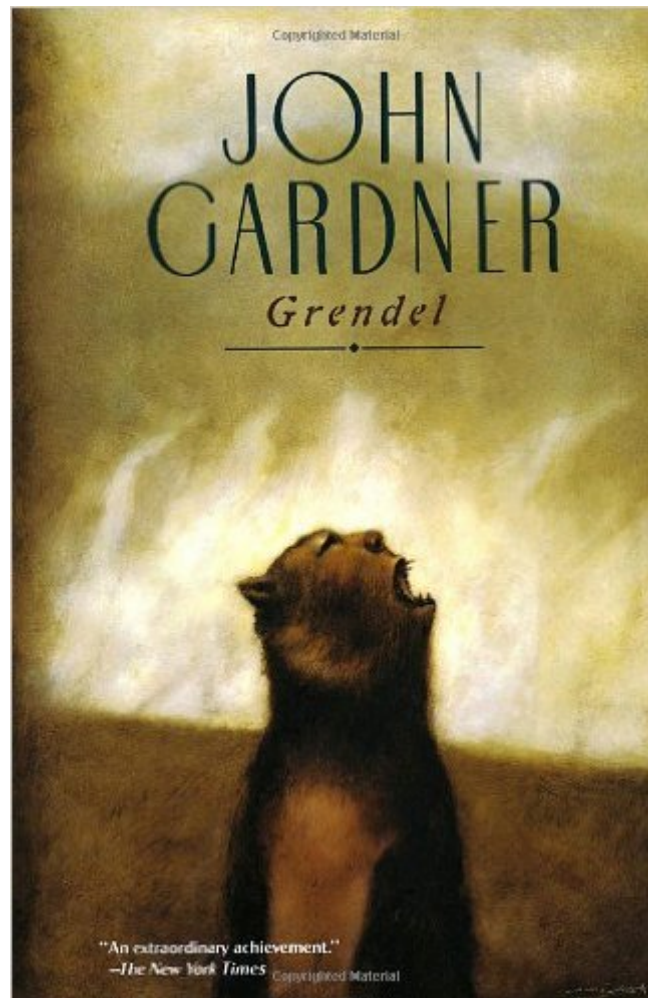


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Grendel



Synopsis

The first and most terrifying monster in English literature, from the great early epic *BEOWULF*, tells his side of the story.

Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Vintage (May 14, 1989)

Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (315 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

John Gardner's "Grendel" shines an odd spotlight on English literature's earliest antihero. When reading "Beowulf," who really ponders the character of the monster Grendel, who after all is not so much a literary character as an object for Beowulf to defeat as an exhibition of his heroism? Gardner sees the shaggy, anthropomorphous monster as a painfully self-conscious creature bellowing in rage at the forces of nature in agonistic protest against his miserable existence as a descendant of the cursed race of Cain. Grendel is sad, lonely, and bored. His only friend (besides his mother, who offers little conversational companionship) is a wise ancient dragon who sits on a massive treasure hoard and mentors the young beast in the significance of being a monster, that having the power to terrify and brutalize is just as much an affirmation of life as killing to eat. And killing is Grendel's forte: He repeatedly targets the thanes of Hrothgar, king of the Danes, who, as descendants of the blessed race of Abel, intrigue him; voyeuristically he spies on them in their mead halls, sardonically observing their folly, believing that he provides for them a healthy challenge to their complacency. He particularly enjoys the ineffectual assaults of a warrior named Unferth who seeks hero status by trying to slay Grendel numerous times and whom Grendel always spares out of spite, to dishonor him and amplify his ineptitude. If Grendel were human, he'd be called a sociopath. He hates himself, men, and the world, but he turns his extreme negativity into a strange

attitude of superiority -- he likes to show his enemies that he can always beat them, that they're defenseless against his aggression and foolish as well.

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