

BOOK I

Chapters 9–12

Not with the hope of escape, or of doing anything, either good or bad: he simply felt that he must take the Ring and put it on his finger. He could not speak. . . . He shut his eyes and struggled for a while; but resistance became unbearable, and at last he slowly drew out the chain, and slipped the Ring on the forefinger of his left hand.

Vocabulary:

Homonyms

A *homonym* is a word that has the same sound and often the same spelling as another word, but has a different meaning. For instance, *draft* may mean a flow of air, military conscription, a long drink, or an incomplete or preliminary version of a document. Generally, the meaning intended by the author is determined by the context.

For each underlined word in the following sentences, determine the meaning from the context and write the letter of the appropriate definition in the blank provided. Note that all the definitions are correct for the word, but only one definition is appropriate for the context.

1. [The inn] had a front on the Road, and two wings running back on land partly cut out of the lower slopes of the hill, so that at the rear the second-floor windows were level with the ground. _____
 - a. forelimbs used for flying
 - b. a structure attached to the side of a main building
 - c. a folding section, such as of a double door or a partition

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2. Most of the Hobbits and the Men of Bree went off then and there in a huff, having no fancy for further entertainment that evening. _____
- a. imagination, whimsy, fantasy
 - b. of a superior nature or style
 - c. critical sensibility or taste
3. “It was sheer accident!” interrupted Frodo. _____
- a. transparent
 - b. completely, totally
 - c. steep, perpendicular
4. The hobbits looked at him, and saw with surprise that his face was drawn as if with pain, and his hands clenched the arms of his chair. _____
- a. distorted, contracted, tightened
 - b. pulled or moved
 - c. sketch, make a likeness with pencil
5. “Maybe,” muttered Sam. “It is also as good a way of saying ‘here we are’ as I can think of, bar shouting.” _____
- a. excluding, ruling out
 - b. saloon, pub
 - c. rectangular block of material
6. The waxing moon was climbing slowly above the hill that overshadowed them, and the stars above the hill-top faded. _____
- a. applying polish
 - b. oily, heat sensitive substance
 - c. increasing gradually in size or intensity

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7. Even as he swooned he caught, . . . a glimpse of Strider leaping out of the darkness with a flaming brand of wood in either hand. _____
- a. trademark or distinctive name
 - b. piece of burning wood
 - c. identifying mark applied with heat
8. Troll sat alone on his seat of stone, and munched and mumbled a bare old bone; for many a year he had gnawed it near, for meat was hard to come by. _____
- a. speak indistinctly with lowered voice or with partly closed mouth
 - b. chew as if without teeth
 - c. indistinct sound
9. Eaten after that draught [draft] the stale bread and dried fruit . . . seemed to satisfy their hunger better than many a good breakfast in the Shire had done.
- a. a flow of air
 - b. military conscription
 - c. a long drink
10. Once or twice he spoke to Strider in the elf-tongue. _____
- a. fleshy, movable, muscular organ, in the mouth
 - b. a spoken language or dialect
 - c. The flap of material under the laces of a shoe
11. Their cold eyes glittered, and they called to him with fell voices. _____
- a. inhumanly cruel; fierce; lethal
 - b. all at once
 - c. upland stretch of open country; a moor

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Questions:

1. What was the “peculiar (but excellent) arrangement” in the relationship of the Bree hobbits and and men?
2. What advice do Merry and Pippin give each other at the end of their supper in *The Prancing Pony*? How well do they heed this advice?
3. What is Frodo’s reaction when he realizes that Pippin “was evidently much enjoying the attention he was getting” and that Pippin was letting his popularity loosen his tongue too much? Did Frodo solve the problem?
4. How are the hobbits delayed in Bree?
5. Who do Frodo and Strider think may have been at Weathertop? What clues lead them to this hope?

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6. At the Ford of Bruinen, what saves Frodo from being captured by the Black Riders?

Thinking About the Story:

7. In *The Prancing Pony*, Frodo sings a song of which the narrator says, “Only a few words of it are now, as a rule, remembered.” What are the words to the song (or poem) as it is now remembered? How does it affect the story to tie a song Frodo sings to a more modern rhyme?
8. While the hobbits are at *The Prancing Pony*, Strider tells them, “Perhaps I know more about [the Black Riders] than you do. You fear them, but you do not fear them enough.” Barliman Butterbur, after noticing that Merry is missing, says to them, “Well, you do want looking after and no mistake: your party might be on a holiday!” What does Butterbur mean? Do you think the hobbits are being careless?
9. What is the rhyme that Strider says applies to him? How does it apply to him? What common saying do we have that is similar? In what ways are the meanings of the sayings similar and in what ways different? Which one of these sayings is the reminder that you most need to remember?

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10. *Point of view* is the vantage point from which a story is narrated. *First-person* point of view is when the narrator is a character in the story. *Second-person* point of view is when the narrator is a person, but is not a character in the story itself. *Third-person* point of view is when the story is told by someone outside the story. Third-person point of view can be *omniscient* (where the narrator reveals the thoughts and emotions of all the characters), *limited omniscient* (where the narrator reveals the thoughts and emotions of a few of the characters), and *objective* (where the narrator doesn't reveal characters' thoughts or emotions). From which point of view has *The Fellowship of the Ring* been told so far?

A jarring shift in point of view takes place in Chapter 11. From what point of view does this chapter begin? How does that affect the story?

11. How is the rhythm of the words in the first few chapters of Chapter 11 different from the previous chapters? How does Tolkien achieve this? What affect does it have on the tone of the scene?
12. When Merry asks Strider how far it is to Rivendell, Strider answers: "I don't know if the Road has ever been measured in miles beyond the *Forsaken Inn*. . . ." He then describes how far things are by how many days it takes to get there. This was a far more common way of describing distances in the past. Why do you think people used to describe distances by the time it took to

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traverse them? Why do you think this has changed to our current custom of describing distances in linear miles?

13. In Chapter 11, as the hobbits and Strider sit about the fire at Weathertop, Tolkien pauses the story for several pages and has Strider relate the poem and story of Tinúviel. Why do you think Tolkien takes the reader away from the immediate action to listen to a tale of ancient mythical history? What purpose does it serve?

14. In Chapter 11, when Merry and Sam beg Strider to tell them a tale of the old days, Strider begins,

‘I will tell you the tale of Tinúviel, . . . in brief—for it is a long tale of which the end is not known. . . . It is a fair tale, though it is sad, as are all the tales of Middle-earth, and yet it may lift up your hearts.’

What might be considered a paradox in the quotation?

15. *Comic relief* is a humorous scene or element in an otherwise serious passage. The humorous element generally is introduced to relieve the intensity of the passage, and it may sometimes increase the seriousness of the surrounding

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material by its contrast. Review the scene in which the hobbits and Strider come upon the trolls in the middle of Chapter 12. How is this scene humorous? Why do you think Tolkien inserted it at this point?

Dig Deeper:

16. Though the hobbits and Men in Bree seem to get along quite well together, Tolkien notes that “Nowhere else in the world was this peculiar (but excellent) arrangement to be found.” In fact, this arrangement did not even exist between different groups of hobbits: “The Shire-hobbits referred to those of Bree, and to any others that lived outside the borders, as Outsiders, and took very little interest in them, considering them dull and uncouth.”

Define the word *ethnocentrism*. How does this term apply to the Shire-hobbits? Have you seen any other examples of this in the story so far?

17. What happens when people automatically assume that other cultures or people are wrong just because they have a different way of doing things or look, speak, or act differently? What happens when we label such differences “weird” or “strange”? Give examples from your own experience or from current events.

How does Matthew 7:1–5 address this issue?

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18. At Weathertop, as the Black Riders approach Frodo and his friends, Frodo suddenly feels compelled to put on the Ring:

[H]is terror was swallowed up in a sudden temptation to put on the Ring. The desire to do this laid hold of him, and he could think of nothing else. He did not forget the Barrow, nor the message of Gandalf; but something seemed to be compelling him to disregard all warnings, and he longed to yield. Not with the hope of escape, or of doing anything, either good or bad: he simply felt that he must take the Ring and put it on his finger.

Note that Tolkien uses the words *temptation* and *compelling* to describe Frodo's experience. How might this passage describe our experiences with temptation and sin? How does Frodo's experience compare to times *you* have felt tempted?

19. As Strider is tending Frodo's wound, Frodo becomes angry with himself:

He bitterly regretted his foolishness, and reproached himself for weakness of will; for he now perceived that in putting on the Ring he obeyed not his own desire but the commanding wish of his enemies.

Read Romans 7:18–25. Compare this scripture with Frodo's compulsion to put on the Ring in Chapter 11 and his regrets in the quotation above. How are the situations and experiences similar? Have you had similar feelings and experiences to the Romans passage? Do you find this passage hopeful or frustrating?

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20. What did Frodo do when he succumbed to temptation and felt overwhelmed and overpowered by the Black Riders at Weathertop? Read Hebrews 2:18–3:1, 4:14–16, 1 Peter 5:6–11. What are we to do when we feel overwhelmed by sin?
21. What did Glorfindel tell Frodo to do as they approached the Ford of Bruinen? How did Frodo respond to the Black Riders when they confronted him at the Ford? What struggle did he undergo? What led to his weakness?

Read Mark 14:37, 38; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22. How are these verses related to Frodo's struggle at the Ford? What warning do the scriptures and Frodo's struggle give to us?

Optional Activities:

1. Write an account of the escape from Bree and the trip to Weathertop from the point of view of Bill Ferny's pony.
2. *Discussion:* In Chapter 11, as Strider begins to tell the tale of Tinúviel, he says, "It is a fair tale, though it is sad, as are all the tales of Middle-earth, and yet it may lift up your hearts.'" Why do you think Tolkien, through Strider, believes all the tales of Middle-earth are fair and sad? From what you have read, do you agree? Do you think real life is similar or different? Is it possible to have a story that is both pleasant (fair) *and* sad?
3. Draw a picture or write poem describing the flood waters rushing down upon the Ford of the Bruinen.
4. *Discussion:* "All that is gold does not glitter," Gandalf writes to Frodo, telling him of Aragorn, a.k.a. Strider, and warning him not to judge Strider by his looks. But some of the hobbits have a hard time trusting the Ranger, who "looks foul but feels fair." Strider laments

But I must admit . . . that I hoped you would take to me for my own sake. A hunted man sometimes wearies of distrust and longs for friendship. But there, I believe my looks are against me.

Strider has had a lifetime of people misjudging him because of his looks. However, in his next statement Strider commits the same error, saying to Pippin, "It would take more than a few days, or weeks, or years of wandering in the Wild to make you look like Strider. . . . and you would die first, unless you are made of sterner stuff than you look."

Is it right to make assumptions about people based on their appearance or based on limited knowledge? For discussion, refer to the instances mentioned above, Frodo's early encounters with the Black Riders, the hobbits' encounters with Elves, and the following scriptures: 1 Samuel 16:7; James 2:1-4, 8, 9.