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Early British Literature

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*Beowulf* and the Sexualization of Grendel’s Mother

As a teacher of Early British Literature, I am often asked why we have to read such old literature. In response to this, I strive to help my students make connections between the old classics and their everyday experience. One way I am able to help make those connections is to introduce other works, other pieces of literature, paintings, or movies that are based on these classics. So, after reading the *Beowulf* translation by Seamus Heaney, my students watched the 2007 film adaptation of the story by Robert Zemekis. Although the stories are essentially the same, the sexualization of Grendel’s Mother changed the story in three significant ways: the character of Hrothgar, Hrothgar’s relationship with his wife, Wealtheow and the character of Beowulf.

*The sexualization of Grendel’s Mother altered the development of the character Hrothgar.* In the text, Hrothgar is portrayed as a mighty warrior, a man of vision and generosity, and the innocent victim of the unprovoked wrath of the monster, Grendel, but in the movie…

*The sexualization of Grendel’s Mother also altered Hrothgar’s relationship with his wife, Wealtheow…*

*As a result of the sexualization of Grendel’s Mother, the character of Beowulf is also altered.*