



# ATLANTA CLASSICAL ACADEMY

## Summer Reading Questions Rising 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

The Sophomore English class delves into the beauty and majesty of British Literature. Focusing on “the wonder and the woe” that suffuses the selected texts, the course seeks to seed an appreciation of the varied situations of the human experience as seen through the language and style of the world’s best writers. In preparation for these excursions, you are asked to choose between *Beowulf* and *Grendel* for your summer reading assignment.

*Beowulf*, an Anglo-Saxon epic, is the oldest English poem – scholars believe it was written around AD 1000 – and describes the battles between Beowulf, a Scandinavian hero, and the monster Grendel. *Grendel*, a contemporary novel by John Gardner, follows the monster from the epic poem, as he fights Beowulf and learns a thing or two about human kind.

Please choose one of the following texts and answer the questions provided in one to two paragraphs. Use evidence when appropriate to support your answers. Please have your responses available on the first day of class.

***Beowulf* trans. by Seamus Heaney (Other translations are available, but this one, by award-winning poet Heaney, is preferred.)**

1. According to the author, what are three admirable traits that a hero should possess? Why do you believe the author privileges these specific qualities? Do you agree that these are the traits necessary for heroes? Why?
2. You read two famous epics in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade literature. In your opinion, how does *Beowulf* fit the mold of the epic poem, as defined by *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid* - or not?
3. Critics argue that *Beowulf* is either a rousing tale full of treasure and battle or a story with deeper, allegorical meaning. Which reading do you believe is the correct one? Why? Could it be both? If both, what do you think the deeper significance of the poem might be?

***Grendel* by John Gardner**

1. Grendel is a monster, yet he has remarkably human traits. Is he more human than even he understands? How do his human traits enable the reader to have sympathy/empathy for him? Is it necessary to have sympathy/empathy for Grendel? Why?
2. Is Beowulf the monster or Grendel? Why?
3. Respond in support or criticism to the following statement: *Grendel* is more about a person trying to find himself than it is about the experiences of a monster.