

Before-Reading Activities

Directions: Before you read Episodes 4-6 of *Beowulf*, review the vocabulary and terms for this reading and answer the short-answer questions.

Vocabulary Word	Definition
ensnare (verb)	to catch an animal or a person in a trap or in a place from which there is no escape
bereft (adj.)	not having something that is needed, wanted, or expected
sinews (noun)	strong tissues that connect muscle to bone
valorous (adj.)	showing courage or bravery
audacious (adj.)	very confident and daring
contrive (verb)	to form or make something in a skillful or clever way
bewail (verb)	to express great sadness or disappointment about something
purged (verb)	removed people from an area in a violent and sudden way
decree (noun)	an official order given by a person with power
treacherous (adj.)	very dangerous and difficult to deal with

Definition

Example

prediction	a logical guess about what will happen next in a narrative, based on evidence from the text	One prediction that I made at the beginning of <i>The Fault in Our Stars</i> was that the book would end with a character's death. I made this prediction because the main character has cancer and goes to a support group for people with cancer. Because she regularly interacts with people who have terminal illnesses, it makes sense that someone close to her might die.
antagonist	the character or group of characters who oppose the protagonist	The antagonist in the play <i>Hamlet</i> is Claudius.
setting	the time and place in which a story takes place	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> takes place along the Mississippi River in the 1830s.

connotation	a feeling or idea associated with a word or expression that is separate from its literal meaning; a connotation may be positive or negative	The word <i>home</i> could inspire positive connotations such as warmth, comfort, and love. These feelings may be associated with the word <i>home</i> , but they are separate from its literal meaning.
foreshadowing	hints provided by a writer about what will happen later in a narrative	These lines from Act I, Scene IV, of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> foreshadow the end of the play: "I fear too early, for my mind misgives / Some consequence yet hanging in the stars / Shall bitterly begin his fearful date / With this night's revels, and expire the term / Of a despised life closed in my breast / By some vile forfeit of untimely death."
mood	the author's use of words and descriptions to evoke certain feelings in the reader	Charles Dickens wrote in <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> , "The river, reflecting the clear blue of the sky, glistened and sparkled as it flowed noiselessly on ... " The mood of this line is calm or peaceful because it evokes calm and peaceful feelings in the reader.

1. In three to five sentences, summarize Episodes 1-3 of *Beowulf*.
2. You may have heard the saying "Don't get mad; get even." While it was already hinted at in the first section, this idea plays an important role in the remaining episodes of the epic. Do you personally believe in this philosophy? Explain why or why not.
3. Make a prediction: How do you think the battle with Grendel will go for Beowulf? What evidence do you have to support your prediction?

During-Reading Activities

Directions: Read Episodes 4-6 of *Beowulf*. As you read, answer these questions. When you are finished, save your work and complete the rest of the lesson.

Episode 4

1. How does the author establish Grendel as the antagonist at the beginning of this episode? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. [Hint: Think about the connotations of the words that are used to describe Grendel.]

2. In Episode 4, the narrator often uses foreshadowing to give the readers hints about the upcoming events in the poem. What is one example of this technique that you found before the fight between Beowulf and Grendel occurs?

3. What happens once Grendel enters Herot? Summarize this scene and the battle that ensues.

4. What does Beowulf take from Grendel as a trophy?

5. How do the people know for certain that Grendel is dead?

6. After Grendel's death, the Geats and Danes celebrate by racing their horses and talking about Beowulf's victory. Then, the narrator says, "No man / who bore a shield, was more / worthy of a kingdom. They, / however, never found fault / with the gracious Hrothgar – / he was a good king." What do these lines mean? What might they foreshadow?

7. Why is the tale of Sigemund significant?

Episode 5

1. What do the people do to celebrate Beowulf's victory?

2. In this section, the narrator provides more foreshadowing by saying, "Treachery had not yet / come to the Danes." Why do you think the author chooses to have the narrator foreshadow future events to the reader? What effect does this have?

3. What are some of the treasures that Beowulf receives from the Danes?

4. Near the end of Episode 5, another story is told by a poet about the Jutes and the Danes. What happens in the story?

5. What does the role of Hildeburh, the Danish queen who is married to King Finn of the Jutes, signify in regard to the role of women in the sixth century (the time in which Beowulf takes place)?

Episode 6

1. At the beginning of Episode 6, the reader learns something interesting about Unferth, who was the Danish warrior who belittled Beowulf and challenged him in the first section of the poem. What did Unferth do? Why might this be interesting to the reader?

2. Who does Queen Wealhtheow want to be the ruler if King Hrothgar passes away?

3. In Episode 6, Beowulf is given even more treasure as a reward for his victory over Grendel. What else does he receive? Why is the neck ring significant, according to the narrator?

4. What ends up being "that grim fate" that would "come to many nobles / after evening fell"?

5. Why doesn't Beowulf fight Grendel's mother when she attacks Herot? How does he react to the news?

6. Think about the way the narrator describes the lair of Grendel's mother. How does this setting establish the mood for the next episode? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.