Name Date

***from* Beowulf,** translated by Burton Raffel

**Reading Warm-up A**

*Read the following passage. Then, reread the passage and highlight important information throughout the article. Be sure to highlight only most important points. Use the area on the right to take notes, or to clarify the reading*

Mail is body armor made from chain links woven together to form a metal fabric. It is then fashioned into gloves, hoods, shirts, and leggings that cover the entire body from head to toe. From the time of the Roman con- quest until the mid-fourteenth century, mail was the best available defense against the sword and lance that domi- nated hand-to-hand combat.

The metal mesh allowed the warrior flexibility as he lifted his weapon or swayed to avoid an enemy’s blade. However, mail was not a protector from the piercing power of a crossbow bolt or a bullet. By the end of the 1600s, mail was no longer used for protection.

Because it was so expensive, mail was worn only by the wealthiest warriors. The cost did not come from the material, but from the time required to assemble it. Tiny rings made from short lengths of iron or steel wire were fastened together with a small rivet. Next, the clusters of rings were attached together to form a seamless garment. The typical knight also wore a solid helmet and a breast- plate, and carried a shield.

Knights would boast about ornate armor since it indi- cated wealth and position. Mail might be something a knight inherited from his father and then passed on to his own offspring. However, armor was also taken as bounty or offered as part of a truce when a battle or feud ended.

The knights of the Crusades wore chain mail armor.

Although it wasn’t as heavy as plate armor, it still weighed more than the leather armor worn by the Moors. The lighter leather gave the Moors and their horses much greater mobility on the battlefield. Even when fleeing, they had an advantage.