

## **Grendel Chapters 1-6 Textual Analysis Answers**

(Literature/Reading Section of Notes)

Borrowed from Website of Sandra Effinger

<http://mseffie.com/assignments/grendel/grendel.html>

### Chapter 1

#### **1. What does Grendel's relationship with nature – the ram, the sky, grass, the doe, the baby bird, owls, and wolves – reveal about his own personality?**

*He shows contempt for nature, especially spring, because its life and rebirth undoes his destruction. He sees flowers as landmarks of past murders: "Here, I killed the old woman with the irongray hair. She tasted of urine and spleen, which made me spit. Sweet mulch for yellow blooms" (p.7). This reveals that Grendel is disturbed, pessimistic, morbid, and perhaps evil. It also shows his absurdist, existential outlook on life. We are but food for worms; there is no greater meaning behind life or death. He also says that he used to take pride in striking fear into innocent woodland creatures. His middle finger to the sky is a good depiction of his defiance to the prospect of any higher order or spiritual entity.*

#### **2. Find a few phrases Grendel uses to describe himself. What do they reveal about his self-image and how it was developed?**

*"shadow-shooter, earth-rim-roarer, walker of the world's weird wall" (7)  
Sounds dark, violent, and sneaky. He's lurking in the shadows, and on the cusp of the abyss.*

*"Pointless, ridiculous monster crouched in the shadows, stinking of dead men, murdered children, martyred cows" (6)*

*Gets at his feeling of powerlessness, the lack of meaning of life; he's dissatisfied with his endless cycle of violence but has embraced it as part of his identity.*

#### **3. What is the significance of the scene (p. 9-10) wherein Grendel challenges the "dark chasms"?**

*Grendel is standing at the edge of a personal abyss. He has been confronted with the reality of true inner darkness - of evil, of death, of the lack of meaning in life. Relate it to scene from Garden State at the granite quarry and Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus."*

#### **4. From Grendel's point of view, what is man?**

*Man is proud, vain, hopeful, dogmatic, and unobservant to the world around him. Grendel sees all of these traits in their constant rebuilding of the mead halls he destroys and their clinging to communitas and the belief in a higher fidelity to their actions.*

## **Chapter 2**

1. Focusing especially on pages 16-18, describe how Grendel perceives his relationship with his mother.
2. Explain the significance of the scene where Grendel gets stuck in the tree (p 18-19). How does this shape his childhood?
3. What does Grendel mean when he says, "I create the whole universe, blink by blink" (p. 22)? What emotions does he feel in this moment?
4. How does Grendel's first meeting with men affect him? Why does he fear them more than he fears the bull? (23-8)
5. Explain the meaning of "the world is all pointless accident" (p. 28). Consult your vocab/term sheet. Which element of Anglo-Saxon culture does this philosophy align with and why?

## **Chapter**

1. As a detached observer, what does Grendel learn about Hrothgar and his theories? What shocks Grendel about man's behavior to other men and to nature? Why does Grendel fear Hrothgar? (37-40, 44)
2. Why is Grendel so impressed and affected by the Shaper? Why does he fear the Shaper? (43)
3. Why does Grendel scream "Lost!" and crawl on all fours as the chapter ends?

## **Chapter 4**

1. Why does Hrothgar build Herot, the Hall of the Hart? (47)
2. Does Grendel see Hrothgar as the good guy and himself as evil? Explain. (48)
3. How does the story of Cain and Abel affect Grendel? What is Grendel's "conversion"? (51)
4. How does hearing the Shaper's story affect Grendel's view of the outside world? (54)

## **Chapter 5**

1. Why does Grendel visit the dragon? What does the dragon tell him about himself and about the "word" (62)?
2. How does the dragon's mind differ from Grendel's and from men's? How does the mind of man work? (62-5)
3. How does the dragon explain the role of the Shaper? (65)
4. How does Grendel "improve" men? (72-3)
5. What is the dragon's ambition? His final advice? His motto? (74)

## **Chapter 6**

1. How is the dragon's charm a curse? (75-6)
2. How does Grendel now react to the Shaper's song? (77-8)
3. How is Grendel transformed by his first raid on Herot? In what sense does he become himself? (80)
4. According to Unferth, what is heroism? What is poetry? (86-8)
5. Why doesn't Grendel kill Unferth? And why is Unferth so bitter? (90)