

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

***Beowulf* Kennings Worksheet**

kenning - a figurative, often compound, and descriptive expression or metaphor used instead of a name (proper noun), a pronoun, or a common noun. Kennings are frequently found in Old English and Old Norse poetry. An oft-cited example is *storm of swords* for *battle*. (In the exemplar text of *Beowulf* under our study, Seamus Heaney often translates the kennings as hyphenated words or compound phrases, but not all kennings are rendered this way: some are simply similes or metaphors.)

All kennings are far more descriptive than the word they often replace, and, beyond attenuating the repetition of a character's name, they serve the purpose of making the language of a poem much more visual and immediate for a listener (or reader).

In *Beowulf*, an early example of a hyphenated (compound) kenning, on page 3, is "whale-road" = the ocean. An example of a kenning that more closely resembles a metaphor is also found on page 3: "Lord of Life" = God.

Instructions for this assignment: 1. Using the text of *Beowulf*, locate ten examples of kennings and write them next to the numbers below. 2. In a short phrase or sentence, tell me what each kenning is supposed to describe. Take note of the explanation above to help you identify the numerous examples of kennings.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.