

## Beowulf Questions Pt. 2

### Reading Check

- a. Describe how Beowulf manages to kill Grendel's mother.
- b. Who comes to Beowulf's aid in his final battle with the dragon? Why does he help Beowulf?
- c. What sad scene concludes the epic?
- d. What happens to the dragon's hoard?

### First Thoughts

1. Beowulf's story is an ancient one, more than one thousand years old. Did its age make it entirely alien to you, or did you find that it deals with issues or themes that seem relevant in our modern society as well? If so, what are they?

### Shaping Interpretations

2. A hoarded treasure in Old English literature usually **symbolizes** spiritual death or damnation. How does this fact add significance to Beowulf's last fight with the dragon?
3. What details describe the dragon? Keeping those details in mind, explain what the dragon might **symbolize** as Beowulf's final foe.
4. Beowulf battles Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon. What do these battles have in common, and what do they suggest Beowulf and his enemies might represent for the Anglo-Saxons?
5. Given what you know about the structure of Anglo-Saxon society, explain what is especially ominous about the behavior of Beowulf's men during the final battle. What does this suggest about the future of the kingdom?
6. The epic closes on a somber, elegiac note—a note of mourning. What words or **images** contribute to this **tone**?
7. Epic poetry usually embodies the attitudes and ideals of an entire culture. What values of Anglo-Saxon society does *Beowulf* reveal? What universal **themes** does it also reveal?

### Extending the Text

8. How would we tell a hero story today? What would the **setting** be, what would the **enemy** be, and what **values** would the hero embody?
9. In the last episode of the epic, the leader's followers mourn his passing and praise his life. What qualities do we look for in leaders today—are they the same qualities Beowulf's people loved him for?

### Challenging the Text

10. What do you think of the way women are portrayed in (or absent from) *Beowulf*?