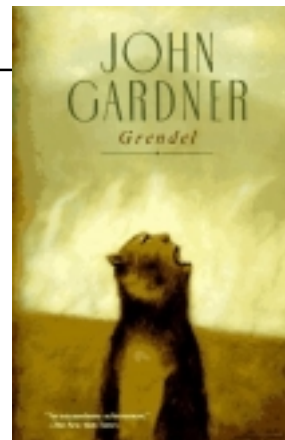




***Grendel* by John Gardner • Before You Start Reading the Novel**



The process of reading is not a half sleep, but in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle: that the reader is to do something for him or herself, must be on the alert, must construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start, the framework. -Walt Whitman

In the process of reading *Grendel*, you are going to be asked to exercise your ability to make connections, to gather hints and clues and make meaning. Sometimes your understanding will be based on concrete clues given by the author; sometimes your personal opinion will be what matters the most. Either way, you cannot simply skim this novel—there is too much going on in it!

Background (on *Beowulf*)

John Gardner, the author of *Grendel*, once wrote a response to a teacher and her students who had sent him their papers about *Grendel*. Here is what he had to say about *Beowulf*. Keep his view of *Beowulf* in mind as you read *Grendel*. (The letter is dated February 23, 1976, and is addressed to Susie West and students.)

"...If you're interested in what I think about *Beowulf* (what it means, why it's great), you might look up a book of mine, published by the Southern Illinois University Press, *The Construction of Christian Poetry in Old English*. One comment in David's paper startled me a little, the suggestion that *Beowulf* is "optimistic." Perhaps David read too fast or had a bad translation. Surely the fact is that in *Beowulf* the hero does everything he can to be a perfect hero, and in the end he's killed, for reasons he doesn't understand (though the poet does), dies deluded--thinking he has saved his people when in fact the treasure he's captured is worthless (rusted and cursed) and his people are now certain to die, since the Swedes will no longer be held off by *Beowulf*'s strength and wisdom (and friendship with certain Swedes). Some of the ironies at the end of *Beowulf* are very grim indeed. Throughout, the poem has hints of Christianity, though *Beowulf* and his companions come before Christianity and can't benefit from it. At the end of the poem *Beowulf*'s friend and kinsman Wiglaf repeatedly sprinkles water over the dying king's face, but the effect of the snake cannot be stopped. A number of contemporary critics (none of them lunatics) have agreed that this is an ironic suggestion of baptism--that is, the sprinkling that now saves you from the snake (Satan) could not save our ancestors. In other words, one of the main things *Beowulf* is about is how, in this world, you simply cannot win, no matter how noble you are. The best you can hope for is *fame*, and the poet undercuts even that--in many, many ways, starting with the poem's first line, which means, literally, "Lo, we have *found out by search* the glory of the Spear-danes. . . ." In other words, fame eventually dies. It's true, of course. The greatest sculptor in ancient Greece, praised universally--by Aristotle and Plato, among others--leaves not one single surviving work. And of the hundred and some tragedies of Sophocles, we have now only a handful, and even those in flawed and partly lost copies. Except ironically, heaven is not the subject of *Beowulf*, and it's true that the poet implies that, bad as life may be on earth, there is a possibility of a better life, a more meaningful and joyful existence, elsewhere. But the limits of the poem are human, and here in the world things are, the poet says, absolutely hopeless. Young people do not realize this, because they're not yet fully aware that they will die, and not only they themselves will die, but their whole civilization, everything they love and believe in will die--and sooner than they dream. That does not necessarily mean that all mankind will die, though that too is a possibility. But it does mean that whatever values we hold dear we must treasure especially because they cannot outlast the planet..."

<http://www.genesee.suny.edu/gardner/perdue.htm>

(This letter may not be downloaded, reproduced or transmitted without the permission of Georges Borchartt, Inc., 136 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022)

About the Structure of the Novel

According to Craig J. Stromme, who wrote a paper about "The Twelve Chapters of *Grendel*," John Gardner once said in an interview that he "wanted to go through the main ideas of Western Civilization...and go through them in the voice of the monster, with the story already taken care of, with the various philosophical attitudes (though with Sartre in particular) and see what I could do."

<http://home1.gte.net/tomchat/12chap.html>

Critique 20.1 (1978): 83-92. Reprinted With Permission Of The Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Published By Heldref Publications, 1319 18th St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036-1802. Copyright 1978. <http://www.heldref.org>.

Keeping this in mind, it might be important to have some background knowledge of the "a various philosophical attitudes," starting with Sartre. Read the following overview of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was one of the major intellectual figures of the twentieth century, doubtless the greatest of his immediate generation in France. In the words of Sartrean scholars Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka in *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre*, he was "uncontestably the most outstanding philosopher and writer of our time." The eminent scholar Henri Peyre, in his preface to *The Condemned of Altona*, called Sartre "the most powerful intellect at work ... in the literature of Western Europe," the "Picasso of literature." Since his death in 1980, Sartre's reputation has not waned, and with perspective it has become clear that he represented his age much as, in different ways, Voltaire (1694-1778), Victor Hugo (1802- 1885), and Andre Gide (1869-1951) represented theirs. "To understand Jean-Paul Sartre," wrote the novelist Iris Murdoch in *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, "is to understand something important about the present time."

Sartre was the chief proponent of French existentialism, a philosophic school--influenced by Soeren Kierkegaard and German philosophy--that developed around the close of the World War II. Existentialism stressed the primacy of the thinking person and of concrete individual experience as the source of knowledge; this philosophy also emphasized the anguish and solitude inherent in the making of choices.

Sartre's worldwide fame was based substantially on his existentialism, but it would be a mistake to consider him significant only for a philosophy that represented his thinking at a relatively early stage of his career. It would be a still greater mistake to reduce his existentialism to very simplistic elements, such as crude nihilism, as often has been done. <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC> • Copyright © 2001 Gale Group. All rights reserved.

Various philosophies usually end up with an -ism at the end of their name, so look up the following words and define them before you start reading the novel.

existentialism

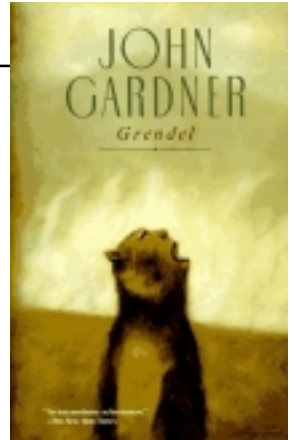
nihilism

solipsism

And, finally, in Stromme's paper, he quotes Gardner as saying about the organization of the novel: "It's got twelve chapters. They're all hooked up to astrological signs, for instance, and that gives you nice easy clues." So, be on the lookout for the twelve signs of the zodiac in the novel, and be ready to make connections (since Gardner says he put them in there as clues.)



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Background Information on Astrology**



The original purpose of astrology was to inform the individual of the course of his life on the basis of the positions of the planets and of the zodiacal signs (the 12 astrological constellations) at the moment of his birth or conception. From this science, called genethliology (casting nativities), were developed the fundamental techniques of astrology. ... (from *Encyclopedia Britannica* <http://www.brittanica.com>)

ASTROLOGY & ZODIAC (abridged from *Groliers New Multimedia Encyclopedia*)

Astrology is the use of astronomical phenomena to predict earthly and human events, in terms of an assumed theoretical system. In its earliest form astrology consisted of simple omens that astrologers read from the sky. In its mature form astrology analyzes the supposed effects of the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars on the Earth for a specific time and place. Although historically the meanings of the terms astronomy and astrology sometimes overlapped, astronomy has been concerned only with determining the positions and physical properties of celestial bodies. Natural astrology, on the other hand, assumed that a generalized celestial influence affected weather, crops, and other phenomena related to whole nations of people; judicial astrology made specific predictions about the future of individuals.

History

Astrology originated in ancient Babylonia and spread from there to China, India, and the West, where different but related traditions grew up. The earliest known horoscope incorporating the principles of mature astrology dates from 409 BC. In the 2d century AD the astronomer Claudius PTOLEMY prefaced his *Tetrabiblos* with a defense of astrology that proved influential. After the fall of the Roman Empire, astrology declined in the Latin west but flourished in the hands of the conquerors of the Eastern Empire. In the 12th century astrology began to prosper in Western Europe. By the end of the 17th century, however, astrology was considered a pseudoscience by almost all learned people. Not only was it opposed to the Christian doctrines of divine intervention and human free will, but also the acceptance of a greatly-expanded, Sun-centered universe raised doubt about whether the heavens were created to direct changes on Earth.

Principles

In addition to the purported effects of planets on the weather, body types, and personality, astrology also has to take into account the new relationships continually being set up among celestial bodies. To do this it uses the 12 signs of the ZODIAC. Aspects are special angles that allow for a discontinuity in astrological influences. For example, there is supposed to be an effect when two planets are 60 deg apart, but then relatively little effect until a separation of 90 deg occurs. Ptolemaic astrology recognized four aspects: 180 deg, 120 deg, 90 deg, and 60 deg. More were added by Johannes KEPLER and other astronomers. The astrological column in a newspaper today is generally based on the sign of the zodiac in which the Sun was located when a person was born. A simplified form of astrology, it implies that all people born under the same sign anywhere in the world at any time share common characteristics and that their daily activities should be so guided. A more individual analysis is possible when casting a horoscope by noting the relationships of the Sun, Moon, planets, and signs of the zodiac to the time and place of one's birth. Starting with the ascendant, the ecliptic is usually divided into 12 divisions called houses. Unlike the zodiacal signs, which represent the annual cycle of the Sun, the heavens rotate behind the imaginary grid of houses once every 24 hours (reflecting the Earth's daily rotation), and in a unique manner for every place on Earth. Each of the 12 houses is significant for some phase of human existence. The astrological judgment is

rendered by examining what celestial bodies fall into which houses. Only individuals born at the same place and at the same time would have exactly the same astrological inheritance. Horoscopes can be cast on numerous occasions to decide the fate of both nations and individuals. Most familiar is the casting of a horoscope based on the conception or birth of a child, the so-called nativity.

From a horoscope the astrologer may determine, through a technique known as directing, when a predicted event will befall the subject. In all methods of directing a point on the ecliptic is chosen, and an arc related to it is used to give a time span; for example, one degree of arc may be taken to equal one year of life. Through the technique of election an astrologer counsels an individual on the choice of propitious moments. The election is usually related in some way to the person's nativity. Even without knowing his or her nativity, a person could supposedly come to some understanding of the effect of the heavens on his or her life through horary questions. For example, a horoscope is cast at a time when a pressing question arises, such as whether a business enterprise will be successful.

Validity

For centuries critics have attacked astrology on scientific grounds, questioning the means by which celestial influences could occur, and on moral grounds, since many view humans as creatures of free will. On their side, astrologers, past and present, have often sought to imply that empirical evidence establishes the existence of heavenly influences and have held that erroneous predictions could be attributed to the complexity of the study. Some practitioners have even thought that astrological theories should be modified.

Although astrology has persisted to the present day, enjoying greater popularity in some countries than in others, it has never attracted more than an occasional scientist to its ranks since the 17th century. Periods of resurgence may correspond with times of uncertainty, especially when science and technology seem unable to provide acceptable solutions to pressing problems and when many people seem to seek a more mystical and spiritual mode of understanding the world. Many contemporary works of astrology use the terminology of recent psychological theories.

Mary Ellen Bowden

ZODIAC

The **zodiac** is the portion of the CELESTIAL SPHERE that lies within 8 deg on either side of the ECLIP-TIC. The apparent paths of the Sun, the Moon, and the principal planets, with the exception of some portions of the path of Pluto, lie within this band. Twelve divisions, or signs, each 30 deg in width, comprise the zodiac. These signs coincided with the zodiacal constellations about 2,000 years ago. Because of the precession of the Earth's axis, the vernal equinox has moved westward by about 30 deg since that time; the signs have moved with it and thus no longer coincide with the constellations. The signs are considered to be of great importance to astrologers (see ASTROLOGY).

J. M. A. Danby

SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC

Sign	Time Range	Symbol	Nickname
Aries	Mar 21 - Apr 19	♈	The Ram
Taurus	Apr 20 - May 20	♉	The Bull
Gemini	May 21 - Jun 21	♊	The Twins
Cancer	Jun 22 - Jul 22	♋	The Crab
Leo	Jul 23 - Aug 22	♌	The Lion
Virgo	Aug 23 - Sep 22	♍	The Virgin
Libra	Sep 23 - Oct 22	♎	The Scales
Scorpio	Oct 23 - Nov 21	♏	The Scorpion
Sagittarius	Nov 22 - Dec 21	♐	The Archer
Capricorn	Dec 22 - Jan 19	♑	The Goat
Aquarius	Jan 20 - Feb 18	♒	The Water-bearer
Pisces	Feb 19 - Mar 20	♓	The Fish

For detailed information about each sign, you may want to check out several web sites. Most likely, the qualities of a particular sign change from author to author.

http://horoscopes.excite.com/horoscopes/sign_profiles/aquarius
<http://astrology.about.com/>
<http://www.astrologyindex.com/>



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 1 • pp. 5-14**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about the character of Grendel in *Beowulf*.

1. For how long does Grendel attack Hrothgar's meadhall Herot?
2. What do you know about Grendel's mother in *Beowulf*?
3. What do you know about Grendel's living space in *Beowulf*?

As You Read the Chapter

4. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
5. Look for lines that emphasize repetition. For instance, when we return to school every September, we talk about returning to the "same old grind." Write down any lines that Gardner uses in this chapter that emphasize that idea of repetition year after year.

Predicting What Happens Next

6. Grendel says that he has asked his mother why they exist..."But she told me nothing. I waited on. That was before the old dragon, calm as winter, unveiled the truth. He was not a friend" (11-12). What do you predict the dragon will say to Grendel?

Philosophy Connection

7. "Orphism is an esoteric, private religion of ancient Greece, named after the legendary musician Orpheus. According to Orphism, the soul, a divine spark of Dionysus, is bound to the body (soma) as to a tomb (sema). Mankind is in a state of forgetfulness of its true, spiritual nature. The soul is immortal, but descends into the realm of generation, being bound to the "hard and deeply-grievous circle" of incarnations, until it is released through a series of purifications and rites, regaining its true nature as a divine being" (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet>). Does this philosophy have any connection to Grendel at this point in the novel?

Astrological Connection

8. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?



Chapter Title

9. What title would you invent for this chapter?

Your Opinion

10. What do you think of the novel so far?



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 2 • pp. 15-29**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about the character of Grendel in *Beowulf*.

1. What do we know about Grendel's cave from *Beowulf*?

As You Read the Chapter

2. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
3. At what point in Grendel's life does this chapter take place (as opposed to Chapter 1)?
4. What literary technique does the author use in order to tell this part of Grendel's fictional story?

Predicting What Happens Next

5. After Grendel's encounter with the Danes while his foot was trapped inbetween the two tree trunks, what do you think his relationship with them will be? Do you predict that this will be the reason that he starts attacking Herot (called Hart in this novel) and murdering men?

Philosophy Connection

6. Read the selection from Plato's *The Republic* on the back of this sheet. Are there any connections to the description of Grendel's cave and his first time exploring the outside world?
7. Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" writes "[Grendel] leaves the cave of ignorance and enters the world of sunlight for the first time (an obvious reference to Plato's parable of the cave)." After describing how Grendel reacts and what he says when he leaves the cave and when he returns, Stromme concludes, "Grendel clearly begins his life in the world as a solipsist." Do you agree or disagree with Stromme's assessment of Grendel's character at this point in the novel?

Astrological Connection

8. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?



Chapter Title

9. What title would you invent for this chapter?

Your Opinion

10. What do you think of the novel so far?

From *The Republic* "The Allegory of the Cave"

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: -- Behold! human beings living in a underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads? And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow? No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, -- what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, -- will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he said.

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

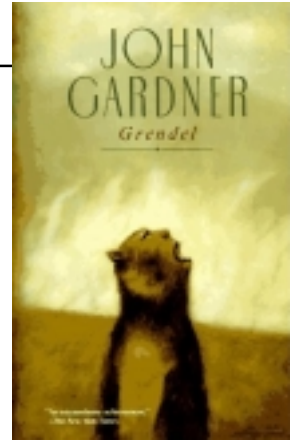
Certainly.

Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Certainly....



Grendel by John Gardner • Chapter 3 • pp. 30-45



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about the character of Grendel in *Beowulf*.

1. What do we know about bard-minstrels as they functioned in the society of *Beowulf*?

As You Read the Chapter

2. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
3. Grendel starts to tell of the history of the Danes. How do the little bands of men evolve into a kingdom led by Hrothgar?
4. List a few of the things that the Danes do that upset Grendel. Name at least one thing that Grendel tries to fix.
5. "One night, inevitably, a blind man turned up at Hrothgar's temporary meadhall. He was carrying a harp" (40). "What was he? The man had changed the world..." (43). Who is this man that Grendel will refer to as The Shaper?

Philosophy Connection

6. If you think Grendel was a solipsist in Chapter 2, has he now been forced to change his philosophy about life, or is he still the same? To refresh your memory, here is a definition of solipsism: In philosophy, a view that maintains that the self is the only thing that can be known to exist. It is an extreme form of skepticism. The solipsist sees himself or herself as the only individual in existence, assuming other people to be a reflection of his or her own consciousness (www.elibrary.com).
7. Is The Shaper (the blind "harp scratcher") a Sophist? Here is the definition: Sophists (SAFH ihsts) were educators who traveled from city to city teaching for pay in the city-states of Greece during the second half of the 400's B.C. They taught grammar, political theory, and many other subjects. But their main subject was persuasive public speaking, which was crucial in such ancient democracies as Athens. They claimed to teach virtue, which they defined as being successful in the world. Sophists did not cling to a specific set of beliefs. For example, some sophists seemed to uphold traditional morality, but others criticized traditional moral values. Some believed that laws should be rejected in favor of the natural right of the strong. But others recognized that human law, though unnatural, was essential for a secure society. Much of our knowledge of the sophists comes from dialogues written by the great Greek philosopher Plato. Plato presents the sophists as largely uninterested in the truth and only concerned with making money. His influence has led to the modern meaning of sophist as someone who uses clever but misleading reasoning. The best-known sophists included Protagoras, Gorgias, and Critias. Protagoras believed that arguments of equal force could be constructed for the opposing sides of any issue. Gorgias was the premier teacher of rhetoric of his time. Critias argued that the gods were inventions whose purpose was to inspire fear of wrongdoing (www.elibrary.com).

Astrological Connection

8. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? How does the following quote relate to the zodiac sign: "Thus I fled, ridiculous hairy creature torn apart by poetry—crawling, whimpering, streaming tears, across the world like a two-headed beast, like mixed-up lamb and kid at the tail of a baffled, indifferent ewe—and I gnashed my teeth and clutched the sides of my head as if to heal the split, but I couldn't" (44).



Chapter Title

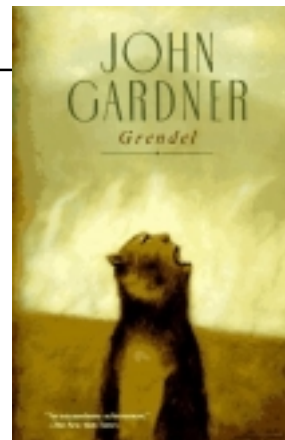
9. What title would you invent for this chapter?

Your Opinion

10. What do you think of the novel so far?



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 4 • pp. 46-56**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about the character of Grendel in *Beowulf*.

1. In *Beowulf*, what do we know about Grendel's origins?
2. In *Beowulf*, what happens to Grendel when men try to use their swords against him?

As You Read the Chapter

3. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
4. At what point in Grendel's life does this chapter take place (as opposed to Chapter 3)? In relation to Chapter 1?
5. The Shaper, as part of the stories he tells, explains creation, and the religion that followed. "Oh, what a conversion!" Grendel says (51). What does he believe about himself now that he did not believe or know before?

Predicting What Happens Next

6. In this chapter, Grendel is nicked by a sword. But we know that later he is impervious to weapons (here is your answer to Question 2 above). What do you predict will happen to Grendel before his confrontation with Beowulf in this story?

Philosophy Connection

7. A creation story usually implies, eventually, the development of a religion. Is religion a philosophy? Or is it something more? (This is purely an opinion question; it would be interesting to see what you think about the topic. You also may want to suggest possibilities for which aspect of Western Civilization and philosophy you think Gardner was intending to present in this chapter.)

Astrological Connection

8. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?



Chapter Title

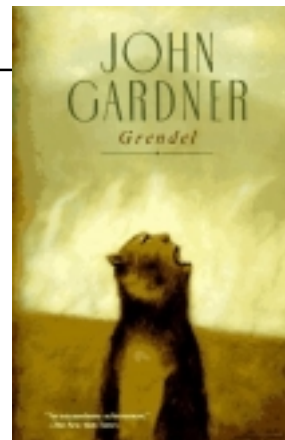
9. What title would you invent for this chapter?

Your Opinion

10. What do you think of the novel so far?



Grendel by John Gardner • Chapter 5 • pp. 57-74



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about *Beowulf*.

1. Where does the dragon appear in *Beowulf*? Do Grendel and the dragon ever meet?

As You Read the Chapter

2. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
3. Is this the dragon that Beowulf later kills? Does it matter? If he claims to see the future, does he know his own fate? (see p. 70, middle of the page, to support your answer)

Philosophy Connection

4. In *your* opinion, what do *you* think Grendel comes away with after his visit to the dragon? Here is what Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" thinks:

In Chapter Five, the chapter of Leo the dramatizer, Grendel learns what his role will be in the new order Shaper has provided. Grendel goes to a dragon to ask about his part in the world and meets a metaphysician who explains everything's place in the world. Gardner says that the dragon is "nasty" and "says all the things that a nihilist would say." [5] Much of the dragon's advice is nihilistic and much is materialistic, but the most important part comes from [Alfred North] Whitehead [a mathematician and philosopher]. The dragon begins his explanation of Grendel's place in the world by describing the fundamental connectedness of things and deploring the common-sense notions of reality. He then tells Grendel that: "Importance is primarily monistic in its reference to the universe. Limited to a finite individual occasion, importance ceases to be important. . . . Expression, however, . . . is founded on the finite occasion" (58). The dragon is explaining the way in which eternal objects are expressed in actual entities, taking his explanation directly from Whitehead: "Importance is primarily monistic in its reference to the universe. Importance, limited to a finite individual occasion, ceases to be important. . . . But expression is founded on the finite occasion [Alfred North Whitehead. *Modes of Thought* (1938; rpt. New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 20. Another example of Gardner's use of Whitehead's analysis is the dragon's discussion of time (56) and that in *Modes of Thought* (141).] The dragon uses Whitehead's metaphysics to explain an ordering of the world even more comprehensible and sensible than the one Shaper provides. The problem is that Grendel can understand Shaper, but not the dragon. The dragon needs to stoop to particulars: "You improve them, my boy! Can't you see that yourself? You stimulate them! You make them think and scheme. You drive them to poetry, science, religion, all that makes them what they are for as long as they last. . . . You are mankind, or man's condition" (62). The dragon prevents Grendel from accepting the simplified theological world-view offered by Shaper—"What god? Where? Life force, you mean? The principle of process?" (63)—and helps Grendel recognize a more complex order in the world.

Astrological Connection

5. Up to this point, Gardner has slipped in the actual image of the astrological sign for each chapter? Can you find any indication of this one?

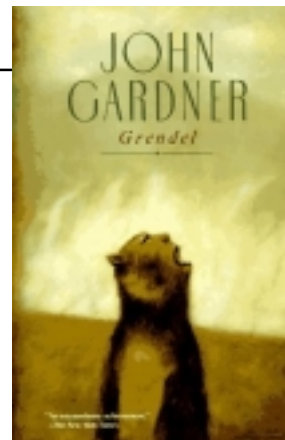


Chapter Title

6. What title would you invent for this chapter?



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 6 • pp. 75-90**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about *Beowulf*.

1. Who is Unferth?

As You Read the Chapter

2. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
3. Where are we now in the timeline of Grendel's twelve year war on Hrothgar?
4. Be on the lookout for definitions of heroism in this chapter, especially on pp.83, 88, 89. You may want to write them down. What is it that Grendel does that prevents Unferth from being the hero he desires to be?

Philosophy Connection

5. Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" claims that it is in this chapter where Grendel really finds himself. He writes:

Before his realization, Grendel had possessed no real sense of himself: he accepted the images others had of him (his mother's image of him as "son," the villagers' image of him as "monster," and Shaper's image of him as "devil") for his self-image. Thus, Grendel is reborn but reborn into scepticism. He accepts that beings other than himself exist, but he has postulated them all as enemies. Grendel is a sceptic, one who doubts everything with moral fervor, and has decided that his new role is to be the destroyer of all the hypocritical orders men have created. Grendel feels that all orders blind men to the truth: "So much for heroism. So much for the harvest-virgin. So much, also, for the alternative visions of blind old poets and dragons" (78).

Do you agree or disagree with Stromme? If you agree that Grendel has become a sceptic, then what made him start thinking that way? Did he always have it in him and just discover it, or did the dragon really change his viewpoint (see p.75)?

Astrological Connection

6. Now the astrological signs are getting a little more obscure. Supposedly this chapter is devoted to Virgo, the Virgin. Find any connections?

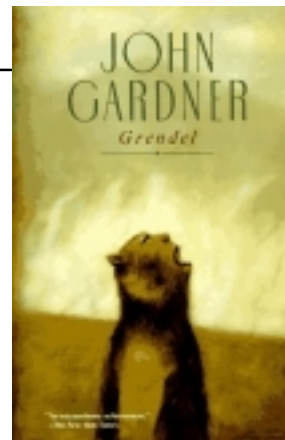


Chapter Title

7. What title would you invent for this chapter?



Grendel by John Gardner • Chapter 7 • pp. 91-110



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

...Then Welthow,
Hrothgar's gold-ringed queen, greeted
The warriors; a noble woman who knew
What was right, she raised a flowing cup
To Hrothgar first, holding it high
For the lord of the Danes to drink, wishing him
Joy in that feast. The famous king
Drank with pleasure and blessed their banquet.
Then Welthow went from warrior to warrior,
Pouring a portion from the jeweled cup
For each, till the bracelet-wearing queen
Had carried the mead-cup among them and it was Beowulf's
Turn to be served. She saluted the Geats'
Great prince, thanked God for answering her prayers,
For allowing her hands the happy duty
Of offering mead to a hero who would help
Her afflicted people. He drank what she poured,
Edgeth's brave son, then assured the Danish
Queen that his heart was firm and his hands
Ready....Welthow was pleased with his words,
His bright-tongued boasts; she carried them back
To her lord, walked nobly across to his side.
(Raffel 42-43, lines 612-641)

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about *Beowulf*.

1. Who is Wealthow?

As You Read the Chapter

2. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
3. How does Grendel's raiding effect the socio-political-economic structure of Hrothgar's kingdom? How does the nearby king react?

Philosophy Connection

4. Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" claims:

Chapter Seven is the story of Wealthow, "holy servant of the common good" (86). She is given to Hrothgar by her brother as a tribute to Hrothgar's power. She brings such a great sense of peace and has a faith so deep that she protects the village from Grendel's ravages. Libra is the sign of conciliators, and Wealthow brings harmony not only between the two peoples, but within the village as well. Chapters Six and Seven are the heart of the novel just as Virgo and Libra arc the center of the astrological year. What we have is the scepticism of Grendel balanced by the faith of Wealthow. He is willing to sacrifice nothing; she "would give, had given her life for those she loved" (88) and has "lain aside her happiness for theirs" (90). He is a sceptic; she is the closest thing we see to a Christian in Grendel. Shaper brought the Old Testament to the village, but Wealthow brings the New Testament ideals with her. At the center of the novel, then, we have the two contrasting ways of viewing the world: Grendel's belief in chaos and futility balanced by Wealthow's belief in order and purpose.

Once again, Stromme has used the astrological signs to develop a theory, and he uses quotes to back up his theory. Do you agree or disagree with him? Can you find any quotes to back up YOUR view of how and why Gardner created Wealthow, and what her purpose is in the novel.

Astrological Connection

5. Since Stromme explains the astrological signs above, you don't have to, unless, of course, you have a better idea that you'd like to share?



Chapter Title

6. What title would you invent for this chapter?



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 8 • pp. 111-124**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

Before You Read the Chapter

Refresh your memory about *Beowulf*.

1. Who are Hrothgar's two brothers, and where is he in the birth order?

As You Read the Chapter

2. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?

Philosophy Connection

3. Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" claims:

The first seven chapters have transformed Grendel from a frightened solipsistic child into an angry sceptical monster. The village has evolved from a small collection of huts into a city-state. Everything necessary for Beowulf's arrival has been given to us, but Beowulf does not arrive for four more chapters. The plot has been developed; the next four chapters develop philosophical ideas Gardner is interested in. Gardner says that "at about Chapter 8 there is a section in which you are no longer advancing in terms of the momentum toward the end... it's just the wheels spinning. That is not novelistic form; it's lyrical form." [7] Gardner stretches Grendel to elucidate certain ideas about philosophy and the growth of society, not to add convolutions to the traditional plot. These chapters should reveal just how different Grendel is from a more traditional novel, for its underlying purpose is to explore philosophies, not character.

So if Gardner is just "spinning his wheels" here, then which philosophy is he exploring with Hrothulf in this chapter? Here's the hint. You explain the connection.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) viewed the state as an organism with its ruler as the head and its people as the body. He maintained that a healthy state is unified, orderly, and in balance, and that its people have happiness, honor, strength, and security. But an unhealthy state is disorderly and unbalanced, and may require strong measures to restore it to normal. Machiavelli called for a leader to use any means necessary to preserve the state, resorting to cruelty, deception, and force if nothing else worked. As a result, many people thought he supported the use of cruelty and deceit in politics. The word Machiavellian came to mean cunning and unscrupulous. Machiavelli explained most of his ideas in *The Prince*, his best-known book, which was written in 1513 and published in 1532. This book describes the methods by which a strong ruler might gain and keep power.

Astrological Connection

4. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?

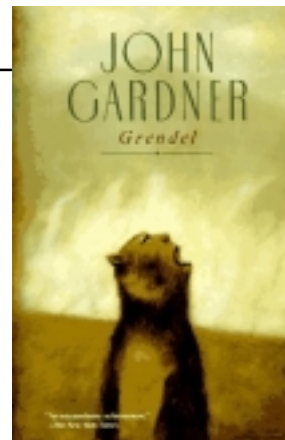


Chapter Title

5. What title would you invent for this chapter?



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 9 • pp. 125-137**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

As You Read the Chapter

1. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?

Philosophy Connection

2. Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" writes:

The priest tells Grendel,

The King of Gods is not concrete, but He is the ground for concrete actuality. No reason can be given for the nature of God, because that nature is the reason for rationality. . . . The King of the Gods is the actual entity in virtue of which the entire multiplicity of eternal objects obtains its graded relevance to each stage of concrescence. Apart from Him, there can be no relevant novelty. (114)

How does the old priest's view of God differ from what Grendel has heard before? How does this encounter with the old faithful priest affect Grendel?

3. What do you think the author, John Gardner, is trying to say about God in *Grendel*?
4. Read the excerpt from Gardner's letter to a teacher and her three students (see back). After reading the excerpt, now what do you think Gardner is trying to say about God? How has your answer in Question 3 changed since reading the excerpt?

Astrological Connection

5. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?



Chapter Title

6. What title would you invent for this chapter?

Teresa mentions that the dragon expresses "John Gardner's thoughts about God." As you know by now, that's not quite right. As a matter of fact, I sort of incline to the persuasion that there is a God; but that isn't important either; since he never talks to me or writes me a letter I have to get along on my own. What is important, is the too innocent way of reading: the dragon is a creature I made up, as a writer, just as I made up Grendel (this Grendel), the priests, Red Horse, and all the rest. What one ought to do, I think, in working with serious fiction, is assume (at the start anyway) that the writer is not in *any* of his characters; he can only be found in the total effect, the total structure, the *feeling* that comes out of it all--in this case, I hope, the feeling that Grendel's story is a sort of tragedy (though by no means a true classic tragedy). Teresa also feels that my handling of the old priest "pokes fun at religion." That's an understandable reading, but notice that the old priest--if I'm not mistaken--is a lovable and serious-minded creature; even Grendel can't help but sort of like him. If the reader steps back out of Grendel's mind, he notices an odd thing about that priest. Though he's wrong and may seem to Grendel foolish, he has faith and awe, two qualities Grendel tragically lacks. It's better to be wrong, even foolish, than nihilistic. And another odd thing about the priest is that his thought echoes that of the first dragon--but with the same fundamental information, he finds a positive vision instead of a negative one. So the point is really this: when one works with art, one must think as much with one's emotions as with one's mind. If one's emotions say that a certain character is good, than chances are he is good. Think of Polonius in *Hamlet*. For years critics made fun of him because he's "wrong." Lately critics have begun to notice that wrong as he is, he's a good man. Shakespeare recreated him and went even further with this argument (good-heartedness versus intelligence) in *The Tempest*. Teresa's idea that "the corruption of man comes from society"--a common idea ever since Rousseau, and a doubtful one, really--is an idea legitimately derived from the novel, but if you brood on it a little longer you may begin to feel the novel's position [is] more complicated than that. Society can corrupt, but so can isolation. In the long run, I hope, an imperfect society is better than a solitary monster.



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 10 • pp. 138-150**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

As You Read the Chapter

1. Write down three lines or phrases that interest you. Why does each line interest you?
2. Go back to Chapter 5 for a minute, page 69. The dragon speaks.

"Put it this way," he said. His voice had grown feeble, as if he were losing hope. "In the case of vegetables, we find expressive bodily organizations which lack any one center of experience with a higher complexity either of expressions received or of inborn data. Another democracy, but with qualifications, as we shall see. An animal, on the other hand, is dominated by one or more centers of experience. If the dominant activity be severed from the rest of the body—if, for example, we cut off the head—the whole coordination collapses, and the animal dies. Whereas in the case of the vegetable, the democracy can be subdivided into minor democracies which easily survive without much apparent loss of functional expression." He paused. "You at least follow that?"

How does this relate to the scene with the goat? The death of the Shaper?

Philosophy Connection

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, (FREE drihkh NEE chuh) (1844-1900), was a German philosopher and classical scholar. He deeply influenced many philosophers, artists, and psychologists of the 1900's. Read a summary of his philosophies on the back of this sheet, then write at least three connections between his philosophy and what is going on in this chapter.

Astrological Connection

4. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?



Chapter Title

5. What title would you invent for this chapter?

Your Opinion

6. What do you think of the novel now that you are nearing the end, when Beowulf will make his appearance?

Classical scholarship.

Nietzsche's first book was *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). It presented a new theory of the origins of classical Greek culture. Nietzsche believed that Greek culture could best be understood as resulting from a conflict between two basic human drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The Apollonian was represented by Apollo, the god of the sun. The Dionysian was represented by Dionysus, the god of wine and intoxication.

The Apollonian is a drive to create clarity and order. It is a desire for a world in which everything possesses a clear identity and can be distinguished from other things. The Apollonian tendency finds expression in the visual arts, where each form stands out clearly from other forms. Nietzsche argued that, in reality, the world lacks any clear distinctions, that it is confused, chaotic, and cruel. The Apollonian drive tries to redeem the horrors of the real world by giving it the illusion of order and beauty, thus making it tolerable.

The Dionysian is a drive that tries to rip apart Apollonian illusions and reveal the reality that lies behind them. This revelation takes place only in special states of ecstasy or religious frenzy induced by drinking, wild music, and sexual license.

Nietzsche came to the conclusion that the Greeks, keenly aware of the pain of existence, were forced to create the mythical world of the gods in order to live at all. The gods "justified human life by living it themselves." The Greeks saw the gods as images of themselves, much as one sees oneself mirrored in a dream, while still aware that the image is not really oneself, but rather a "fair illusion." By means of such illusion, the Greeks withstood their suffering. Such "illusion," whether in dream, myth, or art, need not be pleasant. What matters most is the presence of form and control over the basically irrational and uncontrolled nature of the universe.

Nietzsche said language (from which logic springs) can never reach the limits of the Dionysian "primordial contradiction." This view, that language, logic, and reason produce in the end only a disappointment in false hopes is also a mark of many present-day philosophers and writers of the school called "existentialism."

When the inquiring mind finally realizes this fundamental limitation of reason, it is seized by a feeling of the tragic-pessimism which overcomes optimistic conviction - and seeks the only remedy possible, "the remedy of art." Thus art is reborn, and its supremacy recognized; it is indeed the only true justification of existence.

Nietzsche and religion.

Nietzsche was a severe critic of religion, especially Christianity. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883 to 1885), he proclaimed that "God is dead." This was his dramatic way of saying that most people no longer believed in God. Thus, religion could no longer serve as the foundation for moral values.

Nietzsche believed that the time had come to examine traditional values critically. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), he examined the origins of our moral systems. He argued that the warriors who dominated earlier societies had defined their own strength as "good" and the weakness of the common people they dominated as "bad." Nietzsche called this "master morality" because it represented the values of the masters.

Later, the priests and common people, who wanted to take power, defined their own weakness and humility as "good." They called the aggressive strength of the warriors "evil." Nietzsche identified these values, which he called "slave morality," with the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition that dominates Western culture. He criticized these values as being expressions of the fear and resentment of the weak against the strong.

Psychological ideas.

Nietzsche's major psychological theory states that all human behavior is inspired by a "will to power." He wanted to disprove and replace a common prevalent psychological theory that was known as hedonism. Hedonism holds that human behavior is inspired by a desire to experience pleasure and avoid pain. Nietzsche argued that people are frequently willing to increase their pain, strain, or tension to accomplish tasks that allow them to feel power, competence, or strength.

Nietzsche did not mean that people wanted only to dominate each other, nor that they were only interested in physical or political power. He wrote that we also want to gain power over our unruly drives and instincts. He thought that the self-control exhibited by artists and people who practice self-denial for religious reasons was actually a higher form of power than the physical bullying of the weak by the strong.

Nietzsche's ideal was the overman (or superman), a passionate individual who learns to control his or her passions and use them in a creative manner. This superior human being channels the energy of instinctual drives into higher, more creative, and less objectionable forms. Nietzsche believed that such "sublimation" of energy is far more valuable than the suppression of the instincts urged by Christianity and other religions.

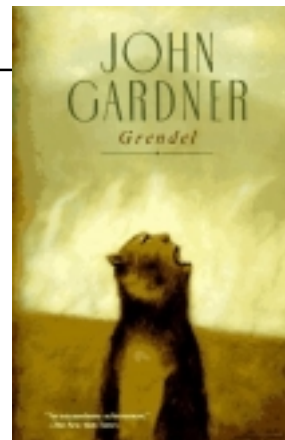
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***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 11 • pp. 151-166**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

As You Read the Chapter

1. Write down three lines or phrases. Why does each line interest you?

Philosophy Connection

2. Read what Craig J. Stromme, in his essay "The Twelve Chapters of Grendel" writes about Grendel at this point in the novel, and then reflect on what you think about the development of Grendel's character up to this point.

Grendel's journey thus far, then, has been from solipsist to sceptic to nihilist. He has listened to the great metaphysicians explain their systems, but he could never believe that an order corresponded to what they described. As Nietzsche is traditionally seen as a predecessor of Sartre, Chapter Eleven gives us the most succinct version of Sartre's thought in the novel.

After Grendel sees Beowulf for the first time, he retires to his cave and meditates on his being:

All order, I've come to understand, is theoretical, unreal—a harmless, sensible,, smiling mask men slide between the two great, dark realities, the self and the world. . . . "Am I not free?. . . I have seen—I embody—the vision of the dragon.' absolute, Final waste. I saw long ago the whole universe as not-my-mother, and I glimpsed my place in it, a hole. Yet I exist, I knew. Then I alone exist, I said. It's me or it. What glee, that glorious recognition!. . . For even my mama loves me not for myself, my holy specialness . . . but for my son-ness, my possessedness. (138)

"All order . . . is theoretical, unreal" is Grendel's explicit rejection of the dragon, the priests, and Shaper. Because "I alone exist," he feels that he must create his own order centered around himself and his perceptions of the world. He posits himself as the center of the world and arranges it accordingly: "For the world is divided, experience teaches, into two parts: things to be murdered, and things that would hinder the murder of things" (139). The ideas Grendel expresses of freedom, existence, and possessedness are all Sartre's ideas, all central to existentialism. In this chapter we can truly say that Grendel has become an existentialist. God (Shaper) is dead, and after his initial despair, Grendel has built a new world and new order without Him. Grendel's chosen essence, "absolute, final waste," does not seem very different from what it was before—the important thing is that now he moves beyond a received definition of himself and defines the world in his own terms.

Astrological Connection

3. Which astrological sign is revealed in this chapter of the novel? What do you know about this sign of the zodiac? How does it (if it does) connect to this chapter?

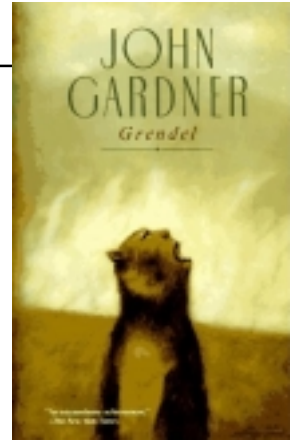


Chapter Title

4. What title would you invent for this chapter?



***Grendel* by John Gardner • Chapter 12 • pp. 167-174**



Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

As You Read the Chapter

1. Write down three lines or phrases. Why does each line interest you?

Philosophy Connection

2. Here is Stromme's final word on the last chapter of *Grendel* (see the back of this sheet). As you have read the excerpts from his essay on "The Twelve Chapters of *Grendel*," what have you learned about 1) philosophy, 2) character development, 3) how to write an essay using quotes to back up your claims?

3. Let's here from the author himself (this is from his letter to the teacher and her three students):

I don't tell you all this, obviously, because I'm a hell-fire preacher urgently concerned that you understand my meaning in *Grendel*. Art never, if it's true art, belligerently insists on its meaning. One of the most exciting things in a great work of art is that it makes the reader realize things he didn't know before--about himself and the world--and the joy the reader experiences comes from his seeing it himself, not from his being told it by a teacher or the writer or anybody else. A book like *Grendel* (not that I claim it's a masterpiece) takes experience and sophistication, which means that different readers will find in it different things. Hopefully all readers will enjoy it and recognize the central question, namely: *if the world really is meaningless (as it now stands) how should I live?* To some readers it will come as news that the world really is meaningless. That is, some readers will never have considered, before, that everything we do--*everything*--eventually comes to nothing. Look at the most ancient civilizations. Think for instance of Stonehenge. All over the British Isles, in Brittany, and as far south as Gaza, we find rings of stones like those at Stonehenge, all made to the same measuring rod, which means that one huge and glorious civilization was able to organize this incredibly difficult project, was able to build the roads it takes for hauling such huge stones, was able to organize the labor force--which must have numbered in the millions--was able to figure out the leverage system, and so on and so on, and all at least a thousand years before Pythagoras! What do we know of this incredible civilization--this nation (or whatever) that controlled more land than did Alexander the Great? We know, precisely nothing. Were they Chinese? Black? Were they giants? Pygmies? Nobody knows. We know they had figured out the movements of the stars, and were more accurate than Ptolemy; but we don't even know if they drew pictures. So it will be, eventually, with all we love in America or France or China or Kenya.

So one reader of *Grendel* will get only this much: that what we value so may not be lasting. Another reader may get much, much more. What the reader gets is not my concern or business. What matters is that I work out the problems with absolute

honesty, that I make *Grendel* sympathetic so that the reader will feel *from inside* the importance of the question, What should I do? If the reader decides, as all three papers here decide, that I am advising people to live like *Grendel* and give up values, then the reader is wrong but I have done no harm, because the reader will see--in *spite* of his slight misreading--that somehow it's not good giving up values (which is exactly what I say). We all know that love sometimes dies, that people who at one time love each other truly and deeply may at another time stop loving each other. But as John Barth beautifully points out in *Chimera*, that is no reason for people to stop trying to love each other all their lives. In other words (as both Barth and I have been saying in books) we don't *need* eternal values to assert and *try to live up to eternal values*.

What did you, personally, experience from this novel?
What did you find in it that made you think about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?

Chapter Title

4. What title would you invent for this chapter?



Chapter Twelve, the chapter of Pisces, the end of the astrological cycle, shows us the battle between Grendel and Beowulf. Beowulf has come to Hrothgar's village to kill the monster and bring a new age to its people. Grendel wants to kill Beowulf in order to maintain the village as his fief-dom. Grendel creeps into the sleeping hall, hoping to kill Beowulf by surprise, but Beowulf, instead, tricks Grendel and seizes him. Beowulf twists Grendel's arm behind his back and forces him to listen:

"Though you murder the world, turn plains into stone, transmogrify life into I and it, strong searching roots crack your cave and rain will cleanse it: The world will burn green, sperm build again. My promise. Time is the mind, the hand that makes. . . . By that I kill you. . . . Grendel, Grendel! You make the world by whispers, second by second. Are you blind to that? Whether you make it a grave or a garden of roses is not the point. Feel the wall: is it not hard?" He smashes me against it, breaks open my forehead. "Hard, yes! Observe the hardness, write it down in careful runes. Now sing of walls! Sing!" (149-50). Beowulf beats Grendel until he produces his first poem; satisfied with the poem, he lets Grendel wander off to bleed to death. As Grendel dies, he says, "Poor Grendel's had an accident. . . . So may you all" (152).

About the last chapter Gardner says, "Grendel begins to apprehend the universe. Poetry is an accident, the novel says, but it's a great one." Grendel can no longer say "Only I exist" after he has sung of the beauty of walls. Beowulf forces Grendel to discard his existentialism and view the world without a screen. Beowulf beats Grendel against reality and turns him into an empiricist. Out of such contact comes poetry. Grendel can only understand that all knowledge, all truth, all art grows out of the contact with reality after he has been forced to give up his old philosophy. Grendel does not merely imagine the wall and posit that it is not-Grendel; he has his head smashed against it until he rejects everything but experience.

Grendel's philosophical journey is almost circular, just as the cycle of astrology is circular. He begins with solipsism, "Only I exist," and ends with empiricism, for which only objects of experience are real. The major difference between the two is that empiricism accepts the existence of other objects while solipsism denies other objects concrete existence. These two schools are closely related historically and often difficult to tell apart in certain philosophers, Hume, for example. Once the empiricist questions the existence of external objects, he becomes a solipsist. The cycle of astrology, then, is important as a symbol for Grendel's philosophical development as well as for some clues in the chapters. Grendel's first teacher, the dragon, reveals the beauties of metaphysics and his final teacher, Beowulf, reveals the hard truths of empiricism. Grendel's awareness of the flaws of the former and the limits of the latter allow him to create poetry, a new way of ordering the world.

Grendel's journey is not the only important one in the novel. The village of Hrothgar's people is almost a main character itself, and its journey is also circular: from an unimportant village to the prosperous years of Shaper and Hrothgar, and finally into a decline with neither a great poet nor a great leader. Shaper "sang of a glorious mead-hall whose light would shine to the end of the ragged world" (39-40). He sang of something that will happen in the future and then helped to bring it about. Grendel sings that "these towns shall be called the shining towns" (151). Shaper's prophecy came true, but its time of truth is already over. The Shaper heralds the village's growth; Grendel's poem signals its decline. Moreover, Grendel's death destroys the last, great symbol of the village's struggle over adversity. Statecraft and religion had already been cheapened, and when Grendel dies even brute nature is gone. Grendel shows in all ways the passing of one age and the birth of the next, and so the novel becomes a complete history of man's progress.