

SYNOPSIS

The novel opens in the twelfth year of Grendel's war with the Danes. Muttering his incessant dialogue with self, the lumbering monster exults in his outrages—the people he has beheaded, the squirting juices that flowed from their violated carcasses, and the sweet joy of continued luck at eluding vengeance. In his lonely narrative, he recalls the realization of power as he outgrew the watery lair of his mother. From her inarticulate mouthings he ranges past guardian firesnakes toward the surface of the fen and outward to human habitations.

His crunching footsteps under the frost-ringed moon, the swish of his limbs through verdant undergrowth, the slurp of his toes in mud fascinate him on his nightly walks outside Heorot, Hrothgar's mead hall. In his twelfth year of the search for answers to his questions, Grendel listens to the poetical ramblings of the Shaper, song-philosopher of the Danes who repeats the high and low marks of their saga in his nightly strummings.

On one of his earlier sallies, Grendel accidentally wedges himself into the cleft of two oak trees and wails for the amorphous comforting parent who is his only companion. A bull taunts and harasses the monster. Later that afternoon, Grendel's mother comes to extricate him. She arrives as men encircle her son and discuss what he is and how they can kill him. As darts fly into his marooned limbs, her screech scatters the weaker beings in all directions. Grendel awakens from his misadventure in the safety of home. Locked in a maternal embrace, he struggles to free himself.

In his mature years, Grendel conceives an abiding hatred for Hrothgar. Gradually, human treachery leads to Grendel's abomination of humankind and the blood oath that locks human and beast in epic struggle. Sickened by the likeness between himself and human beings, the beast fills with "murderous unrest" as Hrothgar's power tentacles reach out into the countryside.

One night, Grendel hears the "king of the Shapers," whose song of Hrothgar's glorious lineage fills the listeners with wonder. Moved by the poetry, but keenly aware of Hrothgar's duplicity, Grendel screams in the face of the paradox: humankind has a capacity for both good and evil. Hrothgar in his ascendance builds Hart hall, symbol of his kingship. Yet, his murderous hand carries destruction as surely as it holds promise.

Grendel proffers peace and mercy toward his old adversary. He cries "Friend! Friend!" but receives only death threats. In his quest for something to believe in, someone to talk to, Grendel knows the anguish of rejection. He continues to

lurk within the sound of the Shaper's magic images, but he knows them to be lies. Determined to learn the truth, the monster, like a cringing rabbit, seeks truth from the Dragon. The reply chills him: The Shaper's song is illusion. Grendel, the source of human nightmare, is their only reality.

And so "Grendel, Ruiner of Meadhalls, Wrecker of Kings," fights his war with Hrothgar. The beast mocks Unferth, the only human warrior to brave his lair, by refusing to kill him. Grendel involves himself so closely with Hrothgar's family that he comes to know Hrothgar's young bride, Wealtheow, his ward Hrothulf, his daughter Freawaru.

More encounters lure Grendel from his boredom into the human community. Ork, the aged priest, sees Grendel as a vision. The old Shaper sickens and dies. In his cave, Grendel's mother moves farther away from sanity and the ability to communicate with her son. He creeps back to town to watch the Shaper's cremation.

Then a new interest sparks his winter doldrums—fifteen Geat heroes, led by a mountain of a man, arrive on the Danish shore. Even the firesnakes sense the inexorable coming of a new order. Unferth attempts to humiliate the rival, but the upstart meets his challenge and bests him. As though destined to face the challenger, Grendel reaches into the dark hall for the newcomer and feels his arm wrenched from its socket. Shrieking, he stumbles back to the safety of mama, but realizes no hope for his pain. With a mixture of joy and pain, he spews evil on the animals that gather around his death throes.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Educated at De Pauw, Washington University, and State University of Iowa, John Champlin Gardner, Jr., (1933-1982) devoted much of his life to places of learning, including Oberlin, Chico State College, San Francisco State College, and Southern Illinois, where he taught English. Two other schools claim his services, Northwestern University and Bennington, where he held positions as visiting professor.

Gardner was born in Batavia, New York, married Priscilla Jones, fathered a son and a daughter, and settled in Bennington, Vermont, where he devoted himself to writing. His brilliance in the field of English literature earned him the Woodrow Wilson, Danforth, and Guggenheim fellowships, an NEA award, and acclaim from *Time*, *New York Times*, and the National Book Critic's Circle.

Before his untimely death in a motorcycle accident, Gardner kept the reading public well supplied with literature, notably *The Forms of Fiction* (1961), *The Complete Works of the Gawain-Poet* (1965), *The Wreckage of Agathon* (1970),

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Grendel (1971), *The Sunlight Dialogues* (1972), *Jason and Medeia* (1973), *Nickel Mountain* (1973), and *October Light* (1976). In addition to critical works and novels he contributed short stories and poetry to *Kenyon Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Esquire*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Southern Review*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, and *Perspective*.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Critics' roses to John Gardner are not without their thorns. His prose definitely pleases and titillates with its poetic and philosophical virtuosity and gift for image. Yet the pyrotechnics of his wit provoke some voices to label Gardner a gimmicky overachiever who uses language tricks to mask the holes in his plots. Other commentary calls him a "man with a message"—many-levelled, obscure and dazzling, "bulging with genius and philosophy," yet filled with the pomposity and pride of the literary man.

Of his own point of view, Gardner says, "People are again realizing it is telling a story that really is important. Most of the hand wringing over the death of the novel went on in New York and an awful lot of people didn't pay much attention." This respect for narrative, what one critic refers to as a "reverence for ancient forms and permanent truths," is perhaps his greatest achievement. Certainly the retelling of *Beowulf* from the monster's perspective is a major tour de force.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To compare the novel with the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*
2. To analyze the author's purpose in mixing comic and tragic elements
3. To discuss variations in style
4. To evaluate imagery, especially sense impressions
5. To contrast human and animal qualities
6. To interpret by means of existential philosophy
7. To explain the interplay of hero and antihero
8. To analyze the conclusion
9. To visualize the main characters
10. To discuss the themes of alienation and revenge
11. To epitomize power as a corrupting force
12. To epitomize poetry as a civilizing force

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To characterize Grendel's relationship with his mother
2. To explain the beast's visit to the dragon
3. To discuss the influence of the Shaper
4. To account for Grendel's sparing of Unferth
5. To comment on Wealtheow's position in a male bastion

6. To contrast Hrothgar's power with that of Grendel
7. To explain why Hrothulf threatens Hrothgar
8. To characterize life in a mead hall
9. To note Grendel's attitude toward other beasts

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have particular meaning in this novel. Explain the meaning each has in context. Chapter numbers are provided in parentheses so that you may return to the line in context.

1. And so I come through trees and towns to the lights of Hrothgar's meadhall. (1)
(Heorot or Hart Hall is Hrothgar's symbol of power and wealth. There, served by the womenfolk, the Danes enjoy their quaff of mead, a drink made from fermented honey, and listen to riddles and tales sung by the Shaper.)
2. Except for his thanes' occasional stories of seeing my footprints, he'd probably forgotten by then that I existed. (3)
(Hrothgar sits among his lords, whose number forms the rudiments of the feudal system. By this societal arrangement, the most powerful and/or richest individual rules the thanes who protect the compound. The lower beings or serfs farm the land and provide food for all, but do no fighting in times of danger.)
3. He's shown them the strength of his organization, and now, instead of making war on them, he sent men to them every three months or so, with heavy wagons and back-slings, to gather their tribute to his greatness. (3)
(The basis of wealth among warrior-kings like Hrothgar is the amount of tribute or tax they command from lesser or tributary tribes. According to the text, Hrothgar's wagons are piled high "with gold and leather and weapons.")
4. He built this hall by the power of his songs: created with casual words its grave mortality. (4)
(In this savage society, the Shaper obtains power not from force but from wisdom. The author makes a play on words to heighten the stance of the Shaper, who civilizes via the morality of his poems. But the mortality that results from Grendel's forays on the listeners is grave indeed.)
5. Merely a new complexity, a new event, a new set of nonce-rules generating further nonce-rules, down and down. (5)
(The cynical dragon, impressing Grendel with his view of the coming apocalypse, notes that human situations remain in a perpetual state of flux, ruled over by nonce-rules or temporary laws. To prove his point, he cites examples from evolution—the

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Devonian or paleozoic fish, the advancement of the thumb, the membranes that separate the bones of the skull, and technology.)

6. 'Know thyself,' that's my dictum. (5)
(The dragon, convoluting the wisdom of ancient Greece into his own materialistic philosophy, declares that he intends to know himself by sorting out his accumulated treasures. To the dragon, knowing himself is the ultimate in xenophobia—an obvious attempt to isolate himself from strangers. To Grendel, knowing himself is just the opposite—it is the outreach toward other beings that will make him whole.)
7. Poor Jangler—Unferth—tried to take advantage of it, charging me on all fours, snatching at my ankles, but I jumped back and tipped over the table on him, half burying him in apples as red and innocent as smiles. (6)
(In Grendel's mock heroic clash with the antihero, Unferth, who is never a worthy challenger, is a mere jangler or quibbler, foisting noisy squabbles in place of genuine threat. Grendel deals with him in appropriate fashion—burying him under a deluge of harmless apples.)
8. I have not committed the ultimate act of nihilism: I have not killed the queen. (7)
(Grendel enumerates his blessings: he still has his teeth and his shelter. And he has not committed the worst of acts—he has not murdered Wealtheow, Hrothgar's queen. This act he sees as the worst because the queen symbolizes the regeneration of the race. Also, she epitomizes innocence because of the manner in which Hrothgar trades for her, like a good pack animal or brood mare.)
9. Unferth stood beside him, his huge arms folded on his byrnie. (7)
(As Hrothgar menaces young King Hygmod, Unferth stands like a sergeant-at-arms, his body enfolded against his coat of chain mail, his expression guarded behind slitted eyes and clamped mouth, "isolated in that huge crowd like a poisonous snake aware of what it was.")
10. *Nihil ex nihilo*, I always say. (10)
(Bereft of the old Shaper, who is admired for his command of language and for his ability to convince men of the necessity for goodness and morality, Grendel returns from the old man's funeral and falls into a troubled sleep. To mask his fears of death, he blusters about "nothing from nothing," recalling how the old man's body was ghoulishly consumed in flame.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe Grendel's home and his response to it.
(Deep within a mere, firesnakes protect the entrance to Grendel's murky cave home. To reach its one-roomed interior, Grendel enters the pool and passes through the sunken doorway "past stone icicles." There warm firelight flickers on the wet rock walls and floor. Piles of rancid bones attest to the atavism of the two inhabitants—Grendel and his inarticulate mother. During Grendel's twelfth winter of warring against Hrothgar, the tedium of confinement in the cave drives him back to the surface in response to the peculiar excitement that stirs him.)
2. What kind of man is Hygmod?
*(During the second year of Grendel's raids, a new threat comes to Heorot—the young king of the Helmings, Hygmod, makes forays and builds a rival hall far to the east. Like Hrothgar, Hygmod increases the number of tributary powers beholden to him as he claws his way to the top of the heap. After the situation builds to a head, Hrothgar and Unferth approach and face Hygmod, the parvenu. In addition to six retainers, the new power, "blond and pale, his arms ringed with gold, a vague smile hiding his shock," is guarded by a chained bear.
Sizing up his chances against the stronger power, Hygmod uses his left hand to draw his sword and drops it before Hrothgar's horse. To prove his willingness to accept the greater king's rule, Hygmod promises gifts in "sign of our great respect for the honorable Scyldings." With expressionless eyes, he parries Hrothgar's saber rattling before playing his trump card—the beautiful Wealtheow, the sister that Hygmod pledges as a gift to conciliate the unspoken rift between the two powers.)*
3. Explain Wealtheow's role in Hrothgar's home.
*(Below Grendel's lair, Wealtheow carries food from table to table, serving her new husband's people, the Scyldings. Hrothgar, moved by her beauty, watches her wordlessly settle squabbles between drunks, pour mead, and demonstrate humility to his fractious thanes. With simple grace she soothes the festering ugliness that erupts between the Danes and Unferth, the brother-killer.
At night, she fulfills her conjugal role as wife to the king, cradling him in her white arms. Even in her most unobserved moments, his men guard her, the "gem-woman priceless among the Scylding treasures." During her brother's visit, she entertains her relatives with real affection and welcome. She allows herself to be honest in her feelings, trading meaningful looks with her husband and displaying wistfulness at Hygmod's sad song.)*
4. Describe the coming of the Geats
(Grendel is wild with joy when fifteen Geats, "proud in

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their battle dress, fat as cows," sail through the icebergs toward the Danish shore. The single coastguardsmen watches as they beach their 80-foot wooden boat and unload their war gear in broad daylight. The watchman rides down on the strangers and challenges them with a single question. At his pause, the spokesman for the Geats introduces the party as "hearth-companions of King Hygilac" and himself as the son of Ecgtheow.

Having explained that his mission is a response to the enemy that stalks Heorot, the stranger proposes to offer Hrothgar advice. The coastguardsmen promises a guard for the boat and points out the location of Heorot. The Geats, their chain mail clanking, trudge on toward the meadhall.)

5. Describe the Shaper's funeral.

(At the funeral gathering, the Shaper's assistant sings an old tale of an interfamily squabble between Finn thanes. The mourners, dressed in black, listen "silent and solemn" as they await the burning of the old man's corpse. His arms lie "crossed, the features are stiff and blue, as if frozen." Hrothgar, too, remains polite and dry-eyed as the song goes on. Beside him stand his children, Wealtheow, and Hrothulf.

After the lighting of the pyre, priests walk around it and chant ancient prayers. The crowd wails for the old Shaper. Grendel, himself a mourner, watches the head of the corpse burst and blood drip from the mouth and ear. Deeply moved by the loss of so great a man, he has inklings of his own demise. Wakeful during the night, he responds to terror by laying his hand protectively on his throat.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. What is Grendel's initial response to human beings?

(In Chapter 2, as Grendel observes men from the cleft of an imprisoning tree, it is night and he smells fire. The voices of new beings surprise him: they speak words that he can understand, but "in a strange way, as if the sounds were made by brittle sticks, dried spindles, flaking bits of shale." As he gets a better look at the beings, he sees them mounted on horses and holding torches. The horned helmets on their heads remind him of a bull. To Grendel, their eyes look dead and their faces grayish-white.

Grendel's first impression is that human beings are ridiculous and irritating. Their movements lack grace; their hands seem to click. He realizes that they are trying to decide what he is, whether an independent being or a fungus on the tree. The men consider chopping out the fungus to save the oak, but draw back in superstitious fear of an "oaktree spirit." The king sends his men to fetch pigs for Grendel.

At Grendel's shout, the king hurls an ax, nicking the beast's shoulder. The men's response to danger

assures Grendel that he is dealing with "thinking creatures, pattern makers, the most dangerous things I'd ever met." Their attack results in his shrieks, which summon his mother. At her approach, the men gallop off. At the end of the chapter, Grendel ponders the fact that rival beings inhabit his world.)

7. Why is Hrothulf a threat to Hrothgar?

(Orphaned at the age of fourteen after his father, Halga the Good, was murdered, Hrothulf is a sulky, devious lad who smiles a meaningful smile at his aunt's welcome. Hrothgar immediately has fears that the boy is a "god-damned pretender." The king lays aside his alarm, summons pity for the fatherless boy, and admires his pride.

The black-haired, hazel-eyed boy, nurturing silent thoughts of overthrowing his uncle, allows Wealtheow to comfort his sorrow. A year later, he seeks out his counselor, Red Horse, the "foul old old peasant he met in the woods sometimes." From him Hrothulf learns the nature of revolution—"an act of creation . . . a religious act." He discovers that he must use power wisely in order to rule people and that he should reward people who work within the system rather than outlaws.

The boy, disillusioned by the fraudulence of power, is moved to tears. He reproves Red Horse's cynicism with his own idealistic remark: "There can be more freedom or less freedom in different states." The old man responds with laughter at the notion of Universal Justice.

Hrothgar continues to watch his shy, moody, awkward nephew, who responds to his cousin Freawaru's budding womanhood. At the same time Hrothgar feels the dwindling of power in his own giant arms, he begins to size up the gathering powers around him—Hygmod, Ingeld, and Hrothulf. To shore up relationships, he plans to marry off Freawaru to Ingeld. Grendel realizes that for Hrothgar, power is only a fleeting illusion which must one day pass to an aggressor.)

8. Why is Grendel disappointed with human beings?

(From the first time that Grendel realizes his loneliness and alienation from human society, he is driven to closer ties with people. He stalks their gathering places, observes their festivities, and listens to their songs. Moved by the beauty of poetry, he comes to know his separateness as the ultimate burden. Unable to face life and death alone, he presents himself as friend and is rejected.

From the moment of rejection, his illusion begins growing into an all-consuming hatred of man in general and Hrothgar in particular. To answer the unsettling questions of existence, Grendel descends into the dragon's lair and sits like a scared rabbit before his would-be mentor. He tries to soak up the wisdom of the cynical treasure-hoarder, but the

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words do not suit the feelings in his heart. Back in the world which he stalks by night, Grendel can find peace only in vengeance.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. What sets this work apart from other novels about evil? (*Grendel is based on a greater work, the Anglo-Saxon epic Beowulf. Because John Gardner has moved from that narrative outward to another view of the same circumstance, he is constrained by an old tradition—the fear of humankind for a ravenous beast that stalks by night and kills without mercy or logic. This basis forms the plot of the spin-off: Gardner attempts to explain the logic of Grendel, who, in his own right, has an ax to grind.*)

Another aspect of this novel that sets it apart from most fiction is its skillful use of language. In the course of the work, Gardner swims through the consciousness of the beast, familiarizing himself with the murky inner caves of Grendel's thinking much as Unferth attempts to breach the firesnakes' perimeter and plunge into Grendel's lair. Surprisingly, the author finds frequent need for wit, satire, parody, anachronism, incongruity—in short, the sharpest and most entertaining arrows in the writer's arsenal. It is this insistence on humor as a means of retelling the well-known story that renders the novel both entertaining and meaningful.)

10. What is it that Grendel learns from his challenge of the stranger?

(Grendel, relentlessly, inexorably moved toward a match with the Geat as though swept along by an undersea current, knows that he must elude the bonds that hold him to a blubbery, uncomprehending parent. Without probing the treachery of the greater world, he can never satisfy the gut yearning that draws him inevitably to humankind, the only thinking beings he has ever known. Warned from his first encounter that humankind can be dangerous, he accepts the possibility of suffering and death in order to fill the chasm of loneliness with some satisfaction other than revenge.)

At first brightened by the hope that there are truths in the Shaper's song, the beast looks hopefully toward Heorot as the source of hope. Then comes the stranger—clothed in mail and fully equipped with war gear—who leaves little question that he plans to make a name for himself by fighting Hrothgar's battles for him. Ironically, the stranger ends the reign of both Hrothgar and the beast. The one he replaces as new face on the block. The other he stalks as relentlessly as Grendel has stalked the Danes. With the inner assurance of a hero, the beardless stranger yanks out Grendel's arm.

Like an apocalypse, the dawning of mortality comes to the armless beast that has twelve years gorged himself on human blood. Humiliated by the sneering champion, Grendel bows to blinding pain and shambles off beastlike into the wilderness to die. Withdrawn into a

childlike self-pity, Grendel lashes out at the other beasts which will one day face the same demise.)

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Compose a scene to follow the last chapter in which Grendel's mother finds the body and grieves wordlessly for him. Show how the enemy animals respond to the death.
12. Write a newspaper account of the coming of the Geat warriors and the battle between the beardless stranger and Grendel. Add direct quotations of some of the major characters, particularly the coastguardsman, Unferth, Hrothgar, Hrothulf, Wealthew, and Ork.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to a recording of the highlights of *Beowulf*. Compare the two stories in terms of point of view. Decide what Beowulf learns about the nature of good and evil after his battle with Grendel.
2. Contrast Grendel to other embodiments of evil in literature, particularly Moby Dick, Dr. Jekyll, the Hounds of the Baskervilles, and Satan. Explain the connection between humankind and evil. Why is one the yin and one the yang? How would a permanent loss of evil alter the nature of human life?
3. Discuss the meaning of the dragon's advice. Why does Grendel carry a sulfurous stench from his visit? Why does he long to return to the dragon's lair? What does the dragon advise him to believe in? Why does the dragon believe that God is an illusion?
4. Locate passages from the novel that reflect the style of other authors, including Kurt Vonnegut, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett, and William Faulkner. Explain why Gardner indulges in literary manipulations.
5. Draw cartoons of comic moments in the novel, such as Grendel's meeting with Ork, his capture of Wealthew, and the apple battle.
6. Write a theme about Gardner's depiction of existentialism. Explain why Grendel finds both joy and pain in the approach of death.
7. Act out Unferth's challenge of the newcomer. Reveal elements of madness in the Geat.
8. Write an extended definition of antihero as it applies to Unferth.
9. Make a glossary of Anglo-Saxon terminology, such as mead hall and Shaper.
10. Explain why Hrothgar is unable to conquer evil even at the height of his power and at his own hearth.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Circle a word to complete each of the following sentences.

1. So he sang—or (leered, intoned, disfigured, pivoted, gewgawed), with the harp behind him—twisting together like sailors' ropes the bits and pieces of the best old songs.
2. I stood waiting, bent forward with my feet apart, flat-footed, till they ended their (interminable, bumptious, adroit, teeming, outlying) orations.
3. His nose was as (porous, unspeakable, hoary, inviolable, ardent) and dark as volcanic rock.
4. Start letting the place go to ruin and you know what the (mere, hex, upshot, keen, tribute)'ll be.
5. The two trunks in their (shoddy, big-boled, acrid, infinitesimal, bristly) dance of growth have turned complete about one another
6. They remain inside the image ring, snow falling softly on their hair and beards, and except for their forms, their (welt, balk, prattle, mire, invulnerability), the town is dead.
7. Why do we stand this (degenerate, sycophantish, anarchistic, lopsided, putrid), stinking hole?
8. The next time he charged I kept my eye on it, watched that horn with as much concentration as I'd have watched the rims of a (dogmatism, warplay, complexity, crevasse, sough) I was leaping, and at just the right instant I flinched.
9. I dismissed it, thought of it afterward only as you remember a tree that fell on you or an (adder, eave, exile, aura, advocate) you stepped on by accident, except of course that Hrothgar was more to be feared than a tree or snake.
10. He got (nether, recompense, flue, venue, putrefaction) for that!
11. The high dead eyelids wrinkled more, the corners of his mouth snaked up as he chuckled, sly, hardly hiding his (geyser, marauder, thane, brume, malice).
12. When I'd reached a safe distance, I held up the guard to (burgeon, taunt, undulate, devise, supplicate) them, then held him still higher and leered into his face.
13. His face and throat and arms were a (moor, victualer, crosshatch, mode, sleight) of festing cuts, the leaving of the firesnakes.
14. Three dead trees on the moor below, burned up alive by lightning, are ominous (propositions, requisites, finitudes, portents, gibberish).
15. I have not committed the ultimate act of (fontanel, schism, credulity, cynicism, nihilism): I have not killed the queen.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (30 points)

Name the characters who fit these descriptions.

- _____ 1. buries Unferth with apples.
- _____ 2. lies awake beside Hrothgar.
- _____ 3. sends wagonloads of tribute to a more powerful king.
- _____ 4. lives as an orphaned nephew in his uncle's house.
- _____ 5. scratches at her nipple.
- _____ 6. scratch Unferth's body as he approaches the lair.
- _____ 7. is caught between two trees and cries "Mama."
- _____ 8. lies on his deathbed and calls for a lamp.
- _____ 9. claims to have won a swimming match with Breca.
- _____ 10. makes Hrothulf blush.
- _____ 11. once had the strength of seven men.
- _____ 12. grasps Grendel's arm and pulls it from the socket.
- _____ 13. is lord of the Helmings.
- _____ 14. is an old priest who tells Grendel of the King of the Gods.
- _____ 15. lives in a treasure-hoard in a cave full of bats.

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

Mark each statement either **F** for fact or **O** for opinion.

- _____ 1. Grendel could have beaten the newcomer in former times.
- _____ 2. Hrothgar clearly indicates that he does not trust the young king.
- _____ 3. Hygmod intends the bear to serve as a threat against Hrothgar.
- _____ 4. Hygmod alters his sister's name to Wealthew as a symbol of common good.
- _____ 5. The Danes know beforehand about the approach of the Geats.
- _____ 6. Hrothgar visits the bedside of the dying Shaper.
- _____ 7. Grendel's mother trusts her son less after he visits the dragon.
- _____ 8. Of the warriors in Heorot, Grendel singles out Unferth to spare.
- _____ 9. The newly built roads inhibit Grendel's nightly wandering.
- _____ 10. Ork becomes a respected member of Hrothgar's community after he talks with Grendel.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions.

- _____ 1. Which character does Hrothgar plan to give to his enemies?
- _____ 2. Who looks upon the newcomer as a man of courage?
- _____ 3. Who beat Breca in a swimming contest?
- _____ 4. Who keeps a bear on a chain?
- _____ 5. Who builds roads out into the kingdom?
- _____ 6. What drink do the Danes prefer?
- _____ 7. Who lies dying among unfriendly animals?
- _____ 8. What protects Grendel's cave?
- _____ 9. Under what does Grendel bury Unferth?
- _____ 10. To whom does Grendel go for answers to his questions?
- _____ 11. To whom does Hrothulf go for counsel?
- _____ 12. What is Hart?
- _____ 13. Which character is unable to speak?
- _____ 14. Which character is burned on a funeral pyre?
- _____ 15. Which character calls Grendel the "Destroyer"?

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match parts of quotations. You will have answers left over when you finish.

- _____ 1. Yet I also remembered, as if it had happened,
- _____ 2. Only one man in the kingdom seemed cast down:
- _____ 3. Once, years ago, for no particular reason, I wrecked the place;
- _____ 4. I would fall, if I could
- _____ 5. The old women are arranging him,
- _____ 6. Nevertheless, I don't recall hearing any glorious deeds of yours,
- _____ 7. I grew more and more afraid of him—
- _____ 8. Their movements were stiff and angular,
- _____ 9. Behind my back, at the world's end, my pale slightly glowing fat mother sleeps on,
- _____ 10. My heart was light with Hrothgar's goodness,

- A. putting gold coins on his eyelids to preserve him from seeing where he goes.
- B. the man who'd been Hrothgar's harper before the blind man came to make his bid.
- C. except that you murdered your brothers.
- D. as if figured by logic.
- E. great Scyld, of whose kingdom no trace remained, and his farsighted son, of whose greater kingdom no trace remained.

GRENDDEL

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. intoned | 9. adder |
| 2. interminable | 10. recompense |
| 3. porous | 11. malice |
| 4. upshot | 12. taunt |
| 5. infinitesimal | 13. crosshatch |
| 6. prattle | 14. portents |
| 7. putrid | 15. nihilism |
| 8. crevasse | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: Identification (30 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Grendel | 9. newcomer Geat |
| 2. Wealtheow | 10. Freawaru |
| 3. Hygmod | 11. Hrothgar |
| 4. Hrothulf | 12. newcomer Geat |
| 5. Grendel's mother | 13. Hygmod |
| 6. firesnakes | 14. Ork |
| 7. Grendel | 15. dragon |
| 8. Shaper | |

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

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

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Grendel's mother | 6. Wealtheow |
| 2. Red Horse | 7. Grendel |
| 3. Grendel | 8. Unferth |
| 4. dragon | 9. Hygmod |
| 5. Ork | 10. harper [Shaper] |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Freawaru | 9. apples |
| 2. Wealtheow | 10. dragon |
| 3. newcomer Geat | 11. Red Horse |
| 4. Hygmod | 12. meadhall |
| 5. Hrothgar | 13. Grendel's mother |
| 6. mead | 14. Shaper |
| 7. Grendel | 15. Ork |
| 8. firesnakes | |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. C |
| 2. B | 7. F |
| 3. H | 8. D |
| 4. J | 9. O |
| 5. A | 10. I |

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Hygmod | 6. hands |
| 2. pig | 7. Hrothulf |
| 3. Danish | 8. brother |
| 4. honor | 9. emerald |
| 5. beardlessness | 10. Ork |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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