

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: The Old English Semantic Field of Thought in *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer*

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A semantic field study examining the meanings represented by the Old English lexemes *wēnan*, *gelyfan*, *þencan*, *geþencan*, *þyncan*, *hycgan*, and *hogian* in the poems *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* found that the words represent a variety of concepts with varying strength. *Wēnan* generally expresses belief, but can also indicate understanding, be used pragmatically, and indicate hope. In contrast, *gelyfan* can only represent belief, and that belief must be near certain or else be a belief in God. *þencan* is a more general term, encompassing several modes of thought, as well as volition. This contrasts with *geþencan*, which represents only simple, discrete thoughts, and the noun form *þanc*, which expresses emotions and the concept of thought in general. *Hycgan* covers a similar range as *þanc*, but can also express multiple thoughts, as well as belief. Finally, *hogian* expresses the presence of mental activity, complexity of thought, and volition.