

Session 3, Reading Selection #2

This selection is an excerpt from the Anglo-Saxon epic poem Beowulf. The poem describes the battles of the heroic Scandinavian prince Beowulf against the monster Grendel, who has been terrorizing King Hrothgar's banquet hall for twelve years. This excerpt describes the arrival of the monster at the banquet hall. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

from Beowulf

1 Out in the black fen something stirred. It was cruel and slimy and its eyes shone green. A part of the night it moved through, its wicked heart was darker than the darkest place in that night. . . .

[Back in the castle]

2 Queen Wealhtheow paced the corridors, wringing her white hands until the knucklebones nearly pierced the delicate flesh. Unferth, drunk, his buckle-belt undone, leaned from a turret to scan the murky marsh. Hrothgar and his lords waited in the banqueting hall below. Food was set out, steaming on the tables; but nobody felt like eating it.

. . .

3 The coming of Grendel was neither swift nor slow. This time, the night so thick, it was impossible to tell the precise moment when the creature emerged from his dreggy pool and began to drag his coils toward hall Heorot. There was only the sound to go by—the foul breath squeaking in little gasps, the noise in his throat like the splintery crunching of bones. The rats could not see him and ran over his scales in the dark. Grendel let them go. He was hungry for more than rats.

4 The door of the banqueting hall was thick and studded. Stout bars held it shut against the night's alarms. None of the ten waiting warriors had slept a wink. Hrothgar's eyes never left the door. He sat bolt upright, sword in hand, a broad axe at his side. The others were in similar attitudes.

5 But they had no chance against the fury of the beast.

6 One moment the door was standing . . .

7 The next, it was down, smashed by a single blow, and Grendel was upon them!

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Session 3, Multiple-Choice Questions

- 35 What does paragraph 2 show about the people in the castle?
- A. They were unprepared.
 - B. They were nervous.
 - C. They were hungry.
 - D. They were patient.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 35: Literature/Learning Standard 12

- 36 In paragraph 3, which word **best** describes Grendel's attitude as he heads toward the castle?
- A. determined
 - B. cautious
 - C. casual
 - D. weary

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 36: Literature/Learning Standard 15

- 37 What was the **main** thing Hrothgar and his men were counting on to keep Grendel out of the hall?
- A. the bars on the door to the hall
 - B. the blackness of the night
 - C. the guard in the turret
 - D. the weapons inside the hall

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 37: Literature/Learning Standard 8

- 38 Although the author never directly describes what happened after Grendel got into the hall, the tone of the last three paragraphs suggests that
- A. Grendel was soundly defeated by Hrothgar.
 - B. Grendel's strength overcame Hrothgar and his men.
 - C. Grendel fled when he saw the men's swords.
 - D. Grendel was surprised to see the men in the hall.

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 38: Literature/Learning Standard 12

English Language Arts, Grade 7

- 39 In paragraph 3, the author writes “the noise in his throat like the splintery crunching of bones.” What kind of figurative language is he using?
- A. alliteration
 - B. exaggeration
 - C. simile
 - D. metaphor

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 39: Literature/Learning Standard 15

- 40 In paragraph 4, the author writes, “Stout bars held it shut against the night’s alarms.” What does *stout* mean?
- A. long
 - B. iron
 - C. wooden
 - D. strong

Reporting Category/Learning Standard for Item 40: Language/Learning Standard 4