

ENGL 211: *BEOWULF*
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

GROUP 1: How does the text exhibit the tension between Germanic-heroic values and Christian values? Consider:

- The imagery of armor;
- The references to wealth and treasure;
- The use of dichotomies: light/dark; quiet/noise; inside/outside; community/solitude.

GROUP 2: We are told that when Grendel comes to Heorot, “The iron-braced door / turned on its hinge when his hands touched it” (721-22). Why does the “mouth” of the hall open so easily to him? Consider:

- The description of Grendel as both a denizen of the fens and part of “Cain’s clan” (102-114)
- ll. 115-21
- ll. 480-87
- The coast guard who looks outward for enemies (242-3).

GROUP 3: What is the significance of Beowulf’s boast that he will kill Grendel in hand-to-hand combat (425-455)? Consider:

- The inability of Beowulf’s men to help him with their swords due to Grendel’s magical imperviousness to metals (793-807);
- The hall’s inner destruction and strong outer structure (766-71).

GROUP 4: Beowulf is introduced to us MULTIPLE times.

- Narrator (197 passim);
- Shieldings lookout (249 passim);
- Beowulf’s genealogy and “word hoard” (267 passim);
- Heorot’s guard;
- To Hrothgar;
- Hrothgar’s commentary (381 passim)

How does Beowulf “enter into” the kingdom by way of introductions? What is the purpose or effect of this repetition?

PRELIMINARY NOTES AND IDEAS (use reverse if you need more room):
