

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Reality of Monsters

Background

From our modern perspective, the monsters of Beowulf don't exactly seem terrifying. Through the ages, our worries about Grendel-type monsters have lessened because we know more about science and the world beyond our own towns, but society still creates cautionary tales about supernatural interferences, typically based on common fears or lessons we should learn. The word monster comes from the Latin *monstrum*, which translates *as an unusual occurrence that is taken as a sign of something being wrong with the natural order of life*. Consider the real-life incidents to which that term could apply.



Monster stories appear in all forms, not just ones that detail crazy creatures like Grendel or The Blob. Recent theories suggest that the surge of giant monsters appearing in movies after World War II signaled the fear of nuclear weapons. Additionally, tales that include werewolves or teens with supernatural abilities (as seen in *Thriller* or *Carrie*) connect with the self-consciousness that every adolescent has about changing physically and gaining social acceptance.

Task: After considering the information above and thinking about the Beowulf monsters, in this assignment you will be determining the needs that monsters have filled in the past and what fears or ideas they could address today. After answering several questions in writing, you will create a monster that draws on concerns of today's world or universal life experiences.

General Monster Questions:

1. Recall the three main monsters in Beowulf. In a symbolic sense, what real fears or threats could the monsters have collectively represented? Think of the variety of troubles and fears the Anglo-Saxons might have faced in their daily lives nearly 1,000 years ago. Take a look back at the textbook pages 18-31 on Anglo-Saxon history and use textual evidence to support your answer.

2 Provide one direct quotation from *Beowulf* for each of the monsters that shows what makes it so fearsome.

Monster	Quotations
Grendel	Line(s) _____
Grendel's Mother	Line(s) _____
The dragon	Line(s) _____

3 Describe three “monsters” we see today in film, television shows, and literature. Consider “traditional” monsters/creature (like Grendel), but also people who threaten the well-being of society.

Monster's name	Name of film/show/book	Monster's physical appearance	Monster's notable actions

4. What modern fears of threats do you think each of the monsters you listed in #3 represent? Why? Create some hypotheses

Design-A-Monster Questions

1. You're going to design your own monster that represents modern fears. Explain the fears/threats that you want this monster to address and why you decided on them. Make clever and intelligent observations of society; don't feel like you have to come up with something ridiculous and extreme. Sometimes the scariest monsters are the ones that live comfortably among us...

2. Describe your monster's appearance and any unusual/supernatural abilities it has. Why are these abilities important?

4. Give your monster a name and explain why you picked it. (Does its name set it apart?)

Part II

Draw a detailed picture of your monster on a separate sheet on paper along with one descriptive word for your monster. As always, it is not important to have great artistic ability, but it *is* important to use drawing as a means of thinking through and clarifying your ideas. **Label** parts of your monster that you believe are significant to our society's fears. Use the space below to brainstorm.