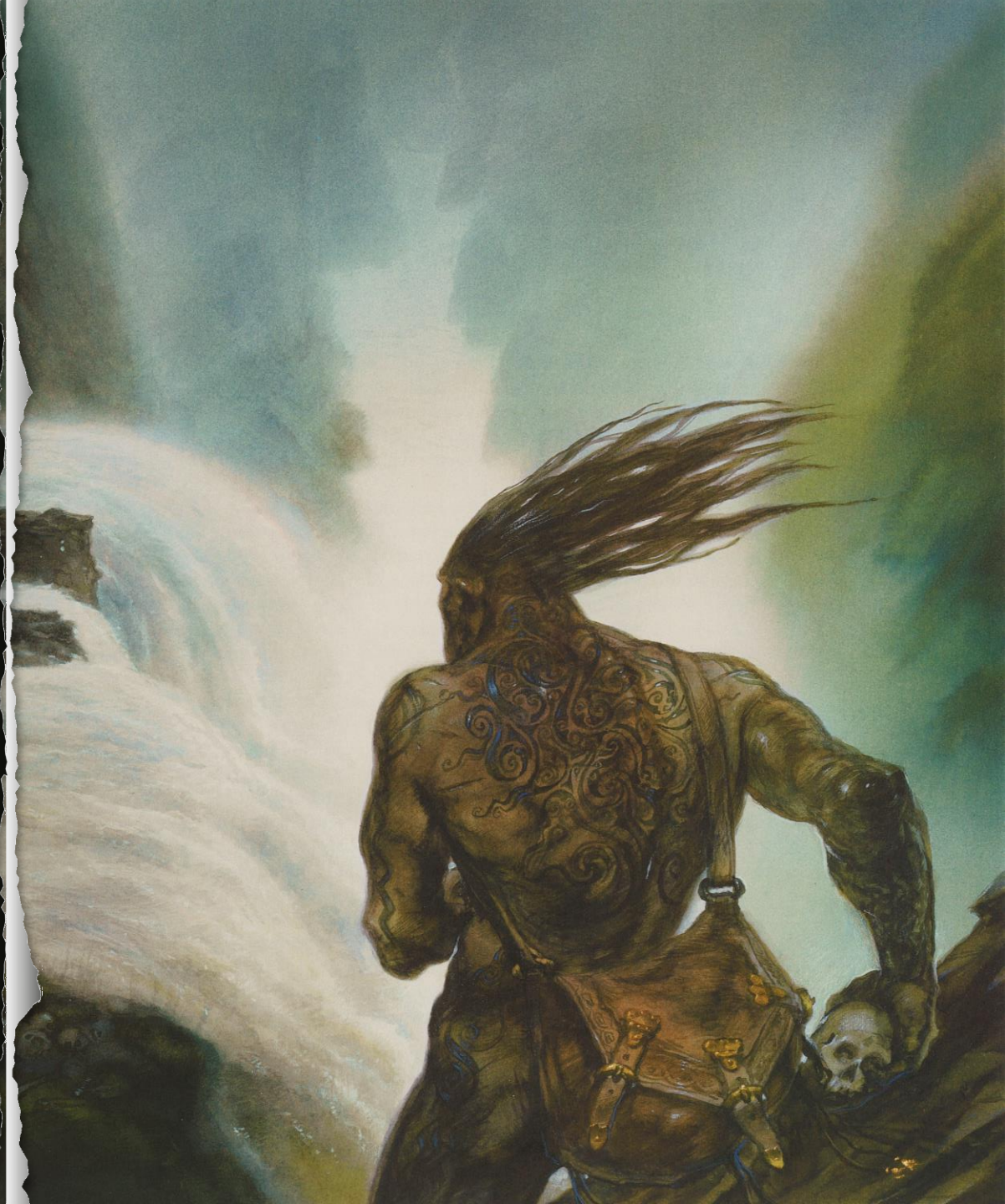


John Gardner's  
**GRENDEL**



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*Grendel* by John Gardner Copyright © 1971. Vintage Books Edition, 1989. All rights reserved.

“Psycho Killer” performed by Bruce Lash, 2003. “Psycho Killer” written by David Byrne, 1974.

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The background of the entire page is a detailed illustration. It depicts a colossal blue dragon with yellow-tipped horns and scales, breathing a stream of fire. The dragon's head is positioned on the left side of the frame. In the lower-left foreground, a small, dark-clad warrior stands on a rocky outcrop, holding a sword and a shield, looking up at the dragon. The scene is set against a backdrop of dark, jagged mountains and a stormy, grey sky with rain falling. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and the yellow of the dragon's fire and horns.

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The Art of John Howe

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About John Gardner

Grendel Film Clip 1

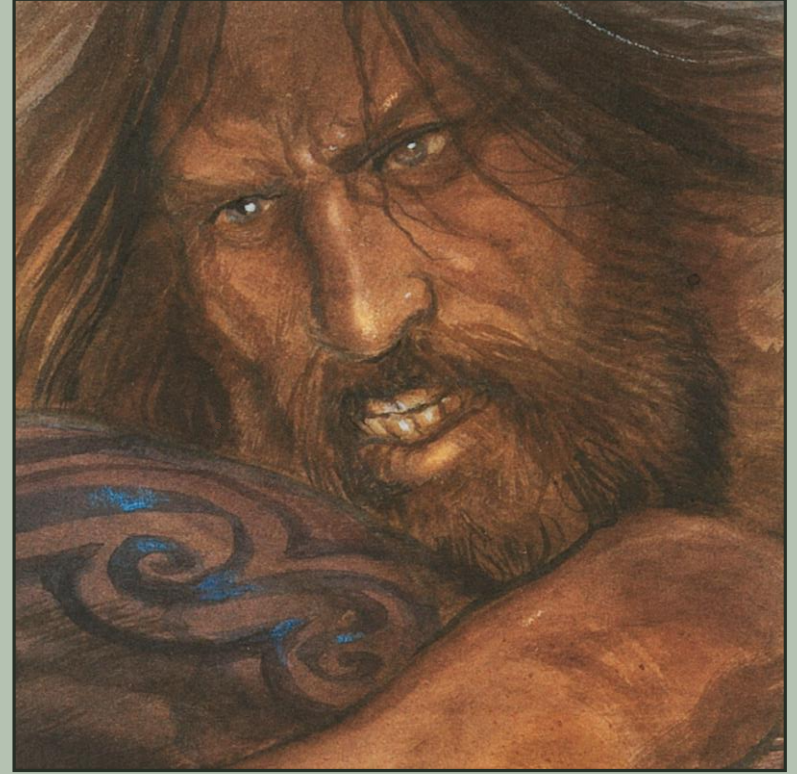
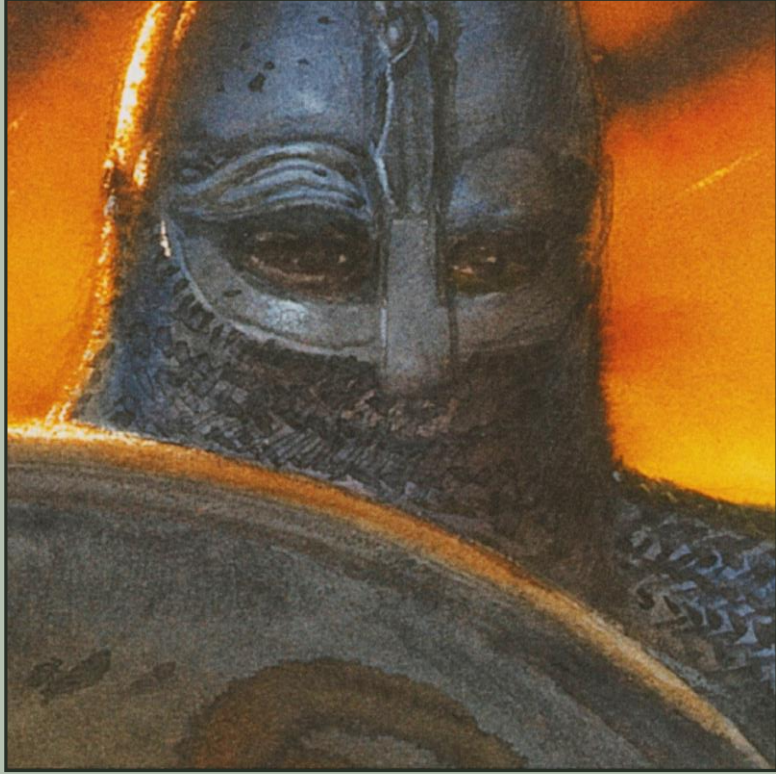
Grendel Film Clip 2

Existentialism

Grendel's Astrology

Works Cited





A Note From the Artist

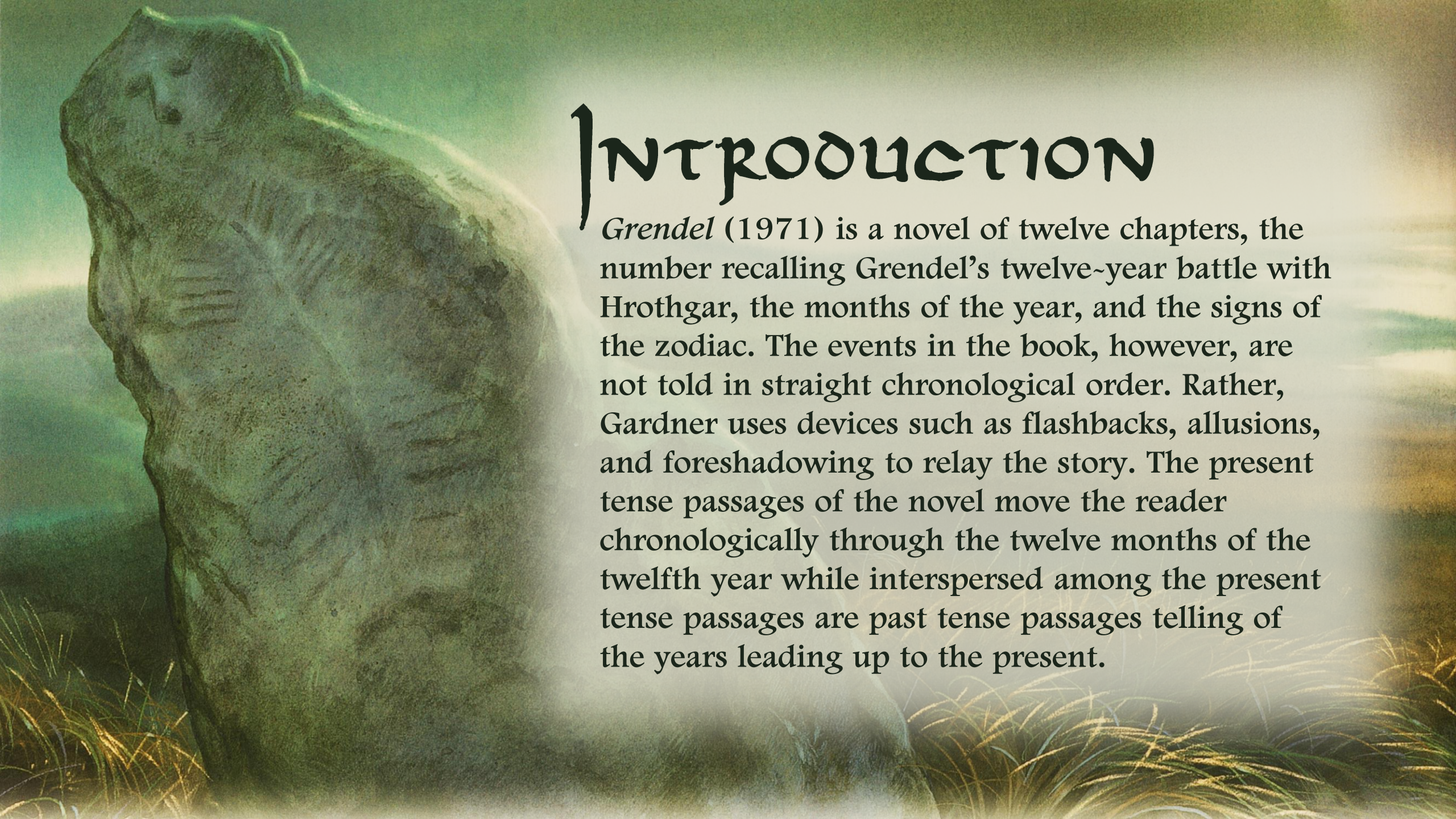




“My first experience of *Beowulf* was actually of *Grendel*, when I was in high school. At the local library, I was drawn across three aisles to the cover of the eponymous novel by John Gardner. I devoured the book in much the same fashion Grendel does his victims, speedily and messily (and with as little afterthought, I’m sure). Many years later I received a copy of “The Monsters and the Critics,” in which J.R.R. Tolkien stands up in stalwart defense of the many values of *Beowulf*, beyond that of historic artifact. I devoured this one much more slowly and thoughtfully, before finally reading a translation of the story itself.”

~ JOHN HOWE, 2007



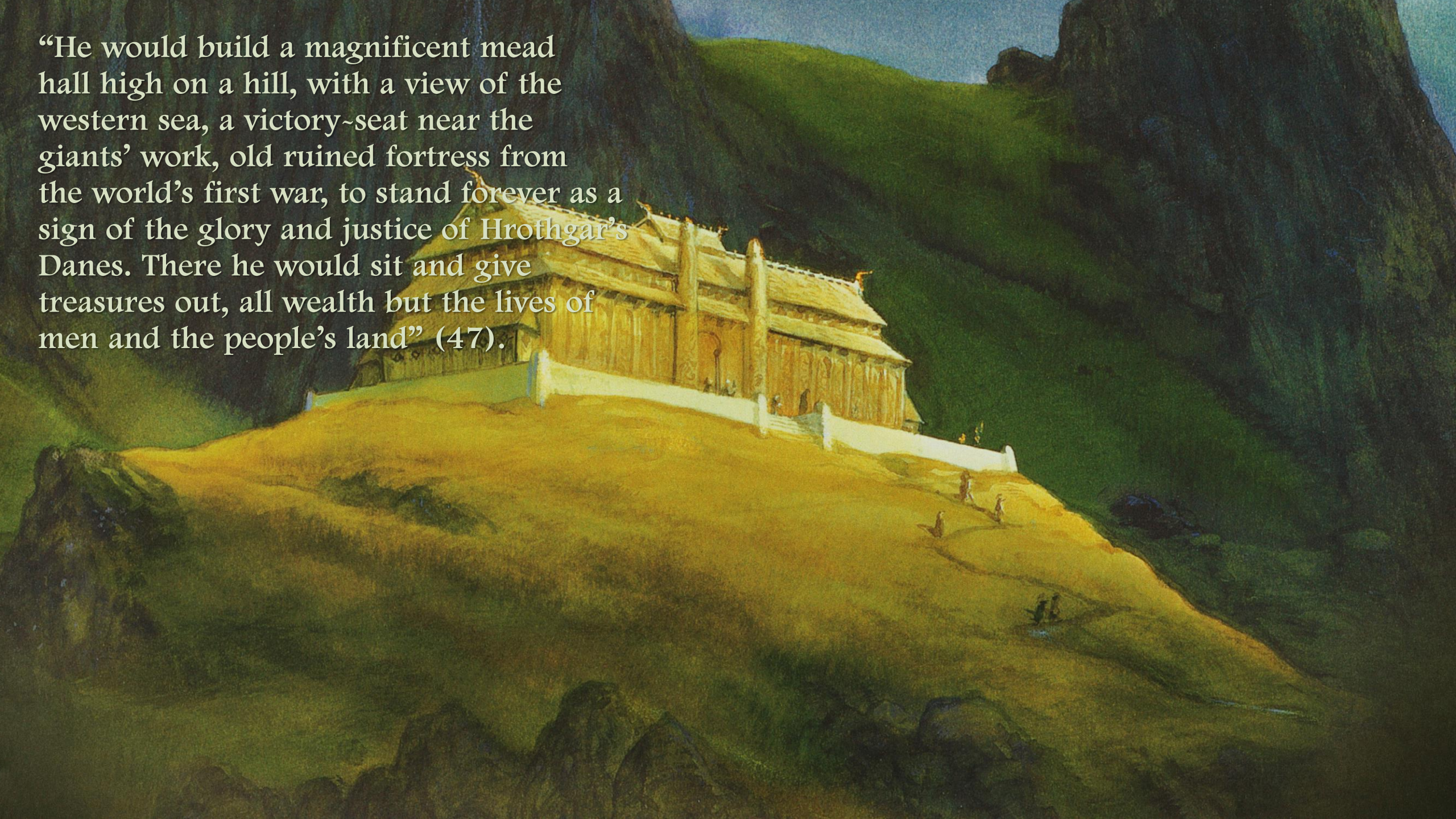


# Introduction

*Grendel* (1971) is a novel of twelve chapters, the number recalling Grendel's twelve-year battle with Hrothgar, the months of the year, and the signs of the zodiac. The events in the book, however, are not told in straight chronological order. Rather, Gardner uses devices such as flashbacks, allusions, and foreshadowing to relay the story. The present tense passages of the novel move the reader chronologically through the twelve months of the twelfth year while interspersed among the present tense passages are past tense passages telling of the years leading up to the present.



“He would build a magnificent mead hall high on a hill, with a view of the western sea, a victory-seat near the giants’ work, old ruined fortress from the world’s first war, to stand forever as a sign of the glory and justice of Hrothgar’s Danes. There he would sit and give treasures out, all wealth but the lives of men and the people’s land” (47).













# John Gardner

John Gardner (1933~1982) was raised on a farm in upstate New York by parents who were both fond of literature—especially the plays of William Shakespeare. As a child, he attended public school and worked on his family's farm. Despite being a classical scholar and an insatiable reader as he grew older, Gardner avoided the literary upper crust, preferring to speak his own mind, whether or not he offended people. As a professor of English specializing in medieval literature, Gardner had been teaching *Beowulf*, the source of inspiration for *Grendel*, for many years at various colleges. He died in a motorcycle accident at the age of 49. His reputation as a novelist, philosopher, and dynamic personality was solidified at the time of his death, and it continues to grow.







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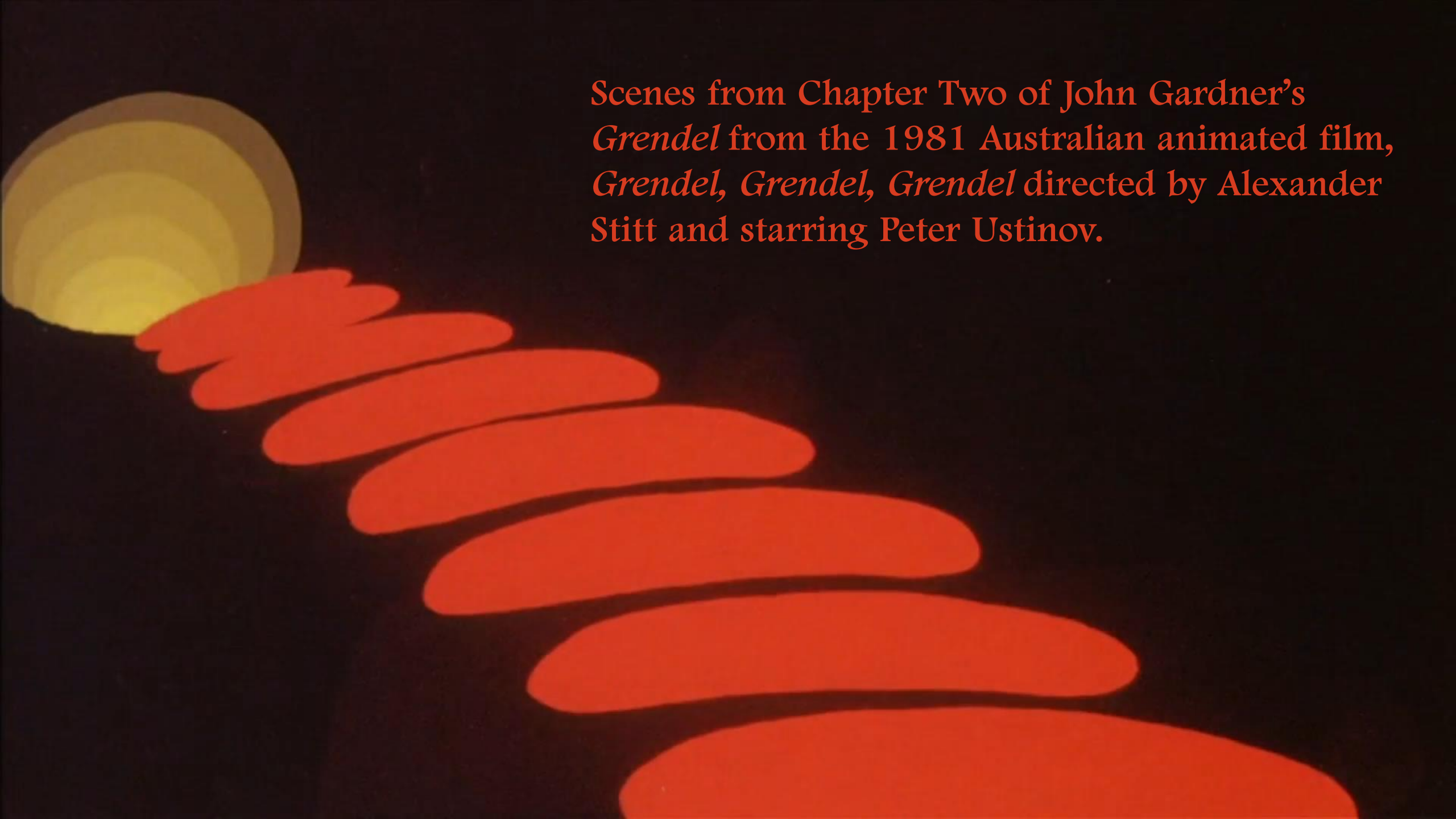


# Reading Check

CHAPTERS 1 ~ 2







Scenes from Chapter Two of John Gardner's  
*Grendel* from the 1981 Australian animated film,  
*Grendel, Grendel, Grendel* directed by Alexander  
Stitt and starring Peter Ustinov.



# Reading Check

CHAPTERS 3 ~ 4









# Chapter V: Reading Check





Scenes from Chapter Five of John Gardner's *Grendel* from the  
1981 Australian animated film, *Grendel, Grendel, Grendel*  
directed by Alexander Stitt and starring Peter Ustinov.









# What is Existentialism?

After the 1940s, there was a widespread tendency in new writers to view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning, and to represent human life—in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the nothingness where it must end—as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. The philosophical premise of existentialism is that temporality and historicity—a situation in one's present that looks back to the past and anticipates the future—is inseparably a part of each individual's being; that the process of understanding something, involving an act of interpretation, goes on not only in reading verbal texts but in all aspects of human experience; and that language, like temporality, pervades all aspects of that experience. The understood meaning of the text is an event which is always the product of a “fusion of the horizons” that a reader brings to the text and that the text brings to the reader.



# Examples of Existential Ideas





# GRENDEL'S ASTROLOGY

*Sample Response:* Chapter One begins with Grendel frightening a ram that has come too close to “[his] mere” (139). One wonders where Grendel learned this type of aggressive, dominant behavior. In this chapter, the cyclical view of the universe is expanded upon, as Grendel notes that he is trapped in the “progression of moon and stars” (8). He further connects himself to the astrological Aries in the first chapter with his extroverted attitude towards us, his readers.







# Reading Check

CHAPTERS 11 ~ 12



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*Here Comes the Sun* written by George Harrison  
Performed by Yuna, 1969/2012.



