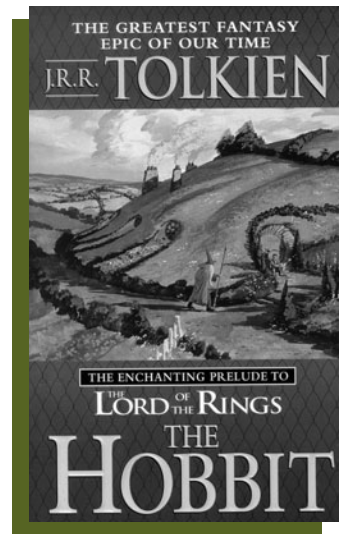




teacher's guide

The Hobbit

by J.R.R. Tolkien



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TEACHER'S EDITION, AUDIO: 0-807-28340-1

ABOUT THIS BOOK

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* is an extremely popular book, both because it is a simply written and fast-paced adventure story and because it is set in Middle-Earth, one of the great fantasy creations in the English language. Although most students respond quickly and positively to the book, teaching it to adolescents can require some delicacy. On the one hand, some students may resent having to read a mere children's book, feeling that fairy tales are beneath their dignity. On the other hand, some students will already be intimately familiar with Middle-Earth, and their strongly developed attitudes about the exact appearance and meaning of Bilbo's world may be an important part of their personal identity.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in 1892 in Blomfontein, South Africa, where his father was a branch bank manager. At the age of three, Ronald's health caused him, his mother, and his brother Hilary to return to England, where they settled in Sarehole, a county village on the outskirts of Birmingham. His father died soon after, and his mother died when he was twelve. His early education was at King Edward's School in Birmingham, where he showed promise in languages and Old English literature.

In 1911, he entered Exeter College, Oxford and received a First Class Honours degree in English in 1915. Immediately after graduation, he entered the army. During his last years at St. Edward's, he fell in love with Edith Bratt, also an orphan, and formed close friendships—and an informal literary socie-

ty—with several of his classmates. In 1916, he married Edith and was shipped to France. After four months in the front lines, he was stricken with trench fever and was sent home.

After the war, he joined the staff of the Oxford English Dictionary, where he wrote entries in the W's, taught at Leeds University for a while, and was then elected to a chair in Anglo-Saxon Studies at Oxford. He was a Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon for twenty years and was then elected Merton Professor of English Language and Literature. Although its reputation was slow to build, the paperback publication of the trilogy in the mid-sixties established the enormous fame of the Middle-Earth and its creator.

Tolkien lived in an Oxford suburb where he spent the first part of his retirement, then moved to a seaside resort and finally came back to Oxford after his wife died. He died a peaceful death at the age of eighty-one in September 1973.

Tolkien's Work

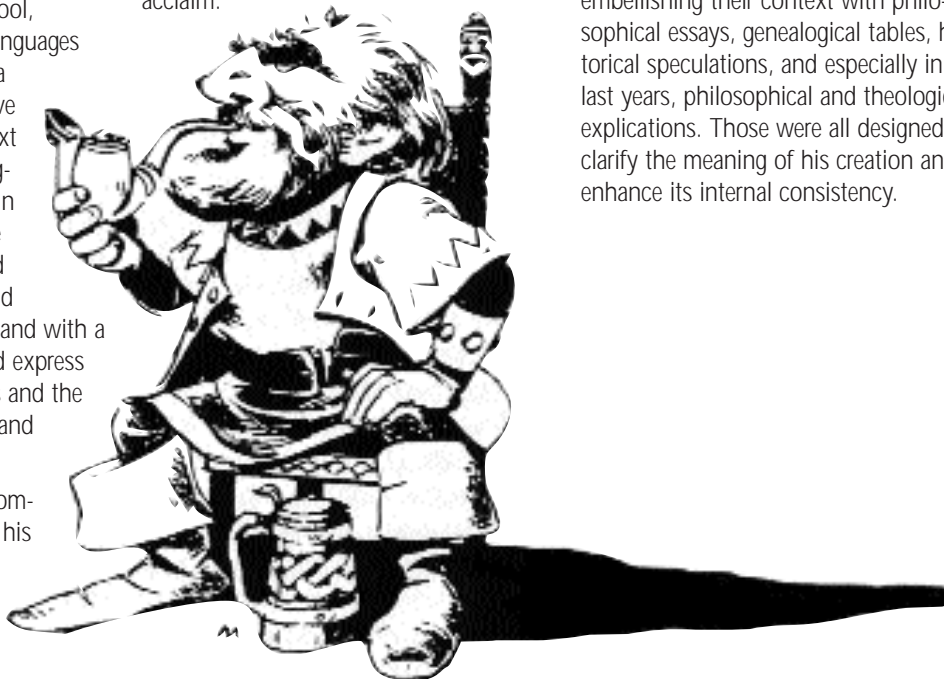
The Silmarillion and *Unfinished Tales*, both edited by his son Christopher and published posthumously, bear witness to the three crucial elements of Tolkien's authorship: the ambitiousness and learned complexity of his creation, his ceaseless reworking of details in search of perfection, and his loving devotion to these labors.

The creation of the Middle-Earth, which occupied Tolkien for sixty years, can be divided into three stages. The first stage, begun at the St. Edward's School, involved first the creation of languages and then the development of a series of legends that could give these languages a social context in which to develop. These legends soon became important in their own right, a mythic cycle which combined Christian and pagan (especially Germanic and Celtic) sources to provide England with a national mythology that would express the English spirit, as the Eddas and the Kalevala does for Scandinavia and Finland.

In the second stage, Tolkien composed stories and sketches for his

own children. Around 1930, one of these beginning with the idle sentence, "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit," became more and more involved as Tolkien defined hobbits and created adventures for one particular hobbit. Gradually, it became clear to Tolkien that Bilbo Baggins' adventures took place in the same Middle-Earth as his high heroic tales, but at a much later point in time.

After six years of intermittent composition, *The Hobbit* was published as a children's book to critical and popular acclaim.



Immediately, Tolkien began work on *The Lord of the Rings*, published in 1954-55, after years of painstaking revision. In many ways, reworking of the plot of *The Hobbit*, the length, intensity and complex theses of the *Rings* trilogy make it the adult epic Tolkien desired to create.

The third stage of Tolkien's literary career followed the publication of the trilogy and continued until his death in 1973. He spent these years polishing the conception of his heroic cycle, leaving the original stories relatively untouched, but embellishing their context with philosophical essays, genealogical tables, historical speculations, and especially in his last years, philosophical and theological explications. Those were all designed to clarify the meaning of his creation and enhance its internal consistency.

Why Use Fantasy in Your Classroom?

Good fantasy offers active participation by the reader in an imagined world—a wide world filled with video-game monsters, clever creatures, and wise (or silly) fairy tale characters. The reward for this intense participation is a sense of wonder that enables the reader to return to the "real" world with enhanced understanding and appreciation—either of the world itself or of his relation to it. Fantasy can easily be used to encourage personal development in students.

A fantasy world is inevitably a mirror of our own world—it admits the possibility of failure, sorrow, and death, as well as success, prosperity, and the joys of life. Tolkien explains the nature of this mirror using four terms: Recovery, Escape, Consolation, and Eucatastrophe. Fantasy

offers Escape from things worth fleeing: the petty evils of tawdriness and ugliness; the "grim and terrible" evils of "hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death." The fulfillment of these Escapes is one of the Consolations of the Happy Ending. In its best form, the happy ending is a Eucatastrophe, an unexpected turning of the plot.

At the heart of this lesson is the fact that the hero must work for his success. Magic accessories and good advice may be given to him, but he must use these aids actively and appropriately, and success often comes only after years of obscure labor or initial failure. The wish-fulfillment element of fantasy both

relieves anxiety and shows the student that personal success can be obtained, although at a certain price. Thus, the development of the hero is less a matter of change than of self-discovery.



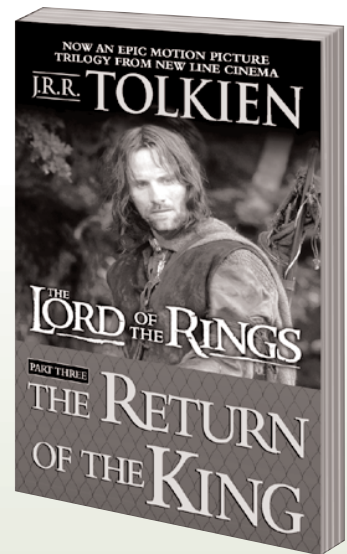
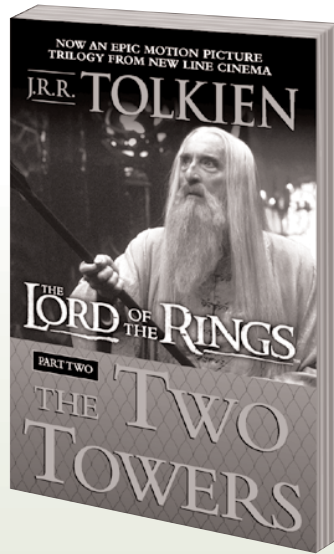
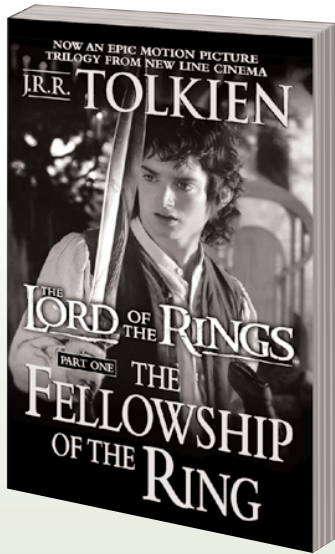
A fantasy novel must offer two things: an attractive fantasy world, and a point of contact between the fantasy world and our own. What readers find attractive is a matter of personal taste, but they are likely to discard a fantasy as irrelevant unless they can find a common perspective from which to assess the attractiveness. In general, these common perspectives are established in one of three ways: the main character is transported from our world into the fantasy world (like Alice to

Wonderland); the main character is a native of the fantasy world with whom the reader can easily identify; or the fantasy world is fundamentally like ours, differing only in specific details. American teenagers will not automatically identify with a fussy English country squire like Bilbo, so the success of *The Hobbit* depends on a tension between familiar

and exotic things that must be established in the first few pages.

The first sentence, introduces a strange creature and an apparently unattractive setting. But the next paragraphs deny this initial reaction. Hobbits love comfort in much the same way we do; they are fond of visitors, food, and clothing; they have families and relatives; some are rich-

er than others—in short, they are very human. By the fourth paragraph hobbits seem normal, and other folk—dwarves, fairies, and Big People—are strange. From here on, adventures take place in a world beyond Bilbo's doorstep, a world which seems as strange to him as it does to us. We share not only his sense of wonder, but also the values that make him love his home.



Other titles of interest:

The Lord of the Rings, Part One
The Fellowship of the Ring
ISBN: 0-345-33970-3

The Lord of the Rings, Part Two
The Two Towers
ISBN: 0-345-33971-1

The Lord of the Rings, Part Three
The Return of the King
ISBN: 0-345-33973-8

Lord of The Rings, Complete trilogy
Teacher's edition, audio cassettes,
ISBN: 0-8072-8344-4

The Complete Guide to the Middle-Earth, by Robert Foster
ISBN: 0-345-44976-2

The Tolkien Reader
ISBN: 0-345-34506-1

The Silmarillion
ISBN: 0-345-32581-8
Teacher's Edition, audio cassettes:
0-807-28295-2

Unfinished Tales
ISBN: 0-345-35711-6

Please inquire about classroom-use discounts for this title through your district's preferred distributor or your favorite local bookstore.

how to use this guide

The Hobbit's chapters are between seven and twenty-five pages long. Dividing the book into eight sections provides reading assignments that are fairly uniform in length and correspond to natural divisions in the story:

Chapter 1: 25 pages
Chapters 2-4: 36 pages
Chapters 5-6: 39 pages

Chapters 7-8: 42 pages
Chapters 9-10: 27 pages
Chapters 11-13: 40 pages

Chapters 14-16: 26 pages
Chapters 17-19: 27 pages

This guide is condensed. To get additional questions and critical commentary, or a Teacher's Guide to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, please visit our website: www.randomhouse.com/highschool

CHAPTER 1: "An Unexpected Party"

Summary

We are introduced to hobbits and to Bilbo Baggins, a stay-at-home, utterly respectable hobbit with a secret desire for adventure. Bilbo receives a visit from Gandalf the wizard. The next Wednesday Gandalf returns for tea, bringing with him a party of thirteen dwarves led by Thorin Oakenshield. Despite misgivings on both sides, on Gandalf's recommendation the dwarves hire Bilbo as Burglar on an expedition to the Lonely Mountain, where they plan to recover their ancestral treasure from the dragon Smaug.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is Gandalf's reputation?
2. What kind of mark does Gandalf put on Bilbo's door?

3. How many dwarves come to tea?
4. What does Thorin wear to distinguish himself from the other dwarves?
5. What two things does Gandalf give Thorin?
6. How did the dwarves lose their treasure and kingdom?

Vocabulary

audacious (29)	obstinately (34)
rune (32)	prudent (34)
abreast (32)	remuneration (34)
legendary (34)	necromancer (37)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. What does the word hobbit make you think of? (The possibilities include rabbit, hobby, Babbit, habit and hob. The word is probably best seen as a blend of rabbit and hob, an obsolete British word meaning "a rustic, peasant" or "sprite, elf.") How does Bilbo resemble a rabbit in this chapter? When you finish

- the book, ask yourself if he still reminds you of one.
2. What is an adventure? Is it something that happens, or is it the way we react to what happens? Can we live without adventures? Is there any "magic" in this book? (Return to these questions as the book progresses.)
3. Explain all the meanings of "good morning" (pp. 17-19).
4. What about adventures awakens Bilbo's "Tookish" side (pp. 26-28, 30)? What causes his "Baggins" side to reemerge (pp. 30, 38)? Is the Baggins side timid or practical? Is the Tookish side heroic, curious or proud?
5. Even this early in the book, we can see some of the characteristics of dwarves. What are they? (Make sure you include proud, formal, hard-working, and devoted to treasure with a "fierce and jealous love.")
6. What are dragons like (p.35)? As you read on, think about the differences and similarities between dwarves and dragons.

CHAPTER 2: "Roast Mutton"

Summary

Thorin and Company set off on their expedition, and Bilbo joins them. At first things go well, but on the first rainy night they seek shelter and blunder into three trolls. Bilbo and the dwarves are captured by the trolls, but Gandalf outwits them and they turn to stone at day-

break. The expedition plunders the trolls' hoard. Gandalf and Thorin take swords, Bilbo, takes a small knife, and they bury the trolls' gold.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why is it important that Gandalf is not present when the expedition meets the trolls?

2. The trolls are evil, bestial, and disgusting. But do they seem mostly human or nonhuman?
3. Is strength or intelligence more valuable so far in this book?

Vocabulary

esteemed (41)	applicable (48)
paraphernalia (42)	

CHAPTER 3: "A Short Rest"

Summary

The expedition comes to Rivendell, where Elrond and his elves live in the Last Homely House. Elrond explains Thror's Map to the dwarves and identifies Gandalf's and Thorin's swords as the famous blades Orcrist and Glamdring, made by elves for the ancient goblin wars.

Comprehension Questions

1. What are the terms of Bilbo's contract?
2. How does Bilbo know that the three people are trolls?
3. How is Bilbo caught?
4. How does Gandalf rescue Bilbo and the dwarves?
5. What do they take from the trolls' hoard?

Vocabulary

drear (55)	bannock (58)
glade (57)	palpitating (60)
faggot (58)	cleave (61)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Why is Rivendell hard to find?
2. When is Durin's Day?

CHAPTER 4: "Over hill and Under hill"

Summary

As they cross the Misty Mountains, a storm drives the expedition into a cave, where they are attacked by goblins. Bilbo and the dwarves are captured and driven into the goblins' underground halls. There Gandalf rescues them and slays the Great Goblin, but as they flee from the goblins Bilbo is knocked unconscious.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why does the expedition take shelter in the cave?
2. Why isn't Gandalf captured?
3. What do goblins usually do with their prisoners?
4. How does Gandalf rescue Bilbo and the dwarves?

Vocabulary

deception (64)	inconveniencing (71)
shirk (69)	gnash (71)
quaff (69)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. What does Tolkien tell us about goblins? (Their sounds and actions, but nothing about their appearance except that they have hands, heads, teeth and flat feet.) Because he does not describe their appearance, we must use our imaginations, and this involves us more actively in the fantasy. Discuss what you think goblins look like, and what in the book gives you that idea.
2. "It is not unlikely that they (goblins) invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once." (p.70) Can you take this statement seriously? Why do you think fantasy is often anti-technological? (It seeks to emphasize the importance of personal effort.)

CHAPTER 5: "Riddles in the Dark"

Summary

Lost and alone inside the Misty Mountains, Bilbo gathers his courage. He finds a ring and puts it in his pocket. Then he encounters Gollum, a loathsome but pathetic creature. They play a riddle-game to determine if Gollum will show Bilbo the way out or eat him instead. Bilbo wins the contest, but Gollum then realizes that Bilbo has his ring, which confers invisibility. Bilbo follows Gollum to the surface and evades the goblins guarding the gate.

Comprehension Questions

1. How does Bilbo know his sword was made by elves?
2. Why is it good that Bilbo lost his matches?
3. How does Gollum guess that Bilbo has his ring?
4. How do the Goblins know that someone is at the gate?
5. Which of the dwarves is the most surprised to see Bilbo?

Vocabulary

subterranean (78)	chestnut (81, 83)
unbeknown (79)	antiquity (86)
flummoxed (79)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. How are Bilbo and Gollum alike? (Their motives for the riddle-game, p. 80; their ability to guess each other's riddles; their abilities underground; their living in holes.) Can you call Gollum evil? Discuss the concept that Gollum is the negative side of Bilbo, with which he must come to terms before he can achieve his identity. (To bring home the concept of the negative side, compare this chapter and Luke Skywalker's descent into the cave during his training by Yoda, in *The Empire Strikes Back*.)
2. What skills does Bilbo show in dealing with Gollum?
3. "No great leap for a man, but a leap in the dark." (p.39) Discuss this quotation with respect to Bilbo's decision not to kill Gollum, and his newfound courage.

CHAPTER 6: "Out of the frying-pan into the fire"

Summary

Bilbo finds that he is on the east side of the Mountains. Using his ring, he enters the dwarves' camp undetected. They flee down the mountainside but are overtaken at night by goblins and Wargs and trapped in five fir trees in a clearing. The goblins set fire to the trees, but the expedition is rescued by the Eagles of the Misty Mountains, although as usual Bilbo is almost left behind.

Comprehension Questions

1. How does Bilbo know he is on the east side of the Mountains?
2. What is the proverb that Bilbo invents?
3. Why does the Lord of the Eagles notice the expedition?
4. Why won't the Eagles fly near where men live?

Vocabulary

sorrel (101)	larch (104)
marjoram (101)	proverb (103)
bracken (102)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Would Bilbo try to rescue the dwarves if they were still inside the Mountains? Would they try to rescue him?
2. Why doesn't Bilbo tell the dwarves about his ring? Do you consider this lying?
3. What does it mean for our opinion of Bilbo's courage and prowess that Gandalf, his mentor, must be rescued by the Eagles?

chapter 7: "Queer Lodgings"

Summary

The Eagles carry the expedition to the Carrock, a rock in the middle of the Great River. From there the expedition goes to the house of Beorn, a skin-changer fierce to his enemies but gentle with animals. Gandalf wins Beorn's hospitality by introducing the dwarves in small groups while he tells the story of their adventures. After two nights at Beorn's house, the expedition receives his advice and departs for Mirkwood. At the forest-gate, Gandalf leaves the expedition.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is a skin-changer?
2. What does Beorn eat?
3. How does Gandalf get Beorn to shelter thirteen dwarves?
4. Why isn't Beorn interested in the dwarves tales?
5. What is the most important advice that Beorn and Gandalf give about Mirkwood?

Vocabulary

carrock (117)	mead (127)
appalling (118)	withered (128)
tippet (118)	stark (128)
dale (119)	hart (135)
trestle (126)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Compare the expedition's arrival at Beorn's house with the Unexpected Party of Chapter 1. Note that now Bilbo is in on the plot. While both hosts have to be cajoled, it is for very different reasons. What are they?
2. Discuss Beorn's character. What are his virtues? Why is he suspicious of strangers? What about him seems vicious? In what ways is he gentle? How does Bilbo come to understand him? Is there a problem with being a grim man in a grim land?
3. Why is it necessary to the story that Gandalf leave the expedition?

chapter 8: "Flies and Spider"

Summary

Mirkwood is dark and unpleasant. The expedition runs low on food, water, and hope. Bombur falls into the enchanted stream and sleeps for four days. When Balin sees firelight off the path, the dwarves and Bilbo go toward it. They are scattered when they interrupt the elven feast. The dwarves are captured by giant spiders. Bilbo rescues them and slays many spiders, but Thorin is captured by the Wood-elves.

Comprehension Questions

1. What do the dwarves shoot with their bows?
2. When Bilbo climbs the tree, why doesn't he see an end to the forest?
3. What does Bombur dream of?
4. What does Bilbo name his sword?
5. How does Bilbo rescue the dwarves?

Vocabulary

inquisitive (140)	sawn (150)
hind (145)	loathsome (155)
vexed (145)	warrant (155)
accursed (147)	quoits (156)
disquieting (146)	gloaming (165)
commons(149)	thongs (166)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. What are the unattractive features of Mirkwood? Do you think the forest is evil? What about the enchanted stream?
2. After Gandalf leaves, who become the leaders of the expedition?
3. What makes the expedition lose hope? Why is their despair unjustified?
4. What heroic acts does Bilbo perform? (Don't forget his naming of his sword.)
5. Why does Bilbo tell the dwarves about his magic ring? What does his reluctance to do so tell us? What do you think he learns from this?
6. Discuss the ancient feud between dwarves and elves? Whose fault is it? If neither side is in the right, how can you tell the difference between good and evil?

chapter 9: "Barrels Out of Bond"

Summary

Lost in Mirkwood, the dwarves are captured by the Wood-elves and imprisoned because they will not explain their mission. Bilbo, invisible, follows them into the underground palace of the Elvenking. He finds Thorin and later discovers the water-gate, the palace's delivery entrance. When the chief guard becomes drunk, Bilbo steals his keys, releases the dwarves, and hides them in empty barrels. The barrels are thrown into the river to float to Lake-town; Bilbo rides atop one barrel.

Comprehension Questions

1. are the dwarves imprisoned?
2. How does Bilbo get in and out of the palace?
3. How many entrances does the palace have?
4. Where is the elves' wine made?

Vocabulary

portcullis (171)	vintage (173)
flagon (173)	toss-pot (177)
potent (173)	kine (178)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Why does the Elvenking imprison the dwarves? Why won't Thorin tell the Elvenking what his mission is? Define pride and greed?
2. Is Bilbo a burglar now? How does he feel about stealing (p. 181)?
3. The escape plan is completely Bilbo's. How good is it? How much does it depend on luck? Does he deserve this luck?

chapter 10: 'A Warm Welcome'

Summary

Wet and bedraggled, the expedition arrives at Lake-town, a trading town of men. They are welcomed by the master, and the townspeople recall prophecies of the downfall of the dragon and the consequent enrichment of the town. After two weeks of rest the expedition departs for the Lonely Mountain.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why does the master welcome the expedition?
2. Why are the dwarves happy? Why is Bilbo unhappy?
3. What does the Elvenking think will happen to the dwarves?
4. What is the Master's reaction when Thorin announces his departure?

Vocabulary

ominous (184)	vagabond (189)
promontory (185)	enmity (190)
gammer (188)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. "Some sang too that Thrór and Thráin would come back one day and gold would flow in rivers through mountain gates, and all that land would be filled with new song and new laughter. But this pleasant legend did not much affect their daily business" (185-86). Discuss the history of Lake-town and the beliefs of its inhabitants. What does it mean that they do not take their legends seriously?
2. Compare the attitudes of the men of Lake-town, the Master, and the Elvenking to Thorin's mission. Who is reasonable? Who is silly? Then consider Bilbo's attitude. Keeping in mind that elves are renowned for wisdom, how wise is Bilbo?

chapter 11 "On the Doorstep"

Summary

The expedition finds the Side-door but cannot open it, and they all become gloomy. One evening Bilbo hears a thrush cracking snails and realized that this is the sign that the door will open. He calls the dwarves, and Thorin opens the door with his key.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why won't the men of Lake-town stay with the dwarves?
2. Where does the expedition make each of their three camps?
3. Why does the door appear?

Vocabulary

disembarked (194)	lintel (197)
waning (195)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Begin to make a detailed map (or model) of the Mountain. Mark the appearance, vegetation, etc. of each area and the events that occur there.
2. In what way does Bilbo show that he has more spirit left than the dwarves? Why does he?

chapter 12: "Inside iformation"

Summary

Bilbo enters the Side-door and, overcoming his fear, goes down a tunnel to Smaug's lair. Overwhelmed by the splendor of the dragon-hoard, he steals a large cup and escapes. The theft arouses Smaug, who goes through the Front Gate, attacks the expedition on the mountainside, and drives them into the tunnel. Bilbo volunteers to explore the lair again. This time he has a perilous conversation with Smaug, during which he sees an unarmored patch on the dragon's breast. Smaug later attacks their camp, but thanks to Bilbo's foreboding the dwarves are safe, although trapped, inside the tunnel.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who goes partway down the tunnel with Bilbo?
2. What does Bilbo take from the hoard?
3. Bilbo quotes two of his father's sayings. What are they?
4. Who is the real leader of the expedition?
5. What about Bilbo puzzles Smaug?
6. What is the most important thing Bilbo learns from Smaug?

Vocabulary

resource (203)	impenetrable (216)
smoldering (210)	waistcoat (216)
grievous (214)	foreboding (219)
cartage (215)	stealth (221)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. "Some [dwarves] are decent enough people like Thorin and Company, if you don't expect too much" (204). What can Bilbo expect from the dwarves?
2. "Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did...he fought the real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait" (205). According to this passage, what is true courage? What abilities and character traits does Bilbo have? How do his earlier adventures prepare him for his confrontation with Smaug?
3. Is it wise to steal the cup? Why does Bilbo do it?
4. Describe the characteristics of dragons. (Begin with greedy, wily, hostile, and riddle loving, and go on to vengeful, treacherous, fond of flattery, and breeders of distrust and dissension.) What is the dragon-spell? Why are dwarves so susceptible to it? (In this book the traditional motif of the cursed dragon-hoard is changed to the idea that so much treasure brings out the evil and foolish side of dwarves—and even elves and men.) In this and the following chapters, trace the changing effects of the treasure on the dwarves and on Bilbo.
5. Explain the names that Bilbo gives himself when speaking with Smaug: "I come from under the hill. . . I am the clue finder, the web-cutter, the stinging fly. I was chosen for the lucky number," etc. (212-213).

chapter 13: "Not at Home"

Summary

Encouraged by Bilbo, the dwarves go down into the hall and find Smaug gone. Bilbo finds and hides the Arkenstone. The dwarves celebrate their recovery of the treasure. Bilbo reminds them that Smaug is still a peril, and they move to a watchtower on a spur of the Mountain.

Comprehension Questions

1. What does Thorin give Bilbo?
2. Which hall leads to the Front Gate?
3. Why do the dwarves leave the underground halls?

Vocabulary

pallid (226)	dominion (233)
figured (228)	perpetually (233)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. "Anyway the only way out is down" (224). What earlier statement by Bilbo does this echo? When does Bilbo's courage assert itself most?
2. Why does Bilbo keep the Arkenstone? Does he have a right to it?

chapter 14: "Fire and Water"

Summary

Smaug flies to avenge himself on the men of Lake-town. He is destroying the town when the thrush tells Bard the Bowman, a descendant of the former Lords of Dale, about the bare spot on Smaug's breast. Bard slays Smaug and directs his people's efforts to feed and shelter themselves, although he plans eventually to seize Smaug's hoard. When the Elvenking hears of Smaug's death, he sets out to seize the hoard himself, but goes instead to Lake-town when he hears of its distress. Eleven days after Smaug's death, a combined army of men and elves marches on the Lonely Mountain.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the guard "with a grim voice" (234)?
2. Why do the men of Esgaroth destroy the bridges?
3. Why can Bard understand the thrush? (See pp. 217-218 and 237)
4. Why are the people of Esgaroth angry with Thorin?

Vocabulary

drear (234)	gledes (238)
foiled (235)	eminent (239)
quench (235)	benefactor (239)
laden (236)	recompense (239)
prophesying (237)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Characterize Bard and the Master. Who speaks more convincingly? What does their appearance suggest about them? Explain Bard's pessimism. Who has more courage? Who has more leadership? Do you believe that some people are natural leaders? Can this ability be inherited?
2. Why does the Elvenking set out from his halls? Why does he go to Esgaroth? What does this tell you about the value he places on treasure?

chapter 15: "The Gathering of the Clouds"

Summary

Summoned by the thrush, Carc, a raven of an ancient family friendly to the dwarves, tells the dwarves of the death of Smaug and the gathering of men and elves. Carca advises Thorin to deal with Bard, but Thorin sends for aid from his cousin Dain and fortifies the Front Gate. Thorin denies that Bard has a right to any of the treasure, and Bard declares the Mountain Besieged. Bilbo is sick of the whole business.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did Ravenhill get its name?
2. How old is Roac?
3. When does Thorin first name himself King under the Mountain?

Vocabulary

carriage (243)	amends (245)
coveted (244)	fells (249)
decrepit (244)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. From the very beginning, Bilbo has assumed that the climax of the adventure would be the recovery of the treasure. Then he realizes that Smaug must also be dealt with. Now he finds (p. 246) that even Smaug's death does not end the adventure. Re-examine your earlier definitions of what an adventure is.
2. Is gold worth fighting for? Why won't Thorin deal with Bard and Elvenking? Evaluate Bard's three topics for discussion (p. 250) and Thorin's answer; note Thorin's complete lack of pity for the Lake-men's distress.
3. Discuss the difference between the content, rhythms, and music of dwarf-songs (pp. 25, 27, 238, 248) and elf-songs (pp. 57, 279-281).

chapter 16: "A Thief in the Night"

Summary

Despite Roac's counsel, Thorin prepares for war. To break the impasse, Bilbo gives the Arkenstone to Bard and the Elvenking. He meets Gandalf in their camp. Bilbo returns to the Mountain despite the Elvenking's warning about Thorin's anger.

Comprehension Questions

1. How does Bilbo leave the Mountain without being caught?
2. What is Bilbo's plan to avoid war?
3. What old friend does Bilbo meet in the camp?

Vocabulary

bade (253)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Why does Thorin reject Roac's advice?
2. Just as the moment in the tunnel (p. 205) is Bilbo's bravest, giving up the Arkenstone is his noblest. Why does he do it? Would any other character in the story be capable of this? Why does he return to the Mountain?

chapter 17: "The Clouds Burst"

Summary

Thorin promises to give to Bard Bilbo's share of the treasure in exchange for the Arkenstone. Dain's army arrives before the exchange is made, and Bard refuses to let it pass into the Mountain. The two sides are about to join battle when both are attacked by a vast army of goblins and Wargs. Dwarves, elves, and men unite in the face of their common enemy, and the Battle of Five Armies begins. At first the good forces trap the goblins and Wargs between two shoulders of the Mountain, but they in turn are attacked from above by goblins climbing over the Mountain. Thorin sallies forth from the

Gate and rallies his side, but his advance is blocked by the bodyguard of Bolg, the goblin leader, and Thorin is surrounded. Bilbo does not fight, but stays, invisible, near the Elvenking. He mourns the coming defeat and death of his friends, but then he sees that the Eagles are coming. At that moment he is knocked unconscious by a stone.

Comprehension Questions

1. What terms do Thorin and Bard come to?
2. What army makes the first attack?
3. Name the armies in the Battle of Five Armies.
4. What stops Thorin's advance?
5. Where does Bilbo take his final stand? Why?

Vocabulary

hauberk (263)	scimitar (268)
mattocks (263)	eyries (270)
reconciliation (265)	smote (270)
precipice (268)	

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Trace Thorin's moral degeneration through the last several chapters. Contrast his current attitude with the Elvenking's statement "Long will I tarry, ere I begin this war for gold."
2. Which would be a greater evil—the killing of the armies of men, elves, and dwarves by the goblins, or a war between men, elves, and dwarves? Why?
3. During this battle, which armies have soldiers that kill themselves or their allies?

chapter 18: "The Return Journey"

Summary

Bilbo comes to his senses the next day and is brought to the camp. On his deathbed, Thorin makes amends to Bilbo. The outcome of the battle is retold: Beorn rescued the wounded Thorin and then killed Bolg, but the battle was not won until the Eagles cleared the mountainside of goblins. Dain, the new King under the Mountain, makes a generous settlement with Bard. Bilbo and Gandalf begin the return journey and part, in turn, from the dwarves, the Elvenking, and Beorn.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why isn't Bilbo found until the day after the battle?
2. Who turned the tide of the battle?
3. What gifts does Dain give?
4. What becomes of Beorn in later years?

Vocabulary

literally (271)	mustering (273)
amend (273)	trackless (274)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage ...and some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world" (p. 273). Discuss Bilbo's character now that his adventure is completed. Why does he refuse the treasure? Why is he weary of his adventure?
2. Examine the final views we get of Thorin on his deathbed and in his tomb. Is his quest fulfilled? Why is his death necessary? What lesson does he learn? Does he deserve our respect or admiration?
3. Examine in detail the various demands and offers made by Bard and the dwarves (and the elves). How does the final solution match what each party wants and deserves? What is the difference between Dain's gift and Thorin's promises?

chapter 19: "The Last Stage"

Summary

Bilbo and Gandalf come to Rivendell, where Gandalf confers with Elrond. Bilbo takes the treasure from the troll hoard. Finally Bilbo comes home just in time to save his hole and belongings from being auctioned. He settles down contentedly, although he finds that he is no longer considered respectable. In an epilogue, Balin and Gandalf visit him several years later.

Comprehension Questions

1. Where was Gandalf while the expedition crossed Mirkwood?
2. How long do Bilbo and Gandalf stay at Rivendell?

3. Why do they walk at the end of their journey?
4. Why are Bilbo's goods being auctioned?
5. What changes does Balin notice in Bilbo?
6. What happened to the old Master of Lake-town?

Vocabulary

lore (280)

effects (284)

Discussion and Essay Topics

1. Look at the elves' song (pp. 279-80). Describe the character and values of elves.
2. "He gained-well, you will see whether he gained anything in the end" (p. 16). "My dear Bilbo !{Gandalf} said 'Something is the matter with you! You are not

the hobbit that you were'" (p.284). What does Bilbo gain from his adventure? (Don't forget to include the ability and desire to make poetry.) What is the difference in the way his home is dear to him now?

3. "You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit?" (p.286). Then what does manage them?
4. Why is Bilbo pleased that he is "only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!" (p.287)?

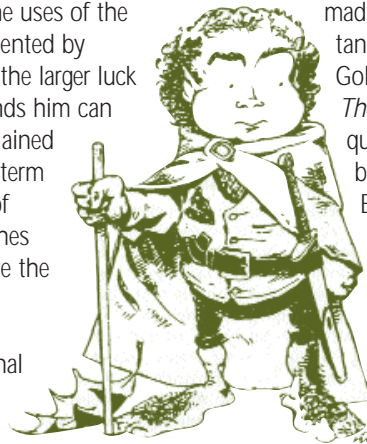
Critical Commentary: Bilbo's Luck

Bilbo is originally chosen the "lucky number," so that Thorin and Company will not be an unlucky thirteen (see pp. 31, 213). During the course of the expedition, Gandalf remarks several times that Bilbo is extraordinary lucky. Some of his luck seems to be the deserved reward for Bilbo's courage and determination. For example, after attempting to find his own way out of the goblins tunnel, confronting Gollum, and evading the orguard, Bilbo certainly deserves to come out on the east side of the Mountains. Similarly, after escaping from the spiders, the expedition needs the luck of being captured by the elves, especially since it turns out that their straying from the path was necessary, because the east end of the road was abandoned (p.184). Other lucky events, notably Bilbo's finding of the troll's key and the ring, are necessary to give Bilbo talismans that enable him to confront enemies who are larger, more powerful, and more numerous than himself. In general, then Bilbo's luck should be seen as a plot device that reinforces the theme of Bilbo's growing self-awareness and self-confidence.

However, some of the fortunate events in *The Hobbit* seem to involve much more than one hobbit's personal luck. Four events in particular should be considered. First is the expedition's rescue from the burning fir trees by the Eagles at a point when even Gandalf expects to die. Second is the expedition's arrival at the

Side-door in one of the very few years when Durin's Day occurs. Third, although Bilbo deserves the credit for discovering Smaug's bare spot, the combination of the bare spot itself, the talking thrush and a heroic descendant of Girion of Dale extends far beyond Bilbo's own luck. Finally, after Bilbo's attempt at mediation fails and Dain attacks Bard and the Elvenking, only the extraordinary event of the Goblin attack restores moral harmony.

Where Bilbo's personal luck is related to the uses of the fantasy presented by Bettelheim, the larger luck that surrounds him can best be explained in Tolkien's term as a series of eucatastrophes that illustrate the workings of Providence. Gandalf's final comments about prophecies and luck, ending with his comment that Bilbo is "only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all" (p.287), are the closest Tolkien comes to disclosing this providential structure in *The Hobbit*. Bilbo's joyous and pragmatic acceptance of this structure—his recognition that he is capable of great deeds but nonetheless dependent on the protection of God—is



one of the two spiritual insights required of dwellers in Middle-Earth. (The other, a selfless love of the Creator and the Creation is usually measured in terms of "elvishness." Bilbo, attracted to elves from the very beginning and eventually named elf-friend, achieves this insight very easily.)

The proof of this providential pattern lies outside *The Hobbit*. The identity of the Eagles as messengers of God (as well as the significance of their coming out of the West in the Battle of Five Armies) is made clear in *The Silmarillion*; the importance of Bilbo's decision not to kill Gollum is a major motif of *The Lord of the Rings*; and the geopolitical consequences of the death of Smaug are best explained in "The Quest of Erebor," one of the fragments in *Unfinished Tales*. Yet the basic principle can be seen quite clearly within *The Hobbit*. Although on the surface it is stronger than good, evil always provides the means of its own defeat: Gollum's ring aids Bilbo, and Smaug in his arrogance shows his bare patch. Triumphant over evil requires not prowess but fortitude, humility, hope and unshakable virtue. Gollum is corrupted by malice, and the dragon-spell turns Thorin's pride to arrogance, deceit, and greed. But Bilbo and Bard, tutored by Gandalf, the Elvenking, and their own hearts, learn the true value of treasure and hatred, and combining against evil they destroy it.