

The Hobbit

Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to

1. define vocabulary words found in the story.
2. point out examples of humor, including slapstick humor, throughout the story.
3. a. list the identifying physical and lifestyle characteristics of each group below;
b. comment on the values of wealth, war, and relationships for the groups:
 - dwarves
 - elves
 - hobbits
 - men of the lake
 - trolls
 - goblins
4. discuss Tolkien's style of narration and point out examples of when the narrator breaks away from telling the story to speak directly to the reader.
5. define the characteristics of a fantasy and discuss ways *The Hobbit* qualifies as one fantasy.
6. find examples of legends in the story and point out how they contribute an air of verisimilitude to the story.
7. discuss the author's poetic writing style, including his use of personification and rhyme and meter in his prose.
8. point out examples of foreshadowing.
9. cite incidents from the story which support the following overall theme: Good men can overcome evil through courage, luck, good sense, and by maintaining friendly relations with other groups and their natural surroundings.
10. discuss the significance of sword names in the story.

11. point out the incidents in the story which demonstrate the following generalizations:
 - most interesting stories have both good and evil in them;
 - great wealth makes individuals greedy for even more;
 - frightened individuals may turn against their friends and leaders in times of trouble.
12. write a character sketch of Gollum and comment on Tolkien's definition of evil.
13. discuss Tolkien's definition of a hero and cite incidents from the story to show that each of the following characters have heroic characteristics: Bilbo, Bard, Thorin, and Beorn
14. point out examples of irony in the story.
15. discuss to what extent Bilbo's successes may be attributed to luck
16. compare the leadership capabilities of the Elvenking with those of the Master of the Lake; list the qualities of a good leader.
17. discuss Bilbo's definition of friendship and to what extent the dwarves are his friends.
18. identify the general characteristics of the following animals in the story; point out their reasons for killing, attitudes toward wealth, and their ability or lack of ability to form friendly alliances with other groups:
 - eagles
 - wolves
 - spiders
19. write a character sketch of Smaug the dragon including his physical description and general personality traits.
20. discuss some reasons Tolkien may have included the types and large number of groups found in this story.

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Vocabulary List

attercop -	<i>a spider; an ill-natured person</i>
audacious -	<i>bold or daring</i>
Bard -	<i>a poet</i>
benighted -	<i>confused in the dark</i>
besieged -	<i>surrounded in a hostile manner</i>
bilbo -	<i>a sword, a rapier</i>
blighter -	<i>a contemptible fellow</i>
carrion -	<i>decaying flesh of a dead body</i>
cavalcade -	<i>a procession of people on horseback</i>
clamor -	<i>a great outcry; noise</i>
conspirator -	<i>a person who takes part in a conspiracy</i>
cronies -	<i>friends</i>
enmity -	<i>hostility</i>
eyrie -	<i>the nest of an eagle, located in a high place</i>
flummoxed -	<i>to confused or perplexed</i>
forded -	<i>crossed a river or other body of water</i>
hart -	<i>a male deer</i>
laburnums -	<i>small, poisonous trees and shrubs</i>
mattocks -	<i>a tool like a pickax with a flat blade, used for loosening the soil</i>
necromancer -	<i>someone who claims to be able to tell the future by communicating with the dead through black magic; a sorcerer</i>
palpitating -	<i>a rapid of the heart</i>
portcullis -	<i>a strong barrier</i>
precipice -	<i>a vertical cliff; a very steep place</i>
purloined -	<i>stolen</i>
quay -	<i>a pier or landing area for ships</i>
quoits -	<i>a game where players throw rings at a peg in the ground</i>
reconciliation -	<i>to become friends again; to settle differences</i>
remuneration -	<i>a reward or compensation</i>
rending -	<i>tearing, bursting, splitting</i>
rent -	<i>torn or ripped</i>
runes -	<i>writings done in an ancient script</i>
scimitar -	<i>a curved bladed sword</i>
smite -	<i>to hit with a blow</i>
succored -	<i>aided, helped, assisted</i>
throng -	<i>a great number of people gathered together; a crowd</i>
tomnoddy -	<i>a blockhead, dolt, or dunce</i>
toothsome -	<i>pleasing to the taste</i>
vanguard -	<i>the troops who march in front of the army</i>
venerable -	<i>worthy of respect because of age or dignity</i>
watercourse -	<i>a stream of water; a channel for water</i>

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Terms and Definitions

Proverb - a short saying that states a basic truth about life. Example: He who hesitates is lost.

Third Person Narrative—a manner of storytelling in which the narrator is not a character within the events related but stands outside those events. In a third-person narrative, all characters within the story are, therefore, referred to as he, she, it, or they.

Flashback - A scene that interrupts the ongoing action in a story to show an event that happened earlier.

Legend – a story which is only partly true about a real or made-up character; a fable. Legends usually include exaggerations and unusual events or circumstances. Example: Paul Bunyan changing the course of the Pecos River.

Foreshadowing – the use of hints or clues in a story to suggest what action is to come. Foreshadowing is frequently used to create interest and build suspense.

Style - the way an author chooses and uses words, phrases, and sentences to tell the story. For example, in an action/adventure story, the author may use simple words and short, choppy sentences, because this style moves the story along quickly. But in a story about a college professor, the same author may choose to use polysyllabic, unfamiliar words and long, convoluted sentences.

Irony - a subtle, sometimes humorous perception of inconsistency in which the significance of a statement or event is changed by its content. For example: the firehouse burned down.

- *Dramatic irony* - the audience knows more about a character's situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary from the character's expectations. The character's statements have one meaning for the character and a different meaning to the reader, who knows more than the character.
- *Structural irony* - a naïve hero whose view of the world differs from the author's and reader's. Structural irony flatters the reader's intelligence at the expense of the hero.
- *Verbal irony* - a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant; sarcasm. Example: calling a stupid man smart.

Personification - a figure of speech in which an object or animal is given human characteristics. Example: The pig laughed all the way to the barn.

Prose - the ordinary form of written or spoken language, without rhyme or meter; speech or writing that is not poetry.

Theme - The central or dominant idea behind the story; the most important aspect that emerges from how the book treats its subject. Sometimes theme is easy to see, but, at other times, it may be more difficult. Theme is usually expressed indirectly, as an element the reader must figure out. It is a universal statement about humanity, rather than a simple statement dealing with plot or characters in the story. Themes are generally hinted at through different devices: a phrase or quotation that introduces the novel, a recurring element in the book, or an observation made that is reinforced through plot, dialogue, or characters. It must be emphasized that not all works of literature have themes in them.

In a story about a man who is diagnosed with cancer and, through medicine and will-power, returns to his former occupation, the theme might be: "real courage is demonstrated through internal bravery and perseverance." In a poem about a flower that grows, blooms, and dies, the theme might be: "youth fades and death comes to all."

Fantasy – a work of fiction that does not represent the real world. It may include non-human, animal, or alien characters, unreal settings, or impossible occurrences. Example: J.R.R. Tolkien's Ring Trilogy

Slapstick - crude comedy in which the humor comes from horseplay or violent activity such as slapping or fighting.

Verisimilitude - the semblance of truth or reality in a literary work.

Deus ex Machina – the intervention into the plot of a person, force, or unexpected occurrence which resolves a seemingly impossible situation. Example: A forest is about to be destroyed, along with the hero, by a fire, but a drenching rain suddenly puts out the blaze.

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Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter 1 - An Unexpected Party

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter:

laburnums-

flummoxed -

audacious -

conspirator -

rune -

remuneration -

necromancer -

throng -

2. Identify each of the following places described in this chapter.

The Hill -

The Water -

The Mountain -

3. What do hobbits usually look like? Why are the Bagginses considered to be respectable hobbits? Define "Tookish."

4. Briefly identify Gandalf. What does Bilbo Baggins remember from his childhood about Gandalf?

5. Originally written as a children's story, *The Hobbit* is full of humor. Find an example of humor when Bilbo tries to have a conversation with Gandalf.

6. What does the “queer sign” Gandalf scratches on Bilbo's door indicate to the dwarves? Why does Gandalf want a burglar rather than a hero or a warrior to accompany the dwarves on this adventure?

7. How many dwarves arrive at Bilbo's home? How does he tell them apart? Who is Thorin? What is the significance of Thorin's key and his map?

8. Briefly identify Smaug and list the general characteristics most dragons have in common.

9. What is the importance of the town of Dale?

10. This story is mainly told by a Third-Person Narrator. The narrator is recording the actions of the story, but occasionally the narrator or author breaks away from the story to speak directly to the reader. Find an example of Tolkein doing this.

Chapter 2 - Roast Mutton

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

toothsome -

purloined –

blighter -

cavalcade -

runes -

2. What two items does Bilbo forget in his rush to meet the dwarves at the Green Dragon Inn? What do you think forgetting these items tell the reader about Bilbo's willingness to go on this adventure?
3. How does Bilbo manage to sneak up on the trolls? Why does Bilbo decide to try to pick the trolls' pockets?

Use the following passage from the story to answer the next two questions:

“Right in the middle of the fight up came Balin. The dwarves had heard noises from a distance, and after waiting for some time for Bilbo to come back, or to hoot like an owl, they started off one by one to creep towards the light as quietly as they could. No sooner did Tom see Balin come into the light than he gave an awful howl. Trolls simply detest the very sight of dwarves (uncooked). Bert and Bill stopped fighting immediately, and “a sack, Tom, quick!” they said, before Balin, who was wondering where in all this commotion Bilbo was, knew what was happening, a sack was over his head and he was down.” (Pg. 38)

4. Find an example of humor in the above quotation.

Chapter 3 - A Short Rest

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

forded -

venerable -

palpitating -
2. Find an example of personification on page 47 and an example of foreshadowing on page 50.
3. Briefly identify each of the following places from this chapter.

The Last Homely House –

Rivendell -

Misty Mountains -
4. Why does Bilbo want to hear the elves' opinion of their adventure to the Mountain?
What do the dwarves think of the elves?

Use the following quotation, which describes Elrond's character and his household to answer the next two questions.

“He was a noble and as fair in face as an elf-lord, as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves, and as kind as summer. His house was perfect, whether you liked food, or sleep, or work, or story-telling, or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all. Evil things did not come into that valley.” (Pg. 51)

5. One overall theme in this story is the conflict between good and evil. What qualities does Elrond possess which makes him a good leader for his people? How does the author depict both good and evil in physical terms?

6. Another theme is the idea of free will. Do you agree or disagree that Bilbo came on this mission of his own free will? What elements of freedom are present in Elrond's kingdom which support the idea that free will is important for a person to be happy?

7. What are the names of the swords captured from the trolls, and what do they signify?

8. Find an example of how Tolkien vividly describes the natural surrounding Bilbo and his friends inhabit. Why do you think he spends so much time describing the countryside?

9. What is the legend about moon-letters? What riddle to they reveal to Elrond? What is Durin's Day?

10. *The Hobbit* was originally written for children. It contains many of the elements of a fairy tale including goblins, wizards, dwarves and other imaginative characters. There are also life lessons or generalizations about life imbedded in the story. State a generalization about life using the following passage from the story.

“Now it is a strange thing, but things that are good to have and days that are good to spend are soon told about, and not much to listen to; while things that are uncomfortable, palpitating, and even gruesome, may make a good tale, and take a deal of telling anyway.” (Pg. 51)

Chapter 4 - Over Hill and Under Hill

1. "...and he [Gandalf] knew how evil and danger had grown and thriven in the Wild, since the dragons had driven men from the lands, and the goblins had spread in secret after the battle of the Mines of Moria. Even the good plans of wise wizards like Gandalf and of good friends like Elrond go astray sometimes when you are off on dangerous adventures over the Edge of the wild..." (Pg. 56)

State a generalization about life based on the above quotation.

Use the following passage to answer the next two questions.

"The end of their argument was that they sent Fili and Kili to look for a better shelter. They had very sharp eyes, and being the youngest of the dwarves by some fifty years they usually got these sort of jobs (when everybody could see that it was absolutely no use sending Bilbo). There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something (or so Thorin said to the young dwarves). You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after. So it proved on this occasion." (Pgs. 57-58)

2. State a generalization about life based on this passage.
3. Find an example of foreshadowing in this quotation.
4. Many critics believe Tolkien's writing reflects his personal dislike for technology. Briefly list the characteristics of goblins; explain how they use the technology they have for evil purposes.
5. What are Biter and Beater? Why does the fact that Thorin has Biter make the Great Goblin fly into a rage? How does Gandalf use Beater to escape from the goblins?
6. What literary term, from the Greek, is exemplified in Gandalf's rescue?

Chapter 5 - Riddles in the Dark

1. Find an example of foreshadowing at the beginning of this chapter when Bilbo is alone in the tunnel.
2. Tolkien is a master of language. Even though *The Hobbit* is written mostly in prose, Tolkien includes many songs and sentences with poetic elements. Sometimes they have meter like the lines in a poem. Find a short passage in this chapter that illustrates his poetic writing style.
3. Many critics believe the character Gollum represents Tolkien's idea of evil. Cite incidents from this chapter to support or refute this idea.
4. What are the rules Bilbo and Gollum agree to concerning the riddle contest?
5. Under what conditions can someone wearing the ring be seen?
6. In what way is Bilbo's eventual escape from the caves an example of irony?
7. One of the characteristics of a hero is a sense of fair play. In what way does Bilbo demonstrate this trait in this chapter?
8. What was Gollum like before finding the ring? Describe Gollum's corruption through its power. Find a passage that explains the transformation.

Chapter 6 - Out of the Frying-Pan into the Fire

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

benighted -

eyrie -

2. What do you think of the dwarves' reluctance to go back into the caves to find Bilbo?
3. Why do you think Bilbo fails to tell Gandalf and the dwarves about his magic ring?
4. What are Wargs? Why are they gathering in the forest clearing? How does Gandalf try to fight the Wargs?
5. How do the Eagles and goblins feel about each other?
6. The last line of this chapter states that Bilbo dreams about his own house. In that dream he is wandering around his house "looking for something that he could not find nor remember what it looked like." (Pg. 110) What do you suppose Bilbo is looking for in his dream?

Chapter 7 - Queer Lodgings

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

cronies -

hart -

2. What is a “skin-changer” and a “Carrock”? In what ways is Beorn’s life tied to and intertwined with nature?
3. What two pieces of useful information does Beorn discover when he goes out at night and turns himself into a bear?
4. Beorn provides the dwarves and Bilbo with ponies, food, water, and arrows. What two things does he warn them to avoid doing while they are crossing Mirkwood?
5. Why does Gandalf leave them at the edge of Mirkwood? What does he give dwarves to help them with their journey? What does Gandalf believe is necessary for the dwarves’ mission to succeed?

Chapter 8 - Flies and Spiders

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

watercourse -

quoits -

attercop –

tomnoddy -

bilbo -

2. Why do the dwarves select Bilbo to be the one who climbs the tall tree to look around and try to see the end of the forest? How do the dwarves feel about Bilbo when he comes down from the tree?
3. Why does Bilbo decide to name his sword “Sting”?
4. Find a passage in this chapter that suggests to the reader that luck is something a person is born with.
5. Why does Bilbo sing songs to the spiders?
6. Before he left, Gandalf said he believed the dwarves need luck, courage, and sense if they were going to accomplish their mission. Which of these qualities does Bilbo use to thwart the spider’s plan to eat the dwarves? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
7. Why does Thorin refuse to reveal his true mission to the King of the Wood-elves? What evidence is there that the Wood-elves are “Good People”?

Chapter 9 - Barrels Out of Bond

1. Define the following vocabulary word from this chapter.

portcullis –

2. “I am like a burglar that can’t get away, but must go on miserably burgling the same house day after day.” (Pg. 173)

In what way is this quotation an example of Tolkien’s writing style?
How is it also an example of irony?

3. Find one sentence on pages 175, 186, and 187 which demonstrates a narration that speaks directly to the reader.
4. Why do the dwarves finally agree to Bilbo’s escape plan, which includes packing the dwarves in empty wine barrels?
5. “Luck of an unusual kind was with Bilbo then.” (Pg. 177) Do you believe Bilbo’s successful escape plan is due to luck, the ability to see his opportunities, or the courage to act on his opportunities? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.

Chapter 10 - A Warm Welcome

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

quay -

enmity -

clamor -

2. “As for the Master he saw there was nothing else for it but to obey the general clamour, for the moment at any rate, and to pretend to believe that Thorin was what he said.” (Pg. 197)

What does the above quotation suggest to the reader about the character and leadership qualities of the Master of the Men of the lake?

3. Why does the Master decide to help the dwarves continue their quest to recover their treasure?

Chapter 11 - On the Doorstep

1. So far in this story Bilbo is a hobbit with great luck and courage. Cite an incident from this chapter that demonstrates that Bilbo also has leadership qualities and good sense.

2. What does the following passage from the story suggest to the reader about the definition of evil in this book?

“The land about them grew bleak and barren, though once, as Thorin told them, it had been green and fair. There was little grass, and before long there was neither bush nor tree, and only broken and blackened stumps to speak of ones long vanished. They were come to the Desolation of the Dragon, and they were come at the waning of the year.” (Pg. 202)

3. Find an example of foreshadowing in this chapter.

4. In the following passage from this chapter, what does Bilbo understand?

“At that very moment he heard a sharp crack behind him. There on the grey stone in the grass was an enormous thrush, nearly coal black, its pale yellow breast freckled with dark spots. Crack! It had caught a snail and was knocking it on the stone. Crack! Crack!” (Pg. 208)

Chapter 12 - Inside Information

1. Why does Bilbo agree to go into the secret passages first, even though he believes he has already earned his share of the treasure by rescuing the dwarves from the spiders and the elves?
2. How does the narrator explain to the reader the dwarves' apparent lack of courage when they all, except for Balin, refuse to accompany Bilbo into the secret passage?
3. What is the bravest thing Bilbo ever did? How does Tolkien's style heighten the suspense in this scene?

For questions 4, 5, and 6, state generalizations about life from the following quotations about Smaug.

4. "His rage passes description—the sort of rage that is only seen when rich folk that have more than they can enjoy suddenly lose something that they have long had but have never before used or wanted." (Pg. 215)
5. "Then as is the nature of folk that are thoroughly perplexed, they began to grumble at the hobbit, blaming him for what had at first so pleased them: for bringing away a cup and stirring up Smaug's wrath so soon." (Pg. 218)
6. "Every worm has his weak spot,..." (Pg. 219)

7. List three important characteristics about dragons Bilbo discovers when he decides to talk to Smaug. What important information does Bilbo learn when he flatters Smaug?

8. What is a proverb? Find a proverb in this chapter that becomes popular with Bilbo after his adventure with Smaug.

9. What are the dragon's words about dwarves that has Bilbo worried? How does Thorin reassure Bilbo of the dwarves' trustworthiness?

10. What is the Arkenstone of Thrain?

Chapter 13 - Not at Home

1. Why do you suppose Bilbo hides the Arkenstone in his pocket before the dwarves can see it?

2. What happens to their "dwarfish hearts" when Thorin and the others see the piles of gold and jewels in Smaug's lair?

3. Why do Bilbo and Balin want to leave the main gateway to the Mountain?

Chapter 14 - Fire and Water

1. How does Bard manage to slay the dragon? In what way could the manner of Smaug's death be disappointing for the reader who has followed the dwarves' and Bilbo's long trek to the Mountain?
2. Why do you think Tolkien names the man who slays the dragon after a word for poet?
3. What do you think of the way the Elvenking behaves when he hears the news of Smaug's death?
4. Besides the Elvenking, who else learns of Smaug's death and might be interested in the treasure?

Chapter 15 - The Gathering of the Clouds

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.
succored -

besieged -

carrion -
2. What piece of wise advice does Roac, the ancient raven, have for Thorin?
3. Find a passage in this chapter showing that the dwarves and Bilbo want peace with their neighbors.
4. Briefly list the reasons Bard thinks his people deserve part of the treasure.
5. How does Thorin respond to Bard's claims to the treasure? For what reasons do you agree or disagree with Thorin's position?

Chapter 16 - A Thief in the Night

1. In what way is Bilbo trying to help “everyone concerned,” including himself, by giving Bard the Arkenstone?
2. For what reasons do you agree or disagree with Bilbo’s claim that he is an honest burglar and that the Arkenstone is his to give away?
3. Bilbo refers to the dwarves as his friends. In what ways is Bilbo a good friend to the dwarves in this chapter? What indications are there that the dwarves might or might not be capable of returning Bilbo’s friendship?

Chapter 17 - The Clouds Burst

1. Define the following vocabulary words from this chapter.

mattocks -

reconciliation -

rent -

vanguard -

rending -

precipice -

scimitar -

smite -

2. List the participants in the Battle of the Five Armies.
3. The dwarves showed their fear of Smaug when they stayed in the tunnels and sent Bilbo into the treasure room alone. They were not particularly brave or fierce. Why then, do you think Thorin and the others show so much fearless courage in the Battle of the Five Armies?

Chapter 18 - The Return Journey

1. How does Bilbo's magic ring both help and hurt him in the Battle of the Five Armies?

2. State a generalization about life from the following quotation.

“This is a bitter adventure, if it must end so; and not a mountain of gold can amend it. Yet I am glad that I have shared in your perils—that has been more than any Baggins deserves.”

“No!” said Thorin. “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.”
(Pg. 288)

3. In the end what is Bilbo's reward for helping the dwarves regain their mountain?

