

Mrs. Robbins and Ms. Fontan

Our study of British Literature will begin with a very modern novel, *Grendel*, by John Gardner. This work is a retelling of the epic poem, *Beowulf*. Gardner takes this ancient tale of heroic battles and rewrites it from the point of view of the monster.

Some things to think about as you are reading:

How does Grendel view the world, and what shapes his views?

It has been said that Gardner used this ancient tale of Grendel to tell a very modern story about the nature of Evil and the quest for a meaningful life in the 20th century. In what ways do you find this to be true?

Writing Assignment:

1. Think of six questions worth exploring [and arguing over] during a class discussion. You should have one question for every two chapters. Do not ask concrete questions; instead, reach for abstract and overarching concepts. Be prepared to conduct a seminar in the class, using your own questions as a springboard for discussion. Type the questions.
2. Write an essay on one of the following topics.

A. Discussions about *Grendel* often center on freedom vs. determinism. With this thought in mind, discuss and analyze Grendel's behavior and decisions. Is Grendel's behavior determined by instinct? Nature? Chance? Fate? How much is determined by his own Will (conscious choice)?

B. Analyze and explain how John Gardner's *Grendel*, which is told from the monster's point of view, is able to penetrate deeply into the mysteries of order and chaos, good and evil, hero and monster.

C. Grendel has many human qualities, and yet his point of view is distinctly alien. How does *Grendel* define what it means to be human?

The essay must be typed, Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced.

Type your name, your class, the date, and my name in the upper left hand corner.

Underline your thesis statement.

Staple the pages together.

This essay is due on the first day of school.

Do not attempt to write this assignment the day before it is due. Last minute problems with printers, etc. will not be acceptable excuses.

You may email your work to us ahead of time, but be sure to bring a hard copy to class on the first day.

Bring *Grendel* on the first day of school.

Our email: [robbsinl@kinnelon.org](mailto:robbsinl@kinnelon.org) and [fontank@kinnelon.org](mailto:fontank@kinnelon.org).

Have a wonderful summer, and don't forget to think deep thoughts.