

Beowulf vs Grendel

Activity 2

LO: I can infer a character's feelings from a text.	What I think	My teacher thinks
<i>I can remember to:</i>		
reread the text carefully.	☐	
pick out a character's behaviour.	☐	
consider how full of pride they are.	☐	
choose an example from the text that shows their level of pride.	☐	

It could be said that this chapter is all about **pride**.

The way that three characters act, in particular, reveals something about their level of **pride**. *They could be full of pride or their pride could be hurt. Maybe they feel confident. Maybe they feel jealous. Maybe they feel sad that their strongest days are behind them.*

Complete the table using information from the text to describe how pride is affecting the behaviour of these characters.

	What does the character do that shows the reader about their pride?	What can you tell about their pride from their actions?
Beowulf		
Hrothgar		
Unferth		



Woven stories on the four walls, a gamut of famous men and daring deeds, amber and umber, blue and green and gold; golden mistballs at the candlelit tables; gleaming disks and garnets set into the mead-benches; a waft of herbs, rosemary and thyme; a hundred voices lifted in harmony.

As Beowulf and his companions entered Heorot, and looked round in wonder, the noise fell back in front of them. Watched by curious Danes, they walked up a silent clearing, right up to the king ensconced on his throne.

“Greetings, Hrothgar! I am Beowulf the Geat, Ecgtheow’s son.”

“Ecgtheow’s son?” Hrothgar’s kind old face was creased and grey. “You are welcome then, and so are your companions.”

“Is it true,” Beowulf demanded, “this hall, even your own hall, is unsafe after dark?”

Hrothgar grimaced, "Every day at dusk the talking must stop. Drinking must stop. Those still alive have to leave this hall."

"I," said Beowulf, "am thirty strong. I am going to crush this monster in single combat."

At once the hall began to ripple with excited cross-currents of sound.

Hrothgar gazed at the young warrior, his eyes so full of light. Then his own eyes glazed; he was travelling the green roads of memory. It's because of his father, Hrothgar was thinking; he's come because I once sheltered Ecgtheow, and paid off his feud, isn't that it? The king got up and grasped Beowulf's right hand.

"And I've heard this monster is so reckless he does without weapons," Beowulf said.

Hrothgar's face crumpled in pain.

"I'll fight on equal terms, then. No sword..."

"Beowulf ... objected Hrothgar.

"...and no shield. I'll grapple this fiend hand to hand." Beowulf paused. "Hygelac, my king, would expect no less."

"Beowulf..." began Hrothgar, but the Geat cut him off a second time:

"And he should have this coat-of-mail if I die. This armour made by Weland. Send it back to Hygelac."

"As you ask," said Hrothgar.

Beowulf shrugged, "Who knows? Fate goes always as it must."

"First," said Hrothgar, putting a hand on Beowulf's arm and turning him round to face the Danish warriors, "take your place at our feast. Eat and drink after your long journey."

A bench was cleared for the fifteen Geats. One man brought hunks of boiled pork, and another wholemeal bread; a third carried an arm-cask and an adorned ale-cup, and each of the warriors emptied it in one draught. They stretched and relaxed, their blood began to sing.

The Danes had been drinking all day. Boisterous, brooding, snoring, sitting or sprawling, they surrounded the band of Geats; the king's two sons were amongst them.



One of the Danes, a burly man with beetling eyebrows, glared at Beowulf.

“So,” he called out. “This Geat, this Geat thinks he can succeed where we failed, does he?”

“Who is that man?” said Beowulf.

“Me,” leered the man. “I’m Unferth. And I can tell a story about you, Beowulf.”

“Keep it to yourself, Unferth,” said another Dane.

And another, “You’re asking for trouble.”

“Let him tell it!” said Beowulf. “I’m curious to hear it. Speak up, Unferth.”

“You won’t get far with Grendel,” said Unferth. “Never! Not if you’re the same man who went swimming with Breca. I’ve heard about your contest: who could swim the longer?”

Unferth twice banged the table with his fist. “After seven days you gave up. Breca had you beat.”

“You’re drunk, Unferth. I’ll tell you the true story. Breca and I swam side by side for five days and five nights, until the tides tore us apart.”

“Big man!” sneered Unferth. “Tchah!”

“Foaming water! Freezing cold! We each held a naked sword to ward off whales.”

“Whales, eh?” said Unferth unpleasantly. “Whitebait, more likely.”

“Breca was washed up,” said Beowulf calmly, “but I was dragged down to the ocean-bed by a sea-monster. I fought with it and buried my sword in its breast.”

Beowulf’s companions growled in support.

“If a man is brave enough,” said Beowulf, “and not doomed to die, fate often spares him to fight another day.”

Unferth rubbed his bloodshot eyes. “You?” he jeered. “You’re a grinning Geat! A pop ... pop ... a poppycock hero!”

“And you, Unferth,” said Beowulf, “who are you to talk?”

Again the Geats growled.

“You cannot bear another man’s success. Where others sing praises, you sow dragon’s teeth. If your actions matched your big mouth, Grendel would never have caused such havoc in Heorot.”

Unferth spat on the ground and said nothing.

“Grendel does as he likes with Danes, but soon, very soon, I’ll show this monster what the Geats are made of.”

With that, Beowulf turned his back on Unferth and, as he did so, he saw the Danish queen, Wealhtheow, entering the hall: purple gown, and long grey hair, and violet eyes.

Flanked by two ladies-in-waiting, Wealhtheow swept up to the dais, and there the ale-thane put the adorned cup into her hands. The queen offered it first to the king, and then she walked over to Beowulf and offered it next him.

“Lady!” Beowulf said, “I have come to deliver your people or die in Grendel’s clutches. That is my choice. Here, in this hall, I’ll kill this monster or lay down my life.”

“Twelve winters without hope,” said Wealhtheow slowly. She paused and smiled sadly at the Geat. “At least we have hope tonight.”

“Since it was built,” called Hrothgar, “this great hall Heorot has never been guarded by anyone but Danes. Take it, look after it! Give no quarter, Beowulf!”

Then all the Danish warriors rose from their seats and, led by Hrothgar and his queen, made their way out of the hall and into the gathering dark, away to the safety of the outbuildings.

There was almost silence in Heorot.

The Geats looked round, they listened to the hall creak in the small nightwind, and they began to lay aside their helmets and armours. Then each man took a bolster from one corner of the hall and found himself a sleeping-place.

“Leave him to me!” said Beowulf. “I’ll fight him hand to hand.”

The Geats lay down and spoke in low voices. Except for Beowulf, not one of them believed he would see the next day or dawn, or ever go back to his family and friends.

