**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.

**Assignment:** Write a formal boast about yourself. A rough draft and final copy are required. You will perform your boast for the class. You may bring props and costumes that you can put on in class.

**Guidelines:** Your boast must show your understanding of Anglo-Saxon poetry by following the Anglo-Saxon poetic format:

* Self-identification (I am \_\_\_\_\_\_, daughter/son of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)
* Your immediate ancestry and something about your lineage (father/mother)
* Your bravery (not going to take anything from anybody)
* Your beliefs (honor, glory, loyalty, honesty, decency, etc.)
* Boasts of at least 3 past achievements (academic, athletic, musical, social, artistic, complete lies, etc.)
* Boast of achievements to come (you can make these as outlandish as you like)
* Include at least 3 identifiable kennings (compound expression w/ metaphorical meaning: oar-steed = ship; whale-road = ocean)
* Include at least 3 alliterative phrases (repeated first consonant sound: monster-mashing, death-dealer; brain-basher)
* Underline the kennings once and the alliterative phrases twice.
* 20-25 lines – approximate verse form (no need to rhyme)

**Here’s an example from an anonymous senior:**

I am Tamara, the only descendant

of the Great Grammar Goddess and

the Baron of Banking. Baking every

snowfall has made me marvelous. I

prepare precise parcels for all I love.

Gift giving, I got it from Grandma,

She slaved away, Sundays mostly, to

be sure we were content. I, the sweet-

toothed teenager, was tempted by the

luscious idea of baking. I started off

small, Saturdays with mom. Soon enough

the Matron of Molasses mounds made me

move on. Dad, devourer of my developments,

decided my delicacies were delectable.

The edges brown & crispy, while the inside

fluffy and flavorful. Fresh out of the oven

these savory temptations melt in mouths.

Cookies, the sweetest sin, are what I’ve

come to love. But now that I have a new

tasty trial, the temptations of a better life

have haunted me. I plan to provide plenty

of cookies for all. The next Martha Stewart,

that’s who I’ll be! I’ll sneak up on them all,

Kevin’s cupcakes will be no competition.

I’ll beat those Pepperidge Farm people next.

Then when she least expects it, I’ll take

on Betty Crocker, the mother of all good cookies.

The doughboy of Pillsbury will be no match for me!

Finally I’ll take on that perfectionist

criminal herself. Martha won’t know what hit her.

My cookies and treats will rock this world! No

one will stop me! Stealth is my secret weapon.

Slowly their businesses will suffer. Until at last

there is one ruler left – me.

**Here’s one of Beowulf’s boasts:**

“Greetings to Hrothgar. I am Hygelac’s kinsman,

one of his hall-troop. When I was younger,

I had great triumphs. Then news of Grendel,

hard to ignore, reached me at home:

sailors brought stories of the plight you suffer

in this legendary hall, how it lies deserted,

empty and useless once the evening light

hides itself under heaven’s dome.

So every elder and experienced councilman

among my people supported my resolve

to come here to you, King Hrothgar,

because all knew of my awesome strength.

They had seen me boltered in the blood of enemies

when I battled and bound five beasts,

raided a troll-nest and in the night-sea

slaughtered sea-brutes. I have suffered extremes

and avenged the Geats (their enemies brought it

upon themselves, I devastated them).

Now I mean to be a match for Grendel,

settle the outcome in single combat.

And so, my request, O king of Bright-Danes,

dear prince of the Shieldings, friend of the people

and their ring of defence, my one request

is that you won’t refuse me, who have come this far,

the privilege of purifying Herot,

with my own men to help me, and nobody else.

I have heard moreover that the monster scorns

in his reckless way to use weapons;

therefore, to heighten Hygleac’s fame

and gladden his heart, I hereby renounce

sword and shelter of the broad shield,

the heavy war-board: hand-to-hand

is how it will be, a life-and-death

fight with the fiend. Whichever one death fells

must deem it a just judgement by God.

If Grendel wins, it will be a gruesome day;

he will glut himself on the Geats in the war-hall,

swoop without fear on that flower of manhood

as on others before. Then my face won’t be there

to be covered in death: he will carry my away

as he goes to ground, gorged and bloodied;

he will run gloating with my raw corpse

and feed on it alone, in a cruel frenzy,

fouling his moor-nest. No need then

to lament for long or lay out my body:

if the battle takes me, send back

this breast-webbing that Weland fashioned

and Hrethel gave me, to Lord Hygelac.

Fate goes ever as fate must.”