

Period 1  
10/14/13  
Grendel: Combo #1

Grendel's ultimate struggle is in how to quantify and justify his existence and experience in the face of Time. For all who exist, Time is the enemy, the destroyer of great works, great deeds, and great men. Grendel is none of these, but as a being with sentience, he struggles to find meaning in a world that has existed without him, will continue without him, and will end without him.

As a baby, Grendel wanders the woods of Daneland in awe of his effect on the wildlife and his surroundings. "I used to take some pride in [scaring animals]...I was younger then. Still playing cat and mouse with the universe." The change in Grendel's perception of the world around him happens regardless of the permanence of his surroundings. He wanders the same woods for twelve years, the only difference being his discovery of men, and he grows tired at the repetition, at the monotony. The same wolves run from him, the same owls avoid him, and nothing, not even his unwillingness to give chase, changes that. Grendel feels a monster because there is only one existence and purpose he can easily take and he is forced to experience it in what seems to be an unending loop of events.

"I watched it season after season....With luck, I might see, on a soft summer night, as many as three halls burning down at once." It is Grendel's curse as an outsider to bear witness to the repetitions of life. There are those who can be caught up in it, as Unferth and the rest of Hrothgar's band are, focused as they are like ants. They don't notice the monotony, the repetition, because all they see is what is in front of them. They believe in the uniqueness of the events they witness. Grendel, from his home on the cliff can see much more at once, can see three mead halls burning for three separate instances of honor or revenge. He can see that this

will continue as long as men have their halls and that the one burning where Unferth became a hero, was just another hall burning. It didn't change anything, it was not special.

Time renders all activities meaningless, makes them worthless because they will not change existence. This becomes more evident each time the scope of a character's vision is expanded. Grendel sees ants, and compares them to men, and the Dragon sees everything and laughs. On his seat above all, the Dragon can see all of time, can see his own death, and cannot find meaning in it. "Even I will be gone....A terrible pity – loss of a remarkable form of life. Conservationists will howl.' He chuckled." He finds his own death a joke because he knows he has not and cannot make an impact on the world. The Dragon can burn a hall for fun, can snatch someone up and eat them, and will still not be able to change history. The things that change existence, the apocalypse that the Dragon is "witness" to, happen by chance.

This is Grendel's issue with his own existence. This is why he curses at the sky, curses at yawning chasms, curses at anything that could possibly give him an answer. Grendel is angry because his scope is large enough and his isolation unique enough that he is forced to recognize the absurdity of existence. He cannot see the beginning or ending of Time as the Dragon can, but he can imagine. He can know that everything will wither away, and see himself standing at the center of all, arguing that his existence mattered. Grendel cannot kill himself because that would rob him of even a semblance of meaning, so being killed is the only way to go. In that sense, Grendel did find closure, if only because he did not have to suffer anymore; his "joy" was relief at being able to end his life outside of isolation, where his actions will echo among others and keep him existing without thought, without pain.