.

Content Requirements:

Your boast must show your understanding of Anglo-Saxon poetry by imitating its structure and style:

- No end rhyme!
- Caesuras
- **Heavy (3 or more words per example)** alliteration throughout poem: include at least **five** (5) alliterative phrases (repeated initial consonant sound): “Until a **flood swept** us apart; / The **frozen sea surged** around me . . .” (278-79)
- Epic diction and style: use elevated word choices—no slang; tell your story with style! (grand manner)

- Original kennings: Include **at least three (3)** identifiable kennings (compound expressions with metaphorical meaning: oar-steed = ship; whale-road = ocean; death-dealer = sword; brain-basher=club, etc.

Use your responses to the questions about your name, etc. that you wrote for your boast material!

***Example:** Please note that this example was written when he was on The Apprentice, long before he became president.*

I, Donald of Trump, from the land of the green-god
 High on the Hudson, son of a robber
 Slumlord, generous to all his thanes,
 Rewarding them lavishly with subway tokens
 Have come here to wipe out the weak
 And establish high halls of gold.
 I have conquered condos and toppled towers,
 Erected edifices by shining seas.
 Now I will conquer the City of Wind
 I will smite descendants of Capone,
 And start a new world order
 With apprentices anew who grovel before
 My cobra words: "Fie on you!
 You're fired!"

Analysis: Using the following highlighter key, identify the Anglo-Saxon elements in this original poem.

Green = kennings

Yellow = heavy alliteration

Blue = stressed beats and caesuras

** Please note that the examples of alliteration in the poem above are insufficient to meet the Anglo-Saxon standard. For each example of alliteration you write, make sure the sound is repeated at least three times in close succession. **

Soources: Compiled and edited from different online iterations of the same assignment, the original concept credited only at <http://www.gradinggirl.com/archives/tag/anglo-saxon-boasts> to Jeffrey Leatham. Original Trump boast (above) comes from an undocumented online Google doc. Specific questions for prewriting are my own.

Epic Boast Peer Review

Writer's Name: _____

Evaluator's Name: _____

Instructions: Write all of your responses and comments on this sheet; do NOT write on the boast itself! Please analyze the Epic Boast before you carefully and answer the following questions, knowing that your review can greatly assist this writer in the editing process. Thank you!

Form/Structure:

1. Does this work fulfill the required number of lines (min. 12-15)? _____ Is it typed _____ and double-spaced? _____
2. Do the lines rhyme at the ends? _____
3. Check off each element that appears in the boast:
 - a. _____ Self-identification _____ Kenning/s?
 - b. _____ Parentage/ancestry _____ Kenning/s?
 - c. _____ Bravery _____ Concrete example/specific event?
 - d. _____ Statements of Belief (2). _____ Concrete example for each one?
 - e. _____ Amazing past feats, bragging about what the speaker has done (at least 3)
 - f. _____ Achievements to come
4. Scan each of the lines (identify stressed beats). Identify proper caesura format in each line. List the numbers of any lines that have fewer or more than two stressed beats on each side of the caesura.
Ex. "Bloody from battle; five foes I bound"

Content/Style:

5. Identify every original kenning in this poem by writing it out and documenting the (line number/s) after:
Ex. "I brought my death-dealer down upon his brow" (12).
6. Write the line numbers where you find heavy use of alliteration (several repetitions of the same sound—must have at least three repetitions of the sound in close succession):
Ex. "Hail! King Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's thane, / Hygelac's kinsman" (127-8)
7. Does this boast use the elevated diction of epic language? Write any words below that are informal or slang, along with their line numbers:
8. Your favorite line:
Why?

Epic Boast

Name: _____ Pd. _____

GRADING RUBRIC:

Follows the given content structure and length _____/30

Contains at least three well-written original kennings _____/15

Contains at least five examples of heavy alliteration _____/20

Includes a caesura and four stressed beats in almost every line _____/15

Written in Anglo Saxon epic style with elevated diction _____/10

Typed and properly formatted _____/10

Total Score: _____/ 100