

Name: _____

Date: _____

Honors English 12

Period: _____

“Grendel’s Mother” and “The Battle with Grendel’s Mother”

1.1.12.D: Demonstrate comprehension / understanding before reading, during reading, and after reading on a variety of grade level texts to support understanding of a variety of literary works from different cultures and literary movements.

1.2.12.A: Evaluate and critique text organization and content to determine the author’s purpose and effectiveness according to the theses, accuracy, thoroughness, logic, and reasoning

1.3.12.C: Analyze the effectiveness of literary elements used by authors in various genres.

“Grendel’s Mother” (read page 23 until line 28 “Both had lost!”) *Although one monster has died, another still lives. From her lair in a cold and murky lake, where she has been brooding over her loss, Grendel’s mother emerges, bent on revenge.*

1. Line 25 – Why do you think Grendel’s mother takes his claw?

Devastated by the loss of his friend, Hrothgar sends for Beowulf and recounts what Grendel’s mother has done. Then Hrothgar describes the dark lake where Grendel’s mother has dwelt with her son.

“They live in secret places, windy
Cliffs, wolf-dens where water pours
From the rocks, then runs underground, where mist
Stems like black clouds, and the groves of trees
Growing out over their lake are all covered
With frozen spray, and wind down snakelike
Roots that reach as far as the water
And help keep it dark. At night that lake
Burns like a torch. No one knows its bottom,
No wisdom reaches such depths. A deer,
Hunted through the woods by packs of hounds,
A stag with great horns, though driven through the
forest

From faraway places, prefers to die
On those shores, refuses to save its life
In that water. It isn’t far, nor is it
A pleasant spot! When the wind stirs
And storms, waves splash toward the sky,
As dark as the air, as black as the rain
That the heavens weep. Our only help,
Again, lies with you. Grendel’s mother
Is hidden in her terrible home, in a place
You’ve not seen. Seek it, if you dare! Save us,
Once more, and again twisted gold,
Heaped-up ancient treasure, will reward you
For the battle you win!

2. What sort of place is the underwater lair of Grendel’s mother? How does the translator’s use of alliteration make this description more effective?

3. Make a prediction. What will Beowulf's response be to Hrothgar's challenge at the end of the passage? How do you know?

Extension Activity: What monsters do we have in today's world? Do you believe Grendel was a real monster in the epic story of *Beowulf*? If not, why would the writer include a fictional monster in this story?

"Battle with Grendel's Mother"

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570 He leaped into the lake, would not wait for anyone's
Answer; the heaving water covered him
Over. For hours he sank through the waves;
At last he saw the mud of the bottom.
And all at once the greedy she-wolf
575 Who'd ruled those waters for half a hundred
Years discovered him, saw that a creature
From above had come to explore the bottom
Of her wet world. She welcomed him in her claws,
Clutched at him savagely but could not harm him,
580 Tried to work her fingers through the tight
Ring-woven mail on his breast, but tore
And scratched in vain. Then she carried him, armor
And sword and all, to her home; he struggled
To free his weapon, and failed. The fight
585 Brought other monsters swimming to see
Her catch, a host of sea beasts who beat at
His mail shirt, stabbing with tusks and teeth
As they followed along. Then he realized, suddenly,
That she'd brought him into someone's battle hall,
590 And there the water's heat could not hurt him,
Nor anything in the lake attack him through
The building's high-arching roof. A brilliant
Light burned all around him, the lake
Itself like a fiery flame.

1. Lines 570-574 – What characteristic of an epic hero does Beowulf display in these lines?

Then he saw

595 The mighty water witch, and swung his sword,
His ring-marked blade, straight at her head;
The iron sang its fierce song,
Sang Beowulf's strength. But her guest
Discovered that no sword could slice her evil
600 Skin, that Hrunting could not hurt her, was useless
Now when he needed it. They wrestled, she ripped
And tore and clawed at him, bit holes in his helmet,
And that too failed him; for the first time in years
Of being worn to war it would earn no glory;
605 It was the last time anyone would wear it. But Beowulf
Longed only for fame, leaped back
Into battle. He tossed his sword aside,
Angry; the steel-edged blade lay where
He'd dropped it. If weapons were useless he'd use
610 His hands, the strength in his fingers. So fame
Comes to the men who mean to win it
And care about nothing else! He raised

2. Lines 610-613 – How important is fame to Beowulf?

His arms and seized her by the shoulder; anger
Doubled his strength, he threw her to the floor.
615 She fell, Grendel's fierce mother, and the Geats'
Proud prince was ready to leap on her. But she rose
At once and repaid him with her clutching claws,
Wildly tearing at him. He was weary, that best
And strongest of soldiers; his feet stumbled
620 And in an instant she had him down, held helpless.
Squatting with her weight on his stomach, she drew
A dagger, brown with dried blood, and prepared
To avenge her only son. But he was stretched
On his back, and her stabbing blade was blunted
625 By the woven mail shirt he wore on his chest.
The hammered links held; the point
Could not touch him. He'd have traveled to the bottom
of the earth,
Edgetho's son, and died there, if that shining
Woven metal had not helped—and Holy
630 God, who sent him victory, gave judgment
For truth and right, Ruler of the Heavens,
Once Beowulf was back on his feet and fighting.

Then he saw, hanging on the wall, a heavy
Sword, hammered by giants, strong
635 And blessed with their magic, the best of all weapons
But so massive that no ordinary man could lift
Its carved and decorated length. He drew it
From its scabbard, broke the chain on its hilt,
And then, savage, now, angry
640 And desperate, lifted it high over his head
And struck with all the strength he had left,
Caught her in the neck and cut it through,
Broke bones and all. Her body fell
To the floor, lifeless, the sword was wet
645 With her blood, and Beowulf rejoiced at the sight.
The brilliant light shone, suddenly,
As though burning in that hall, and as bright as
Heaven's
Own candle, lit in the sky. He looked
At her home, then following along the wall
650 Went walking, his hands tight on the sword,
His heart still angry. He was hunting another
Dead monster, and took his weapon with him
For final revenge against Grendel's vicious
Attacks, his nighttime raids, over
655 And over, coming to Herot when Hrothgar's
Men slept, killing them in their beds,
Eating some on the spot, fifteen
Or more, and running to his loathsome moor
With another such sickening meal waiting

660 In his pouch. But Beowulf repaid him for those visits,
Found him lying dead in his corner,
Armless, exactly as that fierce fighter
Had sent him out from Herot, then struck off
His head with a single swift blow. The body
665 Jerked for the last time, then lay still.

The wise old warriors who surrounded Hrothgar,
Like him staring into the monsters' lake,
Saw the waves surging and blood
Spurting through. They spoke about Beowulf,
All the graybeards, whispered together
And said that hope was gone, that the hero
Had lost fame and his life at once, and would
never

Return to the living, come back as triumphant
As he had left; almost all agreed that Grendel's
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Mighty mother, the she-wolf, had killed him.
The sun slid over past noon, went further
Down. The Danes gave up, left
The lake and went home, Hrothgar with them.
The Geats stayed, sat sadly, watching,
Imagining they saw their lord but not believing
They would ever see him again.

—Then the sword
Melted, blood-soaked, dripping down
Like water, disappearing like ice when the
world's
Eternal Lord loosens invisible
Fetters and unwinds icicles and frost
As only He can, He who rules
Time and seasons, He who is truly
God. The monsters' hall was full of
Rich treasures, but all that Beowulf took
Was Grendel's head and the hilt of the giants'
Jeweled sword; the rest of that ring-marked
Blade had dissolved in Grendel's steaming
Blood, boiling even after his death.
And then the battle's only survivor
Swam up and away from those silent corpses;
The water was calm and clean, the whole

Huge lake peaceful once the demons who'd lived
in it
Were dead.

Then that noble protector of all seamen
Swam to land, rejoicing in the heavy
Burdens he was bringing with him. He
And all his glorious band of Geats
Thanked God that their leader had come back
unharmed;

They left the lake together. The Geats
Carried Beowulf's helmet, and his mail shirt.

Behind them the water slowly thickened
As the monsters' blood came seeping up.

They walked quickly, happily, across
Roads all of them remembered, left
The lake and the cliffs alongside it, brave men
Staggering under the weight of Grendel's skull,
Too heavy for fewer than four of them to
handle—

Two on each side of the spear jammed through
it—

Yet proud of their ugly load and determined
That the Danes, seated in Herot, should see it.

Soon, fourteen Geats arrived
At the hall, bold and warlike, and with Beowulf,
Their lord and leader, they walked on the mead-
hall

Green. Then the Geats' brave prince entered
Herot, covered with glory for the daring
Battles he had fought; he sought Hrothgar
To salute him and show Grendel's head.

He carried that terrible trophy by the hair,
Brought it straight to where the Danes sat,
Drinking, the queen among them. It was a weird
And wonderful sight, and the warriors stared.

3. Why do you think the Geats want the Danes to see the monster's skull?