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Reading Questions 7-9

Reading 7 (9/26/23)

Question 1- Beowulf thinks it is best to finish the fight, he thinks revenge is good and necessary. The poet was telling us that it is not good to get revenge on someone because it normal ends with a bad ending on one side or the other.

Answer- *"Beowulf tell Hrothgar that it is better to avenge your friends that to sorrow in silence. But the poet just finished showing us the tragic effects on vengeance... One explanation would be that the poet feels that when it comes to monsters, revenge is completely vindicated in a way that it isn't amongst humans..."*

Question 2- If Beowulf died that means Grendel's mom would still be alive. The warriors would not be able to go home because Grendel's mom would still be a problem to them. She might be even more angry because someone (Beowulf) tried to kill her. The warriors would still have to fight her.

Answer- *"If a ring-giver dies and his men are still alive...what possible explanation can there be? They should have died for him, or with him. If they remain alive, they are tainted forever as cowards...Beowulf is taking care that his men are not left like that, and he asks Hrothgar to look out for them."*

Question 3- When Grendel and his mom were alive, they were not able to be killed by a normal sword. Grendel was killed by hand and his mom was killed by a huge sword giants used.

Answer- *"...Neither Grendel nor his mother can be killed with regular weapons. Beowulf stumbles on the secret accidentally in Grendel's case, by deciding for completely other reason to fight him bare-handed... He's back to fighting bare-handed again (this is with Grendel's mom now), until he discovers an ancient sword that was forged by the giants. This is a weapon that will kill Grendel's mother and can hack through Grendel's neck, but as soon as it does it melts and leaves nothing behind but the hilt..."*

Question 4- Both in the Hobbit and Beowulf, there are special swords. In the Hobbit the sword glows, and in Beowulf there is only one sword that can kill Grendel's mom.

Answer (4 and 5)- *"Beorn is a very interesting figure, and in this section, Tolkien is borrowing heavily from the Saxon world. Hopefully you noticed the mead-hall. Beorn lives in a great hall and serves his guests mead. (Obviously the one thing lacking is companions!) Beorn's name itself is the Saxon word for bear, which of course is also what Beowulf's name means. Beorn is a skin-changer, which is also a feature of old Norse mythology.... In Beowulf, it also seems that the giant sword Beowulf used may have had some kind of ability to glow after a kill. After Beowulf kills Grendel's mother, a light shines, and he inspects the cave with sword held high. Remember that in Chapter 4 of The Hobbit, Gandalf's sword was brought as blue flame for delight in the killing of the great lord of the cave..."*

Reading 8 (9/27/23)

Question 1- Heremod illustrates what a king should not be. Hrothgar has Heremod be his example because it is how a king should not be or act. Heremod lets pride and greed get in his way. We have seen many stories about pride and greed already in this story. Beowulf was to guard his soul against the temptations of being prideful, become greedy, or selfish. It should remind us of how we should act and how not to get prideful or greedy ourselves.

Answer- *"...He gives the example of Heremod, once a mighty man, who came to a bad end through stumbling at this particular point. In describing pride, he uses the imagery of a night marauder who will come in and destroy your soul, while the sentry sleeps, in just the way Grendel had terrorized Heorot... We also learn that after becoming proud, Heremod got greedy and refused to give rings. He turned on his own men and hoarded his treasure. This is what a dragon does-devours and hoards...As Hrothgar is giving Beowulf advice, he is warning him to not become a dragon king."*

Question 2- Both in Beowulf and the Hobbit, there are dragons, pride, and greed. In both books, in my mind, I'm seeing the places they're describing as dark places. Places nobody wants to go, so there is nothing there. I imagine the places being spooky at times.

Answer- *"...In this section, we see the dwarves and the hobbit going into Mirkwood-a dark and nasty forest filled with dark nasty creatures. It's against everyone's better judgement to go in there. In a lot of ways, tracking Grendel's mother to the Lake of Monsters is similar. Everyone knows to stay away from that place, even the animals. It's deep in the bogs and crags and fens, populated by monstrous beasts."*

Reading 9 (9/28/23)

Question 1- Beowulf says that the marriage is not going to work out, it will actually end very badly. On the side note, it reminds us of the foreshadowing of Heorot, he will be killed by a son-in-law.

Answer- *"The poet has already given us one tragic story of a peace-weaver in the Finnsburg Episode in which we are led to infer the peace-weaving isn't always effective. Here the poet is more explicit. He just goes ahead and has Beowulf telling Hygelac how it's probably all going to go terribly wrong. The poet seems to feel that attempting to stop a blood-feud is a near impossibility, and that vengeance is a monster that can never be satisfied."*

Question 2- I'm not sure how Beowulf and the Hobbit related in these few chapters, but here are some things that I found interesting: Bilbo is starting to get more and more comfortable using that ring. He has been helping the dwarfs, but he has also been stealing things here and there. Also, we found out that Fili and Kili are related to Thorin. We also found out that Thorin is the grandson of the King under the Mountain.

Answer- *"...If you look at the family tree at the beginning of this book, you'll see that Beowulf is Hygelac's nephew. Not just any nephew-he's the son of Hygelac's sister. In Saxon culture, that relationship was a very strong one. Their kenning for this sister-son, and the bond you had to your sister-son was very tight. Tolkien works this in as well, when Thorin announces himself to the guards of Laketown, he introduces*

Fili and Kili as 'the sons of my father's daughter.' This tells us that Fili and Kili were the sister-sons of Thorin,

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just as Beowulf was the sister-son of Hygelac. The sons of your brother were still kin, but it was not as close of a relationship as the sons of your sister."