Grendel Study Guide

Chapter 1

1. What is the point of view of the novel? Who is the narrator?
2. What is the setting of the novel at its open?
3. Does Grendel think his thirst for killing is a sickness or a pleasure – or neither? Explain.
4. In chapter one, what special powers of Grendel are described?
5. Who unveiled the truth to Grendel? (Briefly mentioned)
6. What is Grendel’s opinion of his mother? Give textual support.
7. Who is the Shaper? What is his job? Describe the Shaper.
8. How does Grendel describe the man in chapter one?
9. What is the defining event/question for Grendel in this chapter?

Chapter 2 – beginning of the flashback

1. What activities does Grendel describe from his youth?
2. How does Grendel hurt himself?
3. Who or what are the “large old shapes with smoldering eyes” that watch Grendel?
4. How does Grendel describe the world?
5. What is Grendel’s opinion of the bull? Why?
6. “Maybe we could chop the fungus out.” Describe the situation surrounding this line.
7. Who are the “pattern makers” and why is Grendel afraid of them?
8. Who throws an ax at Grendel? Who is the “tall one”? (same answer for both)

Chapter 3

1. Contrast the difference in human behavior before and after the arrival of the Shaper.
2. This chapter describes the entrance of the Shaper. What is the significance of the Shaper.
3. When does Grendel decide to turn on Hrothgar?
4. Grendel states, “Then once, around midnight, I came to a hall in ruins.” Describe what Grendel sees.
5. Why did the wars begin?
6. How do Grendel’s memories of the Danes differ from what the Shaper tells?
7. What is the subject of the first song the Shaper sings?
8. Describe how Hrothgar gained his power.

Chapter 4

1. According to Grendel, what was the purpose of Herot?
2. Cite examples of irony and hypocrisy mentioned in this chapter.
3. What is the purpose of using italics in this chapter?
4. What does Grendel see as the purpose of the Shaper?
5. Why do the humans receive the Shaper so warmly?
6. In this chapter what “conversion” takes place?
7. On page 53, what does Grendel seem to be saying about point of view?
8. Why does Grendel want to believe the Shaper’s idea of creation found on page 55?
9. The confirming event takes place in this chapter. What is it?

Chapter 5

1. Give a physical description of the dragon.
2. How does the dragon view Grendel?
3. What powers does the dragon have?
4. The dragon says to Grendel, “You want the word. That’s what you’ve come for. My advice is, don’t ask!” What is the word?
5. What does the dragon say about the Shaper?
6. According to the dragon, how do humans think?
7. The dragon has a long discussion or discourse on time and space. What is relative?
8. “The essence of life is to be found in the frustrations of established order.” What does this line mean?
9. According to the dragon, why does man kill?
10. The dragon tells Grendel, “You are, so to speak, the brute existent by which they learn to define themselves.” What is the meaning of this line?
11. What is the dragon’s response to the existence of God?
12. According to the dragon, what is life?

Chapter 6 – Unferth Chapter

1. After meeting the dragon, Grendel says he has changed. What stays with Grendel after meeting the dragon? i.e. how has Grendel changed?
2. What charm did the dragon put on Grendel?
3. In the beginning, Grendel misunderstood and thought the charm was an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. After meeting the dragon, Grendel’s feelings towards hearing the Shaper’s songs changed from shame to what?
5. What about the Shaper’s songs enrages Grendel?
6. “All around their bubble of stupidity I could feel the brume of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
7. How many Danes does Grendel snatch from their beds when he launches his first raid.
8. Grendel states that after he begins his killing raids, he was transformed. He had become something. What has Grendel become?
9. As Grendel is killing the Danes, he meets his salvation. What is his salvation?
10. Who is Sideways-Walker?
11. “the dragon scent in the room grew stronger, as if my teasing were bringing the old beast near.” What is Grendel doing at this point in the novel?
12. Instead of killing Unferth, what does Grendel do to attack him?
13. Grendel protects Unferth from what?
14. What kind of heroism does Unferth display?
15. What is Unferth’s explanation of a hero?
16. Does Grendel kill Unferth? Why or why not?
17. What efforts does Unferth make at attacking Grendel?

Chapter 7 – Wealtheow Chapter

1. Define NIHILISM (Look it up!!)
2. According to Grendel, he has not committed the ultimate act of nihilism. What is it?
3. In the second year of Grendel’s raiding, he learns that Hrothgar faces another threat to his kingdom in addition to Grendel’s terror. What is the threat?
4. “Hygmod, lord of the Helmings, greet your guests!” Who is Hygmod?
5. Who was the leader of the army of Scyldings?
6. Hygmod has what animal for a pet on a chain?
7. What “treasure” does Hygmod offer Hrothgar to save Hygmod’s life?
8. Describe Wealtheow when Hrothgar first sees her.
9. Grendel says, “I clenched my teeth, tears streaming from my eyes.” What about this scene when Grendel first sees Wealtheow moves Grendel to the point of tears?
10. What is the grim parallel that Grendel notes on page 102?
11. How does the arrival of Wealtheow at Herot change Hrothgar? change Hrothgar’s men? change the Shaper?
12. Who is the brother-killer?
13. Who is the “thinking animal stripped naked of former illusions, stubbornly living on, ashamed and meaningless, because killing himself would be, like his life, unheroic..”?
14. Grendel sees himself as Wealtheow’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
15. “Old Hrothgar watched and listened, brooding on dangers.” What is the context of this statement?
16. Grendel says he was “clenching feet on fire with chilblains.” What are CHILBAINS? Look it up!
17. Who was guarding the door to Wealtheow’s room? Be specific!
18. How does Hygmod’s bear die?
19. Why does Grendel not kill Wealtheow?