

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**?

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 shrithed down from the moors, over sheep-runs, over gurgling streams. It shrithed towards the timbered hall, huge and hairy and slightly stooping. Its long arms swung loosely.

One man was snoring, one mumbling, one coughing; all the Geats guarding Heorot had fallen asleep - all except one, one man watching.

For a moment the shape waited outside the hall. It cocked an ear. It began to quiver. Its hair bristled. Then it 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.

Through half-closed eyes Beowulf was watching, and through barred teeth he breathed one word; the name of the monster, the loathsome syllables. "Grendel."

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

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

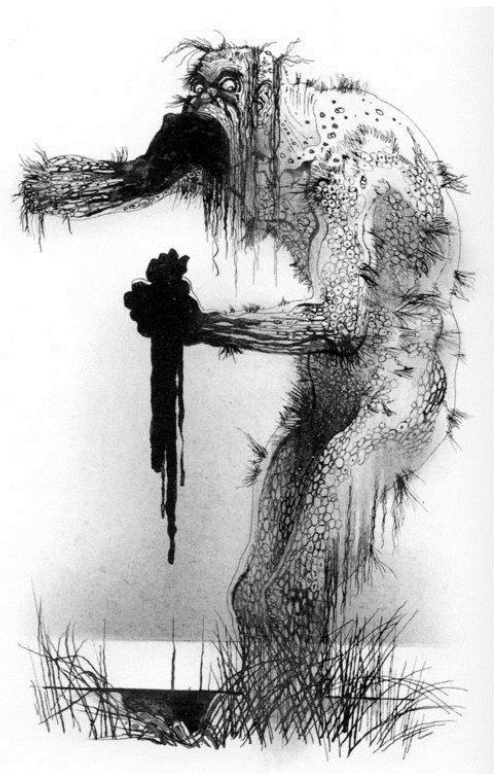
Still the Geats slept. The air in Heorot was thick with their sleep, thicker still with death and the stench of the monster.

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

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, he could feel his fingers cracking in the Geat'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. Tables and mead-benches were overturned, Grendel roared and snarled, and in the outbuildings Danes woke and listened in the darkness.



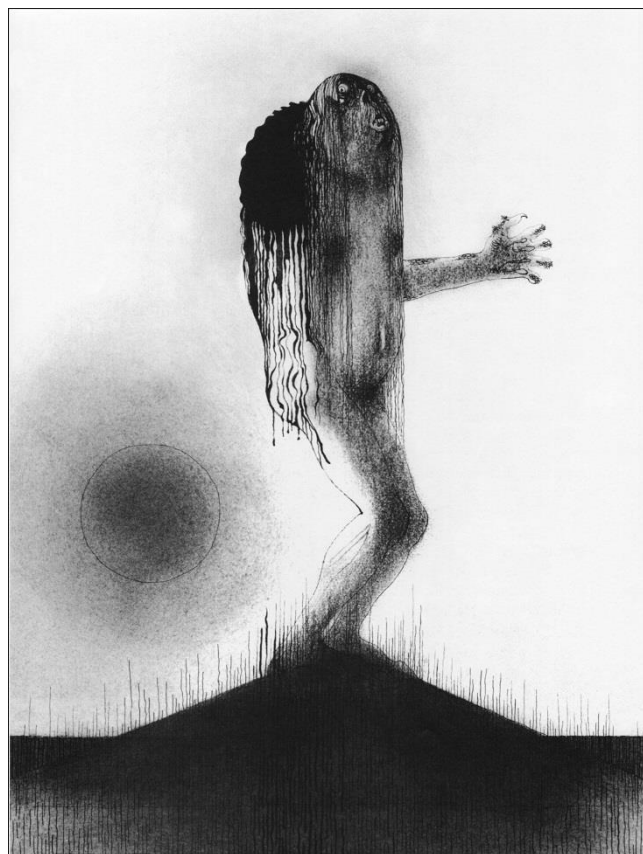
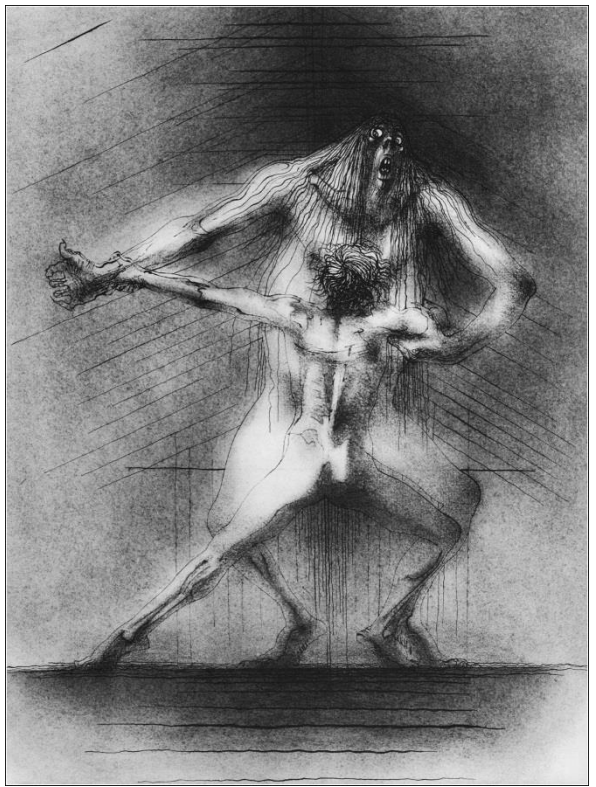
When the Geats saw that Grendel could not escape Beowulf's grip, they surrounded him and slashed at him with their swords.

Heorot flashed with battle-lights. Those warriors did not know that no kind of weapon, not even the finest iron on earth, 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 converged on Beowulf.

Beowulf was gasping, "I wanted to throttle him..."

"He's finished!" roared one Geat.

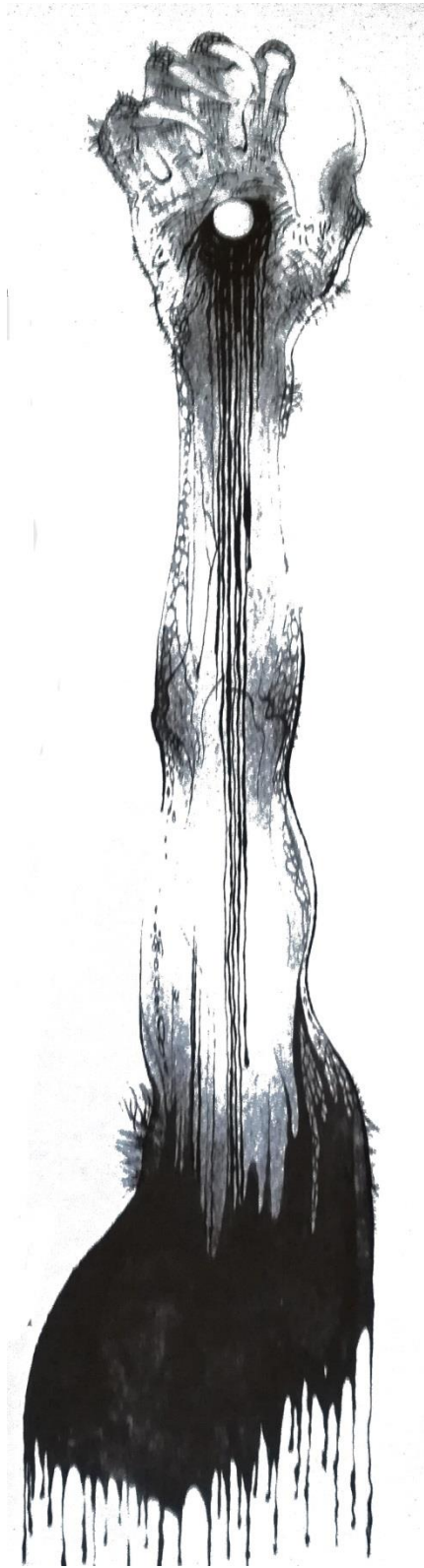
"Done for!" shouted another.

"I couldn't hold him... not strong enough..."

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

"I've done as I said," Beowulf panted, "and avenged Leofric."

Until that very moment, the Geats were not aware that they had lost one of their companions. They listened as Beowulf told them what had happened when Grendel first came to the hall; and all their joy at the monster's death turned to anger and gloom at the fate of Leofric.



"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. One man climbed onto another's shoulders just outside the great door, and by guttering candlelight secured Grendel's grasp, blood stained and battle-hardened, under the gable. Two others found brands at the hearth, rekindled them in the embers, and headed for the outbuildings.

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 cruel grasp, and in the 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 damascened sword that once belonged to Healfdene, 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, “so well cut and inlaid 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, and decreed that gold should be paid for the life of the warrior Leofric.

The warriors drank and feasted and drank again. Then the poet sang a lay, he compared Beowulf to Sigemund, the dragon-slayer. Waves of noise broke out along the benches, talk and laughter.

“As it used to be,” said Hrothgar.

“And will be,” said Wealhtheow. “Give rewards, Hrothgar, while you may. But remember your own sons! Leave this land, leave this Danish people to our sons when the day comes for you to die.”

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...

