

Beowulf Review Questions

Grendel's First Attack, Beowulf's Arrival

1. Describe Herot
2. Describe Grendel's lair. How does it compare to Herot?
3. What is the significance of Grendel being descended from Cain?
4. Why does Grendel attack Herot?
5. What had Herot symbolized before the coming of Grendel? After?
6. What doesn't Grendel touch Hrothgar?
7. Why does Unferth bring up Beowulf's swimming match with Brecca? How does Beowulf respond?
8. What is Welthow's role in Herot? What does the narrator praise her for?
9. What is the significance of Hrothgar's speech in lines 382-391 (page 32)?
10. What are Beowulf's thoughts as he waits for Grendel's arrival?

Grendel's Battle With Beowulf

1. Why does Beowulf wait, allowing Grendel to kill one of the Geats, before he attacks Grendel?
2. Describe the battle between Beowulf and Grendel.
3. Why can't the other warriors come to Beowulf's aid?
4. How does Beowulf wound Grendel?
5. What do the people of Herot do the morning after the fight?
6. Describe the significance of lines 534-544 (page 35). How is it a reflection of Anglo-Saxon culture?

Grendel's Mother

1. Why does Grendel's mother attack Herot? What does she take with her?
2. What does Hrothgar ask Beowulf to do (lines 565-569)?
3. How does Beowulf respond?
4. Describe the lake.
5. Describe the battle between Beowulf and Grendel's mother. How does Beowulf defeat her?
6. What does Beowulf do before he swims back to land?
7. What is his reward for defeating Grendel's mother?

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The Dragon

1. How does the dragon react when it notices its cup has been stolen?
2. Why doesn't Beowulf fear the dragon?
3. Why does Beowulf want to fight the dragon alone?
4. When does Beowulf realize he is losing the battle with the dragon? What does he do?
5. What do Beowulf's followers do when they realize he is losing? What does Wiglaf do?
6. How is the dragon killed?
7. What request does Beowulf make before his death?
8. How is Beowulf killed?
9. Summarize Beowulf's last words to Wiglaf.
10. What does Wiglaf say to the rest of Beowulf's followers?

Beowulf: The Epic

1. Identify and explain the Christian influences on the poem.
2. Discuss the battle between good and evil in the poem. Who represents good? Evil? Give one example from the poem.
3. Is Beowulf a hero? Why?
4. Compare and contrast the battles with Grendel and the dragon. Consider the cause of each monster's attack, Beowulf's motivation for countering the attack, Beowulf's preparation for battle against each monster, and finally, the result of each battle.
5. Discuss the behavior of Beowulf's men in each of these battles (Grendel, Grendel's mother, the dragon).
6. What attitudes and actions lead to Beowulf's downfall? Give one example from the text.
7. What is Beowulf's opinion of fate? Compare to Oedipus.