HCTA Models

This model provides two strong block quote examples. For your HCTA, you should include three strong block quotes and analytical paragraphs. Remember, these are only models; your assignment should have original analysis.

Theme: Being a hero means facing obstacles others have failed to conquer.

Quote 1:

No one knows its bottom,
No wisdom reaches such depths. A deer,
Hunted through the woods by packs of hounds,
A stag with great horns, though driven through the forest
From faraway places, prefers to die
On those shores, refuses to save its life
In that water. It isn’t far, nor is it
A pleasant spot! When the wind stirs
And storms, waves splash toward the sky,
As dark as the air, as black as the rain
That the heavens weep. Our only help,
Again, lies with you. Grendel’s mother
Is hidden in her terrible home, in a place
You’ve not seen. Seek it, if you dare! (Beowulf 433-446)

Throughout the pages of Beowulf, the story-teller utilizes similes and personification to emphasize the dangers of the depths of the ocean that Beowulf volunteered to travel across to defeat Grendel’s mother—a mission no man has successfully accomplished. Regarding the
similes, Hrothgar describes the perilous environment of the ocean to be “as dark as the air” and “as black as the rain” (Beowulf 37-38). This description of the adventure Beowulf chose to embark on draws attention to the fact that, despite Hrothgar’s warnings of the imminent death that would meet Beowulf before he could reach the lair of Grendel’s mother, Beowulf chose to go through with his decision. This idea is further reinforced by the statement that the ocean compares to the rain “that the heavens weep” (Beowulf 437). Through the personification of heaven, the author is emphasizing the severity of the water’s dangers, again proving that Beowulf’s courage is what is driving him to complete the seemingly impossible task. Beowulf’s decision adds to his characterization as a hero by illustrating that he is willing to go to “such depths” that no man has succeeded in before (Beowulf 433). The similes and personification, cautioning travelers like Beowulf against the dangers of the ocean, reinforces the theme that Beowulf’s heroism is defined by his willingness to continue on despite the obstacles.

Quote 2:

Quickly, the dragon came at him, encouraged
As Beowulf fell back; its breath flared,
And he suffered, wrapped around in swirling Flames—a king, before, but now
A beaten warrior. None of his comrades Came to him, helped him, his brave and noble Followers; they ran for their lives, fled Deep in a wood. And only one of them Remained, stood there, miserable, remembering As a good man must, what kinship should mean. (Beowulf 687-696)
Towards the closing pages of *Beowulf*, strong imagery and a cliché emphasize the heroism of Wiglaf, a young warrior who stood by Beowulf’s side while others failed to do the same. Within the scene, imagery is present in the description of Beowulf’s suffering at the hands of the dragon, “wrapped around in swirling flames” (*Beowulf* 688). The imagery, in addition, played a role in emphasizing the cowardliness of Beowulf’s soldiers, who “fled deep in a wood” while only one person, Wiglaf, remained (*Beowulf* 690-691). The distressing images describe the dangerous situation, thereby emphasizing the consequences of abandoning Beowulf and the heroism that drove Wiglaf to stay. Other than the imagery, the evidence of a cliché in the passage also drove the reader’s attention to this abandonment when it was stated that the men “ran for their lives” (*Beowulf* 690). Interpreting the cliché literally, it is clear that the soldiers recognized they could not successfully defeat the dragon—and therefore ran to avoid being killed. Because Wiglaf stayed behind, he demonstrated the bravery and loyalty that the others failed to possess.

Through the use of imagery and cliché, Wiglaf is characterized as a hero in this scene by staying by Beowulf’s side and defeating the dragon while the rest of his troops fled; this heroism augments the theme by proving that he was able to do two things the others failed to: face the dragon alive, and—more importantly—maintain his loyalty to Beowulf.

**Works Cited**