

Beowulf quote discussion essay sample

[Family](#), [Mother](#)



And that night Grendel came again, so set / On murder that no crime could
ever be enough, / No savage assault quench his lust / For evil. Then each
warrior tried / To escape him, searched for rest in different / Beds, as far
from Herot as they could find, / Seeing how Grendel hunted when they
slept. / Distance was safety; the only survivors / Were those who fled him.
Hate had triumphed. (Beowulf 49-58)

The night after the day of Grendel's first attack, some of Hrothgar's warriors
fled Herot's halls. The wisest fled-knowing that if they sought refuge
someplace away from Herot, Grendel would not be able to reach them and
kill them. Using the metaphor "Distance was safety" (Beowulf 57), Hrothgar
describes the correlation between survival and those who had the wisdom
and foresight to flee Herot before the next nightfall. With Hrothgar declaring
that "Hate had triumphed" (Beowulf 58), Hate is employed as a synonym for
Grendel. Even though Grendel was one of the main antagonists throughout
the story, he had his own version of wisdom-albeit not a good one.

He was wise enough to know that if he repeatedly struck Herot by night, he
would instill fear in the warriors inhabiting the mead hall. By utilizing the
literary devices of metaphor and synonym, Grendel is characterized by
Hrothgar as an evil entity and a force to be reckoned with. In this scenario,
the wisdom to flee Herot proved to be a more valuable weapon than physical
strength-as the only person who could defeat Grendel-who was Beowulf, was
not yet introduced into the plot. Attempts to defeat him prior to Beowulf's
were proven to be fruitless. Quote 2:

That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime, / Knew at once that nowhere on
earth / Had he met a man whose hands were harder; / His mind was flooded
with fear- but nothing / Could take his talons and himself from that tight /
Hard
grip.

Grendel's one thought was to run / From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and
hide there: / This was a different Herot than the hall he had emptied. /...

Suddenly / The sounds changed, the Danes started / In new terror,
cowering in their beds as the terrible / Screams of the Almighty's enemy
sang / In the Darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain / And defeat, the tears
torn out of

Grendel's / Taught throat, hell's captive caught in the arms / Of him who of
all the men on earth / Was the strongest. (Beowulf 273-281, 305-313)

In this passage, the story teller employs situational irony and imagery to
demonstrate the tables turning on Grendel due to the hands of Beowulf. Had
Grendel had the wisdom to actually check upon who was in the hall, he
would never have been stuck in this predicament of the hunter becoming the
hunted. With the usage of the quote “ Grendel's one thought was to run”,
situational irony is extremely apparent. Grendel is now being hunted by
Beowulf, instead of him hunting the inhabitants of Herot.

To describe the suffering of Grendel, the author employs the use of various
lines with adjectives, such as “ In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain”.
With the severity of Grendel's pain having been stressed by imagery, we can
now infer that he regrets not having the wisdom to avoid entering the mead

hall. The theme of wisdom being a more valuable weapon than strength is not directly, but indirectly demonstrated by the fact that Grendel could have avoided defeat at the hands of Beowulf if he had merely taken a glance to check upon who was in the hall. Quote 3:

And Beowulf uttered his final boast: / “ I’ve never known fear, as a youth I fought

/ In endless battle. I am old, now, / But I will fight again, seek fame still, / If the Dragon in his tower dares / To face me.” / Then he said farewell to his followers, / Each in his turn, for the last time: / “ I’d use no sword, no weapon, if this beast / Could be killed without it, crushed to death / Like Grendel, gripped in my

hands / and torn / Limb from limb. But his breath will be burning / Hot, poison will pour from his tongue. / I feel no shame, with shield and sword / And armor, against this monster: when he comes to me / I mean to stand, not run from his shooting / Flames, stand till fate decides / Which one of us wins.

(Beowulf 606-622)

Repeatedly throughout Beowulf, Beowulf wins every battle. When young, he defeated Grendel with bare hands, when middle aged, he defeated Grendel’s Mother with the help of a weapon. We can see a correlation between Beowulf regarding aging and weakness. Through allusion and connotation, that correlation is further explored. When an allusion to Grendel is made, “ I’d use no sword, no weapon, if this beast / Could be killed without it, crushed to death / Like Grendel, gripped in my hands and torn / Limb from limb.”

(Beowulf 613-616), he is referring to his youth when he required no weapon to slay a monster.

When Beowulf was middle aged, he almost died while trying to kill Grendel's Mother with a sword. With allusion to these prior events throughout the epic poem, we can see a clear pattern of age connoting weakness. Because Beowulf is now old, he dies from being scorched to death by the dragon, even though he has a full suit of armor, a sword and shield. This further proves the connotation of age with weakness. Had Beowulf had the wisdom to leave the dragon alone instead of relying on his now waning physical strength and fate, he would have never been killed.

Works Cited

Beowulf. Language of Literature: British Literature. Ed. Arthur N. Applebee. Evanston: McDougal Little, 2000. 33-60. Print.