

Beowulf, Agon Two Answer Guide

Below are several sample answers and resources you can use to help you craft your own answers to the questions in the Agon Two reading guide.

1. **Reread ll. 1330-1340. Why do you think that Grendel's Mother takes revenge on the Thanes of Heorot? Look back at the Anglo-Saxon terms from Agon One for help.**

Sample Answer: Grendel's Mother takes revenge on the Thanes of Heorot because they did not pay the wergild for Grendel's death, which is usually done to prevent a retaliation. After Beowulf mortally wounds Grendel, the monster returns to his lair to die, presumably in front of his mother, which sends her into a vengeful rage. Hrothgar hints at this when he says that Grendel's Mother was "driven to avenge her kinsman's death" (l.1339).

2. **Analyze Beowulf's speech to Hrothgar in ll. 1383-1396. What, if anything, does this speech seem to say about the Anglo-Saxon view of legacy and the afterlife?**

Answer Tip: For some historical context to help with this answer, [visit this website](#).

3. **What is the significance of Beowulf's sword, Hrunting?**

Answer Hint: Look at ll. 1459-1472.

4. **Reread ll. 1529-1556. Does the narrator ultimately attribute Beowulf's prowess as a warrior to Beowulf's own skill or to God? Use direct quotes from the poem to support your claim.**

Answer Tip: Your answer to this question really depends on your own interpretation of the text and which force you believe has the biggest impact. The most important thing is that you support your claim with direct evidence from the text—this makes your argument more convincing and helps your validity.

5. **Why does Beowulf go back into Grendel's lair after he defeats Grendel's mother? (look at ll. 1570-1590).**

- a. **Why do you think Beowulf risks his life to do this when Grendel and his mother are already dead? What does this say about his personality and/or values?**

Answer Tip: For more information about the characteristics of a traditional Anglo-Saxon hero, [visit this website](#).

6. Reread Hrothgar’s speech to Beowulf in ll.1723-1784.

- a. **What does Hrothgar mean when he says that he has “wintered into wisdom”?**

Sample Answer: “Wintered into wisdom” implies that Hrothgar has lived long enough that he has amassed knowledge that younger people, like Beowulf, do not have, which makes him a reputable source for life advice. He literally has lived through so many winters that he became incredibly wise.

- b. **What is Hrothgar warning Beowulf against? What does he want Beowulf to do?**

Sample Answer: Hrothgar goes into detail about the tendency of heroes to think they are invincible after a great victory; he says that they often die because they do not remain vigilant— he could be killed by “an archer that draws a deadly bow” because he wasn’t paying attention (l. 1744). With this story, he warns Beowulf to be mindful of his mortality and watch out for danger. Hrothgar also speaks about heroes who become resentful and selfish, who “dishonor custom and bestow no gold” because he was treated well in the past, and when they die, those possessions aren’t considered valuable anymore (l. 1750). With this story Hrothgar warns Beowulf against becoming prideful and selfish so he can keep his “eternal rewards” (l. 1759).

- 7. According to Hrothgar, how has Beowulf helped him besides defeating Grendel and Grendel’s mother? How was this beneficial to both the Danes and the Geats?**

Answer Tip: Look at ll. 1855-1865 for the answer.

- 8. How does Beowulf's discussion with Hygelac in ll. 1990-1999 differ from what Beowulf told Hrothgar in Agon One when he arrived at Heorot?**

Answer Tip: Review your notes for Agon One and go back into that portion of the text for the answer. Look for Beowulf's first conversation with Hrothgar.

- a. Why might Beowulf lie to Hrothgar?**

Sample Answer: Beowulf is a powerful warrior who killed monsters in his homeland before coming to the land of the Danes. He might have told Hrothgar that the Geats encouraged him to help the Danes so Hrothgar would not feel guilty about taking Beowulf away from the Geats, who greatly missed and needed him to help with their own problems.