

Name _____

Senior Honors English
Beowulf and Grendel
Writing Assignment

Comparison/Contrast Essay

Directions: Now that we have completed reading *Grendel*, you will need to begin an analysis of this novel in relationship to the original epic poem. Your task is to compare and contrast this novel with the epic poem, *Beowulf*. Your essay should have a clear thesis, well-developed paragraphs, carefully chosen concrete details, insightful commentary, and a strong conclusion. As you craft this essay, consider the following layers of complexity that were added to the novel, *Grendel*:

- the representation of the various philosophies in the novel;
- the pairing of the zodiac/astrological symbols in the novel;
- the use of first-person narration;
- the development of Grendel as a sentient being.

Your essay should be a minimum of three pages. You will want to consider using either the point-by-point method or the block method for this essay. (See the back of this paper.)

Prepare a rough draft of your essay first. The rough draft is due on _____. As you write, consider the following elements.

Title:

Your paper should have a title that reflects the content of the paper. Do not simply state your title as *Grendel* or *Beowulf*. You should be more creative than this.

Introduction:

This paragraph should clearly state your thesis. In the introduction you should name the author of *Grendel* (John Gardner) and the epic poem, *Beowulf*. Comment on the bodies of work and then offer the thesis. **Your thesis should indicate the effect that was created by John Gardner's use of his unique structure and its expansion of the epic's traditional story line.**

Body paragraphs:

These paragraphs should be developed as indicated in your leading ideas from your introduction. You may follow the chunk writing format if you are comfortable with it, but I anticipate that most of you know the suggested ratio of CD to CM and will not need such a specific plan for the essay. The body paragraphs, however, will need to include both concrete details and commentary. Any essay of literary analysis needs both. Rather than paraphrase quotations, you should use the actual words (quotes), giving your point more emphasis and making a stronger paper. Integrate these into your writing. When citing lines from the epic poem use line numbers. When citing passages from the novel use page numbers.

Create smooth transitions between paragraphs. Be mindful of using a third person voice in a paper of literary analysis; do not use first or second person.

Conclusion:

This should be three to five sentences that "echo" the thesis without repeating it. Draw all of your points into a tight, final comment. Do not use the phrases "in conclusion," "to summarize," or any other such indicator. A strong conclusion should give a finished, insightful feeling to the paper.

Two methods: Block (one side at a time) OR Point by Point

Block

- Works well for short papers.
- Divide the paper in half, first discussing one work and then the other.
- Make sure the second part combines elements of the discussion points raised in the previous paragraph(s) related to both literary works, without being repetitive. If the two literary works were treated entirely separately, then the discussion would be merely parallel rather than integrated.
- If you use the block method, make sure to follow the same order of items being compared or contrasted.
- End with a conclusion that emphasizes the greatest similarity or difference.

Point by Point

- Works well for longer papers.
- This method creates a more integrated structure that discusses both works.
- Using point by point you may discuss any number of topics without requiring that your reader recall what you said in the previous block (as in the block method).
- End by emphasizing the overall picture of the most important point of comparison or contrast.

Here is another way to view the different approaches. Consider the following example.

BLOCK Construction

Introduction + Thesis

TS – 1st *Grendel* the novel

CD + CM/CM – point of view

CD + CM/CM - structure

CS

TS – 2nd *Beowulf* the epic poem

CD + CM/CM – point of view

CD + CM/CM - structure

CS

Conclusion

POINT-BY-POINT Construction

Introduction + Thesis

TS – Point of view or structure

CD + CM/CM - *Grendel*

CD + CM/CM - *Beowulf*

CS

TS – Point of view or structure

CD + CM/CM - *Grendel*

CD + CM/CM - *Beowulf*

CS

Conclusion

Getting started:

Use an outline, list, or Venn Diagram to identify which elements you will consider.

For either format remember the following:

- While you are expected to “weave” your concrete details and commentary, you must be mindful of the 1:2 ratio of CD:CM.
- Concrete details must include quotations with citations; do not rely on paraphrasing. The result is lack of clarity and weak writing.