

THE HOBBIT

by J.R.R. Tolkien



THE AUTHOR

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973) was born to English Baptist parents in Bloemfontein, Orange Free State (now part of South Africa), where his father was a banker. His father died in Africa when Tolkien was four years old; his mother converted to Catholicism in 1900, but died four years later. He and his brother then came under the care of Father Francis Morgan, a family friend in Birmingham and a Catholic priest, who saw to their education. As a young man he was fascinated with languages and attempted to formulate a language of his own. At Oxford he studied English Language and Literature with a special emphasis on philology. These studies laid the foundation for the languages he invented for the various creatures of Middle-earth in his fantasy works.

After seeing combat in World War I, Tolkien returned to Oxford to teach (1925-1959), and in this context began the writing for which he was to become famous. He began compiling tales of the fictional Middle-earth, drawn heavily from Anglo-Saxon and Norse mythology. These stories were not published at this time, but eventually were incorporated into *The Silmarillion* (1977), compiled and published posthumously by his son Christopher. His first published work was *The Hobbit* (1936), which was essentially a children's story. It was so well-received that he followed it up with *The Lord of the Rings* (completed in 1948, published in 1954-5), a trilogy consisting of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. These works revived fantasy as a literary genre and spawned many imitators, none of which approached the mastery of Tolkien's stories. He also produced a definitive edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a translation of *Beowulf* that was completed in 1926 but finally published by his son in 2014, and even translated the book of Jonah for the *Jerusalem Bible* (1966). Throughout most of his creative years he was part of an informal group of writers in Oxford known as the Inklings, the most notable of whom were C.S. Lewis (in whose conversion to Christianity Tolkien played a part), Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield. The fame he gained as a result of his books became a burden to him, especially the extent to which his books were adopted and misused by the members of the 1960s counterculture.

The Hobbit is, as mentioned above, a children's story - a tale of a normal everyday person thrust into the midst of a great adventure through no choice of his own. It is a tale of heroism, of growth through struggle, and of finding out in unexpected ways that one is stronger and more

resourceful than one could ever have imagined. The great themes of *The Lord of the Rings* are only hinted at here; the cosmic struggle between good and evil, the nature and power of temptation, and the story of redemption are far more fully developed in the trilogy. What *The Hobbit* really serves to do is orient the reader to Middle-earth and its various creatures and introduce important characters who will play significant roles in the larger work - the wizard Gandalf, the elf lord Elrond, and Gollum, the pitiful creature who cannot stand the thought of being without his “Precious.”

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Bilbo Baggins - The title character is summoned on a perilous journey to steal the treasure of Smaug the dragon and in the process gains possession of the One Ring of Power.
- Gandalf the Grey - The wizard who interrupts Bilbo’s pleasant life in the Shire to call him to undertake a dangerous journey.
- Thorin Oakenshield - The leader of the dwarves who seeks to regain his throne as King under the Mountain.
- Dwalin, Balin, Kili, Fili (the two youngest), Dori, Nori, Ori, Oin, Gloin, Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur (an exceptionally fat dwarf) - The twelve other dwarves who accompany Bilbo on his journey.
- Elrond - The leader of the elves of Rivendell, he refreshes the company as they prepare to enter Mirkwood and entertains Bilbo and Gandalf on their way home.
- Gollum - A small, slimy creature who has been warped by possessing the Ring for many years. Bilbo inadvertently finds the Ring and Gollum pursues him in an effort to retrieve it.
- Beorn - A skin-shifter who appears sometimes as a giant of a man and sometimes as a great bear and spends his time keeping bees. He helps Bilbo and his companions after their escape from the goblins and Wargs and later plays a major role in defeating the goblins at the Battle of Five Armies.
- Smaug - The dragon from whom Bilbo and his companions seek to recover the dwarves’ stolen gold, he is killed by an arrow shot by Bard.
- Bard - Head of the archers of Lake-town, he rallies the troops to do battle against the dragon and finally kills Smaug by shooting an arrow into the bare spot on his breast.

PLOT SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1 - AN UNEXPECTED PARTY

The story begins in the Shire, the home of simple and peaceful creatures called hobbits, folk about half the size of humans with hairy feet. In particular, we enter the hobbit-hole of a wealthy denizen of the Shire named Bilbo Baggins. Bilbo is fifty years old, and, being a respectable hobbit,

has never had an adventure in his entire life. All that is about to change, however, as Bilbo receives a visit from the great wizard Gandalf the Grey. Bilbo doesn't recognize this friend of his grandfather at first, and becomes quite alarmed when Gandalf announces that he is sending Bilbo on an adventure. In fact, he slams the door in his face, but not before inviting him to tea the following day (just to be polite, of course).

Just before tea-time the next day, Bilbo answers a knock at his door and is surprised to find a dwarf standing there who introduces himself as Dwalin. He is soon followed by twelve of his companions - Balin, Kili, Fili, Dori, Nori, Ori, Oin, Gloin, Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, and Thorin. Lastly Gandalf arrives, and Bilbo is kept very busy fetching refreshments for his uninvited guests. After dinner the dwarves help Bilbo clean up, then play haunting music late into the night, singing of their lost gold, stolen by a dragon long ago. When the dwarves start talking about adventures from which they might never return, Bilbo screams aloud and cowers in fear, but soon recovers himself and asks what they mean. He discovers that Gandalf has volunteered Bilbo's services as a burglar (or expert treasure hunter, if you prefer) to recover the hoard of gold taken from them by the fierce dragon Smaug. Gandalf produces a map of the Lonely Mountain within which Smaug lives and guards the gold, indicating a small secret door leading into the mountain's interior to which Gandalf possesses the key. Thorin then tells Bilbo something of the history of the situation. The dwarves had settled under Lonely Mountain with their accumulated wealth and had prospered as artisans, establishing a profitable and cordial relationship with the men of Dale, a nearby town. Then the dragon had come, killing men and dwarves and stealing their treasure. The dwarves want to leave the next morning to begin their journey and insist that Bilbo, the expert burglar, go with them.

CHAPTER 2 - ROAST MUTTON

When Bilbo wakes up the next morning, his kitchen is a mess with the remains of a very big breakfast and all the dwarves are gone, for which Bilbo is both relived and a little bit disappointed. Just as he settles down to his second breakfast, Gandalf walks in and wonders what is taking him so long. Thorin had left him a note that he had neglected to find while cleaning up the debris in his hobbit-hole; the note accepted his offer to serve as their burglar and told him to meet them at the Green Dragon Inn at 11:00. Bilbo rushes out the door, failing to bring with him any of his usual provisions. They all mount their ponies and begin the trip through hobbit lands, then on into the wild and uninhabited territory beyond. As the weather grows worse and the travel more difficult, the dwarves are forced to camp out in the open for the first time. Suddenly they notice that Gandalf is no longer with them.

Unable to light a fire, they spot a light in the distance among a stand of trees. After some argument they decide to find out the source of the light. When they get close, they send Bilbo, their burglar, to do reconnaissance. What he finds are three gigantic trolls around a fire, roasting mutton and complaining about the lack of variety in their diet; what they really want is a bit of human flesh to eat. Unwilling to return to the dwarves empty-handed, Bilbo tries to pick the pocket of one of the trolls, but the purse he is trying to steal cries out and the troll grabs Bilbo by the neck. Soon they begin arguing about how best to cook him, but as they fight with one another Bilbo moves out of the firelight. Just then the dwarves appear, wondering what has happened to their burglar. One by one they are caught and put in sacks by the trolls, despite the fierce fight put up by Thorin at the end. Bilbo is the only one free, and he has no idea how to rescue his friends. At this point Gandalf appears. By mimicking the voices of the different trolls he draws them into another argument. That goes on and on for hours. Then the sun peeks over the horizon and the three trolls, who cannot live

in sunlight, are turned to stone. The companions then locate the trolls' cave, open it with a key found by Bilbo, and find there food and drink, clothing, pots of gold, two fine swords claimed by Gandalf and Thorin, and a knife that would serve well as a sword for the diminutive Bilbo.

CHAPTER 3 - A SHORT REST

As they travel, they see mountains in the distance, but upon questioning by Bilbo, Gandalf says that these are not their destination, but are the Misty Mountains, indicating that they still have a long way to go. Knowing they need a rest, Gandalf leads them across the wilderness to a hidden valley called Rivendell, inhabited by Elrond and a company of elves. The elves were singing merry tunes, which cheered Bilbo, who liked elves, but did not please the dwarves, since the two peoples did not get on well. Nonetheless, the company spends two peaceful and refreshing weeks in Rivendell. Elrond, an expert in deciphering runes, identifies the swords taken from the trolls' cave as elvish in origin; Thorin's is called Orcrist, the Goblin-cleaver, and Gandalf's is Glamdring, the Foe-hammer. He also discovers invisible writing on their map, able to be read only in moonlight under conditions duplicating those under which the runes were written. What the runes say makes no sense to him or to the company: "Stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks, and the setting sun with the last light of Durin's Day will shine upon the key-hole." With this puzzle fresh in their minds, they prepare to leave the comforts of Rivendell.

CHAPTER 4 - OVER HILL AND UNDER HILL

For days after leaving Rivendell the companions climb into the Misty Mountains. One night they encounter an especially violent thunderstorm, which brings out the stone giants to throw rocks among themselves. They and their ponies are getting drenched, so they send Kili and Fili to seek shelter. They find a dry cave large enough to shelter them and their ponies, but Gandalf is concerned that the cave might not be unoccupied. They go to the cave and find nothing in it, so they settle down and fall asleep. Bilbo wakes up in the middle of the night just in time to see the ponies disappearing through a crack that has opened in the back of the cave. He cries out, but soon hordes of goblins rush through the crack and seize him and the dwarves; only Gandalf escapes by using his wand to kill several goblins who attack him. Bilbo and the dwarves soon find themselves chained together, prisoners of the goblins deep in the bowels of the mountain. The goblins are already fighting over their provisions and would soon eat their ponies.

They are brought before the Great Goblin, who asks them their business. Thorin responds that they had no intention of trespassing on the goblins' territory, but merely were crossing the mountains to visit their relatives on the other side. One of the goblins points out, however, that several of their number had been killed by lightning (Gandalf's wand) in the cave, and that furthermore Thorin carried Orcrist, the Goblin-cleaver, which had been used by elves to slay any goblins in earlier times. The Great Goblin in fury orders the companions to be imprisoned in his dungeons forever and charges them with mouth wide open. At that moment the lights in the cavern go out and the fire shoots sparks all among the goblins. With a flash of his mighty sword, Gandalf cuts the Great Goblin in two and, in the confusion, leads the company, still chained together, out of the cavern and deeper into the heart of the mountain. Once they escape the goblins, Gandalf cuts their chains. As they go even deeper into the mountain, however, they can hear the goblins pursuing them. At one point Gandalf and Thorin wait with their swords around a sharp corner and kill enough of the goblins to send the others fleeing, but still the goblins persevere. They send their swiftest and

most silent runners in pursuit, and finally they come upon the company unawares. When the last dwarf in line, carrying Bilbo, is suddenly seized, Bilbo falls from his shoulders, hits his head on a rock, and is knocked unconscious.

CHAPTER 5 - RIDDLES IN THE DARK

When Bilbo regains consciousness, he finds himself alone in total darkness. As he crawls along the tunnel, his hand touches a small ring, which he puts into his pocket without thinking. After sitting for a very long time feeling sorry for himself and uncertain of what to do next, he discovers that the dagger he took from the trolls' hoard gives off a faint light, indicating that, like the swords of Gandalf and Thorin, it is an elvish blade; the glow indicates that goblins are in the vicinity, but not too near, given the faintness of the light. In any case, the light from the dagger is enough to guide him along the tunnel. The path he travels takes him steadily downward in the same direction until he suddenly finds himself standing in an icy-cold underground lake. Since Bilbo cannot swim, he ventures no further.

What Bilbo does not realize is that he has stumbled upon the dwelling of Gollum, a small creature of about his own size whose nature and origin are unknown. He lives on an island in the lake, on which he rows in a small boat, living on fish and the occasional goblin. Gollum can see in the dark and is watching Bilbo, wondering what sort of creature he might be and how he might taste. Because he has lived so long alone in the dark, Gollum talks to himself, calling himself "my precious." He rows toward Bilbo and asks who he is. Bilbo introduces himself, and the presence of the elvish dagger puts Gollum on his best manners. Unable to think of anything else to say, the creature challenges Bilbo to a riddle contest; if he wins he gets to eat Bilbo, but if he loses he will show the hobbit the way out of the mountain. The two exchange riddles, each answering those posed by the other, until Bilbo, running out of ideas, asks, "What have I got in my pocket?" Gollum demands three guesses, takes four, and still cannot answer correctly, so Bilbo insists that he keep his promise and show him the way out.

Gollum says he has to gather a few things first; his plan is to retrieve from his island what he calls his "birthday present," a lovely ring of gold. This is the great Ring of Power that renders the wearer invisible. He intends, of course, to use it in order to surprise Bilbo, overpower him and eat him. Unfortunately for Gollum, the Ring is nowhere to be found. At this point the creature guesses what Bilbo has in his pocket and pursues him with murder in his eyes. Bilbo flees up the tunnel down which he had come, and in the process slips the Ring on his finger. Gollum rapidly gains on him and Bilbo falls, but much to his surprise, the creature runs right past him without appearing to see him. Bilbo then decides to follow him, hoping he will lead him to some exit from the tunnel system. Gollum thinks Bilbo will head for the rear entrance, but fears that if he does he will fall into the hands of the goblins, who will then gain possession of the Ring. He must find Bilbo before the goblins do, so he heads for the exit with Bilbo, still invisible, close behind him. Soon Gollum stops, afraid that he will encounter goblins if he goes any further, and decides to wait for Bilbo to come to him. At this point Bilbo takes a great leap over him and speeds along the passage, leaving Gollum weeping and wailing in his wake. The tunnel takes him upward, but as he sees the door to the outside world in the distance, he realizes that it is guarded by a troop of armed goblins. They spot him immediately because the Ring has slipped from his finger. He quickly puts it back on his finger and, as the goblins run everywhere trying to find him, escapes through the door and into the wood below.

CHAPTER 6 - OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE

Once Bilbo is able to get his bearings he realizes that the “back door” has let him out on the eastern side of the Misty Mountains, so he begins the descent into the plains and valleys below. Just as he is wondering whether or not he should return to the caverns to seek his friends, he sees Balin on lookout. Balin, of course, cannot see Bilbo because he is still wearing the Ring, so the hobbit decides to play a trick on his friends. He finds them arguing about whether or not to go back to the goblin caves to find him. Gandalf is insisting that they must when suddenly Bilbo appears in their midst. They immediately want to hear about Bilbo’s adventures, and he tells them about getting lost, the riddle contest with Gollum, and his escape from the goblins, only leaving out the bit about the Ring (though Gandalf surmised that something important had been omitted from the tale). Gandalf then tells Bilbo how he and the dwarves escaped after the slaying of the Great Goblin.

Gandalf then reminds them of the need to put some distance between themselves and the goblins before nightfall, so they push on down the slopes of the mountains. They reach a quiet clearing in the forest, but in the moonlight they hear the howling of wolves. Bilbo realizes that his newfound Ring is useless against terrifying creatures that hunt by smell rather than sight. Gandalf orders the entire company to climb the trees at the edge of the clearing, and Bilbo just makes it up with Dori’s help before the arrival of the Wargs, as the vicious wolves of the Wild are called. The wolves place guards at the foot of each occupied tree while they discuss their plans. They had intended to join the goblins that night in a raid on a nearby village of men, hoping to kill all of them except for a few the goblins would keep as slaves. The goblins had not yet arrived, but when they did the company would no longer be safe, since goblins, unlike wolves, can climb trees. Gandalf took charge of the situation by setting pine cones on fire with his wand and throwing them down on the wolves, setting many ablaze and driving the rest away in terror.

Meanwhile, far above on his mountain perch, the Lord of the Eagles looked down with interest at the commotion in the wolves’ meeting place. He could also see in the distance long lines of armed goblins making their way down the mountain. When the goblins arrive at the clearing they gather the surviving wolves and put out the fires spreading into the woods - all except those at the bases of the trees where Bilbo, Gandalf, and the dwarves are hiding; those they feed, anticipating the flavor of roast meat. Just as the flames reached the companions, however, the Lord of the Eagles and his fellows swoop down and seize them in their talons, carrying them off, much to the surprise of the goblins, who are infuriated. More eagles arrive and attack the wolves and goblins, killing many and driving the others away. The eagles take the company to their eyrie high in the mountains, and thence to a rock shelf, where they bring them food to sustain them. Gandalf then arranges with the Lord of the Eagles for the great birds to carry the fifteen weary companions into the valley below after they get a good night’s sleep.

CHAPTER 7 - QUEER LODGINGS

The next morning the eagles take Bilbo, Gandalf, and the dwarves from their mountain eyrie to a rock outcropping in the plain below. Gandalf says that he must soon leave them, but before he does he wishes to introduce them to Beorn, a skin-shifter who appears sometimes as a giant of a man and sometimes as a great bear and spends his time keeping bees. Gandalf takes Bilbo to meet Beorn, and while he is telling the story of their adventures, the dwarves gradually filter in. When the tale is told, Beorn invites the company to share his dinner and stay the night. At dinner they are served by Beorn’s animals, with whom he is able to communicate, while he tells tales of the wild country

around them and the terrible forest of Mirkwood, which they would have to traverse in their journey. At that point their host leaves them. They spend the entire next day resting in Beorn's house while he is away confirming the truth of Gandalf's story. He returns with the head of a goblin and the skin of a Warg and is now prepared to help them continue their adventure. He gives them food and lends them ponies to ride and warns them that they will find neither food nor water in Mirkwood, and above all must not stray from the path through the forest. They travel rapidly for the next few days until they reach the edge of Mirkwood, at which point they send the ponies back to Beorn. Gandalf also leaves them here to carry on alone.

CHAPTER 8 - FLIES AND SPIDERS

Bilbo and the dwarves then start down the path into the dark depths of Mirkwood. The forest is full of strange sounds, and thick, black cobwebs hang among the trees on both sides of the path. At night they can see nothing, not even their hands in front of their faces, though those on guard reported eyes staring at them from the forest and the trees above. When they tried to light a fire at night it only made things worse because it attracted all sorts of unsavory creatures, including huge moths and bats. As day follows day, their food and water are close to running out. One day they reach a stream running right across the path, but because of Beorn's warning they avoid drinking or even touching it. The bridge is broken, but Bilbo spots a boat on the other side. Fili snares it with a hook on the end of a rope and they pull it over to their shore. They cross the stream four at a time, but just as the last of them reaches the far shore a deer comes charging down the path. Thorin shoots it, but it knocks Bombur into the water. By the time they pull him out he is fast asleep and cannot be wakened. Meanwhile, the other dwarves loose their arrows at several white deer that come down the path, but they miss, leaving them with no arrows remaining.

Had they realized the significance of the white deer they would have known that they were nearing the far edge of the wood, but they don't know this and become discouraged with the incessant gloom, the declining provisions, and the weight of Bombur, the fat dwarf who had to be carried while still in his enchanted state. Finally then send Bilbo up a tall oak to see what lay ahead. While he feels a delightful breeze and sees hundreds of butterflies, nothing but treetops extend as far as his eyes can perceive. That night they eat the last of their food. In the morning Bombur wakes from his slumber; he remembers nothing of their previous journey, but tells them of lovely dreams with singing elves and plenty to eat and drink.

That night they see lights in the forest and what seems very nearly to resemble the feast in Bombur's dream. Ignoring the warnings given to them by Gandalf and Beorn, figuring that if they stay on the path they will die of starvation anyway, they plunge into the forest in the direction of the fires. As soon as they enter the circle made by the wood elves' feast, however, the lights go out and they are left alone with no idea of how to get back to the path. Soon the lights reappear at some distance; this time they decide to send Bilbo in alone to find out what is going on. When he enters the circle the lights go out again, and Bilbo falls asleep on the ground in the same sort of enchantment that had overtaken Bombur. A third try turns out even worse, as Bilbo is separated from the dwarves entirely.

When Bilbo wakes the next morning, he finds himself bound to a tree by the web of an enormous spider. He manages to draw his sword just in time, free himself, and kill the spider, who obviously was not accustomed to "flies" that fought back. He promptly names his little sword "Sting," and after a long sleep goes off in search of the dwarves, putting on his Ring in order to avoid drawing the attention of any of the creatures of the forest. Soon he comes upon a nest of spiders; he

listens to them talking and realizes that they are arguing about how and when they should eat the dwarves, who are wrapped in webbing and hanging from a nearby tree. He kills two of them with well-thrown stones and then starts singing, drawing the furious spiders farther and farther from the dwarves. He then sneaks back and cuts the dwarves free, though not before the spiders return and surround them. They succeed in fighting their way out even in their weakened condition, largely thanks to Sting and the Ring, and reach an elven circle where they can catch their breaths and rest. That night they make Bilbo tell them all about the Ring and retell the tale of his encounter with Gollum.

The next morning they realize that Thorin is missing. In fact, he had been captured by the wood elves and carried off to the cave of their king. Elves and dwarves are not friendly toward each other, and the king interrogates Thorin, thinking he was leading an attack against them while they feasted. Thorin says nothing more than that he and his friends were starving, and is promptly thrown into the dungeon.

CHAPTER 9- BARRELS OUT OF BOND

Bilbo and the dwarves try once more to regain the path, but before they get too far they are surrounded and captured by the wood elves who have already imprisoned Thorin. Bilbo quickly slips on the Ring and trots along invisibly behind the elves and their prisoners as they return to the Elvenking's cave. After intense but fruitless questioning by the Elvenking, the dwarves are put in separate cells in the dungeon. For the next two weeks Bilbo wanders invisibly about the Elvenking's palace, discovering the location of each dwarf and finally finding Thorin as well. Using Bilbo as an intermediary, Thorin orders the other dwarves not to reveal the nature of their quest under any circumstances, for he knows that the elves would then demand a share of the treasure as the price of their release.

A few days later Bilbo discovers a valuable secret: the cave has a second entrance, this one by means of a trapdoor that opens on a subterranean stream. This stream leads to the forest river and thence to Long Lake. By means of this waterway the elves engage in a lively trade with the men of Lake-town, importing wine, which the elves love but cannot make themselves. The wine comes to them in barrels, and Bilbo notices that the empty barrels are simply dropped through the trapdoor and left to float down the river, there to be retrieved by the men of Lake-town. This gives Bilbo an idea. When the guards are asleep, he steals the keys to the cells and releases the dwarves. He then convinces them to hide in the empty barrels, thence to be dropped through the trapdoor into the stream below. Bilbo himself grabs onto the last barrel and finds himself floating down the stream on top of it. The barrels are soon intercepted by another group of elves and lashed together into a raft, then sent off down the river toward Long Lake.

CHAPTER 10 - A WARM WELCOME

As the barrels continue floating down the river, beyond the cliffs and into the plain below, Bilbo catches his first sight of their destination, the Lonely Mountain. Finally the raft made of barrels reaches Long Lake. The river spills out near Lake-town, which is actually built on wooden pilings in a calm bay. Once prosperous, the town is now fallen into decay. That night Bilbo releases the dwarves from their barrels, and a bedraggled group they are indeed. Thorin, along with Bilbo, Fili, and Kili, marches into the hall where the men of Lake-town are feasting and introduces himself as the King under the Mountain who has returned according to the ancient prophecy. This causes

a great stir, after which the members of the company are wined and dined, given a fine house in which to stay, and in general treated like royalty. Within a week the dwarves are restored to health and strength and Bilbo gets over the atrocious cold he acquired from his barrel-riding journey. A week later the Master of Lake-town sends them off toward the Lonely Mountain with boats, ponies, and supplies. Word of these developments reaches the Elvenking, and he, like the Master of Lake-town, is convinced the company will all be killed, but is determined to monitor events in case treasure is really to be had.

CHAPTER 11 - ON THE DOORSTEP

After three days' journey up the lake and along the river, they draw near to the Lonely Mountain. Their escorts, unwilling to stay anywhere near the dragon's vicinity, refuse to remain to guard the provisions and make their way quickly back to Lake-town. As they approach the foot of the mountain, greenery gives way to burned and blackened stumps; they have reached the Desolation of Smaug. They learned from the men of Lake-town that the dragon has not appeared for many years, causing some to disbelieve in his very existence. Thorin and company are not so foolish, however, and proceed to explore the lands around the mountain. They look down at the ruins of Dale, a once-prosperous town at the foot of the mountain, and continue their search for the secret door of which their map had spoken. When they reach the place where the Running River emerges from the mountain, they see smoke pouring out of the crack and surmise that the dragon must be within the mountain's depths. One day their search finally bears fruit, as Bilbo, Kili, and Fili find a stone staircase that leads to a grassy area in front of an unusually flat rock wall. Knowing that they have found the door at last, they return to tell the rest of the company. The next day all but Bombur climb to the site. The dwarves try to break through the stone with their mining tools, but the magic that conceals it is too strong. Bilbo sits thinking for days as the dwarves become increasingly discouraged, but one day at sunset the pieces of the prophecy on the map come together - the setting sun and new moon in the sky at the same time, a thrush knocking on the door, and a cry from the bird that results in a piece of rock flaking off from the mountain, revealing a keyhole. Thorin quickly brings out his key and the magic door opens before them, leading into the dark depths of Smaug's lair.

CHAPTER 12 - INSIDE INFORMATION

Thorin now indicates that he expects Bilbo to lead the way down the dark passage; in fact, none of the dwarves show any inclination to accompany him except Balin, who only intends to follow a short distance to cry out for help if necessary. Bilbo finds the passage easy to traverse, and soon Balin leaves him to his own devices. Cognizant of the danger that awaits him, Bilbo slips on the Ring. As he descends the passage the temperature begins to rise, and soon he sees a faint glow in the distance. As he gets closer, the red light becomes brighter, the passage grows hotter, and he can hear a nose like an enormous beast snoring. When he emerges from the passage, there before him lies Smaug, sound asleep atop an enormous hoard of gold, jewels, and other treasures, enough to take the little hobbit's breath away. He sneaks up to the edge of the hoard, picks up a gold cup, and rushes with it back to the waiting dwarves.

Unfortunately, dragons, though they have no practical use for their gold, know the contents of their treasures to the last farthing. When Smaug wakes up he immediately realizes that the cup is missing and flies into a rage. He searches the cavern and the surrounding underground regions,

though he is too large to fit into the passage used by Bilbo. He then emerges from the main gate of his lair and flies to the top of the mountain, looking below him for the thief who had robbed him. Bilbo, realizing what is happening, urges the dwarves into the passage where Smaug cannot find them. But Bofur and Bombur are still in the valley below guarding the supplies, so Thorin quickly organizes the dwarves to lower ropes and haul them and as much as they can carry up the mountain and thus into the tunnel. Smaug hears their clamor and descends on them, but they escape just in time into the passage, though they are somewhat singed when the dragon breathes his deadly fire after them. Throughout the night the dragon circles the mountain but is unable to find the culprit he seeks. Finally he returns to his couch of treasure and falls into a sort of half-slumber.

At this point the dwarves are stymied. How are they to dispose of Smaug and retrieve the treasure? Bilbo argues that he is a burglar, not a dragon-slayer, but nonetheless suggests that a few venture out during the day while the dragon is asleep to replenish their supplies while Bilbo uses the Ring to keep an eye on Smaug. When he descends again into the cavern he is nearly caught; though Smaug cannot hear or see him, he can smell him. The dragon tries to trick Bilbo into coming out, but the hobbit instead engages him in a battle of wits, first flattering Smaug and then piquing his curiosity by giving himself a long list of cryptic, riddling titles. Smaug concludes that the burglar must be one of the men of Lake-town and determines to get his revenge on them. He can tell that Bilbo has been in the company of dwarves by the smell of the tunnel and warns him that the dwarves will cheat him unless he is careful. How, he asks, do they expect to move the treasure even if they manage to steal it? Bilbo warns him that he and his company have not just come for treasure, but also for revenge, at which Smaug enjoys a hearty laugh, insisting that he is invincible. Bilbo says that he has heard that dragons have a soft underbelly, but Smaug shows him that he is armored there as well, though in the process Bilbo spots a bare patch under his left breast. At this point Bilbo flees back up the passage, though not fast enough to avoid being singed on the way out.

Once Bilbo recovers from his ordeal, he tells his tale to the dwarves, but he is certain that the dragon will seek some form of revenge that night. He urges them to get inside the tunnel and shut the door; they do so just in time, for as soon as they are inside Smaug begins to batter the mountainside with his tail, causing a rockslide that obliterates the secret door forever and trapping the dwarves in the mountain's interior. He then flies southward to wreak his vengeance on the men of Lake-town.

CHAPTER 13 - NOT AT HOME

The dwarves cower in fear inside the tunnel for what seems like days and re near to suffocating. At this point Bilbo suggests they all go down the tunnel, since that is the only way out and the dragon appears to be gone for the time being. When they get to Smaug's lair they find it in utter darkness. The dwarves light torches but are afraid to enter the cavern, sending Bilbo ahead to explore. He actually climbs the pile of treasure and at the top finds the fabled Arkenstone, the marvelous gem carved by dwarves generations earlier from the heart of the mountain. This Bilbo quietly pockets, since the dwarves had promised that he could have the pick of the treasure. After Bilbo climbs down the pile of treasure and crosses the floor of the cavern, the dwarves come down and begin to explore the hoard. They stuff their pockets with as many jewels as they can hold, then put on armor, even finding some that will for Bilbo. Thorin searches for the Arkenstone, but to no avail. Realizing that time is short, he offers to lead the company out of the caverns, whose winding paths he knows very well. Finally they arrive at the Front Door of the mountain a look down on the ruined town of Dale. Recognizing their need to hide, they climb to a lookout post where they can

sleep in safety and watch for the return of Smaug. At this point they see nothing from their perch except a large gathering of birds far to the south.

CHAPTER 14 - FIRE AND WATER

Meanwhile Smaug is venting his fury on the men of Lake-town. Because of his fiery breath they see him coming so they have time to cut loose the bridge to their island homes, saturate their dwellings with water, and arms themselves with bows and arrows. Their weapons are unable to penetrate Smaug's scales, however, and he breathes out fire on the island dwellings below. It appears that the whole town will be burned down to the water, but the archers, led by a man named Bard, refuse to give up. When Bard has only one arrow left, a thrush perches on his shoulder. This is the same thrush that had contributed to Bilbo's success in finding the secret doorway into the mountain, and he tells Bard about the bare patch on Smaug's left breast. When the great dragon makes his next pass, the moon gleams on his breast and Bard is able to see the bare spot, through which he shoots his last arrow. The bolt sends Smaug crashing down into what is left of the town, and Lake-town and the dragon sink into the depths of Long Lake, never to be seen again.

The town may be gone, but most of the people survive, as do their fields and crops on the shore. They are ready to make Bard their new king - he is of the royal line of Dale - but the master of what used to be Lake-town argues that Thorin and his company are responsible for stirring up the dragon's wrath, and thus should share their treasure to help rebuild the town. Soon all questions of kingship are forgotten and the people engage in providing food and shelter for themselves, largely organized by Bard. He sends for help from the Elvenking, only to find that the elves, having heard of the death of Smaug, are already on the move to claim the unguarded treasure for themselves. They do, however, take time to assist the men of the town in building huts on the shore and gathering wood for more permanent dwellings, but within a few days are marching toward the mountain. The gathering of birds seen by the dwarves is because the crows and other carrion-eaters anticipated a feast from what appeared to be inevitable warfare over the treasure.

CHAPTER 15 - THE GATHERING OF THE CLOUDS

When Bilbo and the dwarves emerge from their hiding place, they see no signs of danger but notice that more and more birds are gathering and coming toward the Lonely Mountain. Among them is the thrush that they had encountered before - the one who conveyed the critical message to Bard. He tries to tell them something, but they can't understand his language, so he fetches an ancient raven who speaks the common language. The raven tells them the story of Smaug's death, and the dwarves are overjoyed, convinced that they now have regained possession of their treasure. The raven warns them, however, that elves, men, and birds are gathering to claim part of the treasure. He advises them not to trust the Master of Lake-town, but to have confidence in Bard and be willing to share their gold if they truly want peace. Thorin, however, is unwilling to share the dwarves' treasure with anyone and asks the raven to take a message to a nearby dwarf settlement asking their help. He then orders his company to fortify the Front Gate, the only remaining entrance to the caverns under the Lonely Mountain.

Soon the Elvenking and his bowmen and the men of the Lake, led by Bard, camp at the foot of the mountain. Bard requests a parley with Thorin, reminding him that some of Smaug's treasure had been stolen from the men of Dale and recalling for him the help the dwarves had received from the men of Esgaroth (the ancient name of Lake-town), receiving only destruction in return. Thorin

refuses to parley with an armed host, however, and will not consider speaking to the Elvenking, who had treated them so badly. He demands that the men lay down their arms and that the elves return to their woodland home. Bard refuses and later returns with a very reasonable demand - one-twelfth of the treasure, which is to be used to assist in the recovery of the Lake-men from the devastation wrought by the dragon. Thorin's response is an arrow into the shield of the messenger, at which point the men and their allies declare the mountain under siege, warning dwarves that, unless they agree to negotiate, they can eat their gold if they wish to survive.

CHAPTER 16 - A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

As the days pass, the dwarves spend their time organizing the treasure. Thorin continues to be obsessed with the Arkenstone, which he claims for himself, threatening vengeance against any who would dare to take it. Bilbo meanwhile is formulating a plan. One night he takes the Arkenstone, puts on the Ring, and climbs down the mountain and over the river to the camp of the elves and men. He then reveals himself and asks to be taken to Bard and the Elvenking. He warns them that an army of dwarves is two days away, then gives them the Arkenstone, which he calls his portion of the treasure, to use as a bargaining chip in their negotiations with Thorin. As he leaves to return to the mountain, an old man in a dark cloak approaches him; it is Gandalf, who warns Bilbo that troubles still remain ahead of him.

CHAPTER 17 - THE CLOUDS BURST

The next morning Bard, the Elvenking, and Gandalf come to the Gate of the Lonely Mountain to parley with Thorin. They reveal the Arkenstone and offer to return it in exchange for their rightful share of the treasure. Thorin angrily demands to know how they came to possess the gem, and Bilbo admits to giving it to them. Thorin flies into a rage and is on the verge of throwing Bilbo down the mountain when Gandalf reveals himself. Thorin then agrees to exchange one-fourteenth of the gold and silver (but not the jewels) for the Arkenstone, insisting that it be counted as Bilbo's share, leaving the hobbit with nothing; he then lowers Bilbo from the Gate to the men and elves below, telling him that he never wants to see his face again. The King under the Mountain has his own plans, however; he is counting on the approaching dwarf army to recover the Arkenstone without giving up any of the treasure.

Dain, the leader of the dwarf army, arrives the next day. His plan is to join Thorin under the mountain, cut a new opening, and thus lift the siege. Bard refuses to let him pass, however, and the two sides prepare for war. Suddenly darkness falls over the two armies and Gandalf cries out, warning them that a horde of goblins and Wargs is approaching to seize the treasure for themselves. This provides sufficient motivation for the dwarves, elves, and men to join forces against the evil interlopers. In the Battle of Five Armies that ensues, the allies draw the goblins and Wargs into a valley between two spurs of the Lonely Mountain and shoot down at them from above. When the barrage sends the goblins into a panic, the allies charge into their midst from both sides. When victory seems to be at hand, another goblin horde comes over the top of the mountain to attack the allies from behind. At this point Thorin and his companions enter the fray, driving the goblins back, but they are too few to turn the tide. Soon the dwarves, elves, and men are surrounded by the goblins and their wolf allies. When all seems lost, a great flight of eagles descends from the north and drives the goblin horde away, but before the battle ends Bilbo is knocked unconscious by a falling rock.

CHAPTER 18 - THE RETURN JOURNEY

When Bilbo regains consciousness he is all alone on a plateau. In the camp below, elves and men are cleaning up the detritus of battle while the dwarves knock down the wall they had built at the Gate. Soon a man comes searching for him but hears only his voice, at which point Bilbo removes the Ring and is transported safely down the mountain. He is brought to a tent where Thorin, having suffered mortal wounds in the battle, is about to breathe his last. He seeks reconciliation with the little hobbit and asks forgiveness for his harsh words at the Gate before the battle, then passes from this life.

After the death of Thorin, Bilbo learns of the events that occurred while he was unconscious. The eagles, having observed the goblins' preparations, had followed them and descended in great numbers, driving them from the mountain into the plain below. The goblins continued to have a numerical advantage, however, and the battle was not going well for the allies. Finally Beorn appeared in the form of a gigantic bear and wreaked havoc among the goblins and wolves. When Beorn crushed the new king of the goblins, they fled in panic, but were pursued by the newly-energized men, dwarves and elves so that none survived. When the victory is assured, Thorin is buried in the heart of the mountain with the Arkenstone on his breast and the blade Orcrist atop his tomb. Dain then took up his abode as the new King under the Mountain. Ten of Thorin's companions remained to serve him; Fili and Kili had perished in the battle. Bard receives the treasure he had been promised by Thorin and uses it to reward the elves, provide for the restoration of Lake-town, and rebuild his ancestral city of Dale. He offers Bilbo the largest share of treasure, but the hobbit will only accept one small chest of gold and one of silver, after which he parts from his friends. The elves escort Bilbo as far as Mirkwood, after which he, Gandalf, and Beorn turn northward to skirt the edge of the forest. They remain for some months at Beorn's house, resting and feasting, and then the hobbit and the wizard turn in the direction of the Shire.

CHAPTER 19 - THE LAST STAGE

On the way home they stop in Rivendell, where they are welcomed by Elrond and the elves. As they feast together, Gandalf tells the tale of their adventures. After a week of rest and restoration they continue on their journey. They ford the river at the edge of the wild lands, pass by the place of their encounter with the trolls, and dig up the trolls' gold, which they had buried earlier. When they finally arrive home, Bilbo is shocked to find that his possessions are being auctioned by his relatives because he is presumed dead. Those who already got bargains are not pleased by Bilbo's return; some even insist for years after that he is not the genuine Bilbo Baggins. He recovers most of his property, though much of it he is forced to buy back from those who purchased it. He also finds that his reputation is seriously altered; while wizards, elves, and dwarves highly respect him, his friends and neighbors think him a bit odd. After all, hobbits are homebodies who have no interest in adventures. He kept his sword and chain mail prominently on display, but the Ring he kept a secret, using it only occasionally to avoid unwanted visitors. His fortune he spent largely in gifts to his nieces and nephews, and he lived in happiness and contentment to a ripe old age, writing his memoirs - *There and Back Again, a Hobbit's Holiday*.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can’t think what anybody sees in them.” (Bilbo, ch.1, p.18)

“He looks more like a grocer than a burglar!” (Gloin, ch.1, p.30)

“There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself.” (Gandalf, ch.1, p.31-32)

“It is not unlikely that [goblins] invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them, and also not working with their own hands more than they could help.” (ch.4, p.70)

“Utterly miserable as Gollum sounded, Bilbo could not find much pity in his heart, and he had a feeling that anything Gollum wanted so much could hardly be something good.” (ch.5, p.88)

“Good-bye! Be good, take care of yourselves - and DON’T LEAVE THE PATH!” (Gandalf, ch.7, p.139)

“Knowing the truth about the vanishing did not lessen their opinion of Bilbo at all; for they saw that he had some wits, as well as luck and a magic ring - and all three are very useful possessions.” (ch.8, p.163)

“It seemed as if darkness flowed out like a vapour from the hole in the mountain-side, and deep darkness in which nothing could be seen lay before their eyes, a yawning mouth leading in and down.” (ch.11, p.201-202)

“It was at this point that Bilbo stopped. Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterwards were as nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait.” (ch.12, p.205)

“Revenge! The King under the Mountain is dead and where are his kin that dare seek revenge? Girion Lord of Dale is dead, and I have eaten his people like a wolf among sheep, and where are his sons’ sons that dare approach me? I kill where I wish and none dare resist. I laid low the warriors of old and their like is not in the world today. Then I was but young and tender; now I am old and strong, strong, strong, Thief in the Shadows! . . . My armour is like tenfold shields, my teeth are swords, my claws spears, the shock of my tail a thunderbolt, my wings a hurricane, and my breath death!” (Smaug, ch.12, p.215-216)

“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.” (Thorin, ch.18, p.273)

“Surely you don’t disbelieve the prophecies, because you had a hand in bringing them about yourself? You really don’t suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit? You are a very fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all.” (Gandalf, ch.19, p.286-287)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Discuss the character development of the protagonist in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*. In what ways does Bilbo Baggins change as he pursues his quest and in what ways does he stay the same? Which is more important, the changes that he undergoes or the ways in which his character remains steadfast despite many trials and temptations?
2. In J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf is clearly to some extent a Christ figure because of his death and resurrection. Does Tolkien give any hint of such a connection in *The Hobbit*? If so, how? If not, support your conclusion by discussing Gandalf’s role in the story and arguing why such an analogy does not exist.
3. Those who have read J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* know much about both the great power and horrifying evil associated with the Ring found by Bilbo and later borne by Frodo. Little of this appears in *The Hobbit*, however; there the Ring serves as a magic object that allows Bilbo to become invisible and escape from all sorts of dangerous situations. To what extent does the story of Bilbo’s adventures hint at the role played by the Ring in the trilogy? Do any aspects of the story indicate the great power for evil that the Ring represents?
4. To what extent may the protagonist in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* be viewed as an Everyman figure? Does the author intend Bilbo Baggins to represent each human being, and is he thus saying something about the potential within all of us? Why or why not? Support your argument with specifics from the novel.
5. In old movie Westerns, the viewer could always tell the good guys and the bad guys apart because the good guys wore white hats and the bad guys wore black ones. To what extent does the same simplistic distinction between good and evil exist in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*? Can one determine the moral qualities of a character by the race to which he belongs (hobbit, dwarf, elf, goblin, troll, etc.), or does Tolkien go beyond this kind of oversimplification and draw characters that are more complex than simply being defined by their races? Support your arguments with specific examples.
6. One of the central themes of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* is the battle of good versus evil. While this may be seen most clearly in the climactic Battle of Five Armies, the conflict permeates the book. What is the significance of the fact that good and evil are usually readily identifiable and distinguishable from one another? Is this a realistic picture of the conflict between the two in the real world, or does this mark the book as a work of fantasy? Be sure to incorporate a biblical worldview into your analysis.

7. Discuss the role of nature in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. In your answer, consider the relationships of good and evil characters with nature and the extent to which nature is an obstacle in the central quest undertaken by Bilbo and his friends.
8. Discuss the contrasts between light and darkness in the settings and plot of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. What qualities are associated with each? What characters love light and which ones love darkness? Are the distinctions moral as well as environmental? Consider in particular how this distinction applies to the dwarves, who are creatures of the mines.
9. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which does the author value more, a simple, peaceful life at home or a life of heroic adventure? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
10. Compare and contrast the two battles of wits in which Bilbo Baggins engages in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. In both the riddle contest with Gollum and the banter with Smaug, Bilbo is literally risking his life on his powers of clever speech. In your analysis consider the characteristics of the two conversations, the means by which Bilbo is able to triumph, and the consequences of the two victories.
11. In I Timothy 6:10, Paul writes, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." How does J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* illustrate the truth of Paul's words? Consider not only the greedy creatures in the novel, but also those who display the opposite quality, being sure to cite specifics in your analysis.
12. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* has much to say about the destructive nature of greed. Compare the effects of greed on Smaug and Thorin. How are their characters similarly affected by their desire for the treasure? What key differences do you find between the two?
13. In I Corinthians 1:27-28, Paul tells the Corinthians that "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are." How does the role played by Bilbo Baggins in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* illustrate the truth of Paul's words, albeit in a different context? Cite specifics from the novel to support your conclusions.
14. In chapter 1 of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Gandalf tells the dwarves concerning Bilbo that "There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself." To what does he refer? How do the dwarves and Bilbo himself come to discover what is really inside the little hobbit?
15. At the very end of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Gandalf says to Bilbo, "You really don't suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit?" While luck is often cited as assisting Bilbo in his adventures, Tolkien here suggests that such an explanation is inadequate. Though the fiction of Middle-earth never mentions God in any way, to what extent does this novel hint at the operation of Divine Providence? Support your answer with specifics from the story.

16. In chapter 4 of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the narrator describes goblins as having "invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them, and also not working with their own hands more than they could help." What does this characterization of the evil goblins indicate about the author's view of industry as opposed to occupations like agriculture? Was Tolkien a latter-day Luddite who hated the Industrial Revolution and its consequences? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with details from the novel.
17. In Psalm 119:105, the psalmist says that God's Word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." When Bilbo and the dwarves enter Mirkwood in chapter 7 of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, both Beorn and Gandalf warn them that under no circumstances are they to leave the path. How do the experiences of the adventurers in Mirkwood illustrate the spiritual truth enunciated by the psalmist?
18. In chapter 18 of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Thorin, on his deathbed, apologizes to Bilbo for his earlier harsh words and treatment, saying, "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." What does this dying statement say about the values of the author? Do you agree with these values? Evaluate them on the basis of the Bible's teaching about what is really important.
19. To what extent do Gollum and Smaug serve as Satanic figures in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*? What aspects of the two creatures are analogous to the way in which the Devil is portrayed in Scripture? Be specific.
20. Most of the characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* are defined morally by the race to which they belong. Such is not the case with the men in the story, as exemplified by the noble Bard and the mendacious Master of Lake-town. What does this say about the author's view of human nature? Describe his perspective by using specifics from the novel and evaluate it from Scripture.
21. Discuss the use of foreshadowing in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. How do words spoken by semi-omniscient characters like Gandalf direct the reader's attention toward the direction in which the narrative is flowing? Is such foreshadowing helpful? Why or why not? Be sure to cite specifics in your analysis.
22. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* takes the form of an epic quest, but what is the nature of the quest that is most central to the plot? Is it the company's quest for the stolen treasure, or is it Bilbo's quest for self-knowledge? Choose one of the two and defend your choice with details from the novel.

23. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* was originally written and published as a children's book, unlike *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy for which it serves as a prequel. What qualities of *The Hobbit* mark it as children's literature? Consider plot, characterization, and language in your analysis.
24. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* was originally written and published as a children's book, but is unlike most children's books in many ways. To begin with, it contains no children; the closest the story comes to providing a character with whom children can identify is the sometimes-childlike little hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, though he is put into terrifying situations that no child would ever experience. It also contains no female characters, thus no mother-figures, and involves the death of a major character at the end of the story. Do these qualities disqualify the book as children's literature? Why or why not? Defend your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
25. Discuss the concept of the ideal leader as it is presented in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. All of the tribal groups have leaders - the dwarves, the elves, the goblins, the eagles, and the men. Choose three of these leaders and use their positive and negative traits to evaluate what the author views as the characteristics of a good leader.
26. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the two human leaders, Bard and the Master of Lake-town, are clearly contrasted. Discuss their characters and produce a description of the author's view of what makes up a good leader. Be sure to cite specifics.
27. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins is often described in terms of the two families from which he has sprung, the comfort-loving Baggins clan and the more adventurous Took. As the story progresses, he becomes more and more courageous and adventurous while still longing for the peace and quiet of his hobbit-hole at Bag End in the Shire. How would you describe the relationship of these two aspects of Bilbo's personality by the end of the story? Is he more of a Took or a Baggins? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
28. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Gandalf the wizard appears and disappears at various times in the story. Discuss the significance of this. Why is Gandalf's absence an important device for both plot and character development, especially for Bilbo?
29. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* contains many songs. Choose three songs sung by different groups of creatures and discuss what they reveal about the characteristics and values of those creatures. Be sure to include discussions of style and vocabulary as well as content.
30. Evaluate the settlement negotiated among the victors following the Battle of Five Armies in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Was it fair to all concerned? Why or why not? Be sure to consider each individual or group involved in winning the battle.
31. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Homer's *Odyssey* are both quest narratives. Compare and contrast the two stories, considering the protagonists, what they seek, what they experience, and how they are changed by their adventures.

32. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* are both quest narratives. Compare and contrast the two stories, considering the protagonists, what they seek, what they experience, and how they are changed by their adventures.
33. Both of J.R.R. Tolkien's most famous works, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, are in a sense quest narratives. Compare and contrast the two in terms of the nature of the quest, its impact on the world at large, and its impact on the protagonist.
34. Scholars generally agree that, of J.R.R. Tolkien's two most famous works, *The Lord of the Rings* is much more obviously Christian in its themes and worldview than is *The Hobbit*. Why is this the case? What qualities of the trilogy make it more evidently Christian than the children's story that preceded it?
35. Compare and contrast the protagonists in J.R.R. Tolkien's best-known works, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. As you make connections between Bilbo Baggins and his cousin Frodo, consider their personalities, the quests they undertake, the challenges they face, and the outcomes of those challenges, both for the protagonists and for the society in which they live. Which do you find more admirable and heroic? Why?
36. The subtitle of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* is *There and Back Again*, indicating that the story, like the great quest epics of literature, is a circular tale of venturing into the unknown and returning home having acquired greater wisdom and prowess. Within that structure, what has Bilbo gained as a result of his quest? How is the Bilbo Baggins at home in his hobbit-hole at the end of chapter 19 different from the one described at the beginning of the first chapter?
37. Both Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* are circular novels, ending where they began after the central character undergoes all sorts of adventures; the latter is even subtitled *There and Back Again*. Compare and contrast the circular plot structures of the two novels, giving special attention to the nature of the journeys involved, the qualities of the protagonists, and the lessons they learn through the adventures they experience.