

Joleigh Marney

Reading Questions-Reading 2-3

Reading 2 (9/13/23):

Question 1- Shield Sheafson took a maul to the mead-benches, mangled his enemies, and wrecked all his foes. He was a good king.

Answer- *"Shield was essentially a marauding pirate. He ran around kicking over people's mead benches. But he is described as "one good king."*

Question 2- It is a gift that means alliance. The king gives it to his warriors knowing that they will stay on his side, because he gave them the rings.

Answer- *"A king gives treasure (rings) to his warriors, and they return promise their allegiance. Treasure is meant to be given. It buys loyalty-it buys bravery. It unites."*

Question 3- Dragons always steal the treasure from others while a good king's treasure is well earned.

Answer- *"Dragons (in all the old stories, not just Tolkien) plunder and kill for the sake of the treasure itself, and they 'never enjoy a brass ring of it.' They hoard it. For a good king, treasure is meant to be given. For a dragon, treasure is meant to be taken. For a good king, treasure unites him to his men. For a dragon, it isolates him. He kills everyone until he is left completely alone with the treasure that he can't enjoy."*

Question 4- The king had his rings, and he was giving them away to the warriors.

Answer- *"Ring-giving happens around the table. There is a table fellowship, there is generosity. The king doles out rings and in return, the thanes swear their loyalty to the ring-giver. This is the center of their culture, and the glue which holds it together."*

Question 5- There was hatred for Hrothgar. The hall would be baiting the battle-flames. There was going to be a family member (the son-in-law) that would start the trouble.

Answer- *"The doom that eventually will destroy Heorot is burning. We are told that the problem will come from within killing among the in-laws."*

Question 6- Grendel was holding a grudge. He did not like the feasting and music. He did not like that the hall was filled with joy.

Answer- *"Grendel is upset by the noise of the banquet. He hates the sound of fellowship, and in particular, the song of the poet."*

Question 7- They people in the hall were singing about the creation.

Answer- *"Grendel hears them singing about creation."*

Question 8- Grendel's ancestor is Cain, who killed his brother (Abel). He was the first person on earth who committed a murder. Cain killed a member of his own family (kin-killing). Heorot was going to be killed by one of his family members. Kin-killing is going to happen in both families.

Answer- *"Grendel was descended from Cain, and he killed his brother. Here we see that Grendel is part of the clan marked by kin-killing. Cain was the first and the archetypal kin-killer. The poet tells us that kin-killing is what will eventually be the destruction of Heorot: it seems to be the perpetual threat. Grendel, of kin-killing stock, is the current threat to the mead-hall...but he's the kin-killer from without. Even when he is gotten out of the way, the future threat to the fellowship of the hall is kin-killing from within."*

Question 9- Shield Sheafson and Grendel were both the pride of their family, and they both fought.

Answer- *"Strangely enough, even though Shield is described as 'a good king' he is called 'the scourge of many tribes, and a wrecker of mead benches.' This is exactly what Grendel is doing a mere eighty lines later."*

Question 10- The people are singing about the creation. Later on, they started to worship false gods and forget God, who they were supposed to be worshipping.

Answer- *"When times are good, the Shielding seem to be worshipping the Creator God. But when affliction comes, they turn back to their old gods. It says that in their hearts they 'remembered Hell.' This indicates a turning back, from which we can infer that they perhaps knew better and are reverting to their old ways. The poet himself adds an editorial note that this was a terrible idea and states that the High King of Heaven was unknown to them. This leaves the exact state of things a bit ambiguous, although it is clear what the poet thinks."*

Question 11- The hero is a mightier man, massive and strong. He is dressed in poor armor though.

Answer- *"We are told that Beowulf is the mightiest warrior of the Geats, that he's battle tested, and that his bravery, nobility, and general awesomeness is obvious to anyone who sees him."*

Question 12- Bilbo Baggins was content in his house. He enjoyed every day. It reminds me of when the warriors were singing about the creation in *Beowulf*. The dwarfs were more of a hop-to-it kind of character, maybe like Beowulf. They weren't afraid of much anything. If there was a problem, they would problem solve through it. Bilbo would kind of follow along. That is kind of what warriors do, they do what they are told.

Answer- *There was no specific answer.*

Reading 3 (9/14/23):

Question 1- The way the author wrote makes us picture the warriors in our minds. He is referring to our sight, and sound. He said they marched glinting in sunlight, and their armor sang as they walked. I took that as the armor was loud and it bumped against each other each step the warriors took.

Answer- *"The poet focuses on the sounds of the men advancing and the way the light catches their armor."*

Question 2- I think his name means fighter. Bees are protective of their home, and wolves are protective of themselves and their pack. Both bees and wolves work as a team.

Answer- *"Bee-Wolf is the word for 'bear'. Bears eat honey-thus, Bee-Wolf. (Note: There are other theories as to the meaning of the name-including 'woodpecker'-but in my humble opinion this one makes the most sense.)"*

Question 3- Beowulf has fought against beasts (five) and sea monsters, and he took out a troll-nest.

Answer- *"Beowulf has fought human enemies (avenging the Geats) but in this story he seems to really specialize in monsters. Here we learn of five beasts, a nest of trolls, and sea-brutes. Later we'll hear the more specific story of the sea-brutes, and of course in the book itself we'll watch him kill three monsters."*

Question 4- Beowulf heard that the monster does not use any weapons, so Beowulf will not use any weapons. Instead, he will fight bare-handed.

Answer- *"Beowulf is going to fight without weapons, hand-to-hand. This is to bring fame and glory to his ring-giver (Hygelac) and also to gladden his heart."*

Question 5- If Grendel wins, there is not going to be any survivor. He is going to kill and eat them all. If Hrethel wins, his war shirt will return from the retainer to be given to Hygelac.

Answer- *"In 442. The outcome of the battle will be deemed a judgment from God. But in 456 Beowulf says, 'Wyrd goes as it much.' The word for fate is 'Wyrd' from which we get our modern word 'weird'"*

Question 6- Hrothgar talked to Beowulf about the relationship he had with Beowulf's father.

Answer- *"We find out that back in the day, Beowulf's father killed a man (Heatholaf) and had to go on the run. He stayed with Hrothgar early on in Hrothgar's reign, and Hrothgar helped him out by first giving him shelter, and then finally by paying the Wergild."*

Question 7- Unferth was not happy that Beowulf was there to help them. Unferth did not like the idea of someone, from not around there, was there to help their problem with Grendel.

Answer- *"Unferth is motivated by envy. He's clearly bothered by Beowulf showing up and being so much admired. It's obviously embarrassing to a thane to have outside help show up in order to take care of a problem. After all, whose primary responsibility should Grendel be? Hrothgar has been the ring-giver, so now is the moment that his thanes should be giving their lives to fight for him. Beowulf showing up makes Unferth look pretty bad. (Especially when he says things about fighting Grendel without weapons.) Given the bond between a ring-giver and his thanes, either Grendel or Unferth should be dead"*

right now. The fact that they are both alive is a testimony to Unferth's cowardice. As long as he could tell himself that Grendel was an impossible foe than he could feel good about himself. Beowulf's arrival made that excuse seem a bit weak. And so he does his best to discredit Beowulf."

Question 8- Beowulf talks about a troll's nest. In the Hobbit, Bilbo Baggins gets into a bad spot with trolls. He almost gets himself and the other dwarfs killed. Obviously, both Beowulf and the characters in the Hobbit lived through the experiences with the trolls.

Answer- *There was no specific answer.*