

Grendel Study Guide

Answer the following questions on your own paper.

Chapter 1: Aries, the Ram

1. How long has Grendel been at “war”? How does he feel about it?
2. What season is it as the chapter begins?
3. How does Grendel describe himself?
4. On page 7, what violent acts does Grendel mention he committed?
5. Where does Grendel live? Describe his home.
6. What does Grendel scream to the chasms? What does this mean?
7. Describe Grendel’s mother.
8. Recount the events that happen during Grendel’s visit to the Hrothgar’s meadhall.
9. What do the people think is the reason for Grendel’s visit?
10. What is Grendel’s attitude toward Hrothgar’s people? Write a quote that supports your answer.

Chapter 2: Taurus, the Bull

1. What does Grendel discover in the pool of the firesnakes?
2. How does Grendel’s mother seem to feel about him? Write a quote to support your answer.
3. What accident befalls Grendel outside of the cave?
4. Describe Grendel’s encounter with the bull.
5. What does Grendel suddenly understand about the world and himself? Write a quote to support your answer.
6. How does Grendel describe the men he sees for the first time?
7. Who is the tall man with the long, black beard?
8. What do the men first think Grendel is? What else do they think he is?
9. After Grendel begins yelling, what do the men do?
10. What happens to save Grendel?
11. What does Grendel try to tell his mother?

Chapter 3: Gemini, the Twins

1. When does Grendel decide to destroy Hrothgar?
2. Describe the development of men’s society that Grendel observes.
3. Describe the “hall in ruins.” What does this event begin?
4. What does the first Shaper tell of in the hall?
5. How does Grendel know that he and men are related?
6. How does Hrothgar begin to gain power?
7. Why does Hrothgar decide to build roads? What is the effect of the roads on his power? Why?
8. How does Grendel feel about the “advance of man”?
9. Who is the old, blind man that comes to Hrothgar’s hall?
10. How do the people react to the man’s songs?
11. What does Grendel say that the man does to the past? What does this mean?
12. What is Grendel’s reaction to the man’s songs?
13. Why does Grendel scream out, “Lost!”?

Chapter 4: Cancer, the Crab

1. What is Hart?
2. Why does the Shaper stay at Hrothgar’s hall?
3. What idea “took seed in Hrothgar’s mind” because of the Shaper’s songs?
4. What does Grendel say the Shaper does to the world?
5. Summarize the story the Shaper sings about the beginning of the world.
6. Why does Grendel carry the corpse of the murdered man into the open?
7. How do the people react to Grendel? What does Grendel understand they will do to him?
8. What is the Shaper’s vision of the world in his songs? How does Grendel feel about this vision?
9. Why does Grendel go back to listen to the Shaper? What effect do the songs have on Grendel?
10. What “lie” does Grendel want to be true? Why do you think he wants this?

Chapter 5: Leo, the Lion

1. Describe the dragon and his cave.
2. Describe the dragon's voice.
3. Why does the dragon laugh at Grendel?
4. What is the dragon's reaction when Grendel picks up an emerald to throw at him?
5. What does Grendel feel when he looks in the dragon's eye?
6. What do dragons know and see?
7. What does the dragon say that the Shaper provides for man? What does he mean?
8. What does the dragon say is "the essence of life"?
9. How does the dragon say he will die? To whom do you think he refers?
10. Why does the dragon say that Grendel should continue "giving people heart attacks over nothing"? What does he mean?
11. What is the dragon's great ambition?
12. What does Grendel tell the dragon that the Shaper said? What is the dragon's response?
13. What advice does the dragon give Grendel at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 6: Virgo, the Harvest Virgin

1. What stays with Grendel after his talk with the dragon?
2. What charm does the dragon put on Grendel? What effect does this have on Grendel?
3. What effect does the Shaper's song have on Grendel this time? Why?
4. Of what does the Shaper sing?
5. Recount the events of Grendel's first human kill (the guard). How does Grendel feel about the kill?
6. Recount the events of Grendel's first raid on the hall.
7. What does Grendel call himself right after this? How does he feel?
8. What does Grendel feel when he is killing the thanes a few raids later?
9. Explain why Grendel calls Unferth "his salvation that moment."
10. Describe Unferth.
11. What does Grendel tease Unferth about? Give an example of his teasing.
12. What does Grendel do to Unferth in the meadhall? Why?
13. What does Unferth want Grendel to do to him in the cave? Why?
14. What is Unferth's idea of a hero? Write a quote to support your answer.
15. What does Grendel finally do with Unferth? Why do you think he does this?

Chapter 7: Libra, the Balance

1. Why doesn't Grendel destroy Hrothgar's people completely? Write a quote to support your answer.
2. What are Grendel's "blessings"?
3. Who is Wealtheow?
4. At this point in the novel, how long has Grendel been raiding Hrothgar's hall?
5. Who is a new threat to Hrothgar? What does Hrothgar do to deal with the threat?
6. Why does Hrothgar refuse Hygmod's gifts?
7. What treasure does Hygmod offer to change Hrothgar's mind?
8. What is Grendel's reaction to this offer? Why does he react this way?
9. What does the name "Wealtheow" mean?
10. How are Wealtheow and Grendel's mother alike?
11. What effect does Wealtheow have on drunken warriors? on the Shaper?
12. What does Grendel say is the paradox of Unferth's life?
13. What does Grendel do to Wealtheow? Why does he change his mind about killing her?

Chapter 8: Scorpio, the Scorpion

1. Who is Hrothulf? How old is he?
2. What idea does Grendel say grows in Hrothulf?
3. Describe Red Horse. What is Hrothulf's relationship with Red Horse?
4. What does Red Horse believe about government and revolution? Write a quote to support your answer.
5. What action is Hrothulf considering?
6. How many children does Wealtheow have? What are their ages?
7. What "traps" or threats to his kingdom does Hrothgar see?
8. What is Grendel's answer to the question of why he continues to hound Hrothgar?
9. What does Grendel mean when he says that he made Hrothgar what he is? Write a quote to support your answer.
10. Describe Hrothgar's dream. What incident in Grendel's life resembles this dream?

Chapter 9: Sagittarius, the Hunter

1. What month is it? How does Grendel describe this time of the year?
2. Why is Grendel afraid?
3. In what image does Grendel sense a riddle?
4. Who is Ork?
5. Of what does Grendel tell Ork to speak? What is Ork's reply?
6. What does Ork say is the nature of evil?
7. What is the reaction of the first, second, and third priests when Ork tells them he has talked to the Great Destroyer?
8. What is the reaction of the fourth priest? Why does he react this way?
9. What vision or dream does Grendel see at the end of the chapter? How does it make him feel?

Chapter 10: Capricorn, the Goat

1. What does Grendel think is the worst pain?
2. According to the young priest, what is the reason the gods made the earth? What do the people think of this?
3. Why does Grendel often mention the scent of the dragon? Is it a real odor? If not, what do you think it is?
4. Why does Grendel kill the goat? Why does the goat try to keep climbing?
5. What tale does the old woman tell the children? What might this foreshadow?
6. What happens to the Shaper?
7. What is Grendel tempted to say? What is Grendel tempted to do? What does he do instead?
8. Describe Grendel's mother's behavior in this chapter.
9. What does Grendel say about all history, including his own?
10. Why does Grendel say his mother has been "dead these many years"?
11. What does Grendel say he should have done to the Shaper? What is his reason?
12. How does Grendel feel about his mother's pain. Why?
13. What does Grendel mean when he says, "We're on our own again. Abandoned."?
14. What happens when Grendel sleeps?

Chapter 11: Aquarius, the Water-bearer

1. Why is Grendel joyful at the beginning of the chapter? Why does this make him joyful?
2. What does the coastguard ask the strangers? What is the leader's reply?
3. Describe the leader. Who do you think he is?
4. What does Grendel feel about the leader?
5. What does Grendel say order is? What does this mean?
6. According to Grendel, why does his mother love him?
7. What does Grendel say would happen if he murdered the last of the Scyldings?
8. How do the Danes feel about the Geats coming to save them?
9. What reason does Grendel give for having to kill the stranger?
10. What does Unferth predict will happen to the stranger?
11. What does the stranger say really happened during the swimming competition with Brecca?
12. What does the stranger say that Unferth did that will send him to Hell?
13. How does Grendel feel about meeting the stranger?

Chapter 12: Pisces, the Fish

1. What does Grendel do with a cloth from the table? Why does he do this?
2. What does he do to a sleeping man?
3. When Grendel grabs the stranger's wrist, what does he realize? What happens?
4. What happens when Grendel tries to kick the stranger?
5. What does the stranger mean by the words he whispers in Grendel's ear?
6. Grendel tells the stranger that if he wins, it is because of what?
7. What does the stranger make Grendel do? Why?
8. What does the stranger do to Grendel's arm?
9. Where does Grendel go?
10. What are Grendel's last words? What does he mean?