

BEOWULF

The text is an extract from the Anglo-Saxon epic poem Beowulf, composed along the 11th century by a single Christian author. The extract is made of a single section composed by 36 lines. From the very first line of the text, the reader is inserted into the situation and in the real theme of the extract. At a first reading, the text might seem simply a narrative of the events that occurred during the funeral of the hero. But if you focus on the rhetorical level you notice the alliteration of the sound "b" at the beginning of the words "built" and "Beowulf". The composer uses alliteration to better convey the atmosphere of the different moments of the funeral. In the 2nd line for example the short sounds in stacked and decked, give the reader the idea of some one who's gathering something. The true intention of the author is highlighted by the second and third lines where, thanks to the use of figures of sound such as anaphora and alliteration, the narrator begins to describe the characteristics of the hero, starting from the description of his funeral pyre and of the reactions of his companions to his death. Another feature of Beowulf that is highlighted here is his courage, witnessed by the objects and the swords that are piled up on the pyre where he will be burned; this second feature is underscored by the alliterative sound "h". The alliteration of the sound "sh" and the presence of a run-on-line tie instead the third line to the fourth noting again the strength of the hero. After exposing the main characteristics of the hero, the narrator focuses on the description of his social role and his relationship with his subjects / companions. In the following lines the author continues the narration of what happened at the funeral of Beowulf using alliteration to introduce turning on of the funeral pyre after the deposition of the body of the hero on it. Rhetorical figures of sound inserted for this purpose can be found at lines nine, ten and eleven. At line nine repeating the sound "b" for example "billowed" and "blaze". Continuing the reading extract the intelligent reader can see the development of a story inside the story, added by the narrator in order to remind the reader once again the high regard of Beowulf to his people: singing a woman describes her fears about Geat after the death of the hero, evoking terrifying images that refer to the warlike character of the society in which the poem is set. The last part of the extract is the description of the beliefs of the culture at the time of Beowulf about life after death.

