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The late medieval period marked a time of increased popularity of the use of astrology in medicine. Though this practice isn't as widespread as it used to be, horoscopes, or the positions of the sun, moon, and stars at certain times, are often used to explain the way one's life is progressing. The zodiac is made up of a collection of 12 different constellations, which each correspond with a different zodiac sign and represent various times of the year. John Gardner uses these 12 signs to structure the novel, *Grendel*, by referencing and representing them through the different characters and their interactions within the text.

Along with the in-text references to the zodiac, the entirety of the novel is structured based on the cycle of the astrological signs. The novel is split up into 12 chapters, representative of the 12 signs. It begins with the chapter corresponding to Aries, which is the starting point of the zodiac cycle. Likewise, it ends with the chapter corresponding to Pisces, the terminal point of the cycle. Each chapter includes imagery or even actual physical representations of the signs, along with less obvious implications. Given that the zodiac is used as a way to explain behaviors, these behaviors that are derived from the signs are also apparent in the way characters act in the chapters.

Aries, whose symbol is the ram, is the first zodiac to be mentioned in the novel. As stated previously, this is because it is the starting point for the zodiac. The first sentence of the novel, "The old ram stands looking down over rockslides, stupidly triumphant," introduces the sign immediately. In addition to the physical representation of the zodiac, behaviors are present as

well. While Grendel hisses at the ram, telling him to go back to his cave, the ram stares at him, ignoring him. Stubbornness is said to be a common attribute of those whose zodiac sign is Aries. The text also states, "... the season is upon us. And so begins the twelfth year of my idiotic war," (Gardner 5) and later, "Locked in the deadly progression of moon and stars." (Gardner 8) These quotes both reference the infinite cycle of the zodiac, even directly stating the "progression of... stars," which is inherently what the zodiac is.

The second chapter centers around the sign, Taurus, or the bull. This chapter also uses a physical representation of the sign, as the major event of the chapter follows Grendel getting stuck in a tree. At this point, a bull from 30 feet away noticed how close Grendel was to the nearby calf and attacked him repeatedly.

The third chapter depicts the sign, Gemini, or the twins, in a more figurative way than the previous chapters. While Gardner did include a direct reference in stating, "Every sheep and goat had its wobbly twins," (Gardner 33) it also makes it clear that as Grendel listened to the words of the shaper, he found it causing trouble in his mind. The twins in this case are represented by the truth or the purpose and structure of life in the eyes of Grendel, and the truth and purpose of life described by the shaper.

The fourth chapter centered around Cancer, the crab. Cancers are described as acting to make their living environment comfortable, but also need to stabilize their emotions. Grendel's understanding of the shaper is that "He reshapes the world... So his name implies." (Gardner 49) This poetry the shaper is reciting is a way for him to make his, and those listening's, living environment comfortable. If Grendel were to desire to follow the words of the shaper, he'd have to stabilize the emotions and feelings of essentially being the center of the universe to do so.

Another way that Gardner represents the zodiac signs is in chapter 5, which centers around the sign, Leo, or the lion. However, there is no lion in this chapter. Instead, Gardner uses the dragon to represent Leo. This dragon surrounds himself with gold and is wise and seemingly full of wisdom. This pride that manifests in the dragon is one of the most notable features of Leos.

Along with this, Grendel seeks wisdom as well, as he visits the dragon in hopes of learning about his purpose.

The remaining chapters follow similar ways of representing the signs. The chapter for Virgo, chapter 6, incorporates direct references to the virgin. Chapter 7, for Libra, includes Wealtheow, who is able to provide balance by marrying Hrothgar, representative of the symbol of Libra, the scale. Chapter 8, the Scorpio, includes Hrothulf who, as Scorpios are known to be determined and passionate, wants to take over the throne. Chapter 9, for Sagittarius, includes an actual archer, which is the symbol of the sign. For Capricorn, chapter 10 includes a goat that Grendel ends up killing simply because it annoyed him. The goat is the symbol of Capricorn. Chapter 11 includes the arrival of the Geats, who arrived by water, representing the 11th sign, Aquarius, or the water bearer. Lastly, chapter 12 is where Beowulf finally kills Grendel. Beowulf is known to have beyond human swimming abilities, similar to a fish, or the symbol of Pisces. Pisces also is the end of the zodiac cycle. This is the last chapter and the one where Grendel ends up dying, signifying the end of his life cycle in accordance with the end of the zodiac. Even in death, his imagination leads him to picture Beowulf as winged and fire-breathing, akin to the excessive imagination characteristic of Pisces.

*Grendel*, a novel from the perspective of the infamous villain, Grendel, allows the reader to get insight into Grendel's feelings and intentions, causing him to appear more human. Humans, through the desire for explanation, have found comfort in the belief in zodiac signs and

astrology. 12 zodiac signs that correspond with symbols, traits, and times of the year, have been used as a basis for explaining the behavior of people all through history. John Gardner uses these zodiac signs as a structure for the novel, by letting each of the 12 chapters represent one zodiac sign by including both physical and figurative depictions of the zodiac.