

British Literature

Week 1

Reading 2 questions

1. "Shield Sheafson was one, scourge of all tribes, Took a maul to the mead-benches, mangled his enemies."
He is described as a man of war who gained great wealth and glory through pillaging and war overseas.
"A good king that was"
The poem calls him a good king, though he seems to be a very restless ruler.
2. "As ring givers rise, they reach their companions so later in life they won't be left on the field. His thanes will stand thick with him, there battle is joined."
The ring givers (people of wealth, kings) give generously so that he may not die on the field of battle alone, instead doing battle with those who are loyal to him.
3. A dragon dies alone while the good king is buried dutifully by those who loved him (loyal to him).
For a good king, treasure is meant to be given. A dragon hoards all of it, "Never enjoying a brass ring of it".
4. "The great and the good with glory were feasting, the scop sang their songs, the strings were well played, the harp filled the hall, a herald of joy."
Feasting, drinking, singing, music, and the giving of gifts
5. "Hatred for Hrothgar was held in abeyance but a son-in-law would soon bring samples of rage."
Foreshadowing of the attack of the monster Grendel
6. "Now a demon demented, in darkness a prowler, held a hard grunge when he heard with great pain, the great and the good with glory were feasting, the scop sang their songs, the strings were well played, the harp filled the hall, a herald of joy."
The celebrations in the mead hall agitated Grendel.
7. "So skilled in his singing, he sang the creation, the Almighty the almighty had ordered the earth to be fashioned, shining, the single plain surrounded with waters."
They were singing of God's works.
8. "By the Creator, as kinsmen of Cain, who had blood on his hands."
His forefather was Cain. He is shown to be a "kin-killer" like his ancestor.
9. "...Took a maul to the mead-benches, mangled his enemies."
He and Grendel both ransacked mead halls and killed in horrible ways.

10. "...he sang the creation, the Almighty the almighty had ordered the earth to be fashioned, shining, the single plain surrounded with waters."
They sing christian songs, but their actions do not show they fear the God they sing of.
11. "And a mightier man, massive and strong, I have never known. He is no mere retainer, dressed in such dread and deadly fell armor."
He is dressed like a mighty warrior.
"A sentry and sea-watch stands silent for years, long have I held watch as Hrothgar's eyes on the coast, and never have known such nobles to land here."
The man on watch is speechless from the sight of the approaching man.
12. You can see Tolkien pulling from the world that Beowulf and Grendel live in. Hoards of treasure guarded by dragons, the landscape, the people and the way they talk, act, and (especially) why they sing.

Reading 3 Questions

1. Through the first 9 verses the author is using descriptive words that make you see what he is writing.
2. He is a fierce fighter?
Bee-Wolf: A Bear
3. "I beat down and bound some beasts, five in number, I took out a troll-nest, I tackled sea monsters on the water and waves, drove warriors from Geatland who honestly asked for it."
He killed monsters.
4. "I have heard this hard monster uses no help from weapons, reckless, scorns to submit to the swordplay we use. To heighten Hygelac's glory, that his heart may be gladdened, I renounce sword and shield and will serve you bare-handed."
He plans to kill Grendel with his bare hands.
5. "Foe against foe, I will fight him for us all. Death comes, one will die, he will deem it God's justice..."
God will decide the outcome.
"Weland wove it. Wyrð must go as it must."
Fate will decide it (the god of fate, Weland)
6. "I sent wergild to the Wolfings, over the water I sent it, and Ecgtheow acknowledged me and accepted strong oaths."
Wergild is a debt or payment. Beowulf is paying back his fathers debt by killing Grendel.
7. "Sea bravery, strength in battle, sickened that man, who vicious and vexed, had his vitals eaten by envy."

He is jealous and threatened by Beowulf's presence.

8. The talk of quests and the encountering monsters reminds me heavily of Bilbo's journey throughout middle earth to get to the lone mountain.

Week 2

Reading 4 Questions

1. "Though spent with the struggle, the sea brought me, on the flood with the flotsam, to Finland's coast."
I'm guessing that it happened somewhere in the baltic sea
2. "Your closest kinsmen, the curse of Hell waits, corrupted by cruelty, however clever you are."
Kin killing was the ultimate shame/sin. Grendel was described as a kin killer, and apparently so is Unferth.
3. Both of them are still alive, meaning that either Unferth is a coward, or is incompetent.
4. "Hrothgar, hero-king, and his house-guard departed. Shielding king, shelter of the people, sought the rest with his best bed-comfort, his bride queen Wealhtheow."
He is a hopeless man who has given up on the glory of the mead hall.
5. The name giving explained in the lives they live. An example is Thorin Oakenshield, or Baggins at Bag End (something like that anyway).

Reading 5 Questions

1. "Swinging their swords from several sides, that the keenest blade could not kill the creature."
Their weapons could not wound Grendel.
2. "But they laid no blame on their lord, they left him alone, Hrothgar was held blameless. What a good king that was!"
Hrothgar was not held accountable for the loss
Hrothgar was shown a bit of a coward by not defending the hall. Instead he shows up in the morning with the women to find out what happens.
3. "Powerful kinsmen came together, close in friendship. Heorot was full of friends, at least for present. Betrayal and treachery had not yet been tried."
Foreshadowing for hardships up ahead.
4. The writing style, though older, is very similar to that of Tolkien's.

Reading 6 Questions

1. Hildeburh is the protagonist. This part of the story shows that she is left with nothing left to her.
2. Another peaceweaver and her family is shown, Except she is prosperous and her family is thriving. And Unferth is part of that family.
3. She is angry at the killing of her son Grendel. She is vengeful
She is the embodiment of vengeance, while Grendel is the embodiment of kin killing coming from cain.
4. Tolkien's monsters are also the embodiment of a vice. The Dragon Smaug is 'greed', hoarding the gold and jealously guarding it.

Reading 7 Questions

1. "Sovereign king do not sorrow- It seems better to me to finish the feud as friends wrecking vengeance than to sorrow in silence. We simply decide to abide and to endure and to exert valor always, to find dignity in death. When his days are all done, the worthiest warrior is well remembered."
Vengeance only leads to more sorrow and death. The want for vengeance would not bring gain, but only more loss.
2. Hrothgar is rich, so maybe if they stayed, they would be better off away from home blessed as those who helped slayed Grendel.
In that time, the culture between the ring givers and his thanes was that if the ring giver were to die, the thanes were to die trying to avenge him. If Beowulf died in the lake, his thanes would be obligated to die, or to go home in shame.
3. The swords don't work in either fight. But once he draws the giant's blade, he easily kills Grendel's mother.
4. The dwarves and Bilbo come to Beorn's house, which is a giant hall, similar to how the halls are described in Beowulf. Beorn's name also sounds Norse like those in Beowulf.

Reading 8 Questions

1. Hrothgar sees how Beowulf is a good leader, and tells him of a man who fell to pride. He sees that Beowulf could make a great king, and warns him of letting his power corrupt his mind and his sense of judgment.
2. The landscape is pretty similar to how Tolkien describes Middle Earth; Mountains, forests, lakes, plains. There are also the monsters that dwell there, calling those places home, and the confrontation of the monsters to keep their home at peace.

Reading 9 Questions

1. He essentially is saying that vengeance is never a cure for one's anger or loss. Instead it leaves one empty, not satisfied or at peace.
2. Earlier in the book, Unferth is called a kinslayer, or a killer of kin. Thorin in the Hobbit is called the king under the mountain, oakenshield, and other names. Names tell of somethings past, such as the lonely mountain.