

Grendel Chapter 11: Warren: (Adapted from Herrera)

Directions: Read the summaries for the zodiac sign and philosophy (below). Read chapter 11 of Grendel. Answer the questions. When finished place document in your Grendel folder.

Zodiac Sign: Aquarius

Dates: January 20 - February 18 (Winter)

Element: Air

Ruling Planet: Uranus (the planet of originality)

Symbol: The Water Bearer

Stone: Amethyst

Life Pursuit: to understand life

Desire: to experience total freedom

Symbolized by the philanthropic and objective Water Bearer, Aquarius energy is innovative and avant-garde. From experimental electronic music to community-oriented living, there's nothing that this sign won't explore. As the sign that rules groups and teams, bringing people together around a social cause or political agenda is an Aquarian specialty. Aquarius energy is cutting-edge, "out there" and even a little strange at times. This futuristic sign helps society envision utopian worlds. This is the sign of science fiction and inventions. No topic is too cutting-edge under an Aquarian transit: extraterrestrials, stem cells, cloning, robots taking over the earth...yup, Aquarius will go there. While Aquarian influence can make rebellions and a detachment from reality (c'mon back to earth!), it helps society see possibilities. The essence of Aquarius energy is community-oriented, original, open-minded, fair, logical, humanitarian, connecting, and inviting. The negative expression of Aquarius energy can be guarded, detached, destructive, out-of-touch, irrational, and desperate. Aquarius vibes are reluctant to express emotions—it prefers rational reasoning and cool-headed logic to the messy tapestry of the human feelings.

Philosophy: Existentialism (from The Basics of Philosophy website)

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe. It focuses on the question of human existence, and the feeling that there is no purpose or explanation at the core of existence. It holds that, as there is no God or any other transcendent force, the only way to counter this nothingness (and hence to find meaning in life) is by embracing existence.

Thus, Existentialism believes that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves (although with this responsibility comes angst, a profound anguish or dread). It therefore emphasizes action, freedom and decision as fundamental, and holds that the only way to rise above the essentially absurd condition of humanity (which is characterized by suffering and inevitable death) is by exercising our personal freedom and choice (a complete rejection of Determinism).

Often, Existentialism as a movement is used to describe those who refuse to belong to any school of thought, repudiating of the adequacy of any body of beliefs or systems, claiming them to be superficial, academic and remote from life. Although it has much in common with Nihilism, Existentialism is more a reaction against

traditional philosophies, such as Rationalism, Empiricism and Positivism, that seek to discover an ultimate order and universal meaning in metaphysical principles or in the structure of the observed world. It asserts that people actually make decisions based on what has meaning to them, rather than what is rational.

Questions:

1. In bullet points, list the key events and characters in this chapter:

1. In Craig J. Stromme's essay, "The Twelve Chapter of Grendel," he writes:

Grendel's journey thus far, then, has been from solipsist to sceptic to nihilist. He has listened to the great metaphysicians explain their systems, but he could never believe that an order corresponded to what they described. As Nietzsche is traditionally seen as a predecessor of Sartre, Chapter Eleven gives us the most succinct version of Sartre's thought in the novel. After Grendel sees Beowulf for the first time, he retires to his cave and meditates on his being: All order, I've come to understand, is theoretical, unreal—a harmless, sensible,, smiling mask men slide between the two great, dark realities, the self and the world. . . . "Am I not free?. . . I have seen—I embody—the vision of the dragon.' absolute, Final waste. I saw long ago the whole universe as not-my-mother, and I glimpsed my place in it, a hole. Yet I exist, I knew. Then I alone exist, I said. It's me or it. What glee, that glorious recognition!. . . For even my mama loves me not for myself, my holy specialness . . . but for my son-ness, my possessedness. (138) "All order . . . is theoretical, unreal" is Grendel's explicit rejection of the dragon, the priests, and Shaper. Because "I alone exist," he feels that he must create his own order centered around himself and his perceptions of the world. He posits himself as the center of the world and arranges it accordingly: "For the world is divided, experience teaches, into two parts: things to be murdered, and things that would hinder the murder of things" (139). The ideas Grendel expresses of freedom, existence, and possessedness are all Sartre's ideas, all central to existentialism. In this chapter we can truly say that Grendel has become an existentialist. God (Shaper) is dead, and after his initial despair, Grendel has built a new world and new order without Him. Grendel's chosen essence, "absolute, final waste," does not seem very different from what it was before—the important thing is that now he moves beyond a received definition of himself and defines the world in his own terms.

How would you explain Grendel's development up to this point? Do you agree with the above statement from Stromme's essay?

1. Zodiac Connection. How does Gardner allude to the zodiac sign Aquarius? List three examples:

1. Philosophy Connection. How does Gardner allude to Existentialism? List three examples:

