



Answer these questions in the necessary detail in your workbook.

Chapter 1

1. Give two characteristics of a hobbit hole.
2. Give two notable points about the size of hobbits and their clothing.
3. Who is the old man with the staff? Describe his clothes, their color, and his beard.
4. Tell why hobbits do not like adventure.
5. Define a “wizard.” How does the term apply to Gandalf? Also, what *particular* skill does Gandalf have?
6. List the names and colors of each of the dwarf visitors.
7. What sound quality do you notice about the names of the dwarves?
8. Who is the most important of the dwarves, and what can he do?
9. Quote the important refrain from his song.
10. How does the song as a whole affect Bilbo?
11. Define “flummoxed.”

Despite being flummoxed and squeaking in fright, what does Bilbo offer to do? Quote Bilbo.
12. Tell why the thirteen dwarves arrive at Bilbo’s home.
13. Quote Gandalf’s opinion of Bilbo.
14. Gandalf gives Thorin a key. What is it for?

What is a “rune”?

What is on the map?

How does this information relate to Bilbo?
15. Explain the connection between Smaug and the treasure.
16. What, then, is the plan for the dwarves?

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Hobbit

Package prepared by
Dr. Thelma Devoe
Bunker Hill Community College
Charlestown, Ma.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in 1892 in Bloemfontein, South Africa, where his father was manager of a British bank branch. Because of Ronald's fragile health, his mother returned to England with him in 1895, and they remained there after the boy's father died suddenly in 1896. After his mother died in 1904, Tolkien was cared for by an aunt and a Roman Catholic priest who became his guardian. He studied philology (language) and literature at Oxford University, and after graduation fought briefly in World War I until he contracted trench fever. While recovering from his illness in 1917, he began writing the first of his many tales about Middle Earth. He spent the rest of his life as a professor of language and literature, mostly at Oxford University, from which he retired in 1959. Tolkien wrote many scholarly articles and translated Old English poems. His scholarly background is reflected in many of his stories. Tolkien died in 1973 and is buried in Oxford.

MAJOR WORKS

- *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). In this trilogy Bilbo's nephew Frodo learns the true nature of his uncle's magic ring and pursues his own quest during the war that ends the Third Age of Middle Earth.
- *The Silmarillion* (1977), edited by Christopher Tolkien. This collection of tales describes the creation of Middle Earth and recounts many of the heroic adventures of its early ages.
- *Tree and Leaf* (1965). Tolkien's essay, "On Fairy Stories," is followed by a short story, "Leaf by Niggle," illustrating his ideas.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS

J.R.R. Tolkien's stories are tales of heroic adventure but often feature the least likely characters as heroes. His hobbits, Bilbo and Frodo, seem ordinary, even a little dull. They like to stay put in a familiar world, enjoying their everyday lives without caring much what happens beyond their home town. But, when confronted by a challenge or responsibility, they find more in themselves than they or others had thought possible.

In *The Hobbit* and his other books, Tolkien seeks to contrast good and evil, true and false strength. Those who are driven by dreams of power and wealth, such as Sauron the Dark Lord in the trilogy or Smaug, are destroyed through the hidden weaknesses in themselves. Creatures like Gollum and the Wargs show that gluttony, greed, and cruelty bring misery to their possessors even before doom overtakes them. Not only the bad but also the good characters, like Thorin and Boromir, fall because of greed or the desire to rule over others. The true heroes in Tolkien's books are those who have control over themselves and who are willing to sacrifice for and cooperate with others. In them the other virtues of courage and perseverance are worthy because they are devoted to worthy ends.

While conveying this moral, Tolkien creates a world filled with marvels. Although many of his creatures and stories, including the dwarves and dragons and the great theme of the quest, are drawn from earlier literature, he can also invent extraordinary characters—Gollum, Gandalf, Beorn, Tom Bombadil—and even whole species, such as hobbits, orcs, and ents. Finally, Tolkien's love of language shines in his knack for naming things and in the riddles, poems, songs, and even languages he creates.

RELATED READING

There are television versions of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Many of the poems in Tolkien's books have been set to music by Donald Swann in *Poems and Songs of Middle Earth* (Caedmon Records).

Among the Old English poems that gave Tolkien much of his inspiration are *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which he translated, and *Beowulf*, which contains a final heroic battle with a dragon.

C.S. Lewis, the *Narnia* series. This seven-volume sequence of tales about an imaginary world that exists in addition to ours was written by a friend and fellow scholar of Tolkien's. See Volume 3, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, which has its own dragon.

Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*. Two children use the power of love and the magic of a geometric time machine to defeat the forces of evil.

POSTREADING WRITING ACTIVITY

Thorin, at his death, discovers what Bilbo already knows. Thorin says, "If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world!" In a composition of several paragraphs, discuss whether or not that statement can apply to today. First, refer to what you have learned from reading *The Hobbit*. Then, add what you have experienced yourself. Next, include what you have observed other people doing. Describe specific actions and report specific statements. Write a summarizing conclusion.