

The Tale of Beowulf and Grendel (with a twist...)

By Henry Hedges, Year 4

There was once a very strange country called Denmark. Now, Danish readers, you might say 'mit land er ikke mærkeligt' to that, but this was not your genuine, pure Denmark. This was a land of monsters, and the Danish King, Hrothgar, had a prime target for them – Heorot, Hrothgar's great hall! The king's men and advisors would meet outside to feast on boar and wine. But one monster hated laughter and happiness so much that he decided to crash the king's party, and the monster's name was Grendel!

You all know that monsters have lairs, I expect. Well, Grendel was no different. It lived in a murky swamp, on the same hill as Heorot! Helps with travel logistics, doesn't it! So, getting back to the bigger picture –

Grendel tore through the undergrowth, straight toward Heorot. It would feast well that night. Once it got to the great doors, it was getting quite excited about the whole affair. "Yummy, more blood to drink," Grendel thought. Sneakily, it crept up to Heorot, making as little noise as a monster could make. Then it roared a huge roar, and ripped the doors off their hinges (they were newly oiled ones, as well!) like they were a piece of paper. The men were asleep by now, but not for much longer they weren't! The force of the rip was enough to blow everyone back into the far wall. Grendel picked up seven men, and swallowed them all in one gulp. Even the strongest warriors were calling for mummy. Hrothgar survived, but after the attack just stood there in stunned silence. His best advisor, Janythen, had been a victim, and was probably sitting in Grendel's belly, wondering what he had got wrong in life. "We need a hero," Hrothgar said softly, "Or we will not survive the year."

And there was one. In the land of the Geats, there was a young man named Beowulf. He had a thin and muscular frame, which very attractive women seemed to like a lot. When he heard the news about Grendel, he hastily gathered an army, and set out on his quest. Twelve days later, he arrived at Hrothgar's expansive amount of land. He walked up the hill that Heorot sat on top of, and knocked on the huge, shiny, new doors. You are probably wondering why Grendel didn't just reach out of his swamp lair and eat Beowulf there and

then. Well that wouldn't be very nice, would it? So Grendel decided to leave it 'till night-time, so it would be more dramatic (monsters are just like that, you know?). So, Beowulf marched up to Hrothgar and said, "I would like to help you with this problem". Hrothgar was shocked. "Who is this man that is brave enough to do such a deed?" Confidently, Beowulf replied, "My name is Beowulf, Prince of the Geats!" Hrothgar asked him to join him in his feast that night. Beowulf agreed politely.

The feast went on for hours, until finally, Hrothgar announced, "Let us sleep to the morning!" And with that, the men all started to drop off, until Beowulf was the only man awake. He sat on a bench, staring into space, when suddenly – CRASH! Grendel once again tore the doors apart with unimaginable strength. Beowulf threw his sword to one side. "If Grendel fights bare handed, I do too!" The beast picked up Beowulf with one hand, and began the crunching process. Beowulf writhed in pain, until eventually he stopped breathing. Fighting with a sword would have proved to be much better than no sword, however cowardly it was. With the hero dead, the whole world was doomed.

The Story of Christian Chapman

By JJ Murphy, Year 6

Boston isn't a city. Nor is it a town. No cars rushing around noisily in the busy, crowded streets, no trees in sight, not even any paths that meander in and out across the lush, green landscape. The reader is probably wondering what happened to such an industrial, densely-populated city. I can tell you what happened. Death happened.

Animals and people alike died out until all that was left of this massive part of Massachusetts and surrounding states was a lonely, desolate wasteland that stretched for miles with only a couple of villages to be seen. No livestock. No plants. No posh mansions or hotels. Many civilians were left stranded with no money and few friends.

Christian Chapman and his energetic younger sister, Evie, were two of these unlucky civilians. Without their mother and father to care for them, they had to work extremely hard to survive all the years of death and destruction. But one day, their lives of hardship changed forever.

One arid morning, Chris went to fetch water from the well nearby. He was now fourteen, and this was how all of his mornings had begun for the last couple of years. Using his strong, powerful arms, he hauled the bucket out of the well, full of water. However, on his journey home, he tripped over a sharp, jagged rock that jutted out of the ground, and in doing so, spilt the contents of the bucket. He was so furious and exasperated, he grabbed the rock and threw it as far as he could. Then as he got up, he noticed some tiny, black, oval-shaped objects in the hole that he had made when pulling out the rock. The hole was now damp from the fresh water that he had spilled.

"I'll surely trip in that hole if I don't cover it up with soil," he told himself firmly.

So that is what he decided to do. After that, it rained all week. Throughout the long, stormy period of frequent showers, Chris and Evie couldn't go to the well, so instead Evie collected rainwater in a bucket which she had carefully placed outside of their dilapidated hut.

Their hut wasn't much of a sight. It looked as if it would crumble at any second, like a badly burned piece of toast. The exterior of the cramped hut was covered with large stones, mostly flint, held together with mud, and the roof was made of thick planks of cedar wood that they had cut from the dead, rotting trunks of the colossal trees before all of the plants had died.

Evie often had bad dreams about the year of the terrible famine that had taken their parents' lives. Inside the hut, there was a large, flickering flame that they used to cook the

piles of meat that the neighbouring states like New York Maine and New Hampshire donated to their village every month.

“At least we didn’t end up like Mom and Dad”, Chris reminded his little sister. But on the other hand, he too missed the good, old days, when every weekend they would have a huge party with family and friends.

After a while, the rain suddenly stopped and so Christian hurried to collect water from the well. On his way back, he was shocked to see that in place of the jagged rock were several little green shoots!

“What in the world are these?!” he asked himself, curiously.

Then he realised what they were – they were plants! He knew that plants needed water and sunlight to grow, so he poured the fresh, cold water from the bucket onto the emerald green sprouts, and then raced home rapidly.

“There...there’s...p-p-p-plants near the well!” he stammered, out of breath from his long run home.

“Well then show me!” Evie exclaimed, impatiently.

So every day from then until next spring, they watered the plants after collecting water from the well. After a year, the miniscule shoots had become miniature trees. That spring the trees blossomed, and beautiful, ripe fruit began to grow. They were delicious, and sticky, sweet juice trickled down Chris’s chin. It was like heaven!

Once he had eaten the whole fruit, tiny black pips were all that remained – he recognised them as the seeds from the hole! Over the years, many new trees grew and their fruits were eaten. Chris found out some information about the juicy fruits and learned that they were ‘apples’ and the trees were called ‘apple trees’.

But little did he know that he was following in the footsteps of his great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, John Chapman, better known as “Johnny Appleseed”.

By the time Chris and Evie had died, Massachusetts was covered with greenery again. Boston was reborn!

Beowulf

By Diana Nanian

On a giant hill stood a hall greater than any. Inside there were mighty warriors drinking and bragging about their battles. The strong warriors were so happy but there was one thing troubling them. A beastly monster would come and in the night would devour most of the warriors. The monster was named Grendel.

A long way from this cliff a man heard about this terrible situation and was willing to help. His name was Beowulf. He arrived in a long boat with carvings and beautiful gold patterns on it. He stood at the gates but surprisingly the guards didn't know him. The king saw him from afar and greeted him with a warm welcome. "What brings you here my old friend?" he asked with curiosity.

"I have heard of your troubles and have come to help," Beowulf said proudly with his chin raised up high.

"We really appreciate your offer, but if a group of strong warriors cannot defeat the terrible monster, then how will you?" asked the defeated man.

Beowulf answered "I will try my best to win this fight!"

The feast started and everyone was happy but there was sadness in the warriors' eyes. They knew this was a day that some of them would die. Beowulf was the only spark of hope in the middle of the miserable hearts. All the warriors drank on and on until they couldn't bear it anymore and fell asleep, their faces leaning on the long wooden table.

Meanwhile in the middle of the dark woods Grendel had been awoken by the sound of laughter and joy coming from the great hall. It was a sound Grendel could not listen to. He dragged his heavy body to the hall. Goo dripped behind him as he stomped with rage. He roared to let whoever was fighting with him know he was the strongest and he would win. Beowulf knew soon he would have to fight with the beast and either die or survive.

Crash the door swung open and there stood Grendel. His green body shining in the moonlight, thinking who he should eat first. Beowulf was in the shadows waiting for Grendel to spot him. After looking for a long time Beowulf showed himself to the terrifying creature. His heart skipped a beat and his face turned red when he saw what he was facing. But instead of hiding he stood up taller than ever and clenched his fists. The fight had begun. The beastly monster crashed his hand down missing Beowulf by inches. Grendel was as strong as a pack of lions ripping its prey limb to limb. With a roar

he started crashing his hand on the ground. It was making Grendel dizzy, but he wanted to finish his opponent.

Suddenly Beowulf grabbed onto the creature's hand and tugged never giving up. He pulled and pulled until he couldn't pull anymore and with one last tug ripped Grendel's hand off. Grendel went off and bled to death.

He held it up in victory showing everyone Grendel's hand. He was proud and never though he would finish the monster off. The king was so happy he burst into tears. He hugged Beowulf with all his might until the champion had to pull himself away. They had a giant feast now knowing they had nothing to worry about. All the other warriors congratulated Beowulf by giving him gold, silver and jewels.

Beowulf stayed at the hall ready to set off the next day. He dropped his heavy head onto the pillow and fell into a deep sleep. There was no sound until he and all the other warriors heard a roar like Grendel's roar. It couldn't be. How could he have survived that? Then Beowulf said "That is not Grendel that is Grendel's mother." All the warriors gasped in shock.

Beowulf would have to go on a mission to kill Grendel's mother. He gathered his weapons and set off. He walked in the mist with his soldiers for an hour until he reached his destination. Beowulf squinted trying to figure out what was in the never-ending hole, but it was useless. There was nothing to be seen. Beowulf threw a stick down trying to figure out how long the hole was but he never heard when it hit the ground. The mighty warrior's face went pale as he thought what he would experience once he jumped into the great hole of misery. He took his sword and gulped. With one last look at the soldiers behind him he leaped into the pit.

The man dived. It seemed like a day he swam through the green water. Once he arrived at the bottom he heard a crunching sound and realised the path he was walking on was made from human bones. He shuddered at the thought that someday he would be part of this path. He spied the she-monster sitting on a throne in the middle of the room. Beowulf stepped forwards and revealed himself while taking out his sword that one of the warriors gave him as a reward. Grendel's mother was much the same as Grendel but much bigger and had a much more terrifying roar. Beowulf was as big as her smallest finger, so he had no luck of winning. He sliced off one of her fingers but surprisingly it grew back on. Beowulf had no hopes of winning. As quick as a flash Grendel's mother pushed the warrior and he fell back. His sword fell out of hand and got stuck in a stone. Beowulf tried pulling it out, but it was too hard. Fortunately, he found a sword right next to him and he grabbed the sword and aimed into the beast's heart. He flung it into the beast's heart and with one last roar the beast fell to the ground. Beowulf started to laugh. He laughed until his stomach hurt.

To the sound of laughter, the king pulled the rope up and Beowulf appeared at the top.

“Our saviour!” he cried, “You saved us. How will we ever be able to repay you?”

“It was my pleasure. I do not need anything,” Beowulf said.

“We should crown him the king!” said one of the soldiers out of the crowd.

“Yeah!” shouted another.

“Crown him the king! Crown him the king! Crown him the king!” the crowd shouted.

And so he was crowned the king and they all had a great feast and lived happily ever after.

The Untold Story of Aphrodite

By Esther Richards, Year 6

“Gia na spasei o kyklos, na dosei tin psychi enos thnitou, na episkevasei to kyklo na to aimas enos theou.”

To break the circle, give the soul of a mortal, to repair the circle, give the blood of a god.

The man grasped the bubbling black liquid in his withered fingers. He uttered to himself the old Greek proverb “Gia na spasei.” Quivering with anticipation, he took a sip.

His soul was gone, but he was complete. He was free. He was ready for battle. He was ready to rule. His laugh echoed around the dilapidated warehouse and the blood red sun set, for possibly the last time.

Day and night: the greatest mystery of mankind. For hundreds of years, scientists have tried to explain this phenomenon, even though they simply can't. True, there have been theories but nothing, nothing close to the truth. The truth, that only I know, and that I am about to tell you, my sole confidante. But first, we will go back in time one day and night and move from the dilapidated warehouse to the golden paradise of Mount Olympus, where our protagonist is waiting.

A sparkling lake. A sword glinting in the dying light of the sun. The same words going around and around in her head: “Gia na spasei. Gia na spasei.” Pain. Darkness. Aphrodite woke up, drenched in sweat.

Pushing the previous night firmly out of her mind, Aphrodite stepped out of her villa and onto the main street of Mount Olympus. Snow white doves flew and chattered to each other, moving dots against the vivid blue sky. She smiled. Doves were her favourite. Below that were white houses embroidered with vibrant fuchsia, pale pink and pastel yellow flowers that seemed to dance in the radiant light. Breathing in the fresh, warm air, she sighed. This was paradise. Well, sort of. In precisely one minute, she would be proven wrong, and her whole world would change forever.

Being the goddess of love and beauty, you would expect Aphrodite to be beautiful. She was. Her hair was like a waterfall of liquid gold and her skin was made of the finest porcelain, looking as if one touch would send it all smashing to smithereens. Shining with youth and happiness, her eyes were like the ocean on a bright day. She cared for everything and everyone, it was her nature.

Statuesquely, Aphrodite walked over to the marble door of Zeus's villa and raised her hand to knock. She heard voices inside. She lowered her hand and pressed her ear up against the door.

"I have seen something," said the resolute voice of Aphrodite's father. "A mortal in London has ascended."

Gasps ricocheted around the room like bullets. They stopped. Zeus continued.

"The man is now the embodiment of night itself. If we don't do something, night will forever rule in the mortal world."

"What will we do?" exclaimed a voice that Aphrodite didn't recognise.

"Nothing," replied Zeus abruptly. "It doesn't affect us. Besides, if we were to do something, we would need to find the sword of Hephaestus –"

"Which has been lost for centuries," interrupted Poseidon. Aphrodite could almost hear her father glaring through the walls. He hated to be interrupted.

"– and find this man and kill him," finished Zeus.

"But –"

"But nothing. No-one is to do anything. You are all dismissed."

Aphrodite darted out of the way just before thirteen gods came spilling out of the doors. Only the wrinkled, benign face of Zeus saw her run away, as he smiled at her with fatherly love.

Slam. The door of Aphrodite's villa shut behind her. Purposefully, she marched into the library and took out a leather clad book entitled: "The Sword of Hephaestus." Dust flew in every direction as she opened it. She coughed. She had to do something. She couldn't just let all the humans die. On the first page was a faded black drawing of the fabled sword. It was there, in every dream she had had since she was thirteen. That evening, she was gone.

Aphrodite dipped her toe into the crystalline water and withdrew it quickly. It was ice cold. Steeling herself, she jumped in.

The cold hit her like a wave. It was like tiny knives were cutting away at her skin. She was fifty feet underwater already. No-one would hear her scream. Through her tear and water filled eyes, she could just about see the outline of a sword. She grabbed it. Her heart was pounding in her chest like hammers. She wasn't going to make it. Her golden head pierced the surface. She had made it. Just.

Gasping for breath, she dried herself. Her hair was soaked, and her eyes were rimmed with red. Sword in hand, she ran back up to Mount Olympus, oblivious to the danger awaiting her there.

Clack. Clack. Clack. Aphrodite's sandals slapped against the smooth stone steps. She was at the top of Mount Olympus. She was alone. Gradually, an oily black mass materialised in front of her, its only recognisable feature was its eyes, gleaming, glistening onyx. It drew its

sword. She drew hers. They clashed, sending sparks flying. The night spirit closed its eyes and sent Aphrodite flying backwards. Floating over to her barely conscious body, the spirit raised its sword. Aphrodite, taking one last breath, sent the sword clattering to the ground and drove her sword into the spirit's centre. The spirit quickly burst into flames and disintegrated into ash.

Triumphant, Aphrodite went back to her villa to watch the sun rise. It never did. It was still night time. Turning the sword over in her hand, she noticed the words on the stained blade "Aima enos theou." "Give the blood of a god," she muttered to herself. Without hesitation, she plunged the sword into her stomach. The sun rose, and it wept for the loss of the kindest goddess, making the colours bleed and merge, to form a deep pink. Her favourite colour.

And here, dear reader, our tale ends. But do not mourn for Aphrodite. She still lives on in flowers newly sprung, in the song of a lone bird, in the smiles of children and adults alike. Only when we forget about her sacrifice do we really let her die. If you go out into the meadow on a warm summer's day, you might hear a tinkling of laughter, or see a flash of golden hair. This is her spirit. A tree on Mount Olympus. Her blue eyes opened. She was alive.