The Lord of the Rings

by

J. R. R. Tolkien

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LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The Lord of the Rings is set in Middle-earth, a fictional world created by Tolkien. Mystical creatures such as hobbits, orcs, trolls, ents, elves, wangs, wizards, dragons, dwarves and men inhabit middle-earth. Middle-earth is a magical world in which imagination rules, but it exists very much like "real" society, with political and economic problems and power struggles. Each of the races that inhabit this world have their own territories and are distinct from one another.

Part I is set in the Shire, a community of mostly hobbits. Bag End is in the Shire and is the home of Frodo, the hero. At the end of Part I, a group of travelling adventurers including Frodo leaves for Rivendell, an elf refuge. Part II takes place beyond the Shire in the rough worlds between Bag End and the citadel of Sarumon, the tower Orthanc at Isengard. It also takes place in the Tower of Sorcery, Minas Morgul, where the evil Sauron rules. Part III takes place in Mordor, a mountain range containing the volcano Orodruin. It also takes place on the road between Mordor and Bag End. The novel concludes just where it began, at Bag End.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Major Characters

Frodo Baggins
The adopted heir of Bilbo Baggins. Frodo is chosen to destroy the Ring, and in the course of this mission, he proves to be a brave and intelligent leader. It is because of Frodo that peace and happiness are once more restored to Middle-earth.

Sam Gamgee
The son of Ham Gamgee and Frodo's inquisitive gardener. Sam turns out to be one of the crucial characters in the success of the quest. Not only does he accompany Frodo, he also risks his own life for Frodo. Sam is good-natured and content.

Gandalf
A wizard who guides the inhabitants of Middle-earth in their assault against Sauron. He is the most important advisor Frodo has in his fight against evil.

Merry
One of four Hobbits who accompany Frodo on his quest. He plays an important part in the quest, helping Eowyn to kill the lord of the Nazguls. He pledges life-long service to Theoden, King of the Mark, and helps restore order to the world.

Pippin
Another hobbit who is indispensable to the quest. His impulsive and inquisitive nature makes him look into one of the seeing stones. By doing this he unknowingly saves Gandalf from being revealed to Sauron. He offers his services to Denethor, steward of Gondor, and his valiant fighting in the war earns him a knighthood.

Legolas
A representative of the elves who goes on the quest.

Gimli
A valiant dwarf and close friend of Legolas.

Boromir
The elder and more loved son of Denethor. The power of the Ring corrupts him but he is redeemed in his death.

Aragorn
Known as Strider as well as Elessar, he is the rightful king and heir of Isildur of Gondor. He is a close friend to Gandalf and to Frodo, and is instrumental in destroying the ring and defeating Sarumon and Sauron.

Sauron
The Dark Lord of Mordor. He is the principal source of evil in the novel and covets the Ring, by which he longs to conquer the world.

Gollum
Also known as Smeagol. Gollum was once an ordinary hobbit, but he became obsessed with the Ring. He killed his best friend to get the Ring, then became evilly obsessed with getting the Ring back at all cost.

Saruman
One of the wizards of the white council, he is corrupted by his own power and becomes a force of evil in the novel.

Bilbo Baggins - The principle hero of *The Hobbit*. He is Frodo's mentor and benefactor.

Minor Characters

Theoden - Valiant king of Rohan, he is killed by the Nazgul Lord in battle. He appoints Eomer, his nephew, as heir upon his death.

Eomer - The brother of Eowyn and future king. Also, one of the officers of the Rohirrim.

Faramir - The second son of Denethor, Steward of Gondor. He is honest and just but his father grows angry with him for not bringing the Ring back to Gondor. Faramir, like is name, is fair-minded.

Denethor - Steward of Gondor, father of Boromir and Faramir. Denethor is corrupted by lust for the Ring. He kills himself in madness and grief.

Galadriel - Queen of Lothlorien. She helps Frodo and his companions greatly by providing them with supplies throughout their journey.

Elrond - An Elf who established Rivendell against Sauron. He is the father of Arwen and caretaker of Aragorn. He accompanies Bilbo, Frodo, Gandalf and Galadriel into the Blessed Realm.

Arwen - The granddaughter of Galadriel, sister to Elladan and Elrohir, daughter of Elrond. She gives up her immortality to wed Aragorn.

Tom Bombadil - The master of wood, water and hills. Tom Bombadil can take any shape or form, but is usually seen as a bear. He rescues the hobbits from the clutches of evil spirits called Barrow-wights and is generally a content and benevolent creature.

Gwaihir - The Lord of the Eagles who he rescues Gandalf from Orthanc (and helped Bilbo in *The Hobbit*.

Treebeard - The oldest living thing on Middle-earth and the leader of the ents. He helps in the capture and defeat of Saruman.

Shadowfax - Gandalf's horse, who is loyal and as fast as the wind.

Shelob - A wicked old spider who is even older than Sauron. She stings Frodo but is wounded badly by Sam.

Rose Cotton - Daughter of Former Cotton. She eventually marries Sam and bears him thirteen children, including Elanor.

Lotho Baggins - The self-appointed chief of Hobbiton and secret ally of Saruman. Wormtongue murders him in his sleep.

Wormtongue - The evil adviser and counselor of King Theoden who is revealed as wicked. In the end he murders Saruman in an attempt to protect himself.

Barliman Butterbur - The Innkeeper of the Prancing Pony. He serves as a messenger between Gandalf and the hobbits.

Fatty Bolger - Frodo's friend who stays behind at Crickhollow to provide a diversion for the Black Riders. Lotho imprisons him.

CONFLICT

Protagonist

The protagonist of this book is Frodo, who has been chosen by Bilbo to carry on the responsibility of possessing the Ring. Frodo represents Good in the novel's epic struggle between Good and Evil. Frodo proves himself to be brave and clever, managing to avoid danger and earn the trust of his many friends. In the end, Frodo is nearly controlled by the weight of the Ring. But he resists and emerges heroic. When the novel closes, Frodo accompanies Bilbo into the Grey Havens, leaving his work and legacy to his dear friend Sam.

Antagonist

There are many antagonists in the novel—all agents of Evil led by Sauron and Sarumon. Sauron is a satanic ruler who is consumed by his desire for power. He commands all manner of evil, including the Black Riders and the Nazgul. Sauron is omnipresent especially because of the palantirs, which give him insight, and the Eye, with which he is able to see the goings-on of the Ring bearer.

Sarumon is a fallen wizard who has been corrupted by his own thirst for power. Though he is a villainous force, Sarumon is also a character to be pitied. Many times, Gandalf tries to persuade Sarumon to repent and claim his former position of respect and glory. But the corrupting influence of power is too great for Sarumon. He destroys the Shire and tries to present Frodo from disposing of the Ring.

There are other characters whose actions constitute evil, or the forces that act against Frodo. Some of these characters are temporarily driven to their evil acts, such as Boromir. Some are permanently ruined by their hunger for the ring, but remain characters to be pitied, such as Denethor.

Shelob and the orcs are characters whose grotesque evil only increases anxiety for the protagonist. Shelob and the orcs are pure evil—beings whose sole purpose in life is to cause trouble for the hero. They are one-dimensional beings of wickedness.

Climax

There are many climaxes in the novel, especially since it is broken into three parts, six books, and multiple chapters. The ebb and flow of dramatic intensity continues to build, however, till the climax of the novel, which occurs when Frodo is ready to toss the Ring into the flames of Mount Orodruin. This has been his objective all along, and the struggles to get to the Crack of Doom have been fierce. Gollum nearly ruins Frodo's objective by biting off the finger that holds the Ring. But Gollum gets too excited and ends up falling into the crack, carrying with him the Ring and thus completing Frodo's mission.

Outcome

The outcome is still fraught with tension. Though Sauron has been defeated, the Shire is destroyed. Sarumon is still wreaking havoc disguised as Sharkey, and Frodo and his friends are still wounded from battle. The outcome is the gradual recovery of the travelers, the rebuilding of the Shire, the defeat of Sarumon, and the retirement of Frodo. Just as the novel opens with Bilbo passing his legacy down to Frodo, it closes with Frodo doing the same to Sam. The final vision is of the new generation, Sam's daughter, and the hope for the future.

SHORT SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Bilbo Baggins throws a party for himself and his protégé, Frodo. At the party, Bilbo announces that he is leaving his home to his heir, Frodo. He returns home and is met by his close friend, the wizard Gandalf. Gandalf insists that Bilbo remove the Ring that he has owned since the events of the previous adventure, chronicled in *The Hobbit*, and give the ring to his young heir. The Ring has special powers, the most obvious of which is to make the wearer invisible. Then Bilbo disappears.

For many years Frodo lives in Bilbo's home at Bag End. Just like Bilbo, Frodo appears not to he aged. In his fifties, he grows restless. One day Gandalf comes to Frodo and tells him that he is in danger. It seems that the Ring originally belonged to Sauron, the Dark Lord. Sauron wants the Ring back so that he can conquer the world. Sauron is using Gollum, an evil hobbit who also wants the Ring, to find out who has it and where it can be located. Gandalf tells Frodo that the ring is a corrupting power, and that anyone who uses it will ultimately be destroyed by it if they do not part with it. Further, he tells Frodo that the Ring can only be destroyed by tossing it into a volcano at Mount Orodruin. Frodo tries to give the ring to Gandalf, but the wizard tells him that he (Frodo) was chosen to bear the responsibility; it is his fate.

It is decided that Frodo will take the ring to the Crack of Doom in Mount Orodruin. He is to be accompanied by his friends Sam, Merry, and Pippin. As they travel, the Black Riders of Sauron pursue them. The Black Riders are bodiless horsemen who want the Ring. The travelers meet up with Aragorn, a friend of Gandalf, and together they continue their journey with the aid of some new companions.

Gandalf leads the companions through the mines of Moria. Gandalf battles a dreadful spirit and falls into an abyss. Aragorn becomes the leader. After many small battles, the company realizes their task will be very difficult. They meet Lady Galadriel, of the elves, and are given some assistance. Boromir, a representative from Gondor, tries to persuade Frodo to give him the Ring to take to his father and thus defeat their enemies. Frodo refuses and the two men fight. Frodo must use the Ring to escape Boromir. Boromir is instantly sorry he has been overcome by the allure of power. Frodo decides to travel alone, fearful of the consequences of his friends being corrupted. Only faithful Sam is allowed to accompany him.

Boromir is killed and given a hero's burial; everyone knows he never meant to fight Frodo. They attribute his sudden corruption to the Ring. Orcs attack and Merry and Pippin are taken captive. Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas pursue them, trying to save their companions. The riders of Rohan appear, having been summoned to help. They destroy the orcs near Fangorn forest but cannot find Merry and Pippin. Merry and Pippin have come into the area inhabited by Treebeard the Ent. He is the oldest living thing in the forest. He sustains them and rouses his troops to avenge the hobbits.

Meanwhile, Gandalf has come back from death as Gandalf the White. He approaches Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas and tells them what has happened to him. He introduces them to King Theoden of Edoras. Together Gandalf and his men join Theoden in fighting the orcs and looking for Merry and Pippin. Along the way they defeat Saruman, who has been causing trouble and impeding Frodo in his quest.

Sam and Frodo are still making their way to the Crack of Doom. Gollum, who still craves the Ring, follows them. They capture Gollum and try to persuade him to forsake his evil and return to his old likable self as the character Smeagol. The three make their way through the forest until they are met by an army from Gondor, led by Faramir (Boromir's brother).

When Faramir releases them, Gollum leads Sam and Frodo into a trap—the lair of the giant spider Shelob. Frodo is wounded so badly that Sam fears he is dead. Gollum disappears. Sam decides to take the Ring and continue on in order to destroy it and fulfil Frodo's responsibility. Orcs come along and steal Frodo's lifeless body. By listening to the orcs, Sam discovers that Frodo is not dead but is merely drugged. He pursues them to save his good friend.

Gandalf and Pippin arrive in Gondor, where they meet Denethor (Boromir and Faramir's father). Pippin is befriended by Beregond. Aragorn has revealed himself to Sauron and decides to travel ahead through the Paths of the Dead in order to reach Sauron quickly and thereby assist Frodo and Sam. Eowyn, niece of Theoden, begs to be taken along but Aragorn refuses. He goes to the Paths of the Dead and offers the dead peace if they will fulfill their promise to fight against Sauron.

Merry is not allowed to accompany Theoden into battle, but the resourceful young hobbit hitches a ride with a fierce young soldier named Dernhelm.

Theoden, meanwhile, receives an urgent message to help Denethor at Minas Tirith. He refuses to let Merry join him, but Merry is offered a ride by a young rider named Dernhelm. Denethor is displeased with his younger son Faramir for having helped the Ring bearer rather than claiming the Ring for Gondor. He sends his son into battle, and when Faramir is seriously wounded, his repentant father goes mad with grief. He tries to set himself and his son's body on fire.

The story continues with the ride of the Rohirrim, allies of Gondor. They are attacked by Nazguls. Theoden falls beneath his wounded horse, but the young rider Dernhelm reveals himself as the fir Eowyn and kills the Lord of the Nazguls. Aragorn, meanwhile, rides into Gondor with the help of the forces of the dead and Sauron's evil minions are defeated.

Gandalf removes Faramir from the funeral pyre, but Denethor sets himself alight and dies. Merry and Pippin are reunited and Aragorn heals Merry, Eowyn and Faramir. The army then moves out to Mordor, where an emissary of Sauron produces Frodo's cloak and sword saying that if the troops do not withdraw, Frodo will be tortured. Gandalf snatches the objects from him and another war begins. Pippin saves Beregond from a troll, but faints just as the eagles come to their rescue.

Sam rescues Frodo and they make their way toward Mount Doom. Gollum, however, overtakes them and just as Frodo comes to the Cracks of Doom, Gollum obtains the Ring biting off his finger. Gollum is so excited about having the Ring back that he falls into the abyss, carrying the Ring with him. Mount Doom erupts with the force of the destroyed Ring. Sauron is defeated for good.

The eagles rescue Sam and Frodo from the erupting volcano. Faramir woos Eowyn Arwen marries Aragorn. The company then goes to Rohan for Theoden's funeral, and then Gandalf and the hobbits begin their homeward journey. The meet Saruman, who is unrepentant, then make their way to Rivendell, where they meet Bilbo. After this the hobbits reach the Shire, which has been completely transformed by Saruman and his servants. It is a barren military wasteland. The Shire hobbits manage to regain control and defeat Saruman. They restore the Shire with some help from Lady Galadriel.

The novel ends with Frodo's retirement. Elrond, Gandalf and Galadriel accompany him and Bilbo to the Grey Havens. Sam, Merry and Pippin return to live a full life in Hobbiton.

THEMES

Major Themes

The three major themes are the corrupting influence of power, the ultimate struggle between good and evil, and the selfless sacrifice for the greater good.

Minor Themes

The minor themes are those of Fate, diversity, responsibility, faithfulness, and obedience.

MOOD

Th mood is definitely imaginative, fantastic, an adventurous. Middle-earth is a new world where the rules and norms are vivid and dynamic. There is some awe, some wonder. There is suspense, danger, and restoration. As with any epic, *The Lord of the Rings* encompasses a gamut of emotional tones and moods. In the end, the reader response is as vivid and changing as the Middle-earth landscape.

J. R. R. Tolkien - BIOGRAPHY

J.R.R. Tolkien, who was born in 1892 in South Africa, grew up in Birmingham, England with his mother after the early death of his father. Tolkien attended school at the prestigious Oxford University until he left to fight in World War I as a member of the Lancashire Fusiliers. In 1919, when the war was over, he returned to school and his wife, whom he had married during the war.

Tolkien's intellectual career began when he was selected to assist in the compilation of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. After that he taught and accepted academic fellowships until completing *The Hobbit* in 1938. His first novel was an immediate success with both children (for whom it was written) and adults, for whom it was an imaginative tour de force. *The Lord of the Rings followed the Hobbit in 1954*. Tolkien died in 1973 before completing a massive literary undertaking that included the complete history of Middle-earth, known as *The Simarillion*. Tolkien still maintains his status as one of the most-loved writers of "fantasy" literature today, and his popularity only grows with each new generation of fans.

LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Tolkien and C.S. Lewis were members of a literary circle called "The Inklings," to whom fantasy and religion were important compensations for the inadequacies of contemporary life. After Tolkien pointed out the mythical qualities in the death of Christ, Lewis embraced Christianity.

Beowulf, written after the introduction of Christianity to England, describes a pagan world populated by evil forces personified in dragons and monsters, but includes no mention of a Supreme Being or a Christian God. Tolkien interprets its theme as man at war with the hostile world. *The Lord of the Rings* is set in a world reminiscent of these times, only with covert traces of Christianity and/or a divine presence.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

The Lord of the Rings is made up of three parts: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, and The Return of the King.

PART I: "The Fellowship of the Ring"

Book I

Prologue

The Prologue refers to the book, *The Hobbit*, and also gives detailed information about the lives of the people known as hobbits. They are described in detail, as are their living habits and their various sub-groups. The prologue lays the groundwork for the rest of the book, giving a brief history of Middle-earth and the origins of the Shire records.

A Long Expected Party

Summary

As the title suggests, the book begins with a party that has been planned for quite some time. Bilbo, the hero of Tolkien's earlier book *The Hobbit*, is celebrating a significant milestone in his life, his 111th birthday. His cousin Frodo, whom he adopted twelve years ago, shares his birthday, which is September 22. Frodo is turning 33 (his coming of age). It seems that Bilbo adopted Frodo in order to make the younger hobbit his heir, disappointing the Sackville Bagginses, who had always wanted to live in Bilbo's home at Bag's End. Frodo's parents had died in a boating accident when he was small and he had lived with Bilbo from then on.

This year the party promises to be even grander than ever before, becoming the talk of Hobbiton. Most people admire Bilbo, but some think that it is unnatural for a person to have inexhaustible wealth as well as a prolonged life. Still, Bilbo's parties are legendary and everyone has been invited.

Though it is called a party, Bilbo considers it to be a variety of entertainment rolled into one. There are presents for everyone; the fireworks have been specially designed for Bilbo by Gandalf the wizard. There is a splendid supper for everyone, and a special dinner for a small group of special friends and relatives.

After the dinner Bilbo announces that he has three reasons for the grand party. First he cares for everyone present. Second, he wants to celebrate the birthdays of himself and his heir. Third, he wants to bid the people of his town farewell. He steps down, puts on his ring of invisibility, and disappears from the crowd.

Back at his home, Bilbo talks to Gandalf, the wizard. After much discussion, Gandalf persuades Bilbo to leave the magic ring for his protégé, Frodo. Bilbo had promised to do this, but when the time comes he is reluctant. Bilbo then leaves. The next day Frodo announces that Bilbo has gone and that he will not be back. He distributes packages that Bilbo had specially made for his friends and relatives before leaving.

Notes

Tolkien's world is a magical one populated by elves, goblins, trolls and other mystical beasts. The heroes, Bilbo and Frodo, are hobbits. Bilbo has already had many adventures chronicled in a previous book, *The Hobbit*. The author, depending on the reader's familiarity with the Middle-earth chronicle that came before, treats Bilbo as a recognizable and likeable character with an established fan base.

This chapter serves mostly to introduce the second generation of adventures, led by Bilbo's protégé Frodo. With this chapter presenting a kind of "changing-of-the-guard" scene between the two hobbits, Frodo earns some respect and admiration simply by his association with a past successful hero.

The Shadow of the Past

Summary

The disappearance of Bilbo is the subject of many conversations in Hobbiton. The general opinion is that Bilbo has finally gone mad and run off into the Blue. Some think that he is dead, many of whom suspect that he has been murdered by Frodo and Gandalf for his legendary gold (earned in the course of events in *The Hobbit*). Despite this ugly rumor, Frodo lives a long life in the community, continuing to throw Bilbo's birthday party year after year. Like Bilbo, Frodo shows what others call signs of "good preservation." He continues to live at Bag End and spend most of his time with his cousins Merry and Pippin. By the time he turns fifty, he has begun to grow restless. And the town has gone abuzz with the news of orcs and trolls and mysterious lands beyond the Shire.

About this time the wizard Gandalf appears. He tells Frodo that town is in danger because of the ring of invisibility that Bilbo has given him. Gandalf explains. The ring was forged in the volcano at Mt. Doom (or Orodruin) by the evil Sauron who wants to rule the world. The ring belonged to Gollum, a hobbit who owned the ring for a very long time until Bilbo tricked him out of it. Now Sauron and Gollum have heard that the ring is in the hands of a hobbit, and Gollum is on his way to find it.

Gandalf explains that the bearer of the ring never ages; for this reason Bilbo lived such a long life and Frodo himself has not shown signs of aging since he got the ring. Also, the ring exerts a mental power on its wearer. It is because of this power that neither Gollum nor Bilbo wanted to part with the ring when the time came. The power made Gollum evil; since Bilbo is a good man, the power does not make him evil.

Gandalf tells Frodo that if Sauron gains the ring he will be all-powerful. When Frodo hears this, he is shocked and doesn't want anything to do with the ring. Gandalf tells Frodo that it is not a simple matter of wanting or not wanting the ring; the ring chose him (Frodo). Gandalf tells Frodo that he must destroy the ring, and the only way this can be done is by throwing the ring back in the Crack of Doom in the depths of Orodruin.

Frodo decides to leave the Shire in order to protect the people of his village. Just then Gandalf catches Sam Gamgee, the gardener, eavesdropping on their conversation. Gandalf thinks Sam has ulterior motives, but it turns out he only wants to go on this adventure with Frodo, whom he admires.

Notes

This chapter provides some exposition in order to kick-start the plot. It also explains some of the unexplainable things about Bilbo, such as why he never aged and why he did not want to part with the ring.

Interestingly, Gollum had had the ring in his possession for so long he was transformed completely. Bilbo, realizing he could not let such a transformation happen to him, reluctantly parted with the ring and left to live out the rest of his natural life.

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Three is Company

Summary
Frodo prepares to leave on his fiftieth birthday, following the path that Bilbo took many years earlier. He sells Bag End to the Sackville Bagginses. Rumor suggests that Frodo has run out of money and must go live with relatives in Buckland. Some others insist that Frodo is only leaving because of some dark plot perpetrated by Gandalf. In truth, Frodo plans to go to Rivendell, as he has discussed with Gandalf. Meanwhile Gandalf has left, not even staying behind to say good-bye to Frodo. Pippin and Merry are also going along on the trip.

On the way, the band of travelers hears the sound of horses. They think Gandalf is joining them, so they hide in order to surprise him. Instead of Gandalf, the noise signals the arrival of a black rider on a black horse. He sniffs the air as if sensing their presence and Frodo gets a sudden urge to put his Ring on. But the rider moves on. Sam tells Frodo that this very Rider had been asking questions about Frodo. The travelers become suspicious and move on, more cautious than before.

Later, they meet a group of elves. The Lord of the Elves, Gildor Inglorian, asks the travelers to join him and his group. After they reach a safe place and have their fill of food and drink, Frodo asks Gildor for news and advice. Gildor tells him of the gathering darkness, the wars of men and the flight of the elves. He tells Frodo that the Black Riders are the servants of his enemies and that he must be careful. He extends his friendship and that of is people to Frodo and his group. Sam is delighted, since he has always dreamed of being on an adventure with elves.

Notes
There is no explanation for Gandalf's disappearance. Readers of *The Hobbit* will recall that he did the same when he sent Bilbo on his adventure.

Frodo's adventures begin here, as he is followed by a menacing band of Black Riders. Fortunately the Elflord arrives to fill him in on the potential threat presented by these menacing riders. Frodo and his companions proceed more cautiously.

On a side note, Sam is the only one whose fear is offset by his excitement and thrill for adventure.

A Short Cut to Mushrooms

Summary
When the adventurous hobbits get up in the morning, they find that the elves have already left, leaving breakfast for them. Frodo decides to take a short cut through the woods, in order to avoid the Black Riders on the road. They hear strange and frightening noises, and hurry along till they come to the farm of Farmer Maggot.

As a youngster Frodo was caught many a times stealing mushrooms from these fields and he is afraid of Farmer Maggot and his dogs. His fear is abated, however, when Maggot and the dogs greet them and offer assistance. Farmer Maggot tells the travelers that a stranger resembling the Black Rider has been asking questions about Frodo. Old Maggot advises Frodo not to get mixed up in these adventures, but realizes that Frodo will not change his mind. He offers to drive them to the ferry.

After supper the travelers set off in the thick fog. Farmer Maggot gives Frodo a basketful of mushrooms and bids them good-bye.

Notes
This chapter advances the suspense. It also adds some light-hearted fun to the novel. Frodo is afraid of Farmer Maggot because of some childish pranks from his past. He is afraid to go, but is relieved when Maggot appears not to remember and even offers his help. The chapter ends with Farmer Maggot good-naturedly supplying Frodo with a basketful of mushrooms for his journey.

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A Conspiracy Unmasked

Summary
Up to this point, Frodo has told his companions that he was moving to Crickhollow to live. As they reach this destination, Frodo realizes that his companions have known all along that he has to dispose of the ring and they are committed to helping him. Merry and Pippin have already decided to accompany Frodo to Rivendell. They agree that it is better to go through the old forest then the road. Fatty Bolger is to stay behind to keep appearances, so that others might think Frodo is living at Crickhollow. They retire for the night and Frodo dreams that he is struggling to climb a tall tower near the seaside.

Notes
Loyal friends have great importance in this novel, as they did in *The Hobbit.* Frodo has not fully realized how well he is supported until now.

His dream is a forewarning of his future troubles, but with loyal friends at his side it will be much easier.

The Old Forest

Summary
Sam, Merry, and Pippin prepare to depart with Frodo. Merry warns the others that the forest seems alive with noises, movements and sounds. As they move, the forest seems to close in on them. After some time they come to the River Withywindle, and Merry realizes that they have been traveling in exactly the opposite direction they had meant to go in. As they walk along the only path in sight the hobbits are overcome with drowsiness. Unable to go on any longer the hobbits give in and fall asleep.

Old Man Willow then attacks the hobbits, trapping and tormenting them. An old man named Tom comes along and sings a song about his girlfriend Goldberry. With his song, Tom commands Old Man Willow to release the captured hobbits.

Tom then takes the travelers home with him. When they reach his house, they hear the sweetest voice singing and welcoming them from inside.

Notes
This chapter shows the mystical powers of the forest, which lures the travelers in then makes them sleep. As if in collusion with the forest, Old Man Willow attacks the travelers. He does not relent until Tom comes along and sings his song.

Tom Bombadil's voice appears to have soothing powers, especially since he is able to free the captives with a song. Tom and his girlfriend Goldberry are creatures whose entire essence seems good. Tom will rescue the hobbits again, and he seems oblivious to evil. Goldberry, the daughter of the River, has control over the rain and the streams.

In the House of Tom Bombadil

Summary
When the hobbits enter Tom's house, they are greeted by Gold berry, daughter of the river, whose sweet voice they had heard. Goldberry is an elf-like woman with golden hair. Her gown is green, but infused with silver like drops of dew. She enchants the hobbits and even Frodo bursts into song when he sees her.

Goldberry busies herself at the table. Frodo asks her who Tom Bombadil really is and she tells him that Tom is the master of wood, water and till. Further, he has no desire to own anything and he has no fear. After Tom comes in and the hobbits have had their supper, Goldberry retires for the night.

Frodo asks Tom if he heard their cry for help or if he just happened to come. Tom says that he was expecting them. When Frodo asks him about Old Man Willow, he says that after dark is not the time to ask such questions.

All the hobbits except Sam have nightmares that night. Frodo dreams of the Black Riders and a stranger. Pippin dreams that he is back inside the willow. Merry dreams of being drowned. Soon they realize they are in the home of Tom Bombadil and all are assured.

In the morning, the hobbits have breakfast and realize it is raining. Since they can't go anywhere Tom begins to tell them stories. He tells them about the old forest and the trees that live there. He tells them about Old Man Willow, whose heart is rotten but his strength is green. Old Man Willow is full of hate. Tom tells them about the great barrows and the barrow wights, evil spirits that roam the hills. The hobbits lose track of time and they can't decide whether it has been hours or days since Tom started talking to them. Frodo once again tries to find out who Tom Bombadil is by asking him directly. Tom Bombadil is vague.

When Goldberry comes in they have supper and Tom begins to question the hobbits. He asks Frodo to show him the Ring. When he wears it he is completely unaffected. Tom tells them that they must leave early the next morning and avoid the barrows. He teaches them a rhyme by which they may summon him for help, and then he retires for the night.

Notes
Tom Bombadil is a benevolent character, yet the mysterious aura surrounding him only deepens. Again, Tolkien uses a newly introduced character to provide background and exposition for the traveling hobbits. Like Gandalf, Tom Bombadil tells the hobbits important information they will need for their adventure.

LORD OF THE RINGS-BOOK SUMMARY NOTES

Fog on the Barrow-Downs

Summary
The next morning the hobbits set out and arrive at the edge of the downs by evening. They get lost and are captured by the barrow wights. Frodo calls for Tom, who rescues them. Tom sings them to consciousness and brings back their ponies, which had strayed. He gives them each a sword from the barrow wights' stolen treasure. The swords had been forged by the Men of Westernesse, foes of the Dark Lord. Tom sees the hobbits off and they set out towards Bree. Frodo reminds the others that he is now traveling under the name of Underhill, not Baggins.

Notes
Frodo shows his presence of mind twice in this chapter. First he is able to sing to Tom despite being under the spell of the barrow wights. Second, he remembers to travel incognito, as unknown assailants are pursuing him.

At the Sign of the Prancing Pony

Summary
Tom escorts the hobbits to the town of Bree, the chief village of Breeland, a small inhabited region. Both hobbits and big people live in Bree. They are the original descendants of the first men that ever wandered into the west of Middle-earth. In the wild lands beyond Bree, mysterious wanderers called Rangers roam the lands as far as the misty mountains. The Rangers have special powers.

When the hobbits reach Bree they go to the Prancing Pony, an inn recommended by Tom. Another stranger, a man named Strider, is also in the Prancing Pony. During the revelry in the Inn, Frodo accidentally dons the ring and his sudden invisibility shocks everyone.

When he reappears, he tries to explain away his sudden disappearance, but Strider himself approaches him, saying he needs to talk to Frodo. The innkeeper Butterbur tells Frodo not to cause any more trouble; he also tells Frodo that he will come up to this room because he has something of interest to say to him. Frodo suspects the innkeeper and Strider, as he has become increasingly paranoid.

Notes
The Ring seems to have a mind of its own when Frodo accidentally dons it. As Gandalf had warned Frodo, it is no ordinary ring and Frodo must not take it for granted. Also, its hold on Frodo seems to have increased. Frodo's increasing paranoia must have something to do with the power of the ring.

Strider

Summary
Strider follows Frodo to his room, which makes the hobbit very uneasy. Strider tells Frodo that he knows his real identity and warns him of the Black Riders. He also warns them of a few hobbits of Bree who are up to no good. He asks to join them. Despite his offers of assistance, however, Strider is unable to earn Frodo's trust.

At that moment, Mr. Butterbur comes in. He tells Frodo that Gandalf has left a letter for Frodo. After giving Frodo the letter and saying he will be on the lookout for Black Riders, Mr. Butterbur leaves.

Frodo reads the letter that warns him against traveling at night and against using the ring. Gandalf has also written about Strider, saying that he is a worthy friend. The letter also tells Frodo to make for Rivendell with haste.

Strider tells the hobbits that his real name is Aragorn and that he will protect them. They all wonder what has befallen Gandalf that he would send someone in his stead. Suddenly Merry comes in.

Merry tells them that he was out for a walk and saw a Black Rider. When he followed the shadow it disappeared. Merry was then overtaken by the Rider's breath and fainted. But before any harm could come, the landlord's helper Nob came to his aid.

Strider warns the hobbits that they are in danger. He says a Bree man named Bill Ferny must have told the Black Riders the hobbits were here. Strider tells the hobbits not to sleep in their own rooms. Instead, he helps them carry their luggage in to the parlous, where they finally go to sleep.

Notes
In Gandalf's absence, Strider seems to have taken the place of guide and leader. He advises them and leads them in the direction they ought to go and, like Gandalf, appears to have a lot of background knowledge that will help the hobbits in their adventure.

LORD OF THE RINGS-BOOKNOTES / SUMMARY

A Knife in the Dark

Summary
Back at Frodo's new "home" in Crickhollow, Black Riders accost Fatty Bolger. Fatty escapes and the horn call of Buck is blown, announcing the invasion. The Black Riders flee, but now they know that Frodo and the ring are not there.

Meanwhile, at the Prancing Pony, Strider discovers that the hobbit rooms have been broken into and the bolsters and carpets have been torn to shreds. All the horses have been stolen from the stables and the hobbits have no means by which to travel, except for one pony.

The hobbits load the pony with supplies and set off, creating a stir in Breeland. Their journey begins on the road and continues along paths and woods through bogs and marshes. By the sixth day they are almost near the place they have been hoping to meet Gandalf, who has left a sign scratched on a stone signifying that he was there three days back.

Sam and Pippin find traces of a recent and hasty camp on the mountaintop, left by rangers or perhaps by Gandalf. Strider is concerned that it was a mistake for the hobbits to stand on the mountaintop, because Black Riders can smell the blood of living things. The crusaders make a fire, beside which they sit listening to stories of Elves and Gil-Galad the Elven King and other tales of Middle-earth.

The hobbits notice strange shadows and they realize that the enemy is approaching. Frodo gives in to the desperation of wearing the Ring and as soon as he does he sees the riders clearly. There are five of them, one wearing a crown. Though Frodo is invisible, that Black Rider springs forward with his knife. Frodo manages to strike at the enemy's feet but is himself injured in the shoulder. He manages to slip the Ring off his finger before losing consciousness.

Notes
Once again the influence of the Ring on Frodo is powerful. The hobbit cannot seem to resist wearing the ring, though he has been warned not to. And every time he puts the ring on, he gets into trouble.

Flight to the Ford

Summary
When Frodo comes to, he still has the Ring, much to his relief. T enemy seems to have withdrawn, thinking Frodo is dead or mortally wounded. Strider prepares a medicine made of leaves in boiling water and the scent calms them all. Though Frodo feels a little relief, he cannot move his arm. In the morning Frodo is put on the pony and they set off. After several days they come to a river and cross the Bridge. Strider finds an Elf stone which brings him hope. The journey proves hazardous and they stray far to the north.

When they turn back toward Rivendell, they meet Glorfindel, an elf who lives in the house of Elrond. Glorfindel tells them that Gandalf had met him nine days earlier and that the Black Riders are after them. Glorfindel tries to help them cross the ford.

Just as they are about to cross the water, the Black Riders catch up to them, accompanied by reinforcements. The Riders attack Frodo's horse, and just as they are about to triumph, Frodo sees a shining figure of white light. The river rises and caries away the Black Riders and their horses.

Notes
Frodo's gradual transformation from a scared, skeptical hobbit to a brave one is apparent towards the end. In the same way that Bilbo Baggins gained courage while wearing the Ring, Frodo appears to be maturing into a lion-hearted fighter.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS-BOOK SUMMARY / NOTES

BOOK II

Many Meetings

Summary
When Frodo awakes he is in the house of Elrond at Rivendell. Gandalf is there. Elrond has called a council meeting to discuss what must happen. Gandalf tells Frodo that Strider is also called Aragorn, Man of the West, and that the Black Riders are also known as Ringwraiths or the nine servants of the Lord of the Rings. .

Frodo learns that for the past four days and three nights he has been delirious. Elrond, a master healer, has been at work trying to save Frodo. The rider who had wounded Frodo did so with a Morgul-knife, of which a piece was embedded in Frodo's body. That piece had worked its way toward his heart, but Elrond had removed it. If the fragment had reached Frodo's heart he would have become like the Riders, a servant to Sauron. The Ring would have been taken from him, which would have proved torturous to Frodo.

Frodo learns about all those who work for the Dark Lord. The men are made of nothing, and wear robs to give shapes to their otherwise shapeless existences. The horses, just like many orcs, trolls, kings and men, have been brought up under the Dark Lord's power and are in his service forever. Gandalf tells Frodo that the white figure he saw at the river was Glorfindel and that the river itself was commanded by Elrond.

After they have eaten they go to the hall of fire. To his delight, Frodo discovers Bilbo is living there among the others. Bilbo tells Frodo what he has been up to and asks to see the Ring. When Frodo produces it, Bilbo at once asks him to put it away, fearful of the way he as responded to it. Strider returns and Frodo discovers that he is also called Dinadan.

Notes
The most delightful surprise in this chapter is the appearance of Bilbo, who was the only family Frodo had known, and who is responsible for Frodo's life and present situation. Bilbo's curiosity about the Ring is mysterious and compelling, as is his immediate request that Frodo put it away. Once again, the Ring has palpable power.

The Council of Elrond

Summary
Somehow representatives from all the major groups living in Middle-earth have all made their way to Rivendell on separate matters of business. Each is called to the council to represent their faction, however, concerning the Ring of Power and the threat of invasion by Sauron and the Black Riders. Frodo is introduced to elves, dwarves, men, and others of his own hobbit race that he does not know.

Elrond addresses the subject of the Ring. It seems that Sauron has declared war unless he recovers the Ring. Boromir, the high steward of Gondor, has had a dream about the Ring. In the dream, he is instructed to find the Ring, a halfling and a broken sword. Strider produces the broken sword--the one Frodo has been using. Frodo produces the Ring. And Frodo himself is the halfling. All these things reveal that Strider, or Aragorn, is the rightful heir to the throne of Gondor. Boromir and his people vow to fight Sauron.

Bilbo stands up to tell everyone how he took the Ring from Gollum. Gandalf joins in to explain how Gollum himself came to possess the ring and how it has changed him and Sauron. In the past, Gandalf 's search for knowledge has led him to many records written in the past which explain the history of the Ring and ways to recognize it.

Gandalf tells them how he captured Gollum and gave him to the elves for safekeeping. But an elf named Legolas announces that Gollum has escaped. Gandalf goes on to tell how he himself has been held captive by Sarumon, a chief wizard of his order. Unfortunately, Sarumon himself has been seduced by power. He wants the Ring and will do just about anything to get it. When Gandalf refused to tell Sarumon the whereabouts of the Ring, he was imprisoned. But an eagle saved him and that is how he came to be at Rivendell with Frodo and his companions.

The council discusses many ways of dealing with the Ring, but none seem satisfactory. Eventually they decide the best course is to let Frodo continue with his journey.

Notes
In this chapter, Tolkien has set out the history of the Ring and how it has affected Middle-earth. Though the ring has enormous influence, it remains essentially unchanged.

Another important aspect of this chapter is the concept of greater good. The council realizes that the task they must complete is dangerous and difficult, but the good of everyone is affected and so they press onward.

The Ring Goes South

Summary

After the group council, the hobbits hold one of their own. Merry and Pippin are indignant that Sam has been chosen to accompany Frodo and not them. Gandalf informs them that scouts have been sent out to gather information about the Black Riders and that Frodo cannot leave unless they come back with news. Gandalf tells Frodo that he might accompany him, but for now Frodo must remain at Rivendell and help Bilbo with a book of records he is completing.

The hobbits remain a Rivendell for two months, by which time the scouts begin to return. No news is to be had of the Riders from any direction. It is decided that Frodo must leave at once, accompanied by Sam and Gandalf. Elrond also decides that they should fortify their numbers to nine, in order to match the Black Riders. Legolas will represent the elves; Gimli, son of Gloin, will represent dwarves and Aragorn (the Strider) will represent men. Boromir will go to represent the Gondors. And Pippin and Merry are allowed to go.

The broken sword is reforged and named Anduril, the Flame of the West. Bilbo gives Frodo a small knife and a shirt of mail armor to be worn under his clothes. Each traveler is given a personal weapon and Sam takes the pony, Bill. They set out with the understanding that, except for Frodo, each man is free to leave the party whenever he chooses.

They reach Hollin and the first stage of their journey is complete. Strider notices a feeling of watchfulness and black crows flying low over the land. The group decides to leave, and at one point even see a dark shadow pass over the land.

A snowstorm impedes their journey. Both Aragorn and Gandalf wonder if Sauron is governing the snowstorm. It gets worse and they decide to stop. The next day they begin their journey again but are forced to stop. Eventually they realize that Canadhras, the mountain itself, hates the elves and dwarves and has set the snowstorm down to stop them from crossing him. They realize they cannot go over the mountain, so they must travel under it.

A Journey in the Dark

Summary

Gandalf tells the group that the only way under the mountain is through the mines of Moria, underground tunnels in which a group of dwarves led by Balin disappeared many years ago.

When the reach Moria, the river has been dammed and the entrance is flooded. Gandalf sets the pony free and sends it back to Rivendell. Gandalf uses a secret password to gain them entrance, and they proceed into the mines. Once they enter, there is no choice but to make their way through the mountain and emerge on the other side.

Fissures and chasms make their path treacherous and at one point they enter a stone door and find a deep well inside it. Pippin throws a stone into it and they hear tapping, as if someone is using a hammer. They walk on for as long as they can endure, coming to many paths and crossroads, resting little and eating even less. The mines of Moria are famous for silver (mithril) and it was in search of this that Balin and his dwarves came to Moria. Gandalf tells them that Bilbo had a coat of mail armor made of mithril and Frodo staggers when he realizes that Bilbo has gifted him with a suit of armor whose value can buy the whole Shire.

When they continue on their journey the next day, they come upon a tomb and Gandalf reads what is written on it. They realize that the tomb belongs to Balin and the elves. Frodo is downcast as he realizes that Bilbo's friend is dead.

Notes

In a series of ups and downs, Frodo and his friends continue to their destination. As a testament to the mastery of Tolkien, the narrative is constantly varied with villains of the known and unknown variety.

Frodo and his companions are clever and creative, coming up with ways to proceed each time they are stopped.

The Bridge of Khazad-dum

Summary

From a book of records in the tomb, Gandalf learns that Balin and the dwarves were attacked by orcs and also by a strange beast with no form or body. Gandalf gives the book of Mazarbul to Gimli; all pay their respects to Balin's tomb and leave.

Suddenly, the orcs appear. After a fierce battle in which Frodo is wounded, Gandalf stops the orcs with a spell. As if in warning of what is to come, however, a very strong presence nearly makes it impossible for Gandalf to use his power.

The further they go the hotter it gets and they realize that the lower levels are on fire. They come across a deep chasm that can only be crossed by a narrow bridge. Gimli leads the way and just as Legolas draws his bow, he sees a sight that fills him with terror. A great shadow, shaped like a man but having far greater power, is pursuing them. It is Balrog, the beast that attacked Balin and the dwarves. Balrog has a blade like a stabbing tongue of fire in one hand and a throng of whips in the other. He leaps across the chasm and races toward them.

Boromir draws out his horn and blows it. Gandalf stands on the bridge and commands the Balrog to go back. But it comes at him with its sword. Gandalf counters it with his own sword and before it can attack a second time he cuts the bridge right out from under Balrog. With a cry the Balrog falls, but he entwines his whip around Gandalf's knees and drags him to his death as well.

Notes

In this chapter Frodo earns the respect and admiration of his crew, especially for the way he has fought off the orcs and managed to get himself wounded. Just as Bilbo did in *The Hobbit*, Frodo grows braver.

The company has lost a great friend and guide in Gandalf, but though they are devastated they manage to keep their wits. When they exit Moria, they realize that the dark night of the caverns has been an illusion. Now, in the daylight, they are full of grief and mourning for their lost leader.

Lothlorien

Summary

The company moves on and comes to Durin's stone. They look into the blue waters of Mirrormere, then proceed to Lothlorien, land of the elves. Sam and Frodo, who are hurt, are carried on the backs of Boromir and Aragorn (Strider). The company rests for a while and when Sam's wound is examined Aragorn realizes that it will heal fast.

In the forest of Lothlorien, the travelers decide to rest. The elves of the forest welcome them, and for safety's sake, they blindfold Gimli (since elves do not like dwarves). The company climbs up two trees and spends the night there. Late at night a company of orcs passes by.

The next day Aragorn decides that since Gimli must be blindfolded, they will all proceed with blindfolds. Later in the day a message comes from the Lord and Lady of Galadrim, welcoming them all, so that no one needs blindfolds. The forest is exquisite and the company admires it. They are told that a strange creature is roaming the forest but since it has not been seen, they do not know if it is good or evil. The company has seen the heart of Elvendom and felt the wonderful power of the lady of the Galadrim.

Notes

Aragorn proves his just leadership by blindfolding everyone in the name of equity. As testament to the evil wind in the air, the companions seem to grow suspicious of one another. Fortunately Aragorn maintains control and is able to quell the growing suspicious natures of his men.

PLOT SUMMARY / ANALYSIS - LORD OF THE RINGS

The Mirror of Galadriel

Summary
Each member is greeted personally by Lady Galadriel, who is lovely to behold. Her husband the Lord Celeborn is also handsome. The Lord and Lady are appraised of what the company has been doing till now and they are truly sorrowful when they hear of Gandalf's fate.

The adventurers stay for many days, resting and healing themselves as well as mourning Gandalf. One day Lady Galadriel shows Frodo and Sam her mirror, which is a basin of water from a nearby stream. When she breathes on the water, Sam and Frodo see scenes from the past and the future. When Sam looks into it, he sees his home has been dug up and his father is all alone; he wants to go home. When Frodo looks into the mirror he sees a single eye which is looking for something. The Ring around his neck gets heavier and heavier, but just as he is about to slip forward the lady makes the vision vanish.

Frodo offers his Ring to her when he realizes that she wears one of the three lesser rings, but she tells him that if she takes it se will be corrupted, as will anyone else. She refuses his offer and hopes that Frodo succeeds in his mission, though that would mean the discovery of the elves that she has managed to keep hidden from Sauron by use of her rings.

Notes
Galadriel knows what the others discussed at the council meeting: if one wants to gain something dear, one might have to sacrifice. The greater good of destroying the ring may very well mean the individual and personal sacrifices of her and her beloved elves.

Farewell to Lorien

Summary
Galadriel gives the company boats in order to float down the Anduin. She gives each of them a gift, in order to help them on their way. She gives Aragorn a sheath made to fit his sword and a silver broach that holds a clear green stone, the Elfstone of the house of Elendil. To Boromir, she gives a belt of gold. To Legolas she gives a bow strung with elf-hair and a quiver of arrows. To Merry and Pippin, she gives silver belts with golden clasps. To Sam she gives neither something to keep him on the road nor to defend himself; instead she gives him a box of earth from her gardens, so that when he returns to his barren and desolate home, his garden will bloom like none other. When she asks Gimli what he wants, he asks for a strand of her hair. She gives him three as well as a blessing that his hands will flow with gold, though it will have no dominion over him. To Frodo she bequeaths a small crystal Phial in which is caught the light of Earendil's star, amid the waters of a fountain. It will be a light for him in dark places and make the night brighter.

The company then leaves and goes on their way. They have chosen a difficult, but a valiant path.

Notes
The path he men have chosen is clearly the path of good, as opposed to evil, which is the essential conflict in the novel. Lady Galadriel's psychic powers and Sam's vision of the Shire being laid waste by some kind of industry are perhaps social comments pointing towards the change that was taking place during World War I (in which Tolkien served), or during World War II (during *which The Lord of the Rings* was written).

The Great River

Summary
The journey by boat is uneventful for a few days. They pass barren lands laid waste by Sauron and come across no living things except black swans flying overhead. The company decides to follow Aragorn along the path he recommends. Boromir disagrees, wanting to return to his home with the Ring, because of the dream he had. Aragorn and Legolas go on ahead to find a safe route; they return to tell the company that they must leave the river and go by road for a while.

Notes
Not much happens here. The most significant thing is the foreshadowing of the eventual conflict between Boromir and Frodo. Boromir wants to take the Ring back to his people. Clearly, this will not fit in with Frodo's aim. The tragic consequences of this disagreement will affect everyone.

The Breaking of the Fellowship

Summary
That night the company rests on the right bank at the foot of Amonthen. The next day the burden of choice is laid on Frodo's shoulders. He must decide whether to return with Boromir to Gondor and defeat Sauron, or proceed with the plan to destroy the Ring.

Frodo takes a walk. Boromir follows him and tries to persuade him to return with the ring to Gondor. Frodo refuses and says that if he does not take the difficult path to Mount Doom and destroy the Ring, every good battle will ultimately be lost.

In desperation, Boromir tries to take the Ring. Frodo slips it on and evades Boromir, who comes to his senses and realizes what he has done.

Frodo is aware that the others must be looking for him. He puts the Ring on again and goes towards the foot of the hill, realizing that he must proceed alone, to avoid further complications. The company learns from Boromir part of what has happened and they pair off to go and look for him. On a hunch Sam goes to the river where he sees an empty boat floating. He jumps towards it but misses and falls into the water. Frodo takes off his Ring and helps Sam ashore. After much arguing, Frodo agrees that Sam should accompany him and the two of them set out toward the Land of Shadow.

Notes
The unexpected complication of Boromir's desperation has made Frodo realize the enormity of his responsibility. He decides to travel on alone rather than see any of his other companions overcome by desperation or the evil spell of Sauron.

PART II: "The Two Towers"

BOOK III

The Departure of Boromir

Summary
The camp is attacked by a band of orcs and Boromir is killed. Before he breathes his last breath, Boromir tells Aragorn that the orcs have carried off the other hobbits. The remaining members of the party search through the bodies of dead orcs and find many weapons. They put Boromir's body on a raft and set it out to sail, having no time for any other kind of funeral.

Aragorn tells Gimli and Legolas that he thinks Frodo and Sam have gone alone to Mordor and that they themselves should follow the orcs and not Frodo. So saying, these adventurers continues on their journey, travelling in search of their missing companions.

Notes
Boromir's death redeems his last act, because he dies a hero. Aragorn is careful to give him a hero's funeral, as much as possible. After that, the men must resume the business at hand of finding their lost companions Merry and Pippin.

The Riders of Rohan

Summary
On their journey, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli come across a pile of slain orcs and come to the conclusion that the orcs have quarreled among themselves. Still there is no sign of Merry and Pippin. Later, they find hobbit footprints and a broach—clues that their captured friends have passed this way.

After many days of pursuit without sign of trail or hope, Aragorn sees riders coming their way. The riders are men of Rohan and their leader is Eomer. Eomer and his riders tell the men that they have already slain the orcs but that there were no hobbits with them. When Aragorn tells Eomer that both Gandalf and Boromir are dead, Eomer is sorry. He tells the hunters that the men of Rohan are no friends of either Sauron or Saruman, the wizard who was aiding in the attack on Boromir's people. He offers the hunters horses, asking only that once their deed is accomplished, they return. It seems Eomer's king, King Theoden, did not want him to aid the travelers.

After bidding farewell to the men of Rohan the three hunters again pursue their hobbit friends. At night they rest under some trees in the forest of Fangorn. Gimli, who is on guard, sees an old man but before they can discover who he is, he disappears. The horses are gone as well. Gimli tells the others that he thinks the old man was Saruman, who has taken or scared away their horses. Their dim hope of catching their friends grows even fainter.

Notes
The narrative remains with Aragorn, rather than Frodo. For the time being, he and his companions are focused on finding Merry and Pippin. The search, like much of the plot, proves more difficult than it had seemed.

The Uruk-hai

Summary
Pippin and Merry, in the custody of the orcs, lie captive awaiting their fates. By listening to the conversation, Pippin learns that there are two groups of orcs. In the course of taking the captives, the two groups have fought one another. Pippin gets hold of a knife and cuts his bonds, tying a loose knot around his wrists.

The prisoners are picked up and after another short journey, the orc's messenger tells them that a single horseman was seen nearby. This time Merry and Pippin are made to walk instead of being carried. Pippin manages to break free, but is caught. Fortunately before he is caught, he manages to lose his cloak pin, a broach. He loses consciousness and only regains it when the orcs stop.

Eomer and his men attack the orcs and Merry and Pippin manage to escape into Fangorn.

Notes
This chapter is a sort of narrative flashback, explaining the pin that the other men found in their search. This narrative layering reveals a thoroughness on the part of Tolkien, who wants to explain all the loose ends he includes.

Treebeard

Summary
The hobbits run as fast as they can into the forest, finally stopping for a drink of water. They come upon a sort of rock wall and climb up natural stairs, where they meet an Ent, or Treebeard, as he calls himself. Treebeard is the oldest living creature in Middle-earth, a fourteen-foot guardian of Fangorn forest. He takes the hobbits to an Ent house and gives them drink and shelter. He knows Gandalf and asks the Hobbits for news of the outside world. When he comes to know about Saruman and how he has tamed orcs to serve him, he is angry. He decides to gather all the Ents and march to Isengard. Treebeard tells the hobbits that there aren't many Ents left because all the Entmaidens and Entwines have gone away and the Ents cannot find them. Due to no new Entings being born and the Ents growing old, the population is dwindling.

The next day Treebeard takes the hobbits to a meeting of Ents at Entmoot. Two dozen Ents are gathered and more come. The next day they march to Isengard. The Ents are angry at Saruman, their neighbor, who cuts down their trees and burns them without reason and who also trains Orcs not to be afraid of Fangorn. Pippin looks behind and sees the whole forest moving. The trees have awakened and are marching towards Nan Curunir, the valley of Saruman.

Notes
The Ents are a population on the verge of dying out. Their forces are weak and they have no force with which to repopulate. Still, they march toward death to fight Saruman, knowing that the greater good they can accomplish will live on as a legacy even if they do not.

The White Rider

Summary
The story now returns to the three travelers hunting for their lost companions. They find a leaf from Lorien and crumbs of food in the grass, as well as pieces of cut cord. They also find an orc knife. They follow the hobbit prints up to Treebeard's rock wall and when they climb up to the top they once more see the old man who had appeared earlier.

The old man comes to them and reveals himself to be Gandalf. He tells them that the old man they had seen earlier was not him but Saruman. He also tells them that their missing hobbit friends have gone with the Ents to Isengard, to fight Saruman. He tells Aragorn that he must go to their aid.

He tells them what happened when he fell into the abyss with Balrog. Gandalf held on to the enemy's heel and the Balrog took him up to the highest peak from where Gandalf flung the Balrog to its death. Gwaihir, who had been sent by Lady Galadriel, found Gandalf there. He was taken to Lothlorien, where he was clad in white and healed. Lady Galadriel's messages of caution are given to the three and they set off.

The White Rider (Gandalf) then summons Shadowfax, his horse, which he took from Theoden along with two others. Gandalf sets Gimli on his own horse and they ride off toward the halls of Theoden, Eomer's king.

Notes
Saruman becomes a more important villain than Sauron in this part of the novel. He has managed to pervert society by controlling the orcs and waging war on all his neighbors. It now becomes the mission of the others to stop him.

The King of the Golden Hall

Summary

Now that Gandalf has returned from the dead, he serves as the captain of the hunters. He leads them to Theoden's halls, and tells the guards that they have come back to return the horses that Eomer had lent them.

The four companions enter the hall after leaving their weapons behind, but they do not get a warm welcome. Theoden is reluctant to show gratitude; he says this is because Gandalf almost always heralds bad news and asks for help. In truth, it is because Saruman has a secret hold on him in the form of his advisor, Wormtongue.

Gandalf frees Theoden from the wicked influence of Wormtongue. Gandalf then asks Theoden to release Eomer, who has been held prisoner of Wormtongue's counsel. Eomer returns and lays his sword at Theoden's feet. Theoden realizes his mistake in trusting Wormtongue. He decides that he will himself lead the riders of Rohan against Saruman. Wormtongue is sent away.

Theoden gives Shadowfax to Gandalf. He proclaims that Eomer his heir and Eowyn his sister are to rule in his place until he returns.

Notes
The war on the orcs escalates as the narrative remains diverted from Frodo, as well as Merry and Pippin.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

Helm's Deep

Summary
On the second day of their journey, a messenger who tells them that Saruman has almost won meets the group. Gandalf leaves them with the excuse of having an errand to run. When they reach Helm's Deep, the battle is fierce and the orcs seem to be winning. Suddenly Theoden and his men ride up from behind, trapping the Orcs. Gandalf appears with a contingent of reinforcements. The orcs flee into the forest, but the trees capture them and the battle is over as quickly as it began.

Notes
Gandalf's strategy proves victorious. He had ridden away to gather men for reinforcements. Many heroes are proclaimed that day, but none as precious as Gandalf. Once again the forces of evil have been overthrown by those of good.

The Road to Isengard

Summary
King Theoden, Gandalf the white rider, Aragorn, Legolas, Erkenbrand, Eomer, Gimli and the men of Rohan all gather beside a stream. When Theoden asks Gandalf about his wizardry over the trees, Gandalf laughs and tells them that it has not been his doing. He asks them to come with him to Isengard if they wish to know more about the trees.

After resting, the men set forth again. They come to Orthanc, the citadel of Saruman at Isengard. They are surprised to find that Treebeard and his Ents have destroyed the citadel, and that Saruman and Wormtongue have hidden themselves away, guarded by none other than Merry and Pippin. Theoden, who is anxious to see Treebeard, says good-bye to the hobbits and accompanies Gandalf to the Northern wall.

Notes
At last the band of travelers, minus Frodo, are complete.

Flotsam and Fetsam

Summary
Merry and Pippin tell their companions how they came to be at Isengard after escaping the orcs and being helped by Ents. Merry tells them how the whole forest marched to Isengard and tore up the gates. Pippin then tells them how Saruman almost managed to escape but was spotted in time and took refuge in the stronghold of Orthanc that even the iron tearing Ents could not destroy. He also tells them how Gandalf came by and asked for Treebeard's help, which he gave. Pippin tells them how Wormtongue came to give Saruman a message, but seeing the destruction he wanted to leave. At that point Treebeard captured him and that is how he came to be cloistered with Saruman.

Notes
Again, Tolkien takes the time to backtrack and explain the missing pieces of the plot that the narrative has not revealed.

The Voice of Saruman

Summary
Gandalf warns everyone about Saruman's voice, which has powers beyond their imagination. Theoden, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli decide to go with Gandalf to get a first hand view of Saruman. When Saruman does appear, his voice sounds like the sweetest anyone has ever heard. He speaks to Theoden and tries to persuade him to be his friend. Gandalf doesn't say a word because he has to let Theoden make his own choices: either succumb to Saruman's wizardry or fight it. Gimli is not taken in and neither is Eomer. Eventually Theoden is able to control himself and he rejects Saruman's appeal.

Theoden's men have fallen under Saruman's spell and are confused by their leader's rejection. Saruman is angered and when his voice changes the men realize their mistake in falling for his tricks. Gandalf gives Saruman a chance to discard his evil ways, but Saruman not only does not take Gandalf's offer, he even tries to persuade Gandalf to join him. When Gandalf asks him once more to come out of Orthanc, Saruman turns away. Gandalf raises his hand and commands Saruman's staff to break. Saruman's staff breaks and he falls back. At that Wormtongue hurls an object at Gandalf but misses and Pippin picks it up. Gandalf retrieves it, recognizing it at once as a palantir (a seeing stone). Gandalf knows that though Saruman is a lost cause, this is a great treasure.

Gandalf asks Treebeard to pour back the water into Orthanc so that Saruman can never escape. Treebeard agrees.

Notes
In this scene, Gandalf again asserts his wisdom and incorruptibility. He also takes over as leader of the wizards, having been unable to persuade Sarumon to repent his wicked ways. Gandalf emerges greater and more admirable. Good once again defeats evil. And order is semi-restored.

BOOK SUMMARY / SYNOPSIS - LORD OF THE RINGS

The Palantir

Summary
Pippin is extremely inquisitive about the glass ball that Wormtongue threw at Gandalf. Finally, curiosity overcomes him and he can stand it no longer. He goes to where Gandalf is and steals the globe. His conscience tells him not to meddle in the affairs of wizards, but he cannot bring himself to stop. He gazes into the palantir and screams. Gandalf revives Pippin, asking him what he has done and seen.

Pippin then tells Gandalf that when he looked into the globe he saw a tower, around which nine huge bat-like things were flying. One of them came up close and he saw Sauron. Sauron saw Pippin and imagined that Sarumon had captured him. Sauron told Sarumon to bring him the hobbits.

Pippin does not understand this, but Gandalf does. Sauron wants the hobbits, thinking they can lead him to the ring. Sauron does not yet know that the palantir is in Gandalf's possession. Gandalf forgives Pippin because he knows that if he had looked into the palantir, Sauron would have realized what transpired.

Just as he is about to leave, a Nazgul flies over head. Gandalf and Pippin leave. Gandalf tells Pippin that Sauron must be close. He has sent one of his servants to find Saruman. Since the seeing stone is no longer in Sarumon's possession, he will not be able to answer Sauron's summons. The Dark Lord will think Sarumon has betrayed him.

Notes
Suspense deepens as one danger is defeated and a greater one rears its head. Gandalf and Pippin are separated from the others and must make their way alone.

Book IV

The Taming of Smeagol

Summary
The narrative returns to Frodo and Sam, who have been traveling for three days. They know that Gollum is pursuing them so they take the offensive and capture him first. Frodo and Sam have been having trouble finding their way. Gollum promises to help them and to be on his best behavior.

Notes
Gollum begins to call himself by his old name, Smeagol. When he was Smeagol, he was a good person. Evil corrupted him and he became Gollum. The message is obvious: every person has a Smeagol and Gollum in them. It is up to the person to decide which he will entertain.

The Passage of the Marshes

Summary
Gollum, or Smeagol, leads the hobbits down the slopes and makes no attempt to escape. He brings them back to the narrow gully they had gotten stuck on before and shows them a way down. I

The next stage of their journey is much the same as the last. Gollum leads them over the marshes in single file. His keen sense of direction serves them well, and even though the morning comes, the sun is hidden behind clouds and the land is misty.

On the third day, they come upon the Dead Marshes. They see lights and flames above unseen candles floating in the gurgling water. Sam and Frodo see dead faces in the mud, faces of elves, men and orcs. Gollum tells them about the battle that was fought there long ago, at the Black Gates, and how the graves of the dead were swallowed up by the marsh. There are candles for every dead creature in it. Somehow they get across the dead marshes, guided solely by Smeagol's senses.

As their journey progresses they sense Smeagol's uneasiness. Later, a winged creature flies over the marshes and Gollum refuses to move until the moon is gone. He tells his hobbit companions that the wraith is a Nazgul of Sauron's, and that it will tell Sauron where they are.

The travelers change as they get closer to Mordor. The Ring weighs heavily on Frodo. The veil that once warded its hostility has become thin and fragile. Frodo has become quieter and more troubled as they travel. Gollum has changed too. For a while, he seemed to have changed into a good person, honest and trustworthy. Now, however, he is fawning and falsely friendly. Sam grows suspicious of both his companions.

On the fifth day of their quest, they come to the desolation that lies before Mordor. The ground is parched, gray and white. Nothing grows on it and even the sun's light is defiled among the ash heaps of the Dark Lords terrain. Amidst this desolation the weary travelers find a dark hole into which they crawl and go to sleep.

When Sam wakes up, he finds Gollum debating with himself over Frodo's sleeping body. Each time Gollum thinks of taking the Ring from Frodo his hand is drawn out, but when Smeagol speaks (which may serve as his conscience) he draws back his hand. Sam realizes that what he had perceived as hunger for hobbit flesh was actually lust for the Ring. Sam does not let on that he has overheard Gollum, but rouses Frodo, who has been refreshed by a pleasant dream, and they set off.

Two more times they feel the dread and fear passing over them. Though they cannot see the Nazgul they believe it is nearby. Gollum very reluctantly leads them to the Gate.

Notes
The evil forces weigh heavily on Frodo and Gollum. However, good old Sam is untouched. He has the presence of mind to be suspicious of his companions, and to think clearly and pay attention.

NOVEL ANALYSIS-BOOK NOTES

Black Gate is Closed

Summary
Before the next day dawns, the journey to Mordor is complete. Gollum and the hobbits come to the tower of the Dark Lord just as the day guards are replacing the night guards. Smeagol says he knows of another entrance and offers to take the men there. Sam is still suspicious, but as Frodo looks at the tower, he sees troops approaching.

Once more Frodo puts his trust in Smeagol, who has twice had a chance to steal the ring or harm him. He is beginning to trust Smeagol. As Frodo contemplates what to do, four more winged creatures fly above. More troops approach, accompanied by Oliphaunts.

Notes
Smeagol has proved himself trustworthy despite momentary lapses. On the verge of an important decision, Frodo makes the decision to trust the man who was once his enemy.

Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit

Summary
As they pursue the alternate entrance, they find themselves travelling by night and sleeping by day. Frodo and Gollum sleep when they can, but Sam finds it hard to do so.

Eventually they come to a clear lake in a shallow dell, where they drink and wash to their content. Though the place is pleasant, all around them are signs of old wars and new wounds. Bones and burnt remains are strewn around the place. Sam asks Gollum if he can find food for them. Gollum comes back with rabbits. Sam fetches some herbs and cooks the rabbit meat in water. Gollum, disgusted by the practice of cooking meat, goes off to find something for himself. Sam realizes too late that his fire has attracted attention. Four men whom Gollum was able to evade capture the hobbits. The men are from Gondor, led by Captain Faramir (Boromir's brother). Frodo tells them who they are and asks them to spare Gollum, if they catch him. He tells them about the fate of Boromir and they are saddened.

Faramir leaves two men to guard the hobbits and goes off on an errand. The guards tell them that they are rangers come to ambush the men that help Sauron. Though they know that Gondor and Minas Tirith are doomed, they will not let the Southrons join the Dark Lord without opposition. Sam then gets his first view of a battle of men against men, which he doesn't like much. While watching the men fight each other, he sees another fight that terrifies and delights him for life: an Oliphaunt.

The Window on the West

Summary
When Faramir returns after the battle, he questions Frodo long and hard about the object he has that Sauron wants. Frodo holds back, telling Faramir of the sword that was broken and about Boromir and Aragorn. Faramir almost accuses Frodo of killing Boromir when Sam speaks up. Frodo, who did not know that Boromir was dead, is upset.

Faramir asks Frodo to join them so that they may be protected from orcs. Some of the guards see a shadow. Sam guesses that it is Gollum, but the men think that it is a large squirrel.

Sam refuses to sleep and after they have eaten Faramir sits to talk with the hobbits. Frodo tells him many tales except about their quest and the Ring, and Faramir tells them about his ancestors and their quest against the Dark Lord. Sam tells Faramir about Lady Galadriel's beauty. While talking he lets slip that Boromir wanted the Ring.

Faramir guesses that it is the one Ring and puts the hobbits at ease by saying that he is not about to force it from them. He sympathizes with Frodo, who has an enormous responsibility on his shoulders.

Notes
The friendship between Frodo and Faramir restores Boromir, though he is dead. Frodo never held ill will toward him, but now he is able to express his admiration for the fallen comrade by remaining silent rather than dishonoring his memory.

PLOT NOTES - BOOK NOTES

The Forbidden Pool

Summary
Faramir catches Gollum and threatens him with death, but finally releases him to Frodo's custody. He questions Gollum about the secret entryway to which he is leading Frodo, and cautions both men that Cirith Ungol (the place they are travelling through) is evil and unsafe. He tells them not to come back to his secret hiding place, and says that if he ever catches Gollum without Frodo, he will kill him.

Frodo is concerned that Cirith Ungol is so unsafe. However, he knows he must destroy the Ring and that this is the only way to reach his destination. Faramir gives Frodo his blessing and reluctantly agrees to let them go.

Notes
Faramir and his men are cautiously helpful, but they do not want any trouble. For this reason, he sends Frodo, Sam and Gollum away, telling them not to bother him or his people anymore.

Journey to the Crossroads

Summary
When day comes and the hobbits have eaten, Faramir gives them their packs, which he has graciously stored with food. He presents them with staffs adorned with carved leads and plaited leather thongs, to help them with their treacherous climbing. Gollum, who has been blindfolded, protests until Frodo and Sam don blindfolds too, in order to appease their companion's sense of injustice.

They travel by day and sleep by night for three days. Gollum hurries them along, and Frodo wonders why he does so. They come to a crossroads and Frodo sees the stone figure of one of the kings. The head has been replaced with a round stone with one single eye on the forehead, symbolizing Sauron. As he looks around he sees the original head lying on the side of the road. The setting sun casts a yellow glow about the discarded head.

Notes
The setting sun creates a crown for the discarded head, symbolizing a return to power by the old rulers and a deposition of the new dictator, Sauron. Frodo finds meaning and comfort in this scene, knowing that they have not come on it by accident.

The Stairs of Cirith Ungol

Summary
Once more Frodo is being dragged down by the Ring, which seems to want to preserve itself. In the distance Minas Morgul looms larger than life and the sister tower of Minas Tirith towers over the moon. Their steps seem to slow, as if all are impeded by the evil forces.

Frodo is compelled toward a white bridge, though he knows that he will be easily spotted. Gollum and Sam try to stop him but are unsuccessful, as he seems possessed. Suddenly thunder and lightening split the night air. The gate opens and out comes the Lord of the Nine Riders. Frodo clutches the Phial of Galadriel and his own will is restored. The wraith-king does not see them, and instead passes on with an enormous army. Frodo feels sorry for Faramir, who will have to contend with these forces.

Gollum hurries the hobbits on and they come to an opening in a rock mountain that has many stairs, straight and winding. The path is difficult, at times too narrow or wide. Frodo sees that there is a red light at the end and guesses that the secret passage is guarded. Gollum tries to encourage him, telling him they might be distracted by the battle preparations at hand. The three of them rest and Sam makes Frodo laugh with his futuristic tales, hoping that once their adventure is over, they can make it into a song. As they talk Gollum slips away; when he comes back the hobbits are asleep. Something of the old Smeagol stirs in his soul and he touches Frodo almost lovingly, feeling as he used to when he was jut a plain old hobbit. His touch stirs Frodo and wakes Sam. Sam misunderstands Gollum's motives, which causes the other hobbit's momentary lapse of goodness to fade in anger.

Notes
This chapter is nearly completely devoted to the character of Smeagol, or Gollum. He is a complex character who was once good but who has been tarnished by years of exposure to the power of the Ring. When Smeagol takes over, the character is his old self, wanting connection with his companions. But in this chapter he is suspected because of his evil self. What might has been a complete relapse into goodness is cut short by Sam's suspicion.

This is not to say that Gollum would have turned "good" were it not for Sam. Gollum is a pitiful character, someone to be sympathized with and felt sorry for. Years of living evilly have turned his soul black and even though he wavers, he is basically ruined by evil.

ONLINE PLOT SUMMARY/BOOK REVIEW

Shelob's Lair

Summary
Gollum's evil side resurfaces with a vengeance as he leads Sam and Frodo into a trap—the lair of the giant spider Shelob. The smell in the place is horrible, but neither Sam nor Frodo realize they are being led into a trap. Gollum thinks Shelob will only care about prey, not the Ring he hopes to recover. Once inside the cave, Gollum disappears.

It is then that Sam and Frodo sense the evil presence of Shelob. It is dark in the cave so they cannot see her. Sam asks Frodo to use Galadriel's phial to cast light in the cave. They see the hungry evil eyes of their predator. As they try to run she spins a web to trap them. Shelob was, as Sauron called her, "his cat", whom he fed prisoners for which he had no use.

Sam and Frodo escape and come to another pass, where upon Sam hides the Phial, afraid that orcs might spy them. But as soon as he does that Shelob rushes forward from another hole. Just as Sam is about to warn Frodo, Gollum grabs him from behind. In the ensuing struggle, Sam and Frodo are separated. By the time Sam gets free, he cannot see Frodo.

Notes
It is unfortunate but necessary to the plot that Gollum has this last bout of evil intent. Shelob is merely another villain thrown in to complicate the plot and raise the anxiety levels of the characters and the reader.

The Choices of Master Samwise

Summary
Sam returns to find Frodo entrapped in Shelob's web, apparently dead or severely wounded. Enraged, Sam uses Frodo's sword to fight Shelob. Shelob fights him, but he miraculously recites an elven prayer and uses the phial; a burned Shelob crawls away. Sam sees that Frodo is lifeless and gives up in exhaustion and sadness.

After some time, Sam resolves to finish Frodo's task of destroying the Ring. He takes the Ring from his companion and leaves him in his coat of fine mail armor. He goes some distance before he hears the sounds of the orcs. He slips on the Ring just in time. His senses seem suddenly sharper, except for his eyesight. And he is aware of an eye searching for him. He hears the orcs and realizes that they have found Frodo, at which point he can only think of rescuing his friend's body from the enemy.

He rushes to where Frodo lay, but the Orcs have carried his body away. Sam realizes he can hear the orcs and understand their language. Eavesdropping, he learns that the orcs are looking for him; and further, he learns that Frodo is not dead, merely paralyzed by Shelob's venom.

Notes
Sam dons the Ring, an act that is full of danger and the threat of corruption. But Sam is a good person, as already established. He dons the Ring fully aware of its dangerous potential. He does so to honor his fallen friend, Frodo.

A convenience here is that Sam learns Frodo is not dead. Otherwise, he might have gone on without Frodo. As it is, he learns that his friend is still able to be saved.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS FREE BOOK REVIEW

PART III: "THE RETURN OF THE KING"

Book V

Minas Tirith.

Summary
Pippin awakes on the way to Minas Tirith with Gandalf. As they near, Gandalf warns Pippin to be careful of what he reveals. Denethor, the leader, is Boromir's father. News of his son's death is bound to cause some reaction.

Sure enough, Denethor is upset that Boromir died when a mere soldier like Pippin lives. Eventually, Denethor accepts Pippin and sends him off with a man, Beregond, to learn about the city and the upcoming war. Pippin and Beregond become fast friends, and Pippin finally feels like he has found a friend (since he has parted from Merry). When Pippin returns to his quarters after the Gate closes Gandalf tells him to rest while he can, because soon there will be no time for rest.

Notes
The friendship between Pippin and Beregond is important, as later it will lead to some important sacrifices on the part of Pippin.

The Passing of the Grey Company

Summary
The story turns now to the remaining members of the company who are at Isengard. With them are Theoden and his men. They are joined some time later by Halbarad Dinadan, a Ranger like Aragorn. He has been asked to join them by Lady Galadriel. Thirty men and Elrond's sons, Elladan and Elrohir accompany him. Elrond's daughter, Arwen, sends a staff for Aragorn.

Merry, meanwhile, lays his sword at Theoden's service, just as Pippin did in Denethor's. He is accepted as Theoden's esquire and given a pony of his own. They are ready to return to Rohan and fight to defend Gondor, then travel to Minas Tirith to fight Sauron. Aragorn tells them that he must part with them, taking his group of men across the Paths of the Dead as quickly as possible in order to reach Minas Tirith and defeat Sauron with haste. Aragorn tells them that he has revealed his position to Sauron in the hopes of frightening him into a hasty misstep. Legolas and Gimli opt to go with him, as do Halbarad and his men.

The Grey Company, as they are called, travel swiftly through the plains. Theoden and his riders go over the mountains. On the way Aragorn's company meets Lady Eowyn, who asks to come along. Aragorn says that without the King her brother's permission, she cannot go. Eowyn laments her fate, saying that being a women she has to remain behind only to hear news of death and destruction. She must govern them especially well, since all may be lost and only she will remain. The next day they part, painfully bound by duty.

The next day the Grey Company comes to the Haunted Mountains and to the Path of the Dead, where no mortal has ever lived to travel through. Aragorn summons the dead to fulfill an oath sworn to his ancestor, Isildur. It seems that long ago the dead promised to aid Isildur in fighting Sauron, but betrayed him. As a result, they have been cursed to remain in the Paths of the Dead. Aragorn tells them that they will be free only if they follow Isildur's heir to battle when called upon. This is that time. The king of the Dead summons his men to follow Aragorn in battle against Sauron and so be free forever.

Notes
Two themes of interest are restated here. First, Eowyn must act in the interest of a greater good. Selflessness is the most heroic code by which Tolkien's characters live. Second, true leadership qualities are destined in man. Aragorn slowly proves his birthright and works his way toward reclaiming a throne that is rightfully and legally his. Thou he will no doubt meet with some resistance by the seated leaders of Gondor, his claim to the throne is unquestionably obvious, especially in this chapter.

The Muster of Rohan

Summary
Theoden and his men are met by Eowyn, who tells them of Aragorn's departure to the Paths of the Dead and who asks once again to be permitted to join them. Again, she is refused. The Lord of Minas Tirith, Denethor sends a messenger to Theoden asking or assistance at once in defending Gondor. Theoden then promises that he himself will ride with six thousand to Minas Tirith.

During the course of the night a great cloud of darkness engulfs the land. As the riders from Rohan prepare to enter Gondor, Merry is told he must not go. He hitches a ride with a desperate soldier named Dernhelm and makes his way in to the battle regardless.

Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas have gone to Minas Tirith. Gandalf and Pippin are already there. Frodo and Sam are off on their quest. Merry, who feels all along like a burden to others, feels even lonelier.

Notes
Plot twists begin to merge and characters come together after many pages of separation. As a character, Merry emerges more thoroughly. He is excited, loyal, and ready to prove himself. But no one gives him the chance. The mysterious soldier is a welcome opportunity for Merry, and an exciting and mysterious diversion for the reader.

The Seize of Gondor

Summary

Pippin meets Beregond in the chaos of the upcoming battle and the two watch as the horizon is devoured by the Darkness coming from the Black Land. Just as the two talk of the creeping shadow, they are struck dumb by a shuddering cry uttered by "fine bird-like forms horrible as carrion fowl, yet greater than eagles, cruel as death". The Nazguls sweep down upon some men who are trying to reach the gates to safety. Beregond recognizes Faramir just as he is attacked by one of Sauron’s formless demons. Just in time, Gandalf appears and saves Faramir, delivering him safely to his father’s throne.

Faramir tells his father Denethor that he has met Frodo. Further, he tells him that Frodo is on his way to Cirith Ungol to dispose of the Ring. Denethor is angry because he had wanted the Ring to destroy his enemies. He tells Faramir he would have rather him died than Boromir. The king dismisses his son, displeased and feeling betrayed.

The next day Faramir is sent an extremely dangerous post, Osgiliath, to defend the walls of the city against the enemy. He goes to please his father, knowing that Denethor feels he has been let down. A messenger comes to relay the news that the leader of the Nazguls, the black captain, is leading his followers to Osgiliath and is being joined by a regiment of men from the south, the Haradrim. Gandalf warns Denethor that the Black Captain will not die at the hands of a man, and that his son Faramir is in trouble on his post. Gandalf tries to help Faramir, but the latter is hell-bent on doing right by his father; he refuses to leave.

The battle is fierce and Faramir’s troops are decimated. The deadly dart of a Nazgul seriously wounds him. For a while, it appears the good troops are losing to Sauron’s evil forces. They thrown dead and disfigured soldiers over the walls of the fort, and the Nazguls circle overhead with their relentless screeching. The reinforcements have not arrived, and those trapped inside the city begin to fear their own deaths.

As Faramir lies dying, Denethor is overcome with guilt and despair. He loses all hope and interest in the battle, deciding to take his own life as he buries his son on a giant funeral pyre. Pippin manages to postpone this while he runs to find Gandalf. He tells Beregond to stop the king from doing anything mad.

Pippin goes down to where he can see Gandalf, but is stopped by the sight of a huge battering ram called grond hammering away at the Gate. It breaks open and the Black Rider enters. He faces Gandalf. He takes off his hood and reveals his evil formless body. A red fire shines between the shoulders and the crown, no head is visible, and he tells Gandalf that he is death.

At that moment, a cock crows. The sounds of reinforcements can be heard. A true battle is about to occur.

Notes

In this chapter, Tolkien has shown remarkable knowledge of father son relationships. An angry father dismisses his errant son because his ego is hurt and then repents and goes mad with grief. Since Boromir’s death, Faramir is the only one on whom the father’s hope and lineage rests. The resulting near-tragedy is full of complicated ethos, another testament to Tolkien’s ability.

The Ride of the Rohirrim

Summary

This chapter backtracks and traces the arrival of the riders of Rohan, Merry and the Rohirrim. They meet with the Woses, the Wild Men of the Woods, who have agreed to lead the Rohirrim into Gondor by a back way in order to help stave off the Dark Years of Sauron.

The headman leads the Riders under cover of darkness and forest and leaves them when it is safe. The riders come to the destroyed walls of Denethor’s kingdom and move forward. Theoden blows upon his horn and the Riders of Rohan burst forth into song as they attack the surprised enemy.

Notes

Once again Tolkien layers the narrative by backtracking and covering another perspective of the same event. This time Merry grows bored with his non-role in the battle and thus becomes the bearer of important narrative information.

The Battle of the Pelennor Fields

Summary

In the battle, Theoden is knocked from his horse and mortally wounded. The Nazgul swoop down to claim their prey when the mysterious young soldier called Dernhelm challenges the Lord of the Nazgul. Merry cowers with fear nearby.

Dernhelm tells the Black Lord of the enemy to leave or be sorry, to which the ringwraith replies that he cannot be harmed by any man. At this moment, Dernhelm throws off his cape and reveals himself to be none other than Eowyn, whom all had forbade to come on account of being a woman. Eowyn, being a woman and not a man, advances and stabs at the creature. In the battle, she is wounded. As the master of the Nazgul stands over her, ready to kill her, Merry strikes him. The Nazgul cries out, giving Eowyn the time she needs to cut off his head. The Nazgul wails and disappears.

The Black Lord is reduced into nothingness and only his clothes and crown remain. His body vanishes into thin air. Merry realizes that Theoden is dying. The king names Eomer his heir. Eowyn is taken away to be tended. Theoden dies not knowing that Eowyn had come to war and killed the Nazgul.

A cry goes up across the city as Aragorn and his men come from the Paths of the Dead just in time to help. The new leaders of Gondor then ride to the city, triumphant.

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE LORD OF THE RINGS

The Pyre of Denethor

Summary
Denethor is reduced to even deeper madness, still trying to command a funeral pyre in which to kill himself and his wounded son Faramir. Beregond, who has been trying to stop the building of the pyre, has been called a traitor and Denethor is about to have him killed. Just in time, Gandalf comes and tries to talk sense into the deranged father and leader of his people.

Denethor is outraged at Gandalf, whom he mistakenly believes has not only stolen his son but now his servants too. He is upset that Aragorn will rule his people, though he knows this leadership is just and earned.

Denethor throws himself onto the pyre along with one of the palantir, or seeing stones. He kills himself. Gandalf carries Faramir's body to the house of healing. Eomer comes to Gandalf and tells him that all along it had been suspected that Denethor wrestled with the enemy in thought and has now finally succumbed.

Notes
The palantir has been Denethor's undoing. Just as Gollum becomes a pathetic character undone by his own evil transformation, so Denethor is a struggling tragic hero—a man who might have saved himself if he had known how to resist temptation.

The House of Healing

Summary
Merry, Eowyn and Faramir are carried to the city of Gondor for healing. Denethor is dead, and so is Theoden. Aragorn asks for the herb "athelas", also known as king's foil." The people of Gondor do not use this herb, but since it grows wild in the forest they retrieve it. Aragorn heals them all and the news spreads quickly, because prophecy has always foretold that the rightful king of Gondor possesses the art of healing.

The Last Debate

Summary
In the morning Legolas, Gimli, Pippin and Merry are all united. Gimli tells them of Aragorn's deeds--how he allied himself with the king of the Dead in exchange for setting them free and how the servants of the Black Lord jumped over board and drowned or fled. Aragorn had then taken the mightiest ship as his own and he put up the flag of Isildur made especially by Arwen, daughter of Elrond. Aragorn then released the Dead from the curse and they vanished. After their departure, the troops gathered and set sail for Gondor.

Gandalf, meanwhile, has assembled the leaders of the armies. He tells the men that this victory is not the final victory. Gandalf says they must wage a battle so completely devastating that Sauron is distracted from watching Frodo, who is about to destroy the Ring. The leaders then discuss strategies and decide to march out on the second day with seven thousand men.

Notes
Though Gandalf and Aragon know that this number is too few against an army of the Black Lord, but they also know that the captain of the Nazgul has been slain and that Sauron's men are reeling from the unexpected defeat at Minas Tirith. They also know that he has not had time to gather forces, as they have. Even though their number is small, some of the men in their army are such that one man is worth more than a thousand. As the plot nears a climax, Tolkien pulls out all the stops for a dramatic offensive.

The Black Gate Opens

Summary
Legolas, Gimli, Aragorn, Gandalf and Pippin (commanding their troops) set off for war. Gandalf says that they should not go by the path that Frodo and Sam tread because that will draw unnecessary attention to them. Instead, they go by the entrance and set fire to the bridge and the fields, then depart.

As they travel closer to Sauron's land, many of the soldiers are visibly shaken. Aragorn, being the fair leader, allows the men to change their minds and loses about a thousand.

When the Lords of Gondor reach the Black Gate, they issue a challenge and are answered by a great rolling of drums. Out of the Black Gate comes an ambassador of Sauron. He speaks to Gandalf, saying that he has something of interest. To everyone's surprise he produces Frodo's cloak and elven broach, as well as his sword. He then tells them never to fight him again. He commands them to respect him as leader and never oppose him. If they do not agree, he claims he will torture Frodo.

As this Gandalf asks him to produce Frodo. Before the surprised ambassador can respond, Gandalf takes Frodo's things from him and rejects Sauron's demands. The messenger retreats and the battle begins.

Orcs and trolls larger than humans attack them. As the fighting intensifies, Beregond is thrown down by a troll who is about to bite off his throat. Pippin comes to his rescue and grabs the troll, who falls on top of him. The stench and weight of the beastly creature suffocate him and he thinks he hears eagles before he passes out.

Notes
Pippin's vision of eagles is a reference to Bilbo's adventures in *The Hobbit*, not (as he thinks) the result of being crushed by a troll.

CHAPTER NOTES/SUMMARY-LORD OF THE RINGS

Book VI

The Tower Of Cirith Ungol

Summary
The story returns to Sam, who is outside the doors of the stronghold where Frodo has been taken captive. Sam dons the Ring and is nearly overwhelmed by its force. He crosses into Mordor then takes off the Ring, realizing that the Eye is searching for him.

He is frightened, and he longs to use the ring, but he knows that the Ring itself will overpower him if he does. He proceeds and manages to cast frightening shadows on the walls of the cave. He passes many dead orcs, and his fearsome shadow frightens off two guards. Finally he reaches the tower in which Frodo is being tortured. He finds Frodo, rescues him from his torturers, and the two proceed as Sam tells Frodo what has happened. When Sam tells Frodo he has the Ring, Frodo becomes enraged and calls his dear friend a thief. This fit soon passes, and both realize it is the Ring and not Frodo himself, striking out with such passion.

Notes
It is in this chapter that Sam proves his true worth. He has saved Frodo, but he has also resisted the pull of the Ring, which many great men have been unable to do.

The Land of Shadow

Summary
As Frodo and Sam make their way to Mount Orodruin, they realize that the Lord

of the Nazguls has been killed in battle by a sudden change in the air. Frodo and Sam came close to orc quarters on the vast plain and get behind a bush just in time. One orc kills the other and disappears.

A band of orcs mistake Frodo and Sam for orcs (since they are wearing stolen orc clothing). They are forced to march with the orcs. Later there is some confusion and Sam and Frodo slip away, finding a pit in which to get some fitful rest.

Notes
At this point, it seems like each time the two Ring-bearers get close to some kind of success, something gets in the way. Suspense builds and the plot escalates.

Mount Doom

Summary
As they near Mount Doom, Frodo’s burden becomes so fierce he can hardly go on. While they struggle to sustain one another, Sam and Frodo are suddenly attacked by none other than a very desperate Gollum, who is trying in vain to get the Ring. He is in a frenzy, clearly possessed by an evil force driving him to get the ring.

There is a struggle and Sam and Gollum are locked in battle. Gollum begs for his life, and Sam relents. This is a mistake, however, because Gollum is still lusting after the Ring.

Sam sees Frodo inside the mouth of Orodruin, struggling against himself. It seems the Ring has again taken control of Frodo. He cannot bring himself to toss it into the pit, which is the only way to destroy Sauron. Frodo claims the Ring for himself and puts it on his finger. Before Sam can protest he is thrown forward. He hits his head on the stony floor and blacks out.

As Frodo claims the Ring, he becomes invisible. The Dark Lord notices him, having been distracted by the wars in Gondor. He summons the remaining Nazguls, who abandon all and fly toward Mount Doom.

Sam wakes and sees Gollum fighting with the invisible Frodo. Sam watches in horror as Gollum snaps his teeth. One minute he holds in his mouth a finger with the Ring attached; the next minute, Frodo reappears, fingerless. Gollum, shrieking with delight at having found his "precious," takes a step too far and falls into the abyss, taking with him the Ring. The Crack of Doom is filled with the Ring, at last.

The mountain shakes and its fires blaze. Sam picks up Frodo and carries him away from Orodruin. Mordor shakes, its towers fall and mountains slide. The earth shakes and the skies burst forth with black rain, and the Nazguls come shooting out of the sky like flaming bolts, withering away into nothingness.

Frodo is once more himself and Sam is overjoyed. Frodo asks Sam to forgive Gollum because, after all, he has had a very important role in delivering the Ring into the Crack of Doom

Notes
This chapter reveals the theme of Fate. Even Gollum, who had struggled with his good identity Smeagol, plays a part in the restoration of order. He is possessed by evil, but even so, he takes that one step that fulfills Frodo’s quest. Wise as he is, Frodo tells Sam not to condemn Gollum. Rather, he wants his companion to recognize that each person plays a part in the battle between good and evil; sometimes the role is not easily categorized.

BOOK SUMMARY/CRITICISM-LORD OF THE RINGS

The Field of Cormallen

Summary
Gwaihir the Windlord and the eagles join in the battle below the mountain. As the Ring falls into the Crack of Doom, the Black Gate collapses. Sauron is destroyed and his evil forces flee. The victors below celebrate Frodo's victory, and the enemy knows their battle is lost.

Gwaihir and the Eagles carry Gandalf to Mount Doom, where he rescues Frodo and Sam from the erupting volcano. Frodo, who has thought Gandalf dead, is overwhelmed. He and Sam rest until they are healed, then they are treated as heroes. They are surprised to find that Strider has become Aragorn, the King. Aragorn calls Frodo, "Frodo of the Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom". Eventually they all depart for Minas Tirith, at which point Aragorn will be able to claim his throne in Gondor.

Notes
Another touching reunion between Frodo and someone he has thought dead simply reinforces his position as a likeable and important hero. Also, he is a true hero. Everyone celebrates his victory, and for days on end he is lauded for his hard work in disposing of the Ring.

The Steward and the King

Summary
Back in Gondor, Eowyn is restless. She is still recuperating from her wounds and she is restless for Aragorn to return. Meanwhile Faramir, also recuperating, takes an interest in Eowyn. For days, he spends time with her, talking and waiting for the news from the great battles. And they grow close and comfort one another, the Eagles come carrying news of the victory and of the coming of the king.

Faramir knows that Eowyn had loved Aragorn, but he also knows that Aragorn did not return this love. He confesses that he is in love with her and asks her to be his wife. She consents.

All is ready and the New King arrives in a procession through the city. Gandalf crowns Aragorn the King of Gondor and a new age begins.

Beregond is forgiven of the treachery that Faramir's father accused him of, and is named Guard of Faramir. Aragorn asks Gandalf to be his counselor, but Gandalf says that now that Sauron is defeated, Aragorn must rule alone.

Arwen, the daughter of Galadriel, is brought to Minas Tirith. She confesses her love for Aragorn, though their union would render her mortal and therefore subject to death (though she had been immortal).

Notes
The romance of the novel is neatly wrapped up as Eowyn finds new love with Faramir and Aragorn is pursued by Arwen, who had sent him gifts when he was at battle. Arwen's sacrifice of her own immortality is testament to her passion and loyalty; like others in the novel, she will give up important things for a cause she truly believes in.

Many Partings

Summary
When all the days of rejoicing are over Frodo tells Aragorn that he wishes to go back and visit Bilbo. King Theoden is placed upon a golden bier and the company follows him to Rohan for burial. After the burial, Eomer is crowned King in Theoden's stead. He then gives Faramir and Eowyn his blessings for marriages, as does Aragorn.

Legolas visits the Glittering Caves. Gimli visits Treebeard. Together, these two remain in Fangorn while the rest travel on. At the gap of Rohan, Aragorn takes his leave of the hobbits and at the Misty Mountains the remaining company comes across Saruman, now old and beggarly. Gandalf once more offers Saruman help, but the old wizard scorns him. He leaves with Wormtongue still in tow. As he goes, he reminds them that the Shire has been destroyed, as Galadriel's mirror had shown

Bilbo is at Rivendell and though he has aged considerably, he is happy to see his friends. He is very old and happenings of Mordor do not hold much interest for him anymore. When the time comes for the hobbits to depart Bilbo gives Frodo the mithril coat and sword, forgetting that he has already done so. To Sam he gives a bag full of gold for his marriage and to Merry and Pippin he gives a load of advice and elven pipes made of pearl and silver. He also gives Frodo three books that he has written—records so that Frodo can continue them with news from his adventures.

Notes
This chapter is mingled with sadness, as it appears that Bilbo's life is near an end. He tells Frodo that he need not return next year, suggesting by innuendo that his life may have ended. And even Frodo, who no longer has the Ring, feels aches and pains that he never felt as long as he had the Ring.

Homeward Bound

Summary
With Saruman's warning that the Shire is destroyed ringing in their ears, the hobbits head for Bag's End. On the way they stop at the Prancing Pony, where the Landlord Butterbur is delighted to see them. He tells them that the old pony Bill returned safely and is quite well. Sadly, though, he tells them that the Shire is in trouble. There are ruffians, wolves and highway robbers. Also, the Shire seems to be under the control of some bad hobbits.

Near the Barrow-downs Gandalf takes leave of the hobbits, saying that they must handle their own troubles from now on, of which they will have plenty. He goes off on Shadowfax to meet and talk with Tom Bombadil, and the four hobbits are left alone, just as they were when they first started out. Merry says that having left the others behind one after another feels like a dream fading away. But Frodo says that, to him, it is like falling asleep once more.

Notes
The action begins to wind down after the dramatic fight with Sauron, and the destruction of the Ring. But Tolkien is ever the plotter, so he reminds his readers that all is not over. The Shire is in trouble and the adventurers have much work to do to restore their old way of living.

The dream-like dropping-off of their companions is a gentle way of winding down the narrative, one that contributes to the fable-like atmosphere of the novel.

The Scouring of the Shire

Summary

When they arrive at Brandywine, they find that a gate has been erected and that guards are posted to keep outsiders away. The Shire has fallen under marital law. Merry recognizes one of the Hobbit guards, who is please to see them alive but has orders from "The Chief's up at Bag End" that he must obey. It seems that Lotho Sackville-Baggins, who bought Bag End, has instated himself as Chief.

When Merry and Pippin climb the gate they are accosted by the Chief's Big Man, who opens the gate and runs away, never to be seen again. The hobbits enter the Shire and are given a list of "don't do's" which they ignore. They make themselves at home in the guardhouse, where they learn from the guards that life in the Shire is anything but pleasant. One of the guards tells them that food and drink are scarce, all of which is either kept for the Chief and his people or is being sent out of the Shire.

The next morning the hobbits make straight for Hobbiton, but are arrested by a "Shirriff" who tells them that they are to be handed over to the Chief's Men. They are also told that all the inns are closed, because they have been converted into quarters for the Sheriffs and no drinking is allowed. Also there are spies all around to inform Lotho of all the Shire happenings. Many of the sheriffs have no choice but to join up with the Chief because if they don't they are put in Lock-holes and even beaten up.

The arrested hobbits go along with the Sheriff and his escorts, noticing along the way that the Shire is ugly and overgrown with weeds. Some men tell them that Lotho Sackville Baggins is only working for Sharkey, who is the real boss. They mock the hobbits, who tell them that the King's men will be coming soon to restore order. When Pippin pulls his coat back and draws his sword, the men are scared.

Frodo tells his companions that he wants no blood spilled. He suggests that Lotho Baggins may be in trouble too, if Sharkey is the real cause of the problem. Sam goes off to Tom Cotton's farm to check up on Tom, Mrs. Cotton and Rosie, their daughter. Merry blows the horn and wakes the hobbits of Bywater. Tom is happy and surprised to see Sam, as is his daughter Rosie, who has long been in love with the good-natured hobbit.

The villagers assemble with axes and firebrands; they build barricades and enlist the help of others opposed to the police state the Shire has become. The leader of the ruffians is killed by Merry and the others surrender.

When this skirmish is over, the hobbits have time to survey the real damage at the Shire. Sam's nightmare has come true. Everything is ruined and his father has been kicked out. He is living with Farmer Cotton. Sam's father tells them that after Frodo left, Lotho began buying up the Shire bit by bit and sending foodstuff abroad. People who opposed him were locked up and food was taken away. Lotho became Chief, but even he was not as bad as Sharkey, who even locked up Lotho's old mother.

Sam's father scolds Frodo for selling Bag End, but Frodo soothes him by telling him of their adventures and Sam's new hero status. Before the day is up Pippin gathers many of his relatives and they stand ready to challenge the gathering ruffians. In the Battle of Bywater, seventy ruffians and nineteen hobbits are killed. When the fighting is over, the good hobbits return to Bag End to salvage their homes.

With a start, Frodo realizes that "Sharkey" is actually Saruman, who had warned them of his misdeeds in the Shire. Saruman laughs, insisting that he must be spared because of his former greatness. As Frodo is about to banish him, Saruman tries to kill him. Frodo still spares him, cheating him out of his revenge. Now the miserable Saruman owes his life to Frodo.

When Frodo offers Wormtongue forgiveness, Saruman says that Wormtongue has killed Lotho. Wormtongue comes out of his hiding place and kills Saruman. The old wizard shrivels up till only his bones are left. The bones rest right at the doorstep of Bag End.

Notes

The Shire has been scoured of evil, but it has yet to be restored to its original glory. Saruman, who recognizes that the hobbit has become a great leader, compliments Frodo. But Saruman offers a gloomy prediction, which is that Frodo's life will be far from easy. The narrative is submerged in this though, but only momentarily. Regrowth is about to occur.

The Grey Havens

Summary

It looks a long time for the cleaning up of the Shire. Prisoners must be released and rogue ruffians must be caught. Homes must be restored and rebuilt. There are no trees or plants, and the hobbits nearly despair until Sam remembers the soil that Galadriel gave him. He plants saplings all over the Shire and puts grains of the precious soil at the roots of these. He pays special attention to Hobbiton and Bywater. He saturates the soil of the Shire with the fine dust, and soon the Shire is restored to a greater glory than it has ever known.

Sam Gamgee marries Rosie Cotton and goes to live at Bag End with Frodo. Merry and Pippin live together at Crickhollow. Frodo grows old and his ailments bother him. Sam and Rosie have a daughter and they name her Elanor. When Elanor is six months old, and it is near Bilbo's hundred and thirty first birthday, Frodo asks Sam to accompany him on a journey. He hands over Bilbo's diary and his own account of the war of the Ring to Sam, so that he can complete it.

Sam thinks that Frodo is off to Rivendell, but when they come to the Hills, they hear the voices of elves and Sam is surprised to see Elrond, Galadriel and Bilbo. Sam than realizes that Frodo is going to the Grey Havens and that he cannot go with him.

Frodo asks Sam to rule the Shire. He tells him that he and Bilbo are going to take their resting-places now, because their work is complete and because Bilbo is old and he (Frodo) will never completely heal. Then a white ship steered by Gandalf comes for the two hobbits that had successfully borne the Ring. Merry and Pippin rush to the shore, telling Frodo that this is the second time he has tried to leave without saying good-bye. After the farewells are said, Gandalf takes his two hobbits into the Grey Haven. Sam, Merry and Pippin are left standing on the shores of Middle-earth.

The three companions turn back and ride to the Shire. Sam poignantly closes this chapter of his life, and the novel, by taking his daughter on his lap and announcing, "Well, I'm back."

Notes

The Grey Haven, symbolic of heaven, becomes the resting-place for Tolkien's two great heroes, Bilbo Baggins and his protégé, Frodo. The novel opens with a changing-of-the-guard, and ends with the possibility of two more generations of leadership (Sam and Elanor). The test of any great novel is the openness of the reader to a sequel, whether in print or in the imagination. Tolkien, as a master of imagination, creates a rich vibrant world. The door is open for a new adventure. What's more, the door is open for a hero (or heroine) to pick up the ball and start it rolling once again.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Frodo Baggins

Bilbo has adopted the eldest of Bilbo Baggins' young cousins, Frodo in order to carry on his legacy. Frodo and Bilbo share the same birthday. This coincidence is as good an explanation as any for the favor bestowed upon Frodo. It also suggests the element of Fate that is so important in the novel.

Though Frodo is loving, generous and kind, he has his faults. Initially, he is fearful and timid. Later, when the Ring strengthens him, he is also nearly seduced by it. Still, he has a strong sense of justice. He is not only kind and generous but also loyal. He celebrates Bilbo's birthday even though everyone is sure that the old hobbit is dead. And he sells Bag End to his enemy for a pittance, showing that he is neither malicious nor greedy.

Frodo's greatest strengths are his generosity of spirit and his power of forgiveness. He saves Gollum from being killed not only by Sam but also by Faramir's men. He is ready to give Gollum more than one chance at repentance. He believes that deep within himself Gollum is a good hobbit and that he will eventually come around to goodness. Frodo also forgives Saruman, who was once a great wizard but fell into evil ways. He lets Saruman go free even though he has destroyed the Shire. This strength is also a weakness Frodo trusts too much and faces betrayal too often.

Frodo inspires great loyalty and comradeship. Frodo tames even Gollum, who has given himself over to evil, for a while. And Saruman, the enemy, acknowledges Frodo's strengths as a leader.

Frodo is very wise and just hobbit. He is also very brave. In spite of being wounded at Weathertop, he strikes at the enemy and injures him. Despite countless hurdles, he manages to fulfill his promise and completes the Quest. He puts himself and his loved ones in immense danger so that the Shire and all of middle-earth may rest in peace. Frodo becomes a poster-child for sacrificial acts of good, ultimately inspiring many others to act in accordance with the greater good.

The quest, however, does not leave him un-scarred. He has many wounds, some physical, and some spiritual. Frodo knows when it is time to leave Middle-earth for the blessed realm and, like Bilbo, he finds a successor, someone to whom he can leave his legacy. Frodo grows as a hobbit, maturing and learning many lessons of strength and bravery. He struggles against his own evil nature, but he wins. The disposal of the Ring has given Frodo an opportunity to prove himself. The success with which he does so is what makes him a remarkable character.

Sam Gamgee

Sam is so full of love and admiration for Frodo that he insists on going along in the dangerous quest to return the Ring. At first, he is more excited about seeing elves and other mystical creatures. Later, though, he is caught up in the heroics of the quest. He does valiant acts that seem inconsistent with his simple existence.

Sam possesses a unique sense of foresight and intuition. He does not trust Gollum right from the start and he seems imperceptible to the effects of the Ring. Sam saves Frodo's life several times. He shows presence of mind, such as when he dresses Frodo and himself in orc-clothes to get away from the tower. He goes without sleep for days on end so that Frodo can rest. He even gives Frodo most of the food and drink during the journey to Mount Doom, knowing his truest duty is to get Frodo to Mount Orodruin.

Sam has a clearly defined sense of right and wrong. He manages to get the Ring, but he is so strong willed that it doesn't affect him the way it affects Frodo. He doesn't lust after it and when he does get a chance to become famous and destroy the Ring, he abandons it in favor of saving Frodo from the Orcs. He keeps a low profile and never wanders from his path. When Frodo collapses before reaching Mount Doom, it is Sam who coaxes him on. When that fails, he carries Frodo on his back up the steep slopes of Orodruin.

Sam is the hope for the future. Just as Bilbo passed his legacy on to Frodo, Frodo passes his legacy on to Sam.

Gandalf

Gandalf is a wizard who was once passed over for the post of the head of the White Council, which went to Saruman. In the course of the novel, Gandalf is a leader and mentor to Frodo and many others. Gandalf knows his powers and his limitations and refuses the Ring when Frodo offers to him. He uses his powers only for the cause of Good against Evil and never takes advantage of it. It is Gandalf who roams Middle-earth looking for information and allying strength against Sauron. Gandalf not only saves the lives of Faramir and the hobbits, but also puts himself in jeopardy to let them live.

Gandalf the Grey becomes Gandalf the White after his fight with the Balrog. He is thrown to his death but comes back to life. Everything that Gandalf does is done deliberately and with deep thought. He chooses Sam as Frodo's companion, just as he chose Bilbo to accompany the Dwarves in *The Hobbit*. Gandalf is fair and wise, offering Saruman a chance to repent.

Gandalf is a reassuring presence in the novel. Every time he shows up, the tone changes from one of frantic desperation to one of security and direction. Gandalf encourages the other characters to be the best they can be. He often leaves when the situation is under control and returns only when his help is needed.

Theoden calls him a bearer of ill tidings, but that is only because Gandalf seems to know everything that happens in the Middle-earth. He is ageless and has been around for quite a long while. He seems to be in the right place at the right time and believes in helping only the helpless. Like Frodo, Gandalf leaves Middle-earth for the Grey Havens when his task is complete. His exit is graceful and poignant.

Sauron

Sauron is the evil servant of Morgoth who fled from the blessed Realm to settle in Middle-earth. He is the cause of all the destruction and corruption in Middle-earth. Sauron is the one who originally forged the Ring of Power, in order to control the world.

Sauron is the principle agent of evil, commanding the Nazguls to wreak havoc in the world. He brings Sarumon under his control and enlists the help of creatures like orcs, wargs, trolls, dragons and men to work for him.

Sauron is only a servant of Morgoth. His end signals peace on Middle-earth, but not the end of evil.

Aragorn

Aragorn, who is also known as Strider the Ranger, turns out to be the rightful king and heir of Isildur of Gondor. He is valiant and wise, and nearly as reassuring a presence as Gandalf. He is a fair leader, even making his way through the Paths of the Dead to enlist the help of the Dead and give them an opportunity to rest in peace by helping him.

Aragorn is a close friend of Gandalf. Like the wizard, he seems to come along at just the right time, in order to save the hobbits or protect their companions. Being a true king, Aragorn has the power to heal, which he uses on Faramir, Eowyn and Merry. He ends up marrying Arwen, whom he loves.

Aragorn reveals himself to Sauron as the heir of Isildur knowing that Sauron might be compelled to act rashly upon hearing this. Being a Numenor he has a life span that is much larger than ordinary men. Arwen gives up her immortality to marry him.

Gollum (Smeagol)

Smeagol was once a hobbit living on Middle-earth near the Misty Mountains. His cousin Deagol discovered the Ring, but Smeagol murdered him and claimed the Ring for himself. Smeagol was banished by his people and given the name of Gollum. The Ring ultimately ruined him, so that he longed for it as the cost of morality.

Gollum is desperate for the Ring, like an addict in withdrawal. Even when he is tamed by Frodo, and recalls some of his former goodness, he still cannot ward off the evil lust of the Ring. In the end, Gollum actually fulfills Frodo's destiny by stealing the Ring from him. In his excitement at having bitten Frodo's finger off (thus acquiring the Ring) Gollum falls over the edge into Mount Orodruin. He is an agent of Fate. No matter what his objective is, in the end he fulfills the destiny that was set for him.

Merry and Pippin

These brave and royal hobbits are friends of Frodo who accompany him on his quest to destroy the Ring. They are proud of their involvement with Frodo, and fight valiantly to help him and protect him.

Both Merry and Pippin help Sam and Frodo rid the Shire of scoundrels and ruffians. Their days spent with the Ents have caused them to grow much larger than the average hobbit, so that their appearances are as great as their reputations. They become famous as a result of their travels, and though they do not retire the Blessed Realm, their graves are laid side by side next to Aragorn.

Legolas and Gimli

Their friendship is unusual indeed. Legolas represents the elves and Gimli represents the dwarves. Though there is little love lost between elves and dwarves, Legolas and Gimli are fast friends. Their relationship is symbiotic: Legolas loves trees and open spaces, and Gimli loves the deep underground. Both are transformed by their friendship.

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

Major Themes

Lust for Power

Throughout the book Tolkien has given instances of the corrupting influence of the Ring, which represents power. It seems that everyone who possesses power is ruined by it. Even Saruman, who was once a good wizard, is corrupted by it. And Frodo, who is the hero, finds himself compelled by the Ring. Not only does it weigh on him so much so that he can hardly walk, he is nearly unable to throw it into the volcano.

Gandalf is afraid of the Ring. He has seen first-hand that good people can be ruined by this evil Ring. He refuses to take it when Frodo asks him. Galadriel is the same way; she does not want to be ruined by the power. There are others who seem resistant to the appeal of the Ring. Sam, for instance, seems so good-hearted and pure that though he feels the Ring, he is able to give it back to Frodo and also recognize that it has exerted some pull on his own actions. And Tom Bombadil, like Sam, seems not to be affected by the Ring.

Boromir is an example of a good man who covets the Ring within the action of the novel. He thinks that he can handle the Ring and not be affected by it. But his desperation gives him away. Frodo realizes that he cannot even trust his friends, because the Ring exerts a force on even the best of men.

The Ring, which is synonymous with power, hold attraction for many, but none can possess it. The Ring itself cannot be controlled or tamed. The irony of the title is obvious: there can never be a "lord" of the Ring.

War Between Good and Evil

The Lord of the Rings is a classic struggle between good and evil. This universal theme is obvious as Frodo seeks to destroy Evil, and Evil seeks to destroy Frodo. There are many pairs of characters representing good and evil: Saruman and Gandalf, and Sauron and Tom Bombadil.

There are also characters whose very selves are split between good and evil: Boromir, Gollum, and Denethor.

In the end of the novel, Evil is not defeated for good, since Morgoth still lives. But Evil has been defeated by Good; that is the most important battle in the novel.

Greater Good, or Altruism and Responsibility

In accordance with the Christian faith, the characters of Tolkien’s novel are altruistic. There are many instances of altruistic behavior, of which Sam’s stands out. Though he sets out with extremely romantic ideas his quest turns out to be one that is life threatening. At great personal cost Sam accompanies Frodo making sure that the Ring-bearer is not lacking in anything. Sam himself goes without food and drink to make sure that Frodo has enough; he even goes without sleep so that Frodo may sleep peacefully and safely. Frodo himself makes a great sacrifice. He gives up his comfortable life in the Shire to go on the quest and make life easier for the Shire folk, most of whom are ignorant of his sacrifice and his deeds.

Aragorn, one of the greatest characters of *The Lord of the Rings*, does things quietly and with much thought. He roams Middle-earth gathering information that will aid the Ring bearer in his quest. He does this without revealing his true identity and even posts his men, the rangers around the Shire, to protect its people. He does his duty to his ancestors. He reforges the Sword Anduril and gives the Dead a chance to redeem themselves. He is a good king, who looks to the interests of his people and does not try to grab opportunities unscrupulously. Arwen gives up her right to immortality so that she may marry Aragorn. She lets Frodo go to the Blessed Realm instead of herself, and Frodo rightly deserves the honor.

The Ents know that their end is near. They cannot find Ent wives and they know their race is doomed. Yet, they spend their precious lives and time on the storming of Isengard. Their sense of responsibility is great, as is that of Faramir and Boromir. These two brothers try to do their father’s bidding: Boromir goes to Rivendell to get help from Elrond while Faramir goes to Osgiliath to protect the borders of Minas Tirith, even though he knows that is a fatal task.

Tolkien has stressed the importance of altruism and responsibility. The god characters always manage to do their duty even if it is at the cost of one’s life. They know that a greater good is served by their individual sacrifice.

Minor Themes

Racial Harmony

Middle-earth is a creation of Tolkien’s imagination. It is peopled by many creatures of different groups. All these creatures have their own social and moral codes that correspond to their groups. However different they may be from each other, they understand the value of peace and harmony.

One of Tolkien's themes is the importance of racial harmony. This is epitomized by the friendship between Legolas the Elf and Gimli, the Dwarf. This friendship represents and ideal. Interestingly, the races of Middle-earth remain separate for much of the novel. But when the War of the Rings begins, they come together as a united front. This is Tolkien’s vision.

Religion

Tolkien’s Middle-earth is not covertly Christian, but as Paul Kocher remarks "it contains many of the transcendent elements of a more than pantheistic religion." There is an underlying scheme of values and rituals of religion and the emphasis placed on pity and forgiveness is definitely Christian. There are examples of sacrifice and redemption, as well as forgiveness and rebirth. These religious themes lend authenticity to the imaginary world of Middle-earth.

AUTHOR'S STYLE

Tolkien has invented not only names but also languages for the different races of Middle-earth. The Elves speak a language that is soft and pleasant sounding; the orcs, on the other hand, have a language that is just as bad as their behavior.

Tolkien’s attention to detail is remarkable. With each change in status, the characters are given new names. Strider becomes Aragorn who then is crowned king Elessar. Tom Bombadil has many names and is called different names by different races. Even the speeches or talking style of the characters in different. Treebeard the Ent, who is the oldest living thing on Middle-earth, talks in long sentences. The Hobbits, on the other hand, are short and to the point in their speech.

SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

The imagery of light and dark has been very well used to stand for good and evil respectively. Gandalf the White stands for good, as does Galadriel who gives Frodo the Phial to show him light in dark places. The Black Riders stand for evil and all of Mordor is covered with a shadowy blackness. Every time a Nazgul passes overhead, the sun or moon is completely blocked out. Evil creatures live in dark places; Shelob, for example, lives in a pitch-black cave called Cirith Ungol.

Tolkien has used the images of light and dark to portray good and evil. White stands for the forces of good whereas black stands for evil. Gandalf the white stands for the forces of good. His staff issues for lightening. Galadriel gives Frodo a Phial that lights up places that are dark. The coming of dawn always brings hope and gladness to the heart of the dwellers of Middle-earth. Night always brings fear and evil. The dark is symbolic of the power of Sauron. He commands a thick cloud to cover Mordor for his own protection. His power is greatest under cover of darkness. Even Gollum hates the light of day and craves the anonymity of dark.

Tolkien has used this image very effectively, borrowing from man’s natural fear of night and the unknown.

STUDY QUESTIONS - BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1. Is there a true Lord of the Rings? Explain your answer with specific details from the text.

2. Compare Middle-earth to Earth. Be sure to include politics and religion in your comparison, as well as social issues like racism and war.

3. What is the thematic importance of the Ring? Of the Eye?

4. What does power do to those who wield it? List some characters who appear to be immune to the corrupting influence of power.

5. Discuss responsibility and the concept of the "greater good" in *The Lord of the Rings.*

6. Explain the significance of the "changing of the guard" that takes place at the beginning of the novel between Bilbo and Frodo. Relate this to the similar scene at the end of the novel between Frodo and Sam.

7. Compare Denethor (father of Boromir and Faramir) to Aragorn. How do they differ as leaders?

8. Compare the relationship between Gandalf and Sarumon to the one between Frodo and Bilbo. (i.e., both are mentor relationships)

9. Discuss the symbolism of light and dark in *The Lord of the Rings.*

10. How does Sam change as the story progresses?

11. How does Frodo change?

12. Compare the characters of Aragorn, Gandalf and Sauron as leaders of their people.

13. Lady Galadriel and Tom Bombadil are purely benevolent characters. Discuss the roles they play in Frodo’s adventure.

14. Boromir is redeemed by a last-minute repentance. Denethor, his father, dies in the shame of his own corruption. Where does Faramir fit into this scheme?

15. Make a list of the following three groups of characters: Good Characters, Conflicted Characters, Evil Characters.

16. Which characters from the above lists are the most compelling? Why?

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