

Grendel in beowulf: character analysis

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The epic poem of Beowulf was mysteriously written some time between the 8th and the 11th century. Even though Beowulf is a one series poem, it's not the only piece of literature based on the epic tale of Beowulf. In 1971 a man named John Gardner wrote a novel titled Grendel, in which a parallel story is told from the wandering eyes and curious mind of Grendel; the monster. The story of Beowulf was written in third person and introduces a variety of characters, each with individual parts.

Grendel, to the contrary, is written as if the audience was reading Grendel's thoughts right on paper through a first person writing style.

The separate points of view play a significant factor in how each story is interpreted and also the effect of the mood the audience feels by the tones depicted by the authors. The classic poem of Beowulf is similar to various other heroic stories, such as The Odyssey, in which a hero over comes immense challenges and then is present with one of several final tasks such as killing a horrific monster. By definition Grendel would definitely be considered a monster.

All of the people and even Grendel himself describe him as a dreadful gruesome monster, but once the reader steps inside of Grendel's shoes they begin to feel sympathetic for the isolated lonesome beast created by John Gardner. Beowulf was known far and long through the Danish lands; he was the Hercules of the Danes. He had slain countless monsters, but nobody truly thought he could kill the lifeless, devilish, hell-spawned demon; Grendel.

“ Grendel who haunted the moors, the wild Marshes, and made his home in a hell, not hell but hell on earth.

He was spawned in that slime of Cain, murderous creatures banished by God, punished forever for the crime of Abel's death. (Beowulf, 21) People that know the story of Cain and Abel know that Cain committed what was arguably the most evil thing possible. Grendel being referred to as a spawn of Cain is a prime example of alluding to a horrifying theoretical monster. "The monster relished his savage war on the Danes.

.. seeking no peace, offering no truce, accepting no settlement, no price in gold or land. (22) The people think that Grendel is nothing but a monster inside and out, always killing people for nothing but pleasure and delight. "Snatched up thirty men, smashed them unknowing in their beds, and ran..

.ack to his lair, delighted with his night's slaughter. " (22) It would take nothing less than a monster to slaughter thirty men, none the less while they were sleeping and then able to escape leaving the people unknowing. The way the author portrays Grendel is that he is enormous and has unbelievable strength, that of no man. God, whose love Grendel could not know.

" (23) Majority of people would have defined Grendel as a monster simply by his appearance, " It's some beastlike fungus. " (Grendel, 24) People tend to judge others on appearances before anything and the story of Beowulf, to add emphasis to the hero, created the most unappealing, savage, atrocious brute. Even though all the Danes knew of the awful dreaded monster, Grendel, it wasn't only the people who identified him as a monster. Grendel himself and also the all-knowing mighty Dragon both portrayed him as being a mindless monster.

When Grendel was day-dreaming while the Dragon was talking, the dragon got angry at him by saying: “ Nothing interest you but excitement, violence.

” (Grendel, 67) Clearly a characteristic that is not meant to be in a human and it stretches that wide gap of differences from the humans and the beast. This makes the reader feel that Grendel truly is a monster since after all, the dragon knows everything. Through out the story there is a never ending urge for Grendel to be as human-like as possible and he does everything in his power to reach that goal.

Though he tried to educate himself and even learned to roughly speech the language of the humans he could never be chivalrous and noble. “ I fool myself with thoughts that I’m more noble.

” (6) Whether directly stated or simply inferred, Grendel knows that he himself is truly a monster, for he has little to no morals or ethics. I move down through the darkness, burning with murderous lust, my brains raging at the sickness I can observe in myself as objectively as might a mind ten centuries away. (11) Grendel knows that there is no hope of living side by side with humans so it nearly forces him to become a monstrous fiend. Bloodthirsty and burning with murderous lust, he is inhumane brute. Most people consider a monster by its appearance and actions but not everyone considers someone or in this case, something, a monster by its emotions.

Grendel wanted nothing more than to fit into the human society but they created a rutish image of him, which led his emotions to create this self portrayed monster through actions in which he was spiteful and murderous.

The epic tale of Beowulf slaying the evil monster was renowned but it wasn't until 1971 when Gardner expanded on the idea of a sympathetic "monster." Through out the novel Grendel, Grendel aimlessly roams the lands with no hope of any future or any freedom. " I asked the sky. The sky says nothing.. . the sky ignores me, forever unimpressed. " (Grendel, 6) These lines really reach out to the reader's emotions by laying into a first person isolation description that becomes a common theme throughout the book.

The extreme isolation that Grendel suffers from gains sympathy from almost anyone who is to read it because most people know how it feels to be excluded or isolated. " Holding conversations with the only friend and comfort this world affords me, my shadow. " (8) It is no new knowledge to anyone that someone's shadow is a non-existent figure of that person and if that non-existent figure is Grendel's only friend, it adds to the sympathy for such a lonesome isolated animal.

" I nderstood that the world was nothing: a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears.

I understood that finally and absolutely, I alone exist. " (22) Grendel comes to realize that he cannot control anything around him and that the world operates on its own. With this realization it makes him that much more secluded from interaction with other creatures and again the audience feels that level of complete solitary confinement. In the poem Grendel is made out to be a disgusting, repulsive, unimaginable monster and those who read he poem before they read Grendel have a further, deeper, level of compassion for him.

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Grendel is made out to be a horrendous wicked monster in Beowulf, but in Grendel he is shaped as a miserable misunderstood creature. The epic poem did a great job at portraying Grendel as the most evil monster in existents. Contrary to Beowulf, Grendel is written in a sympathetic manner. Grendel is both a sensitive and a life-less animal but it depends on how you read about him. When reading Beowulf, the reader should be prepare to read about a hellish demon monster, but when reading Grendel, ne is a sorr ul monster by torced; not choice.