

Multiple-Choice Answers With Explanations

1. The passage does not indicate whether Hrothgar's brothers were rivals, and there is no evidence that he defeated them (A). Certainly family lineage (C) plays a role; Hrothgar is one of four children, and as he is the second child named in the first paragraph, it would seem more likely that Heorogar would be the next in line. There is no evidence in the passage to suggest that Hrothgar stole power from anyone (D), and he does not build Heorot (E) until he is already the ruler of the Danes. The second paragraph, however, clearly states that it was his **honor and glory in battle (B)**, that resulted in his being chosen leader.

2. Although Heorot is described as the biggest mead-hall ever built among the Danes (A), the passage does not indicate that either the mead-hall's impressive size or Hrothgar's taste for a lavish lifestyle (B) was his primary reason for building Heorot. Moreover, Grendel has not yet emerged as the fiend who will destroy the hall (D), making it unnecessary for Hrothgar to assume that he must provide the hall as protection to his warriors (E). Instead, Hrothgar built the hall to offer his soldiers a gathering place where he can fulfill his obligations as a ruler and **reward and honor his deserving soldiers (C)**.

3. As illustrated by Beowulf, Hrothgar, and other heroes in the poem, heroes kill only when necessary and justified—in fair combat between equals, in self-defense, and for legitimate blood revenge. Grendel, however, is presented as the unprovoked aggressor, who takes defenseless men in their sleep. Thus, (A) is eliminated. As is also illustrated throughout the poem, whenever one clan is bested by another, it is proper for the victor to accept the offer of blood gold (B) and negotiate some form of peace (C) and (D). Grendel has refused all overtures of peace and simply continues to kill. The only aspect of Grendel's killing that is not in violation of any part of the heroic code is that he attacks at night. **Thus, (E) is the best answer.**

4. The demeanor and mood among the Danes after years of Grendel's rule can be best characterized as **(A) sorrowful**. The *Beowulf* poet explains that the Danes' sorrow was "sore and heart breaking." As brave soldiers, the Danes are not fearful (B) and resigned (C), although they do not know how to stop Grendel's attacks. And there is no optimism (D) or hope (E) until the arrival of Beowulf.

5. The *Beowulf* poet does not suggest that lack of leadership (D) or lack of power (A) are the reasons for the ongoing sorrow among the Danes. In fact, Hrothgar has already been established as a strong and moral leader. He also clearly indicates that the brave Danes have every right to avenge Grendel (E) since Grendel has indiscriminately killed their men for years. The *Beowulf* poet suggests that the lack of solace stems from the fact that, although the Danes have a religion (B), **only belief in the Christian God can provide true solace (C)**.

6. Unferth does not mock or criticize Beowulf's strength (A), but suggests his *lack* of it—or at least that Breca had more. Neither is Beowulf's noble parentage (or Breca's for that matter) (C) mentioned as any kind of liability. If luck (D) functions in the adventure at all, it only works to Beowulf's advantage. (E) is tempting, but the only pride Unferth clearly illustrates is his claim that Breca "achieved his boast" when he allegedly bested Beowulf in swimming. Unferth clearly

criticizes both Beowulf and Breca for daring the feat to begin with, even against the advice of their friends and foes. **Thus (B) is the best answer.**

7. (A) and (D) are tempting because the kenning is a form of metaphor, and metaphors are types of analogies, but **(B) is the best and most precise answer.**

8. (A) is tempting, but Beowulf does admit to the possibility of defeat, and he is prepared to die in this quest. (C) is certainly evident in the many boasts he makes about his reason for coming to Heorot and his readiness for combat. (D) is evident in the manner in which he speaks to Unferth after Unferth denigrates Beowulf's swimming adventure, and (E) is shown when the poet states that Beowulf is the one to call the revelry to an end because he knows he needs to rest in order to engage in combat against Grendel. There is, however, no point at which the narrative evokes sympathy or empathy in the reader for any of the characters. **Thus, (B) is the correct answer.**

9. The word appears twice in this passage: first when Unferth says that Breca "made for the dear home of his own beloved liegemen ... where he ruled his folks' towns and treasures." Thus, Breca is ruling his liegemen, not they ruling him. Likewise, at the end of the passage, when Hrothgar, the ruler, becomes joyous after Beowulf's boast, the liegemen laugh. Clearly, (A) is eliminated. (B) and (C) are tempting, but the passage does not specify that Breca's liegemen were warriors—thus eliminating (C)—but Breca does return to him liegemen to *rule*—thus making (B) less likely. Given that liegemen are mentioned only in connection with Breca and Hrothgar, who are both rulers, (D) and (E) become the most likely choices. The men in the hall who are laughing with Hrothgar's newfound joy are clearly not merely Hrothgar's servants, so (D) is eliminated. **Thus, (E) remains as the best answer.**

10. Beowulf claims that, after he has defeated Grendel, the Danes will be able to return to the mead-hall "as the sun ... shines from the south!" suggesting winter, but this is future speculation, not a statement of the present season. Thus, (A) is eliminated. Hrothgar is certainly old in this passage, but we do not know that he is dying (B), and, clearly Heorot's golden days are over (C). Beowulf promises to restore them with his defeat of Grendel. (E) is tempting if one does not look closely at the text, but the passage tells us that Beowulf "knew that a fight with the fiend ... *awaited the hour when the sun shone no more* and the dark shroud of night came over all." Apparently it is still daylight, and Beowulf desires to rest *before* the arrival of darkness. **Thus, (D) is the correct answer.**

11. The *Beowulf* poet states that Beowulf "trusted in his valorous might *and the mercy of God.*" Strength and loyalty to other warriors (B), weapons and protective gear (C), the help of God and of kinsmen (D), and dexterity and courage (E) are all aspects of the heroic code, but what sets Beowulf apart are his **valor and his belief in a Christian God (A)**. The *Beowulf* poet here clearly attempts to set Christian values above the other significant hallmarks of the heroic code.

12. The passage's description of the manner in which Grendel enters the hall, ripping the door off of its iron hinges, clearly eliminates (A). (B) is eliminated by the reference to Grendel's "fiendish claw" and the fact that, for whatever reason, Grendel "has no skill to strike ... with sword or hew through shield." (D) is clearly untrue, as Grendel devours every morsel of the one man he kills—including the hands and feet. (E) is eliminated by the fact that, when caught by

Beowulf, Grendel desires only to return to his lair in the “fen.” (C), however might be tempting, but this passage mentions only Grendel’s wrath, asserting no other motivation for the monster’s attacks on Heorot. **Thus, (C) is the best answer.**

13. The use of the term “house-mouth” to indicate the door is an **example of a metaphor (E), a comparison between two things without the use of like or as**. Here, the door opening is likened to a mouth. An allusion (A), on the other hand, is a reference to a past historic event or figure. (B) might tempt some students, but a kenning is a double noun, whereas this phrase is a modifier-noun combination. Others might be tempted by (C), but the odd comparison of a door to the mouth of a house is not an attempt to reconcile two *opposing* ideas. Finally, a simile (D) is a simple comparison using like or as.

14. This question is relatively easy, as the passage clearly states that Hrothgar and his retinue retire *from* the hall for the night. Likewise, the passage tells us that many of the men sleeping in the hall did not believe that they would survive this adventure and be able to return home. Thus, as they are not of Hrothgar’s clan, the Scyldings, they must be Beowulf’s men. **Thus, (E) is the best answer.**

15. An examination of the final two paragraphs of the passage, the narrative of Beowulf’s hand-to-hand battle with Grendel: A *din* filled the hall, and the *ale-sleep* left all the *Danes*, castle-dwellers, *clansmen*, and *princes*. Both the champions were *enraged*, and the building *resounded* with the *strain* of their struggle; it was a *wonder* that the mead-hall stood firm, and that the fair house fell *not* to the ground—for it was fastened *within* and without with *iron bands* of *cunning* smithy-skill. *Even* so, *many* gold-decorated mead-benches crashed from the sill where the grim foes *wrestled*. The wisest Scyldings had believed that *no* man’s might would ever break apart that stout, *bone-carved* house or *unhinge* it by *any* means—*unless* a fire’s embrace should *engulf* it in smoke. The *clamor* redoubled its *intensity*, and each and every *Dane* of the North was *stricken* with *terrible* fear, *even* those out on the wall, *when* they heard the *wailing* when God’s foe let fly his *dismal* song, the cry of defeat, as *hell’s servant* howled in *pain*. He who among *men* was *greatest* in might during his life’s days held him too tightly. clearly shows **(B) to be the most compelling answer**. While, certainly, vowel sounds are repeated (A) these repetitions are random and do not seem to be intended to create any effect. (C) is likewise eliminated because any occurrence of onomatopoeia is infrequent and largely unintentional. There is no rhyme scheme (D) in this prose translation. Finally, the alliterating and consonating sounds—by and large, *f*, *r*, *m*, and *l*—create a more fluid sound than cacophony, thus eliminating (E).

16. The repetition of the beginning *g* sounds is alliteration. The repetition of *l* is consonance. The comparison using the word “like” establishes the phrase as a simile. **Only (C) specifies two devices actually illustrated in this phrase.**

17. The narrator’s two intrusions are “Never have I heard...” and “I have heard of...” in the description of the treasures bestowed upon Beowulf. As an appearance of reality (given the role of monsters, superhuman feats of strength, and the vastness of the treasure bestowed) is *not* an issue in this poem, so (A) and (B) are both eliminated. This is a scene of celebration *after* a tense scene of adventure, so suspense (C) is not the issue. The two intrusions are not severe enough, or

prolonged enough, to constitute a full shift in point of view (D), but the narrator's speaking directly to his audience/readership is clearly reminiscent of the oral tradition. **Thus, (E) is the correct answer.**

18. This is a scene of celebration that begins with decorating the hall and ends with the bard's entertaining the company with a song. The revelry includes drinking and extravagant gift-giving. (A) might be implicit following the defeat of Grendel, but is certainly not explicit in the episode. (C) and (D) are not wrong in kind, but in degree as they do not convey the intensity of the joy. The arrival of the armored horses might suggest pomp (E), but everything else in the passage more suggests almost rowdy celebration. **Thus, (B) is the best answer.**

19. During the course of the passage, Hrothgar presents to Beowulf "*a banner woven of gold as an ensign for the victory, an embroidered flag of battle, a helmet (E-1) and a coat of mail (E-2), and a precious sword (E-3).* ... [Hrothgar] commanded that eight steeds with carved headgear be led into the court; one horse had a gleaming saddle set with jewels ... And ... *gave both to Beowulf at once, the steeds (C) and the weapons (E-4).* ... And [Hrothgar] *gave to each of Beowulf's fellow voyagers a precious gift (A)* ... and ordered that *the blood-price be paid in gold for the one whom Grendel had killed (B)*... ." Ironically, however, although Hrothgar is referred to as the ring-giver, in this passage he does not give a single ring, **thus making (D) the correct answer.**

20. For readers not paying close attention, the last two paragraphs of this passage probably seem like an odd departure from the narrative—suddenly we are talking about characters we have never heard of before, and there seems to have been some sort of invasion and peace negotiation. (C) can be eliminated by the fact that the events are narrated in the past tense, and, therefore probably do not foreshadow the future. (E) is eliminated by the fact that the events in the tale are sad and deal with betrayal, loss, and bereavement. (B) and (D) might be tempting, but, again all of the characters and situations are new, and there is no apparent relationship between them and the characters and events in the current story. The transition into these paragraphs, however, explains that the bard is about to sing a song:

Then did the song and music mingle together ... and harpsong of the hero's ballad was heard as Hrothgar's bard invoked joy ... by playing the song of that sudden raid on the Finnish sons ...

clearly establishing (A) as the correct answer.