

# The Curse of Grendel

A fearless warrior battles a monster who's been tormenting Denmark for years

## About the Story

**Lexile:** 990L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

**Learning Objective:** After reading the play, students write a news article summarizing the play's events.

**Key Skills:** conflict, character, text evidence, author's craft, summarizing

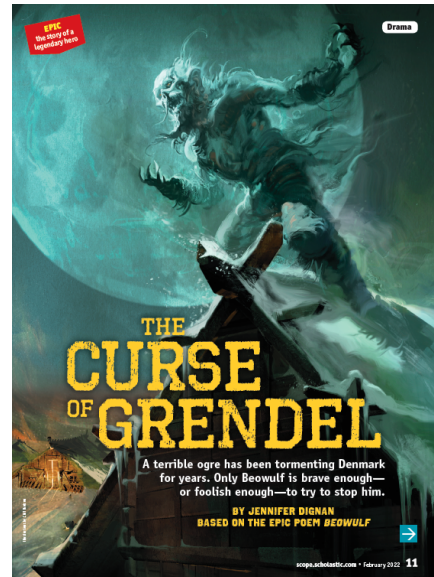
### Essential Questions:

- What are the qualities of a hero?
- How can stories from the past help us understand the time in which they were written?
- What makes a story timeless?

### Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.7, R.9, R.10, W.3, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

### Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation guide to names in the play

### Video:

- "In the Age of Beowulf"

### Connected plays from the Scope archives:

- *The Monster in the Cave*
- *Hunting a Snake-Headed Monster*
- *Into the Maze of Doom*

### Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Preparing to Write: The Heorot Herald
  - Close Reading and Critical Thinking
  - Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
  - Pronunciation guide to names in the play
  - **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
  - Choice Board
  - Quiz\*
  - Contest Entry Form
- \*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

## 1. Preparing to Read

15 minutes

### View a Video (10 minutes)

- Students may have little or no knowledge of the epic poem *Beowulf* and the time period in which it was composed or set. To provide context, show our video “In the Age of Beowulf,” which will introduce them to medieval Europe. (Note: Although the story takes place in sixth-century Denmark, it reflects many of the values of the time and place in which it was written down: England, sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries.)

### Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. Highlighted words: *bested*, *fiend*, *folly*, *loathsome*, *mortally*, *pompous*. (Optionally, share the interactive link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently beforehand. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides.)

## 2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 12 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Project the **pronunciation guide** to the names of people and places in the play. Listen to the audio of the names being read aloud as you assign parts. Then read the play as a class.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions.

### Close-Reading Questions

(15 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- 1. How does Scene 1 illustrate the problem that the Danes in the play face? (conflict)** Scene 1 reveals that the Danes are under siege by a horrible monster named Grendel. Embla describes how "Heorot was once full of life" but now "sits quiet and empty every night." She also tells Gudrun and Oddmar that her parents have told her "many stories of how it used to be," revealing that Grendel has terrorized the Danes for many years, or at least as long as these children have been alive. Grendel's awfulness is further illustrated when he kills Halvar.
- 2. In Scenes 2 and 3, how do other characters describe Beowulf? How does Beowulf see himself? (character)** Wulfgar says Beowulf seems "honest and brave" and "worthy of respect." King Hrothgar says that he has heard Beowulf "has the strength of 30 men in each hand." Beowulf sees himself as capable and invincible and as Denmark's only hope.
- 3. In the time of the play, reputation was of great importance. How is this revealed in the play? (text evidence)** In Scene 4, Unferth challenges Beowulf by attacking Beowulf's reputation. Unferth claims that Beowulf's boasting is unfounded and that Beowulf almost died in a swimming contest. Beowulf responds by pointing out that Unferth is too unimportant to even have a reputation. At the end of the play, Unferth concedes that Beowulf is a mighty warrior. These exchanges show the importance of the words and stories attached to one's name—in other words, the importance of their reputation.
- 4. Why does Beowulf lay aside his sword in Scene 5? What does this reveal about him? (character)** Beowulf lays aside his sword so that his fight with Grendel—who fights with only his hands—will be fair. Students may say that this shows Beowulf's sense of fairness because a victory using a weapon against a beast that uses no weapon would be dishonorable. Other students may say that it shows Beowulf's bravado.
- 5. Which details in Scene 5 show what a horrible monster Grendel is? Why do you think the playwright included these details? (author's craft)** In Scene 5, several details show that Grendel is a horrible monster. He has a "gleeful smile," suggesting he is happy to find Heorot full of men to kill. He immediately devours one of Beowulf's men and turns to Beowulf "with blood shining on his teeth." Swords "have no effect on Grendel's thick skin," showing how difficult it will be to defeat Grendel. The playwright likely included these details to illustrate how thoroughly terrifying Grendel is and to emphasize the greatness of Beowulf's accomplishment in defeating such a monster.

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Beowulf** was written many centuries ago, yet it is still widely read and celebrated today. **Why might the story appeal to modern readers?** *Answers will vary. Students may say that it helps us understand a society from the past. Or they might say that it is an exciting story about victory against all odds, or that the theme of good versus evil is timeless.*
2. **Think about the qualities that make Beowulf admirable in his time. Do you think he would be likable today? Explain.** *Answers will vary. Some students may respond that his admirable qualities include courage and strength, which he uses to protect innocent people. This could make him as likable today as he was in his own time. Others might argue that one of the admirable qualities in his time was boastfulness, but today, such immodesty could make him unlikable.*

## 3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: The Heorot Herald**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 15 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

**Other plays from the Scope archives that tell tales of courageous warriors defeating terrible monsters:**

- [The Monster in the Cave \(September 2020\)](#)
- [Hunting a Snake-Headed Monster \(September 2018\)](#)
- [Into the Maze of Doom \(December 2016/January 2017\)](#)