

Logan Shackelford: (9th Grade: Fostoria, Ohio)
Level III Third Place Winner
Letter to David Wright concerning his edition of *Beowulf*

Dear David Wright:

If I could go to the times of the Vikings, I would try to be as honorable as Beowulf, how he was to his people, protected his allies, fought with honor: Beowulf makes me want to stand against evil. I want to fight for the good of man, have courage and know what is right and what is wrong.

Before I began reading your book, I thought maybe you would need to be some blessed man to stand up against evil, have some power granted by God, have no fears or have worries like a common man. I thought you needed to be part godly to have brave acts such as Beowulf, have to have the strength our hero, or have courage that cannot be broken by anything. Like Beowulf not running away from the dragon, but instead charging into the fire of the beast. Before I read your book, I would have been one of the princes who ran away from the dragon into the woods; I would be the one hiding from Grendel.

I could not take the role of Beowulf before the book; I would have lost honor. In the past, I took challenges that I knew would not be difficult, I wouldn't challenge myself. I wouldn't think to myself what I might gain from the challenge; I thought only how difficult this task was going to be. I also thought that someone else would rise to the challenge; I didn't see a reason to get involved. In the book I would be the man hoping for someone to come and kill Grendel, I would not rise to the task for fear of my life.

As I started to read that entire thought slowly faded away, I still would not be Beowulf but I would be one of the crewmembers on the voyage to fight with Beowulf against Grendel. I would not stand beside Beowulf in the fight though; I would stand behind or in the middle. I believe I would get more courage from the front but I'm sure I would not move up to fight Grendel. As I continued the book, I was amazed how Beowulf accomplished many great feats, such as fully removing the arm of Grendel and how he brought the beast down with his own hands, no blades were used. My view on where I would stand next to Beowulf in battle rose as he talked King Hrothgar into helping him take action against Grendel's mother, when she killed the court.

My view on honor also changed as I read the book. Before, I had a sense of honor but the honor in my sense was not needed in my life. I learned that honor in my life is still important for I need honor so I can help people when needed. The next thing to change was my challenges; I would gain nothing from easy challenges, no gaining of skills, and no sense of accomplishment. It changed because I wanted more difficult challenges to see where my level of particular skill is at. I would also gain a sense of accomplishment, and if the challenge failed then I would try to pass the challenge. I also accepted that you can't always change everything. But my maturity rose by the book because you never heard Beowulf boast of his strength and accomplishments, he never said anything bad, he showed deference and respect to kings, and I thought to myself, I can be just as courageous and honorable as he is.

By the end of your book, I found myself right beside Beowulf in battle. No matter how much the odds were stacked up against us, I would fight with him. Similar to Wiglaf who had a sudden surge of courage and loyalty when he remembered what Beowulf did: he charged right

into battle against the dragon—I would do that! Your book made me think that I can have courage like Wiglaf, honor like Beowulf, and, if faced with a challenge or change, I would lead the charge.

Sincerely,

Logan Shackelford