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**Beowulf Fishbowl Discussion**

*British Literature A*

**Plot-Based**

1. What is the climax of the plot? Why? Similarly, will Beowulf be defeated? Why or why not?
2. Why does everyone in Herot hall trust Beowulf when he arrives? Why does Beowulf help the Danes?
3. Why is it important that Grendel is descended from Cain? And, is it right that Cain’s punishment is placed on his descendants? Explain.
4. Would Grendel’s mother have attacked Herot Hall if Beowulf hadn’t killed her son? Or, is Grendel’s mother justified in killing Esher? Why or why not?

**Character**

1. Who is Beowulf?
	1. What **motivates** his actions? Why does he fight the monsters?
	2. What are his **limits** or weaknesses?
	3. What does he **value**? How does he perceive himself in relation to others?
	4. Will his **successes** change him?
	5. Is he a quintessential (ideal) **hero**? Why or why not?
2. Who is a better monster: Grendel or Grendel’s mother? Why? How are they different? Why were they killed differently?
3. Is Beowulf a hero or monster in your perspective? Explain.
4. What role do minor characters, such as Unferth, Finn, Seigmund, Hermod, and others play in *Beowulf*?

**Gender**

1. Discuss the women in parts 27-31. What do we know about them? Why are they discussed?
2. Apply the gender lens to some of the female characters in the poem. Consider Grendel’s mother, Welthow, and Hnaf’s wife. How would we traditionally read them? How can we read them through the gender lens?
	1. Consider: why doesn’t Grendel’s mom or Hnaf’s wife have a name?
	2. What else does Welthow do besides pass the mead cup?
	3. Why doesn’t Beowulf bring anything from Grendel’s mother back to Herot?
3. Apply the gender lens to the male characters. Consider Beowulf, Grendel, and Hrothgar especially. How do they exhibit stereotypical qualities of men? How do they break stereotypes?
	1. Consider: why is Beowulf male?
	2. What is Beowulf and Hrothgar’s relationship like?

**Themes**

1. What is the significance of religion in the poem? Why is Christianity alluded to many times, especially in battles?
2. How is Beowulf a good friend to the Hrothgar and the Danes? To Unferth? To his own men, the Geats?
3. What does *Beowulf* show us about what the Anglo-Saxons valued and feared? How do you think the epic has changed over time?
4. Is Grendel based on humanity’s vices (evil qualities)? Why or why not?