

## Grendel Chapter 2 and “Things” and Research

### Grendel Chapter 2 Notes

- Second time mentioning words as “skin” or “web” and as a “**spell**” (p. 15, also seen in Chapter 1)
- Actually a thousand years old? Language actually spoken by no one else?
- Lives in a magical world separated from the ordinary world (connected by a body of water)
- **Dark, mysterious tone**— talk of mysterious magic and “darkness [he] displaced” (17), darkness of a cavern, “large old shapes with smouldering eyes” (16), wickedness, “every dark corner of the cave and the woods above” (17)
- Much of a change of tone between older (Chapter 1) and younger Grendel (Chapter 2) — younger self was innocent, helpless, crying out for help and curious
- “Humpbacked shapes in the cave” (21) — potentially more of Grendel’s family?
- Grendel (before meeting Man) speaks the language of Man and has fire, but it is a little different
- Grendel’s mother loves him but can’t express it verbally — Grendel tries to capture it in words (29)

### History of Astrology. Why study astrology during the time when Beowulf was written?

- Beowulf written ~700-1000AD
- Zodiac’s 12 signs still relatively new (from ~500B.C. from the Egyptians and Babylonians, perhaps just introduced to the Anglo-Saxons)
- Perhaps switch to Christianity / Anglo-Saxon culture prompted surge of interest in astrology?

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac#Twelve\\_signs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac#Twelve_signs)

### Story Summary of Beowulf, Information about “Author”

- Beowulf is the story of a hero named Beowulf that helped kingdoms by killing monsters (Grendel, Grendel’s mother, a dragon) and becomes king in the process
- Beowulf is the longest surviving Anglo-Saxon poem
- Book was written shortly after England’s conversion to Christianity (700s AD) because it had references both to Christian and pagan religious beliefs
- Author probably lived in England but had Scandinavian events (because Anglo-Saxons and their culture originated from mainland Europe, such as Scandinavia)

### Sources:

<https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/give-me-short-summary-this-epic-poem-295725>  
<https://letterpile.com/books/Who-Wrote-Beowulf>  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf>

### “Things” by Liesel Mueller

- Attributing human-like qualities to inanimate objects for a human-like comfort; only a philosophy; no actual additional action/safety except peace of mind
- We feel safety with our own and a bore/coldness/danger in non-human things
- Similar to how Grendel groups with his mother (and kin?) and people group with themselves, even though they speak the same language, both use fire, and both have similar bodily structures

### Nihilism and Solipsism

- “I understood that the world was nothing: a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears ... I alone exist. All the rest, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against, blindly ... I create the whole universe, blink by blink. — An ugly god pitifully dying in a tree!” (Gardner 22)
- Usually causes despair when viewed from an existential viewpoint; also implies lack of morals
- “I think, therefore I exist” → Descartes’ solipsistic philosophy
- “The problem with human knowledge and certainty is that it is derived from our experience of the world which is internally derived from our admittedly fallible senses” (“The Matrix and Solipsism”) — how can anyone know any better or farther than their own existence? Existence is only based on what we perceive (back to a possible definition of truth with the correspondence theory: what if our senses and/or words can’t capture all information we come across, and thus can our “truth” truly correspond to the real world?)

### Sources:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nihilism>  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solipsism>  
<https://incinemascope.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/the-matrix-and-solipsism/>