

Beowulf vs Grendel

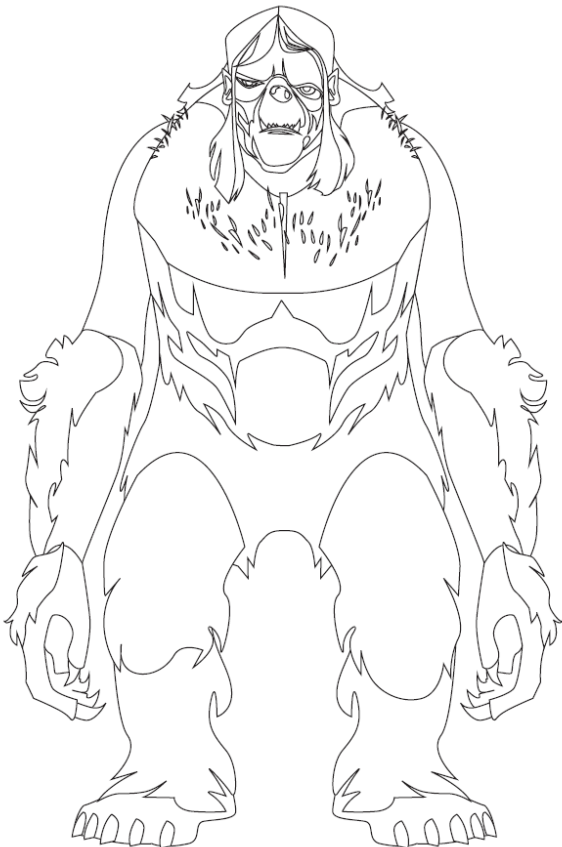
Activity 3

LO: I can retrieve information from the text.		What I think	My teacher thinks
<i>I can remember to:</i>			
reread the text to find descriptions of Grendel.		☐	
use the illustrations to get more information.		☐	
describe in full sentences with expanded noun phrases.		☐	

Using Kevin Crossely-Holland's descriptions, Charles Keeping's illustrations and your own imaginations, can you **describe the monster Grendel**? You might want to watch this [video](#) for ideas too.

Think about what he looks like, how he moves, what he sounds like, what he smells like. Think about how you would feel if you saw him in the dancing candle-light and darkness of Heorot. If you were unfortunate enough to grapple with him, how would his touch feel upon your skin?

Describe Grendel.



Through the dark night, a darker shape slid. A sinister figure shuffled down from the moors, over sheep-runs, over gurgling streams. It shuffled towards the timbered hall, huge and hairy and slightly stooping. Its long arms swung loosely.

For a moment the shape waited outside the hall. It cocked an ear. All the Geats guarding Heorot had fallen asleep - all except one, one man watching.

The monster grasped the great ring-handle and swung open the door, the mouth of Heorot. It lunged out of the darkness and into the circle of dim candlelight, it took a long stride across the patterned floor.

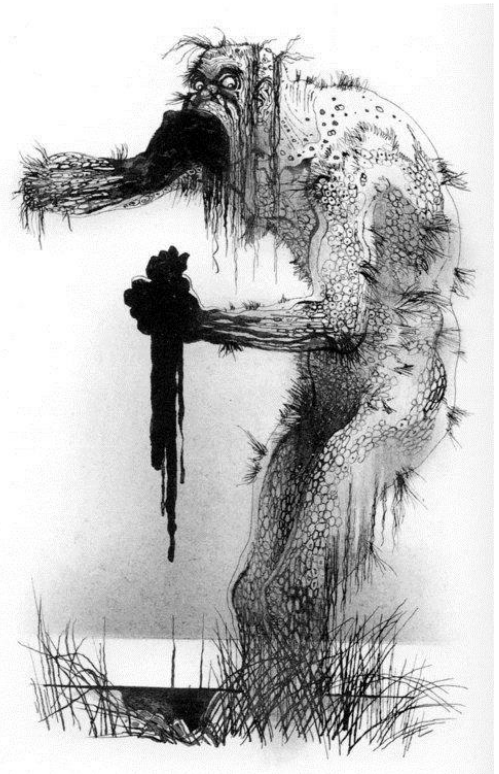
Grendel saw the knot of sleeping warriors and his eyes shone with an unearthly light. He lurched towards the nearest man and scooped him up with one ghastly claw.

Then the monster ripped him apart and devoured his body; within one minute he had swallowed the man whole.

Still the Geats slept. The air in Heorot was thick with their sleep, thicker still with death and the stench of the monster.

Grendel slobbered; his first taste of flesh only made him more ravenous. He wheeled round towards Beowulf, stooped, reached out for him, and...

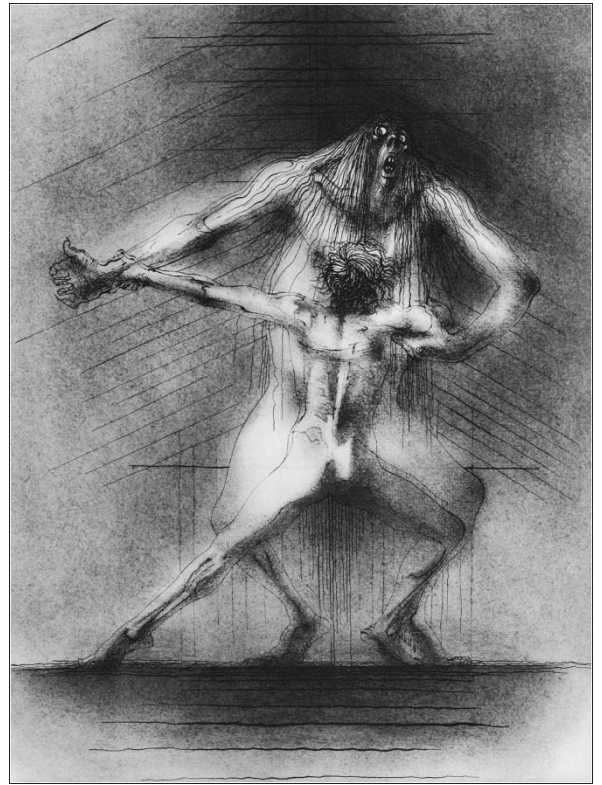
Beowulf leaped up and stayed the monster's outstretched arm.



Grendel grunted and pulled back. And at that sound, all the other Geats were instantly awake. They grabbed their swords, they backed off, they shouted for Beowulf.

Grendel tried to break free but Beowulf held him fast. The monster snorted and tugged against Beowulf's grip. Now the great room boomed. Clang and clatter shattered the night silence as Beowulf and Grendel lurched to and fro in their deathly tug-of war.

When the Geats saw that Grendel could not escape Beowulf's grip, they surrounded him and slashed at him with their swords.



The warriors' swords could wound their enemy. His skin was like old rind, tough and almost hard; he had woven a secret spell against every kind of battle-blade.

Now Beowulf twisted Grendel's right arm behind his neck. He locked it and turned it, slowly he turned it, putting terrible pressure on Grendel's shoulder.

The monster bellowed and dropped to one knee. Grendel jerked and his whole body shuddered and trembled. With superhuman strength he jerked again as he tried to escape Beowulf's grip, he jerked and all at once, his right shoulder ripped. A ghastly tearing of muscle and flesh; the monster's arm came apart from his body.

Grendel howled.

He staggered away from Beowulf,
and reeled out of the hall.

The Geats cheered and shouted; they
hugged one another; they gathered
around Beowulf.

“He’s finished!” roared one Geat.

“Done for!” shouted another.

“Wherever he goes,” said a third
companion, “death goes with him.”

“I’ve done as I said,” Beowulf panted.

“Look at the monster’s hand!” muttered one man.

“Each nail like steel.”

“Each claw, I’d say.”

“Ten terrifying spikes.”

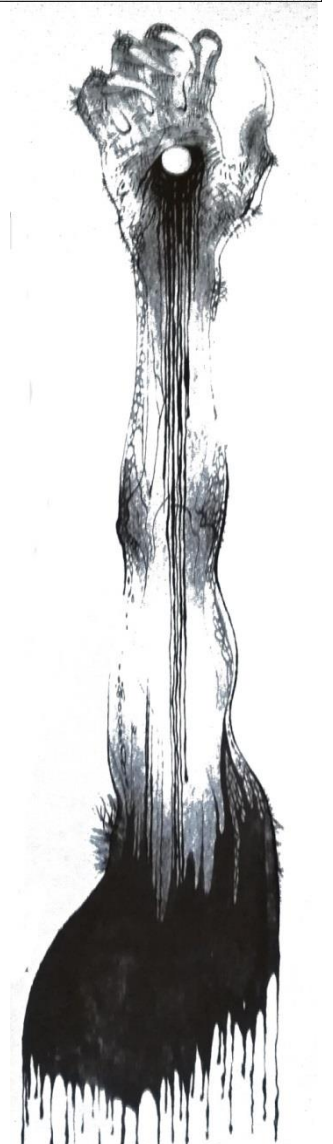
“Hand, arm and shoulder.”

“No man can withstand Beowulf...”

“...and no monster neither.”

Beowulf raised a hand and the Geats’ cheers fell silent.

“Hang it up!” Beowulf said. “Stick it up outside the
door, under the gable. And then give Hrothgar news of



my victory.”

Beowulf’s companions hastened to do as he asked.

Within a few minutes the first Danish warriors hurried into the hall. Others followed on their heels and then, at dawn, as the eastern sky turned pale green mackerel, the king himself proceeded to the hall on his old unsteady legs, supported by Wealhtheow, his queen.

He paused at the door, marvelled at the monster’s grasp, and then embraced Beowulf.

“This hall Heorot,” Beowulf said, “I return it to you. Once again you can call it your own.”

“I’d lost hope,” Hrothgar said. “Lost all belief that anyone could end it, this monstrous nightmare.”

“Twelve winters,” said Wealhtheow.

“I kept my word,” Beowulf said, “and fought hand to hand on equal terms.”

“Beowulf, best of men, from this day on I will treat you like a son; whatever I have here on this middle-earth will be yours also.”

Wealhtheow looked troubled at the king’s words, but she smiled and said nothing. Once more Hrothgar stepped forward and embraced Beowulf.

Word of Grendel’s death quickly spread far and wide. Throughout that day hundreds of Danes converged on Heorot to stare at the monster’s arm. That evening, Hrothgar held a feast in honour of Beowulf and the Geats.

The king gave Beowulf shining rewards for killing Grendel - a battle banner woven with gold thread, a helmet incised with battle scenes, a coat-of-mail and, finest of all, the huge sword that once belonged to the king's own father.

Then, at a sign from Hrothgar, eight horses with gold-plated bridles pranced into the hall.

"This saddle," said Hrothgar, "decorated with precious stones, this is my own. Take it and take these horses, and make good use of them."

Finally, Hrothgar gave a gold buckle to each of the Geats who had crossed the sea with Beowulf.

The warriors drank and feasted and drank again. Waves of noise broke out along the benches, talk and laughter.

"As it used to be," said Hrothgar.

At the end of the evening, Hrothgar and Wealhtheow retired to their quarters, and Beowulf was conducted to a bed in the outbuildings where he could sleep alone and more peacefully; he was weary after his night's work. But all the other Danes and Geats remained in Heorot.

Benches were pushed back, the whole floor was padded with bolsters and pillows; and at each man's head, his helmet and coat-of-mail, his spear and shield, gleamed in the gloom.

Silence in the hall, dark and deeper dark, another night for men: one of the feasters sleeping in Heorot was doomed and soon to die...

