

# **Student Essay on Kinship in Beowulf**

## **Kinship in Beowulf by Gareth Hinds**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Student Essay on Kinship in Beowulf.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Essay.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>

# Essay

E. Talbot Donaldson takes an interesting approach on the topic of Kinship. He says that the concept of wergild was an extremely valued thing. He says money had less significance than avenging the life of a man. He quotes Beowulf saying, "It is better for a man to avenge his friend than much mourn." He says that the purpose of the old tradition of marriages between royal families was to replace hostility with alliances. If this didn't happen then the need to take vengeance would create long-lasting feuds. He says that this aspect of doom is most intriguing to the reader. He also speaks of Hrothgar's inability to fight Grendel when he is terrorizing his people and how he is not criticized for it.

I agree with all of the things that this Yale, Columbia, and Indiana University professor has to say. His views are reasonable and I found that when reading Beowulf, there seemed to be a very strong sense of wergild. His opinion of why royal marriages were thought of is very just because this concept of wergild could have a never-ending story, leaving bloodshed upon death upon death. He also brings up a good point about Hrothgar. I don't understand why his people did not criticize him for not doing something about Grendel. Grendel had been disturbing his kingdom for 12 years before he even got help from an outside force. The only reason I could think of is if Hrothgar had been an extraordinarily good king for the time before Grendel. If his people had that much respect for him that they would not condemn him for not doing anything.