

WRITING	STUDIO	THE "SUTTON HOO HELMET" EXERCISE	
		BUNTING CENTER	1401 MOUNT ROYAL AVENUE, BALTIMORE, MD 21217. (410)225-2418. WRITING@MICA.EDU
	MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART		4 FLOOR

The Sutton-Hoo Helmet Exercise

This is an exercise that Louise Martinez had her Art History classes do early in the semester to show them how obvious it is when one plagiarizes.

There are 3 parts.

- Part 1 is the "Research Sources" and part 2 is the "Sample Essay." Ms. Martinez would hand out these two parts, and have the students form small groups and find all the errors (focusing on problems with citation, but there are other problems with the essay as well.)
- The whole class would reassemble, and point out errors they found.
- At the end of the exercise, Ms. Martinez would hand out the third part, the "Corrected Sample Essay," so students could see one way of revising the essay to include proper citations.

One quibble I have is that the URL for the British Museum link is incomplete, and therefore less useful. A possible suggestion for insanely large URLs is to go to <http://www.tinyurl.com> and generate a smaller URL which will point to the long one.

RESEARCH SOURCES

thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compa....dex+is+\$=ENC13707&submit-button+summary:

The Sutton Hoo ship-burial was excavated in the spring and summer of 1939. Archaeologist Basil Brown was asked by a local landowner to investigate eighteen low grassy mounds. All but one had been looted in antiquity. In the largest mound Brown uncovered an undisturbed royal burial, the grave of an early seventh-century East Anglian King. Deeply buried beneath the mound lay the ghost of a thirty metre long ship. At its centre was a ruined burial chamber the size of a small room, built with a pitched roof, once hung with textiles. The burial showed the richness and complexity of Anglo-Saxon life, which until then had been thought to be inferior to life during the Roman occupation.

No trace of a body was found during the excavation, however, analyses of samples for residual phosphate (a material left behind even when a body has decayed away completely), taken in 1967 during the British Museum's excavations, support the idea that a body was originally placed in the burial chamber, but had totally decayed in the highly acidic conditions at the bottom of the ship. The burial also contained a leather purse with a jeweled lid that held a selected group of Merovingian coins. All of the coins were struck at different mints between AD 575 and AD 620. They provide a date after which the burial must have taken place. This in turn gives some clues as to which king of the East Angles may have been buried in this sumptuous grave. There are four kings who may have been buried here: Raedwald, Eothwald, and the co-regents Siegebert and Eric (all died between 625 and 637).

Beowulf, trans. Kevin Crossley-Holland, London: The Macmillan Co., 1968; lines 34-42;

...and then they laid their dear lord,
the giver of rings, deep within the ship
by the mast in majesty; many treasures
and adornments from far and wide were gathered there.
I never heard of a ship equipped
more handsomely with weapons and war-gear
swords and corselets; on his breast
lay countless treasures that were to travel far
with him to the waves' domain.

Robert Calkins, *Monuments of Medieval Art*, Ithica NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1979, pp 53-54.

Many of the resplendent artifacts from the period of barbarian migrations were found in graves. Burial practices varied widely. Often important chieftains and kings, elaborate artifacts, a full complement of weapons and armor were placed with the coffin, and mounds (*tumuli*) created over the graves. In northern countries royal persons might be buried in a ship beneath a *tumulus* in an area marked out with stones, or set adrift in a ship.

One of the most spectacular treasures was found in a combination ship-and-mound burial at Sutton Hoo. Many objects of personal adornment, weapons, insignia, and utensils were found in a burial chamber located amidships. A purse contained thirty-seven gold Merovingian coins, three unstruck blanks, and two ingots. There were therefore enough coins to serve as symbolic payment for the forty oarsmen that the ship would accommodate, and the two ingots would have served as payment for the two steersmen for the funereal nautical voyage. Since no body or certain evidence of cremation has been found at Sutton Hoo, some scholars have suggested this ship burial was a cenotaph or memorial.

Sample Essay

The “Sutton-Hoo helmet” dates from the seventh century CE. It was dug up from a Viking-type of ship that also contained many other items. These things were probably the belongings of some Anglo-Saxon who must have been wealthy and powerful to be able to own things made of gold, jewels, and complicated enamelwork. The question can be asked, why were the ship and these items buried long ago, and who might have owned them?

In 1939 archaeologists were digging up large mounds in the farmlands of East Anglia because they believed these could be the burial places of Anglo-Saxons and their treasures. In the biggest one they found this wooden ship that was ninety feet long. At its center was a ruined burial chamber the size of a small room, built with a pitched roof and hung with textiles. The ship contained weapons and armor, and many objects made of gold, jewels, or enamel, like belt buckles, purse covers, and clasps. A collection of coins were also found. These had dates on them from 575 to 620. because of this, the ship was dated to the 7th century. Everything else in the ship seemed to be of an expensive nature and probably owned by someone wealthy, possibly a king, and so money would not have been unusual to find buried in the ship. But the coins might have had another very interesting use. To pay the oarsmen and steersmen for a funeral voyage.

The Anglo-Saxons were seafaring warriors, so it makes sense that they would bury a king in a ship with his armor and possessions. It is known that in northern countries royal persons might be buried in a ship beneath a tumulus or set adrift in a ship equipped with grave goods. The famous poem Beowulf was written later than the date of Sutton-Hoo, but it described many of the Anglo-Saxon beliefs and culture, including burial. The poem describes the burial of Scyld, it says the people laid their dear lord deep within the ship, many treasures and adornments from far and wide were gathered there. I have never heard of a ship equipped more handsomely with weapons and war-gear, swords and corselets. Probably the people of Sutton-Hoo were honoring their dead king with riches, preparing him for his afterlife.

As to who was buried in the ship, no one has been able to say for sure. No body was found in the ship and due to that, some experts believe the boat was just a cenotaph. Others said there was a body but that it decayed. Analysis of samples for residual phosphates (a material left behind even when a body has completely decayed away) taken in 1967 during the British Museum’s excavations, support the idea that someone was once buried in it. So it seems likely that the ship was used to bury a person, and what it said in Beowulf tells us a similar fact. But they can’t decide exactly who was buried in this particular ship. During the range of dates of the coins, there were two Anglo-Saxon kings and two co-regents.

Corrected Sample Essay

[Note: the placement and style of footnotes here are one possible way of citing the research, but other methods and styles exist. You may use a method you have used previously, or consult Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art* (on reserve at Decker Circulation Desk) for the Chicago Manual Style, pp 245-253, and 207-210.]

The helmet found at Sutton Hoo dates from the seventh century CE. It was excavated from a Viking-style ship that also contained many other items. These objects belonged to an Anglo-Saxon who was wealthy and powerful, able to afford gold, jewels, and complicated enamelwork. The question can be asked, why were the ship and its treasures buried long ago, and who might have owned them?

In 1939 British archeologists investigated large mounds in the farmlands of East Anglia, believing that these could be the burial places of Anglo-Saxons and their treasures. In the largest mound they discovered a wooden ship that was ninety feet long. Although the ship was in a ruined condition, archeologists could still see one of its important features: a room-sized burial chamber with a pointed roof. This room had once been decorated with hanging textiles.¹ The ship contained weapons and armor as well as objects made of gold, jewels, or enamel. Among the treasures were belt buckles, purse covers, and clasps. The burial also contained a collection of coins. The dates on these coins ranged from 575 to 620 CE. Archeologists therefore dated the ship and its contents to the seventh century CE. It was not surprising to find coins among the ship's other valuable treasures, since the ship's owner was probably a king or some other wealthy person. The coins, however, might have had a very interesting use. They could have been used to pay the oarsmen and steersmen for a funeral voyage.²

The Anglo-Saxons were seafaring warriors, so it is logical that they would bury a king in a ship with his armor and possessions. Examples exist of royal burials in ships that were either buried beneath mounds or sent out to sea filled with grave goods.³ The poem *Beowulf* was written later than the time of the Sutton Hoo burial, but it describes many aspects of the Anglo-Saxon's beliefs and culture, including burial. The narrator of the poem tells of the burial of Scyld, a warlord: "The people laid their dear lord.../deep within the ship.../many treasures and adornments from far and wide were gathered there/I have never heard of a ship equipped more handsomely with weapons and war-gear, swords and corselets."⁴ Probably the people of Sutton Hoo were honoring their dead king with riches, preparing him for the afterlife.

It has not been possible to identify the person buried in the ship. Because no body was found in the ship, some experts believe the boat served as a cenotaph, a memorial that does not mark a grave.⁵ Others say the body that once existed has decayed. Studies done by the British Museum in 1967 found "residual phosphate (a material left behind even when a body has completely decayed away)."⁶ The finding supports the idea that someone was once buried in the ship, and the lines from *Beowulf* provide additional evidence for the ship-burial of kings. Archeologists unfortunately have not been able to discover this king's exact identity, since during the time-range of the dates on the coins, there were two Anglo-Saxon kings and two co-regents (kings ruling together).⁷

¹ The British Museum, [thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compana...dex+is+\\$+ENC13707&submit-button+summary](http://thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compana...dex+is+$+ENC13707&submit-button+summary), "The Sutton Hoo Ship," September 12, 2001.

² Robert Calkins, *Monuments of Medieval Art* (Ithaca, New York, and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p54.

³ Calkins, p53.

⁴ *Beowulf*, trans. Kevin Crossley-Holland (London: The Macmillan Co., 1968), lines 34-42

⁵ Calkins, p54.

⁶ The British Museum

⁷ The British Museum