

Beowulf: Lost in Translation Questions

1. Compare the translations. What are the major differences that you see? The major similarities?
2. Burton Raffel translated the version in your textbook (p. 48, lines 381-393) in 1963. Compare this version with the others on the reverse.
3. Which translation do you think is most interesting/exciting/easy to understand/appealing?
4. What Anglo-Saxon literary devices that we've studied (kennings, caesuras, alliteration) appear? In which versions are these devices preserved?
5. Which Anglo-Saxon literary devices don't seem to translate well—in other words, they don't appear to be easy for translators to work into their versions of *Beowulf*? Speculate: why do you think this might be?
6. I included one prose translation of *Beowulf*, though many more exist. How do you think a prose translation differs from a poetic one? What qualities might be compromised in a prose translation?
7. What conclusions can you draw about the process of translation?
8. What would your advice be to translators (consider the following: What do they need to think about in order to produce a readable translation that is still faithful to the spirit of the poem? What should they avoid doing?)



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