

The Fellowship of the Ring



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

J.R.R. Tolkien is an internationally acclaimed author, academic, and philologist, best known for writing [The Hobbit](#) and *The Lord of the Rings* series. He was born John Ronald Reuel Tolkien on January 3, 1892, in Bloemfontein, South Africa. After his father, a British banker, died from rheumatic fever in 1896, Tolkien's mother returned home to the West Midlands in England with Tolkien and his younger brother, Hilary, in tow. She home-schooled her sons, with Tolkien a keen pupil who particularly enjoyed languages and botany. Tolkien studied English literature at Exeter College, and undertook military service at the Battle of Somme in World War I. He married Edith Bratt in 1916, and they had four children together. After producing a prolific output of fictional and scholarly works during his academic career as a professor at the University of Leeds and the University of Oxford, Tolkien died at age 81 on September 2, 1973. His many books set in the fictional world of Middle-earth have retained a devoted fan following, and [The Hobbit](#) and *The Lord of the Rings* have since been transformed into award-winning Hollywood films.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The influence of Tolkien's British upbringing is evident in the settings he creates for Middle-earth—for example, he revealed that he based his Shire landscapes on Victorian Warwickshire villages. Furthermore, his loathing of the industrialisation that encroached on his favourite childhood landscapes can be viewed in his depictions of evil industry in Middle-earth, with Mordor and Isengard reflecting the realities of factories and forges that belched fire in the Midlands near his Birmingham home. Although Tolkien repeatedly rejected the suggestions that his works are allegorical, *The Lord of the Rings* was likely influenced by his Christian upbringing and his experiences during World War I.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Fellowship of the Ring and the later volumes in *The Lord of the Rings* series draw heavily on elements from Norse, Germanic, Finnish, and Greek mythologies that Tolkien studied and then taught as a professor. He was also influenced by popular British authors including Shakespeare, William Morris, Charles Dickens, and George MacDonald. Tolkien notably founded the Oxford literary discussion group the Inklings, which included his friend C. S. Lewis, author of the *Chronicles of Narnia* series. Tolkien authored numerous works set in the world of Middle-

earth: [The Hobbit](#) and *The Lord of the Rings* were published during his lifetime, while his son Christopher posthumously published a number of his works including *The Silmarillion* and *The Children of Húrin*. Tolkien is now regarded as a founder of high fantasy writing, and his works have influenced modern writers such as Terry Brooks, Ursula Le Guin, Stephen King, George R. R. Martin, J. K. Rowling, and Christopher Paolini.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Fellowship of the Ring*
- **When Written:** 1937-1949
- **Where Written:** Oxford, England
- **When Published:** 1954
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Epic, fantasy
- **Setting:** Middle-earth
- **Climax:** Boromir attempts to seize the titular Ring from Frodo, resulting in Frodo's decision to continue alone in the quest to destroy the Ring.
- **Antagonist:** The Dark Lord Sauron
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Inventing Languages. Tolkien's love of languages went beyond his proficiency in multiple Germanic, Slavonic, Romance, and Celtic languages. A professional philologist, Tolkien invented multiple languages for his Middle-earth universe, each with their own system of characters, grammar, and vocabulary.

A Way with Words. Through his job with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Tolkien spent much of 1919-1920 detailing the history and etymology of words beginning with "w" and of Germanic origins—including the words waggles, walrus, and walrus.



PLOT SUMMARY

The Fellowship of the Ring is the first of three volumes that make up J.R.R. Tolkien's epic tale *The Lord of the Rings*. The prologue sets the stage by describing the habits and traditions of hobbits, a small, good-natured, and pastoral folk who become surprising key players in the fate of **the One Ring**—a weapon belonging to the Dark Lord Sauron that will allow him total domination over the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. Hobbits are unobtrusive yet curiously tough peoples who share a love for the pleasures of domestic life, including consuming good food

and drink, smoking pipeweed, and enjoying the orderly nature of their simple homes and businesses in the land of The Shire. The narrator also relates the key events of *The Hobbit* (the prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*) in the prologue, where a hobbit by the name of Bilbo Baggins is thrust into adventure as he joins a party of dwarves who journey to re-take the Lonely Mountain from the ancient dragon Smaug. Along the way, Bilbo happens upon a golden ring that a miserable creature called Gollum has been in possession of for numerous decades. Bilbo's magic ring gifts its wearer invisibility, and Bilbo largely uses it to aid his friends during adventure and to escape prying relatives once he returns home to The Shire. He is unaware of the Ring's true nature and the danger its possession put him in.

The Fellowship of the Ring opens with Bilbo about to throw a great birthday party to celebrate his milestone in reaching the significant age of 111. The party also honors his favorite nephew and adopted heir, Frodo, who comes of age at 33 on the same day. Bilbo's fellow hobbits mostly think him quite mad, but do not mind his eccentricities because he generously shares his wealth (gained from his Lonely Mountain adventures) with Shire residents. Only Frodo and the wizard Gandalf are privy to Bilbo's decision to disappear from the Shire at his "eleventy-first" birthday party for one final adventure. Bilbo executes his plan and gifts the majority of his belongings to Frodo, including Bilbo's magical ring. The elderly hobbit is extremely reluctant to part with the ring, but Gandalf persuades him to leave it to Frodo, and Bilbo leaves his home at Bag End feeling relieved of a great burden. Gandalf also departs the Shire after warning Frodo to keep the ring secret, for the wizard begins to suspect its dark nature.

Gandalf visits the Shire periodically over the next 17 years, and upon his final visit reveals to Frodo that he has learned the true nature of Bilbo's magical ring—it is the One Ring that was created by Sauron to dominate all life on Middle-earth. Alarming, the Dark Lord has risen again and is searching for his Ring in the Shire. Gandalf tells Frodo he is in great danger and must flee his home, advising he makes for the elf-haven Rivendell that is hidden West of the Misty Mountains. In the meantime, Gandalf will travel to gain counsel about the Ring from his powerful allies. Despite having yearned for adventure, Frodo is devastated to leave his homeland. He is buoyed by the surprising addition of his dear friends Sam, Merry, and Pippin to the journey to Rivendell. The four hobbits manage to evade terrifying Black Riders who track their path out of the Shire, and Frodo is greatly concerned that Gandalf has not re-joined him as promised.

The threat of the Black Riders force the hobbits to leave the Shire through the bordering Old Forest, where they hope to elude their pursuers and navigate their way northeast. However, they are lured off-track by Old Man Willow, a malevolent and magical tree that begins to strangle the hobbits and trap them in its trunk. In a state of pure panic, they are

rescued by the enigmatic and comical Tom Bombadil, a powerful being who takes care of his domain over the Old Forest. Bombadil and his wife Goldberry host the hobbits at their home for two nights, after which the hobbits are rested and rejuvenated in body and spirit. Their hosts send them forth on the right path to exit the Old Forest, but Bombadil must rescue his four charges again when they fall victim to a barrow-wight. He sends them on their way again after gifting them ancient knives that he has pulled from the vanquished barrow-wight's treasure hoard.

The hobbits reach Bree, a town inhabited by humans and hobbits, where they make for The Prancing Pony inn. Frodo draws unwanted attention when he accidentally slips on the Ring and disappears from sight in front of locals and guests who are drinking at the inn. He removes the Ring from his finger and is accosted by a suspicious stranger called Strider; earlier, the innkeeper Barliman Butterbur had warned him to keep clear of the mysterious Ranger (the name given to grimly dour wanderers such as Strider). Strider reveals he knows about Frodo and his possession of the Ring, and offers his service to the hobbits, stating that he is a friend of Gandalf's. It is only when Butterbur remembers to give Frodo a letter left in his care by Gandalf that the hobbits begin to trust Strider. Like the hobbits, Strider is concerned at Gandalf's absence. Merry returns from a walk having spied a Black Rider, and they set up decoys in their rooms.

The next morning reveals that their rooms have been ransacked, and their ponies set loose from the stables. The hobbits leave Bree with Strider as their guide. The Ranger leads them off known roads into the wild to evade the Black Riders. They make for Weathertop, a hilltop with the ruins of an ancient watchtower, and Strider tells them stories to keep them distracted from danger. During their camp at Weathertop, the group is attacked by four of the Black Riders—Strider fends them off with burning brands, but Frodo is stabbed by a magical weapon. The group hasten toward Rivendell, hoping they will get Frodo to Elrond (Lord of Rivendell and a powerful healer) in time to save him. They manage this with the help of the elf-lord Glorfindel, who finds them on the road.

Frodo wakes from a deathly sleep to find he is safe in Rivendell, where Elrond has healed him. To Frodo's surprise, Bilbo is also living in the elf-haven. Over the next few days, uncle and nephew greatly enjoy reconnecting, marred only by Bilbo's lust to hold the Ring again. Frodo denies his request, and Bilbo at last realizes the corrupting power of the Ring, which influences its bearer to evil. The rest of Frodo's party also enjoy the elves' hospitality, and are greatly relieved to reunite with Gandalf again. It is in Rivendell that the four hobbits learn that their companion Strider is in fact of noble lineage—his true name is Aragorn and he is the rightful heir to the thrones of Gondor and Arnor.

Many other individuals from various lands have recently found

their way to Rivendell. The Lord of Rivendell convenes the Council of Elrond, a meeting in which travelers share their stories about the frightening changes occurring across Middle-earth as a result of Sauron's growing power. Speakers include Glóin (one of the thirteen dwarfs who accompanied Bilbo to the Lonely Mountain), Legolas (an elf-prince from Mirkwood), Boromir (a man of Gondor), Bilbo, Frodo, Elrond, and Gandalf. Gandalf reveals that he was delayed in meeting Frodo on the road to Rivendell due to his fellow wizard Saruman the White's betrayal in his ambition to wield the Ring. Finally, the Council must decide what to do with the Ring. After settling on a quest to cast the Ring into the fires of Mount Doom in Sauron's stronghold of Mordor—the only way to destroy the ring and ensure Sauron's power is checked—Frodo humbly but bravely volunteers his service as Ring-bearer. The Lord of Rivendell determines that Nine Walkers representing the Free Peoples of Middle-earth shall set out in opposition of Sauron's nine Black Riders. Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, Aragorn, Boromir, Gimli (son of Glóin), Legolas, Merry, and Pippin form the Company of the Ring, known more informally as the Fellowship. Of particular note is the strong friendship that will develop between Gimli and Legolas despite their initial mistrust of one another, as well as the four hobbits' continued loyalty to one another.

The Fellowship sets out south from Rivendell toward Mordor. During their attempt to cross the Misty Mountains, they are foiled by heavy snow and rock falls, and alter their course to the dangerous path under the mountains through the Mines of Moria. Within Moria, an abandoned dwarf kingdom, they find the tomb of Gimli and Gandalf's friend Balin. After leading a company of dwarfs to reclaim their ancestral home in Moria, Balin had not been heard from in years. The Company of the Ring then hear great drums that rise up from the depths of the Mines, and are attacked by hosts of orcs and a balrog (a powerful elemental demon). The Fellowship flee with their foes in close pursuit, and Gandalf makes a stand against the balrog on the narrow Bridge of Khazad-dûm. After an epic battle, wizard and demon fall into an abyss.

The Fellowship are devastated to lose Gandalf, but under Aragorn's leadership they exit the Mines and dash to the protection of the elf-forest Lothlórien. Here they meet Celeborn and Galadriel, the ancient Lord and Lady of Lórien who offer rest as well as gifts for the Fellowship's journey ahead. Each member of the company feels that Galadriel tests their minds in some way, offering them a choice between continuing into danger or choosing a different path of great desire. They all choose to continue with the Ring-bearer. The Lady of Lórien also shows Frodo and Sam visions of present and future scenes in her magical **mirror**. In awe of Galadriel's power, Frodo offers her the Ring, but she wisely refuses the temptation that would ultimately corrupt her.

The Fellowship depart Lothlórien by way of boats on the Great River Anduin, and Boromir grows increasingly preoccupied

with thoughts of the Ring. Aragorn and Frodo are aware they are being followed by the treacherous Gollum. When the Fellowship arrive at a lake before the mighty Falls of Rauros, they disembark to discuss their next move—whether to travel east directly to Mordor, or to divert to the west to the safety of Minas Tirith in Gondor. As he argued for at the Council of Elrond, Boromir advocates that they travel to Gondor and make use of the Ring's power in direct conflict with Sauron's forces. The rest of the Company recognizes the impossibility of using the corrupted Ring for noble purposes, but are unsure which direction to take. They leave the Ring-bearer to decide their course. While Frodo takes some time alone to think, Boromir approaches him and in a moment of madness tries to take Ring by force. Frodo uses the Ring to escape Boromir, and the hobbit decides that he must go to Mordor alone—he does not want to endanger his friends with the perilous journey or the influence of the Ring. He slips away without telling anyone, although Sam guesses his plan and leaves with him. The Fellowship of the Ring is broken, but the quest continues as two hobbits make their way to Mordor on their own.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Frodo Baggins – The favored nephew of the famous Bilbo Baggins, Frodo is a hobbit who loves his home in the Shire too much to give in to itching feelings for adventure in the wider world. However, he is propelled beyond the Shire's borders when his friend and mentor Gandalf the Grey advises him that the magic ring Bilbo recently gifted him is in fact the Dark Lord Sauron's **One Ring**. Sauron has recently learned of the Ring's whereabouts and has sent his servants, the Black Riders, to the Shire to find it. Once he repossesses the Ring, Sauron will have total power over the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. Although frightened, Frodo gamely agrees to Gandalf's plan for him to deliver the Ring to the elf-haven Rivendell. He is accompanied by his loyal friends Sam, Merry, and Pippin, and the four hobbits become members of the Company of the Ring that sets out from Rivendell to destroy the Ring in Mordor. Frodo is an unassuming hobbit who, like his uncle, surprises his peers with his resilience and quiet heroism. The Ring has a corrupting influence on all creatures (apart from the exceptional Tom Bombadil), especially on those individuals that bear it. Despite lacking skills in fighting or magic, Frodo proves himself a worthy candidate to bear the Ring due to his humility and his genuine lack of desire to wield the weapon for its power. By the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo has accepted his responsibility in bearing the Ring to Mordor, despite the likely cost of his life. The insight he has developed through the adventures of *The Fellowship* results in his wise yet difficult decision to break the Company of the Ring and travel to Mordor on his own.

Gandalf the Grey – Despite his humble appearance as an

elderly man in a grey cloak and drooping hat, Gandalf is one of the most powerful beings on Middle-earth. A member of the Istari, Gandalf's knowledge and power is second only to his fellow wizard Saruman the White. Gandalf is less arrogant than Saruman, and takes a keen interest and joy in the goings-on of humble folk such as hobbits. He is a mentor to Bilbo and Frodo, who contrary to their original impressions of Gandalf as a wandering magician, come to realize that the Grey Wizard is a wise sage and mighty warrior. Gandalf's concerns about the nature of Bilbo's magic ring reveal its truth as **the One Ring** belonging to the Dark Lord Sauron. He wisely resists using the Ring's power himself. Gandalf also discovers Saruman's treachery in allying with Sauron. After escaping Saruman's imprisonment, the Grey Wizard leads the Company of the Ring, which is formed to defeat Sauron by destroying the Ring in Mordor. However, the Grey Wizard falls to his presumed death during an epic battle in which he saves the Company from a demonic balrog that attacks them in Moria. Gandalf has long been a great ally to other powerful Middle-earth characters including Elrond, Galadriel, and Aragorn.

Aragorn / Strider – Disguised as a seemingly suspicious and dangerous wanderer called Strider, Aragorn is in truth the heir to the thrones of Gondor and Arnor—his ancestors, Elendil and Isildur, fought Sauron in the War of the Last Alliance in the Second Age. For centuries, his peoples have been wandering Middle-earth as the doughty Rangers, or Dúnedain, who secretly protect the Free Peoples of Middle-earth (including hobbits and humans). By the time Frodo encounters Strider at Bree, the Ranger has already accomplished great exploits and is a master warrior, tracker, and healer. He has many powerful allies: Gandalf the Grey trusts Aragorn implicitly, Elrond is Aragorn's foster father, and Arwen is betrothed to him. After the Council of Elrond, Aragorn volunteers his service to the Company of the Ring. He also bids Rivendell's elvish smiths restore the **shards of Narsil** (Elendil's longsword and an heirloom of his lineage) into a formidable blade that he names Anduril, Flame of the West. In reforging the sword that was broken, Aragorn begins to officially step towards claiming his birthright as the King of Gondor and Arnor. He shoulders leadership of the Fellowship after Gandalf's fall in Moria, although he feels torn between his loyalty to Frodo and his duty to the people of Gondor.

Samwise (Sam) Gamgee – A gardener like his father the Gaffer, Sam is a humble hobbit who is fiercely loyal to his friend and employer Frodo. Caught listening in to Gandalf and Frodo's plans to take Sauron's **One Ring** to Rivendell, Sam is eager to accompany Frodo despite the gardener's hesitance in leaving the Shire for unknown lands. Sam proves himself a brave and trustworthy friend in his dedication to serving Frodo. Although he is not hired to accompany Frodo on the quest to Mordor, Sam continues to refer to his friend as "Mr. Frodo" and "Master," making it clear that he holds Frodo in the highest regard and is

willing to carry out Frodo's wishes above his own. Sam goes to extraordinary lengths to keep his promise to himself, and to Gandalf and the elves, that he will not abandon his master. This is most prominent in *The Fellowship's* closing scene, where Sam almost drowns in his devotion to staying at Frodo's side through the perils of the quest to destroy the Ring. Beyond his steadfast loyalty, Sam is a lover of songs and myths and takes great delight in interacting with the elves of his childhood stories. His simple, earnest, and relentlessly pragmatic attitude is of great comfort to his fellow hobbits, and balances Frodo's melancholy when the Ring-bearer becomes preoccupied by the task ahead.

Boromir – The son of Denethor and brother of Faramir, Boromir is a proud man and mighty warrior who is set to inherit his father's role as Steward of Gondor. Present at the Council of Elrond, Boromir argues for the men of Gondor to take **the Ring** and wield its power against Sauron. He is reluctant to believe Elrond and Gandalf's advice that the Ring cannot be controlled by any but Sauron. Elrond names him a member of the Company of the Ring, and he becomes increasingly obsessed by thoughts of the Ring as the Company progresses toward Mordor. Boromir appears unwilling to enter the elf-forest of Lothlórien, for he has heard disturbing rumors about the psychic powers of the Lady Galadriel who dwells there. Indeed, he is unusually quiet after he meets her, perhaps shaken by the knowledge she has learned about his desires and ambitions. Boromir experiences a challenging relationship with Aragorn after he learns of the Ranger's lineage, as he respects Aragorn yet doubts his ability to lead the realm of Gondor. The key difference between the two warriors is Boromir's desire for power and prestige. His extreme sense of duty to Gondor causes him to make rash decisions and to ignore other matters unrelated to his home. Boromir is ultimately corrupted by the Ring and tries to take it from Frodo, which results in the breaking of the Fellowship.

Sauron – The antagonist and titular character of *The Lord of the Rings* series. The tyrannical Dark Lord Sauron of Mordor gained almost infinite power in the Second Age, his mastery over Middle-earth checked only by the courage of the armies led by the High Kings Gil-Galad and Elendil in the War of the Last Alliance. He has now risen to power again and desires to repossess his **One Ring**, as this will allow him total domination of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the power-hungry Sauron is an ever-potent threat who desperately searches for Frodo using his many servants. Elrond hopes that Sauron can be defeated if seemingly insignificant figures such as hobbits can slip into Mordor to destroy the Ring; Sauron is unlikely to suspect such a move, instead anticipating that a new adversary will challenge him by wielding the exceptional power of his Ring. Although Sauron never emerges in full form in the novel, he appears as a Great Eye when Frodo views him Galadriel's **mirror**. By only acting

through his dreadful agents such as the Black Riders, the villainous Dark Lord remains a mysterious, distant figure who invokes terror across Middle-earth and represents pure evil.

Bilbo Baggins – An elderly and kindly hobbit who gained fame and fortune after his exploits in helping to defeat the dragon Smaug (as detailed in *The Hobbit*). Bilbo is unaware of his **ring's** true power, until the truth of its master Sauron is revealed to him at the Council of Elrond. Despite his age, Bilbo bravely volunteers to take the ring to Mordor to destroy it, but his nephew Frodo is given the task of Ring-bearer.

Galadriel – A wise and seemingly ageless elf who rules over the elf-forest of Lothlórien alongside her husband, Celeborn. Galadriel possesses the powerful elven ring of power, *Nenya*, which likely contributes to her ability to maintain the timeless forests of Lórien. She resists the temptation of **the One Ring** when Frodo offers it to her. She sees past, present, and future visions in her **mirror**.

Saruman the White – A wise and noble wizard, and head of the Istari. Gandalf greatly relies on Saruman's counsel in many matters until he learns of Saruman's treachery—the White Wizard has been corrupted by his ambitions to wield the power of **the Ring**, and allied with Sauron. After a confrontation between the two wizards, Saruman imprisons Gandalf atop the tower Orthanc.

Gollum / Smeagol – A miserable and treacherous creature who has been obsessed with re-claiming **the Ring** ever since he lost it to Bilbo during the events of *The Hobbit*. Gollum follows the Fellowship from Rivendell to Amon Hen, waiting for a chance to steal back the Ring. He was once a hobbit-like boy named Smeagol, until lust for the Ring made him murder his best friend and transformed him into the wretched figure of Gollum.

Tom Bombadil – A comical yet powerful and ancient figure who reigns over the domain of the Old Forest bordering the Shire. He is the husband of Goldberry and is partial to bursting into song. He saves Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin from Old Man Willow, and aids them in their flight to the elf-haven Rivendell. Interestingly, **the Ring** has no power over Bombadil, but he refuses to leave his realm to make a stand against Sauron.

The Balrog – An ancient and powerful demon wreathed in flames and darkness who was awakened by the dwarfs when they dug too deep in search of the precious metal mithril. The balrog pursues the Fellowship during their flight from Moria. After an epic battle with Gandalf at the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, the balrog is bested, but drags Gandalf with it as it falls from the bridge.

Shadowfax – Too wild and noble to be tamed by anyone but Gandalf, Shadowfax is the silver-gray Lord of all Horses who hearkens back to the great Mearas horses of past ages. Gandalf takes Shadowfax from Rohan's pastures so that he can swiftly bear the wizard to the Shire to aid Frodo.

Elendil – A mighty High King of Númenor, and Aragorn's ancestor, who fought alongside Gil-Galad against Sauron in the War of the Last Alliance. Although he died in battle, with his sword **Narsil** breaking beneath his body, his efforts had helped weaken Sauron enough that Elendil's son, Isildur, was able to overcome Sauron by cutting **the One Ring** from the Dark Lord's hand.

Isildur – Son of Elendil, and Aragorn's ancestor, Isildur triumphed over Sauron by cutting **the One Ring** from his hand in the final stages of the Siege of Barad-dûr. He then refused to destroy the Ring, keeping it for his own use. Orcs killed Isildur sometime after the War of the Last Alliance, and the ring was lost to the River Anduin.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Meriadoc (Merry) Brandybuck – A distant cousin and great friend of Frodo's, Merry is an unusually perceptive hobbit whose loyalty to Frodo earns him a place as one of the nine companions in the Company of the Ring.

Peregrin (Pippin) Took – A distant cousin and great friend of Frodo's, Pippin is a kind but reckless young hobbit whose loyalty to Frodo earns him a place as one of the nine companions in the Company of the Ring.

Legolas Greenleaf – An elf-prince from Mirkwood and a member of the Company of the Ring, Legolas is an expert archer and a swift runner who is agile and light on his feet. Despite their initial distrust of one another due to historic racial tensions, Legolas and Gimli form a strong friendship.

Gimli – A dwarf (the son of Glóin) and a member of the Company of the Ring, Gimli is courageous and stalwart in battle where he adeptly wields his axe. He overcomes his mistrust of elves to become firm friends with Legolas and a great admirer of Galadriel.

Elrond – Of elvish and mortal heritage, Elrond is the Lord of Rivendell (an elf-haven hidden West of the Misty Mountains). He is Arwen's father, and a powerful ally of Gandalf's who founds the Company of the Ring.

Celeborn – A wise and seemingly ageless elf who rules over the elf-forest of Lothlórien with his wife, Galadriel. The Lord and Lady of Lórien offer refuge and respite to the Fellowship after they flee Moria without Gandalf.

The Black Riders / Ringwraiths / Nazgûl – Nine fallen mortal kings who seek **the One Ring** for their master, Sauron. The Nazgûl take the form of cloaked black riders as they pursue Frodo and the Fellowship, hunting them using their enhanced senses attuned to the Ring.

Goldberry / The River-daughter – Goldberry is the wife of Tom Bombadil. Her beauty and kindness greatly restore Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin after their terrifying encounter with Old Man Willow. Like her husband, Goldberry's origins are unclear;

she possesses natural magic and may be immortal.

Glorfindel – A powerful elf-lord who is present at the Council of Elrond. Earlier, Elrond sends him to find and protect Aragorn and the hobbits (Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin) on the road as they approach Rivendell.

Gildor Inglorien – The leader of a company of elves that Frodo, Sam, and Pippin chance upon as they travel from Hobbiton to Buckland. This encounter saves the hobbits from an approaching Black Rider; Gildor offers them safe company for the night, and shares advice with Frodo concerning his journey to Rivendell.

Farmer Maggot – An unusually astute hobbit who catches Frodo, Sam, and Pippin on his farmland after they lose their way taking a shortcut to the Buckleberry Ferry. Farmer Maggot helps the hobbits hide from the Black Riders by taking them to the Ferry in his wagon.

Fredegar (Fatty) Bolger – A rather rotund hobbit and friend of Frodo's who stays in Frodo's Buckland residence as a decoy to distract the Black Riders.

Haldir – Leader of the elves who guard Lothlórien's borders, Haldir guides the Fellowship to where Galadriel and Celeborn reside at Caras Galadhon.

Old Man Willow – A malevolent willow tree in the Old Forest who lures travelers to him, spelling them to sleep before strangling them with his branches or trapping them in his trunk.

Gwaihir the Windlord – Lord of the Giant Eagles, Gwaihir rescues Gandalf from his imprisonment by Saruman at Orthanc and carries the wizard to Rohan.

Barliman Butterbur – A man of Bree, Butterbur is the innkeeper at the popular Prancing Pony. He warns Frodo against the suspicious character Strider, and after a lapse in memory he remembers to deliver Frodo a letter that Gandalf had left in his care some weeks ago.

Bill Ferny – An unscrupulous man of Bree who has allied with Sauron and the Black Riders. Aragorn and the hobbits purchase a neglected pony from Ferny after the hobbits' ponies flee their stables due to the presence of Black Riders.

Arwen Undomiel / Evenstar – Of elvish and mortal heritage, Elrond's daughter and Galadriel's granddaughter Arwen is romantically tied to Aragorn.

Glóin – Present at the Council of Elrond, Glóin is the father of Gimli, an old friend of Bilbo's, and one of the thirteen dwarfs who marched to the Lonely Mountain in the events of [The Hobbit](#).

Erestor – An elf-lord who attends the Council of Elrond, Erestor suggests that [the Ring](#) is given to Tom Bombadil, but the Council rejects this idea.

Ham (The Gaffer) Gamgee – An elderly hobbit, and Sam's father, who has tended the gardens next door at Bag End for

most of his life.

Lobelia and Othello Sackville-Baggins – Greedy and obnoxious hobbits who have long desired to inherit their relative Bilbo's hobbit hole at Bag End. They purchase Bag End when Frodo sells up under the pretense of moving to Buckland.

Balin – One of the thirteen dwarfs who marched to the Lonely Mountain in the events of [The Hobbit](#), Balin has not been heard from since he led a company of dwarfs to reclaim their ancestral homeland of Moria.

Gil-Galad – A glorious and ancient elven High King of Ñoldor who fought alongside Elendil against Sauron in the War of the Last Alliance. Elrond was Gil-Galad's herald in the that war.

Elbereth Gilthoniel – An ancient elvish deity whom the elves revere in name and song. Frodo and Legolas invoke her name as protection against the Black Riders.

Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took – A legendary hobbit (and ancestor of Bilbo, Frodo, and Pippin) who could ride a horse and slew the orc leader in the Battle of Greenfields.

Deagol – A hobbit-like boy, and cousin and best friend of Smeagol. He was briefly a Ring-bearer until Smeagol murdered him to take [the Ring](#), gradually transforming into the creature known as Gollum.

Folco A hobbit, and friend of Frodo's.

TERMS

Barrow-wights – Malevolent, shape-shifting creatures of darkness who resemble wraiths and dwell in tainted burial mounds.

The Battle of Greenfields – The first battle ever fought in the Shire, where the hobbits routed an invasion of orcs from the Misty Mountains.

The Black Speech – The official language of Mordor spoken by **Sauron** and his servants, **the Black Riders**.

The Company of the Ring / The Fellowship – A company of nine individuals (also known as the Fellowship) who are chosen by **Elrond** to represent the Free Peoples of Middle-earth in the quest to destroy **Sauron's One Ring**.

The Council of Elrond – A meeting called by **Elrond** in Rivendell to address **Sauron's** evil domination and to decide the fate of [the One Ring](#). Elves, dwarfs, humans, hobbits, and a wizard are present.

Dwarves – A mortal race of diminutive and doughty beings whose chief business is the mining and crafting of precious metals and minerals.

Elves – An immortal race of elegant and wise beings who are departing Middle-earth to sail West.

The Free Peoples of Middle-earth – Also known as the Free

Peoples of the World and Free Folk. The beings of Middle-earth who oppose **Sauron's** domination. This includes most elves, dwarfs, and hobbits, and many humans.

Great Eagles – Immense, sentient birds capable of speech.

Hobbits – Also known as halflings and the Little People. A mortal race of diminutive, good-natured, and pastoral folk who chiefly dwell in the Shire and its surrounding regions. Hobbits are often disregarded as inconsequential by the other races of Middle-earth, but prove to be surprisingly courageous and resilient as demonstrated in the saga of [the Ring](#).

Humans – Also known as men, mortals, and the Big People. A mortal race of beings with various dispositions who have settled in most of the inhabited regions of Middle-earth.

Mearas – Ancient wild horses from Rohan who were exceptional for their speed and intelligence.

Middle-earth – The world that *The Fellowship of the Ring* and many more of Tolkien's works are set in.

Mithril – A precious metal valued for its unparalleled strength, lightness, and silver luster. The dwarves mine mithril from deep in the earth and craft it into objects such as coats of mail.

Ñoldor – An ancient culture of elves who are wise and highly skilled in many crafts.

Númenor – Also known as Westemnesse. An ancient powerful kingdom, its human inhabitants were known as Númenóreans.

The One Ring – Also known as the Great Ring of Power, Isildur's Bane, and less formally as [The Ring](#). An ancient weapon created by the Dark Lord **Sauron** to aid his domination over Middle-earth, the One Ring has immense individual power and also controls the nineteen Rings of Power that were gifted to the elves, dwarfs, and humans. The One Ring has some agency in that it always desires to return to its creator.

Orcs – Also known as goblins. A mortal race of cunning and war-mongering beings who ally with the evil forces of Middle-earth.

Rangers – Also known as the Dúnedain of the North. Wise in knowledge, mighty in battle, and living by a strong moral code, these humans are descendants of Númenórean kings who live tough and lonely lives on the road to protect the Free Peoples of Middle-earth.

The Rings of Power – The Dark Lord deceived ancient elvish smiths into forging nineteen Rings of Power, not knowing that **Sauron** had crafted himself the master [Ring](#). Nine went to human kings, seven to dwarfs, and three were kept by the elves.

The Siege of Barad-dûr – A seven-year siege against **Sauron's** fortress during the final stages of the War of the Last Alliance.

The War of the Last Alliance – An epic battle of forces late in the Second Age in which an alliance chiefly composed of humans and elves marched against the Dark Lord **Sauron**. The war is renowned for its seven-year Siege of Barad-dûr, where

against all odds, the Last Alliance were victorious in triumphing over Sauron.

Wizards – Also known as the Istari. An immortal race of wise and powerful beings who resemble elderly humans in appearance; only five wizards are known of in Middle-earth.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



GOOD VS. EVIL

The confrontation between forces of good and evil, or light and dark, is the basic theme of epic, myth, and romance—all genres that readers have applied to Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first volume in his *Lord of the Rings* series. It is therefore no surprise that the honorable members of the titular Fellowship (Frodo, Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Boromir, Sam, Merry, and Pippin) suffer from the Dark Lord Sauron's unrelenting evil assaults in their quest to protect the Free Peoples of Middle-earth by destroying the **One Ring** (Sauron's creation and the key to his total domination of Middle-earth). This classic conflict between forces of good and evil is the driving theme in the world of Middle-earth, and in Tolkien's epic novel. Through the Fellowship's experiences during their perilous quest, Tolkien proposes that evil occurs when individuals fall to the temptation of wielding power for personal gain.

Many of Tolkien's authorial choices establish that the dichotomous struggle between good and evil is the driving force of the novel, as he clearly links people and places to either good or evil. For example, Rivendell and Lothlórien are described as elegant refuges of culture and knowledge, and the very lightness and brightness of their described locations is contrasted against the darkly foreboding settings of the corrupted Moria, Isengard, and Mordor. Clearly the peaceful and aesthetically beautiful elvish locations are shelters for the protagonists, compared to the shadowy, polluted, and obviously evil strongholds of Sauron and Saruman. Furthermore, Tolkien's invented names sound good or evil to the ear, heightening the sense of conflict between the two. Elvish names such as "Galadriel" and "Lothlórien" roll elegantly and softly off the tongue, compared to harsh and discordant names that signal evil characters, such as "orcs" and the "Nazgûl." Names are reflective of a culture's broader language, and Tolkien's multiple invented languages of Middle-earth generally stereotype its different races: for example the guttural sounds of Khuzdul, the dwarvish language, reflect their

rough, straightforward, and often forceful personalities, while the grating and harsh sounds of Black Speech establishes the evil dispositions of Sauron and his servants. Lastly, character behaviors often indicate an individual's alliance with the light or dark. Inherently good characters such as Frodo, Sam, and Aragorn demonstrate selflessness as they serve those around them, alongside humility through their repeated self-doubts as to their own strengths and responsibilities. This contrasts sharply with the clear-cut evil behaviors of Sauron and his allies who attempt to conquer all cultures using deception and violence. Through these many stylistic choices, Tolkien forms a relationship between form and content, allowing readers to immediately identify obviously good or evil characters and places.

The force that distinguishes evil from good, Tolkien claims, is the corrupting influence of power. Numerous characters in Middle-earth gravitate towards control of peoples, creatures, special objects, and entire lands due to their personal ambitions to wield power. Some, such as Sauron and Gollum, make no secret of their hatred and violent intentions, while others like Saruman are more deceptive and cunning in their dark desires. Whether their intentions are clear or concealed, these characters all bleed into evil territory because of their shared desire to use power for their own nefarious purposes. Tolkien paints characters such as Saruman and Boromir as admirable individuals who then fall to the evil temptation of personal ambition, betraying their companions by attempting to take power through persuasion and then force. The corrupting influences of power, particularly the lure of the titular Ring, reveal these characters' flawed moral resolves. Through Saruman and Boromir's wrongdoings, Tolkien suggests that all characters balance light and dark within them to some extent; those who are classified as good exercise willpower in the face of trials and temptations, such as Gandalf, Elrond, and Galadriel's rejections of the offered Ring, while those who are evil bend to the siren call of corruption.

For much of his epic novel, Tolkien parses good and evil, neatly shelving his characters as one or the other to showcase the age-old struggle between the two opposing forces. However, readers may find Tolkien's claim that all beings balance light and dark within themselves to be a confusing nuance—if this is true, why does Tolkien paint races such as orcs as wholly evil? Murky philosophy aside, Tolkien ultimately spins a cautionary tale, underscoring the danger in using power for self-serving purposes. In making his readers squarely confront the many evils within the power plays of Middle-earth's world, Tolkien leaves readers with the notion that hiding from or avoiding struggle and conflict will only result in the triumph of evil.

introduces readers to a world in which cultures memorialize the feats of their legendary heroes in myth and song. In Tolkien's early chapters, the narrator and protagonists make reference to larger-than-life individuals who excelled in combat and magic, including Frodo's ancestor Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took (renowned as the hobbit who slew the orc leader at the Battle of Greenfields), as well as Gil-Galad and Elendil (elvish and Númenórean high kings of old who fought together against the evil Dark Lord Sauron in the battles of the Second Age). *The Fellowship's* protagonists remember these great heroes of past ages long after their deaths due to the glory they have earned on the battlefield. Tolkien complicates this definition of heroism, however, as the story goes on. Nine individuals form the titular Fellowship (also known as the Company of the Ring) in order to defeat Sauron by destroying **the Ring** that would enable him total domination over Middle-earth. During their journey towards Sauron's stronghold in Mordor, it becomes apparent that the strongest and bravest fighters in the Company of the Ring are not necessarily the heroes of the tale. Tolkien employs a dynamic and diverse Fellowship to suggest that heroism is not dependent on particular skills and talents, but rather on one's moral fortitude and acts of selflessness.

Those with great talents or skills—in magic, fighting, or wisdom—are not necessarily the most heroic characters of the story. Boromir, Captain of Gondor, is a man of renowned skill in combat who frequently uses his sheer strength to support members of the Fellowship. For example, he and Aragorn use their size, strength, and stamina to force paths through the deep snowbanks on the mountain of Caradhras. Boromir is also a member of the Fellowship who deals with the brunt of the orc assault in Moria. However, he fleetingly but significantly betrays the Company of the Ring when he tries to take the Ring from Frodo by force in order to wield the Ring's power himself. In this case, Boromir's strength actually negates his heroism—his talent on the battlefield doesn't automatically elevate him as a hero. Similarly, Gimli the dwarf is a character of great physical strength who is a powerhouse in battle and an essential protector for the Fellowship. However, he is not the hero of the company due to his tendency to make heated judgments and decisions. Boromir and Gimli demonstrate great courage in battle, but fail as truly heroic characters due to their flaws in arrogance, pride, and folly. Contrastingly, the four hobbits in the Fellowship—Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin—are repetitively referred to as insignificant by their comrades and themselves. Indeed, most of Middle-earth views hobbits in general as simple, merry folk without much depth of character. The Fellowship's journey reveals this is not the case, as the hobbits surprise all with their continuous abilities to overcome hardship. Most tellingly, the humble Frodo consistently rejects the Ring's evil power, despite a man as traditionally heroic as Boromir yielding to its temptation. Tolkien therefore implies that one of the most physically inconsequential and least talented characters is the most heroic due to his moral



COURAGE, HEROISM, AND SELFLESSNESS

From the outset, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

integrity—Frodo’s resilience in persevering towards a doomed quest while overcoming his fears and failures is the ultimate form of courage.

It is selflessness, particularly in the forms of humility and service, that Tolkien promotes as the key aspect of courage and heroism. By thrusting the four hobbits into situations in which their allies and enemies are greater than them in physical stature as well as in fighting and magical prowess, Tolkien dramatizes the distinction between moral and physical power. The hobbits demonstrate a stronger moral compass than many of their peers, particularly due to their humility in admitting their weaknesses and fears, and through their camaraderie in volunteering their services to the Company of the Ring despite likely death. These forms of selflessness arise from a loyalty to one another and to their home, contrasting with the goal of earning personal glory that drives traditional heroes. Furthermore, *The Fellowship of the Ring* does not suggest that heroes are fearless, but rather that courage requires individuals to acknowledge and deal with their fears—even if there is little hope in defeating them completely. Frodo the Ring-bearer is heroic because he is willing to attempt to defy Sauron, despite the ultimate personal cost of a likely death. Aragorn is another character that Tolkien promotes as a hero in *The Fellowship*. Although Aragorn has mighty skills in combat, selflessness in serving others has always been his guide to right action and seems to eclipse his more traditionally heroic qualities. For example, the inhabitants of Bree treat Aragorn with suspicion and even malice due to his mysterious nature. They are unaware that they owe their safe lifestyles to the tireless work of Aragorn and the Rangers who guard Bree’s borders. The Rangers’ collective heroism in protecting unknowing common folk demonstrates another form of selflessness and humility. Overall, then, the hobbits and Aragorn reveal that heroism is not about proving oneself the bravest and strongest, but instead relies on selflessness, courage in the midst of fear, and the bonds of fellowship in taking care of others.

From a modern perspective, readers likely agree with Tolkien that acts of selflessness and moral integrity are more noble and heroic than the traditional definition of seeking personal glory through combat. In considering the role of a hero, Tolkien demonstrates that a person’s strength and courage is not determined by their stature, skills, or talents. Indeed, *The Fellowship of the Ring* relates the story of how the most unlikely of characters can be central to the fate of the world.



FREE WILL, FATE, AND FORESIGHT

The Fellowship of the Ring begins the story of the Company of the Ring who set out to destroy **the One Ring**, an action that will defeat the rising

threat of the Dark Lord Sauron. Nine individuals choose to join the Fellowship for the purpose of saving the Free Peoples of

Middle-earth. In many ways, though, their choices and decisions seem predestined by a greater overarching power that is hinted at in myth, circumstance, and conversation. Throughout the Fellowship’s journey, moments of foresight also become integral to the plot. Certain characters use the power of prophecy and vision to arm themselves with knowledge that will greatly help their forces in the contest between good and evil. Overall, this narrative interplay between ideas of free will, fate, and foresight suggests that free will can exist in a world also governed by predestined action.

Tolkien’s story hints at an overarching and all-powerful presence that has specific plans for the beings of Middle-earth. The diverse members of the Company of the Ring all come together by happenstance, as for various reasons they have been drawn away from their homes to Rivendell at the same time. Here, the Council of Elrond suggests that a small company is required to infiltrate Mordor and destroy the Ring. Despite all nine spontaneously volunteering their services, Elrond comments on the fortuitous nature of it all—that Nine Walkers of complementary talents have volunteered to oppose Sauron and his nine Black Riders seems too circumspect not to be fate. Situations like these abound in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, suggesting an overarching presence that directs the events on Middle-earth. These situations also offer readers glimpses of the possibility that everything that will come to pass is already destined to occur. Interestingly, it is difficult for readers to discern the priorities of this potentially all-powerful presence. Gandalf is certain that Bilbo’s finding the Ring and giving it to Frodo makes the Frodo the fated Ring-bearer (indeed, in Gandalf’s opinion Frodo is the very best person to bear the treacherous object and has the most chance at succeeding in the Fellowship’s quest to destroy it). However, the Grey Wizard is also certain that this overarching power would not protect the Free Peoples of Middle-earth by letting the Ring rest safely at the bottom of the sea. Readers can therefore interpret fate as having favorable or disastrous designs for the Fellowship and their quest to destroy the Ring.

However, Tolkien also champions the power of choice by free will throughout the story, which contradicts the very concept of fate. Gandalf is a character who strongly upholds all beings’ right to free will. As one of the wisest of the Istari, the wizards of Middle-earth, his knowledge and views hold great weight. However, Gandalf lets others make crucial choices about the wellbeing of Middle-earth, offering his advice and guidance only—especially regarding Frodo’s actions. It is Frodo’s choice to accept the mantle of Ring-bearer, to serve the Free Peoples of Middle-earth rather than return to his beloved Shire, and to often choose which physical paths the Fellowship shall take. Through Gandalf, Tolkien elevates the prevalence and power of free will over fate.

The idea of foresight complicates the conflict between fate and free will in the novel. Characters with skills of prediction,

prophecy, and vision are able to arm themselves and their allies with insight and knowledge that can alter the power plays of Middle-earth. Gandalf predicts that Gollum still has a part to play in the fate of the Ring, Elrond foresees that the Fellowship's quest will only be completed by someone seemingly weak whom Sauron will overlook, and Aragorn warns that Gandalf should not enter the Mines of Moria. All of these are occurrences in which the wise correctly predict events to come, offering advice and insights to their allies. Foresight troubles the concept that individuals have free will, as in these cases it is a prediction of fate. Characters also gain powers of foresight through their use of magically enhanced objects—for example, Galadriel can view present and future global events using her **mirror**. Foresight is again a prediction that seems to stem from the mysterious, overarching power of fate.

Although Tolkien champions characters who embrace the value of self-determination, he reveals that fate is a major player in his world, too. On Middle-earth, the potential for free will and choice exist alongside the inevitability of fate, which is sometimes predicted through foresight. In this way, *The Fellowship* resists a tidy ending, as the tension between free will and fate remains unresolved by the end of the first volume in *The Lord of the Rings* series.



HISTORY AND MYTH

The titular company of *The Fellowship of the Ring* consists of individuals from many cultures, including hobbits, dwarves, elves, and humans.

Tolkien presents various forms of history and myth across these cultures—for example, hobbits enjoy playful songs that reflect their pastoral traditions, humans favor legends of battlefield valor, and elves tend to create mythical odes about ancient events. These histories and myths can have a threefold purpose: they preserve memories of previous eras, reflect the repetitive nature of history, and can shape future events.

Tolkien infuses his epic novel with stories of mythical people and events to offer historical context to readers, which simultaneously adds depth to the world he's building. Much of this storytelling takes place in conversation. For example, Gandalf's account to Frodo of the legendary rings of power, the ancient War of the Last Alliance, and Gollum's origins as Smeagol set the scene for Frodo's chapter in the saga of **the Ring**. History is preserved and passed on through the sharing of stories. Numerous songs also reference the past histories of Tolkien's universe. For instance, Aragorn sings the Song of Beren and Lúthien to the hobbits by the campfire at Weathertop. It describes the meeting and courtship of Beren and Lúthien Tinúviel, referencing bygone characters and landscapes. Such a song weaves a vision that offers characters (and readers) insights into previous ages. These historic references in conversation and song demonstrate the power of

myth, legend and folklore to both ground a narrative and to broaden its world.

Songs about the past also relate directly to the plot's current situation, suggesting that history repeats itself. Even songs that directly relate legendary events from ages long gone comment on characters' present situations. A good example of this parallel is when Gimli chants Durin's Song as he passes through Moria with the Company of the Ring. The song recounts the splendor of the dwarven king Durin's rule before the decline of his kingdom of Khazad-dûm; this hauntingly matches the current decline of the Third Age, marked most significantly by the dwindling of the elves. Song is therefore a medium that expresses the idea that history is cyclical.

Furthermore, the preservation of history and myth can shape the future. For example, The Riddle of Strider appears twice in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. It was written decades earlier by Bilbo, based on a prophecy that had been attached to Aragorn's family for many generations. It speaks to the truth of Aragorn's heritage, for while he appears a mere wanderer, he is in fact the Heir of Isildur. The Riddle predicts that he will re-forged the ancient blade **Narsil**, and claim the thrones of Gondor and Arnor. It is not until the later books in *The Lord of the Rings* series that these predicted events transpire as truth, but the Fellowship learn quickly that there is more to Strider than meets the eye. Beyond learning about the past, then, history is vital in looking to the future—history can guide individuals toward specific destinies.

Tolkien thereby emphasizes the societal importance of preserving history and explaining myth. By prioritizing characters' storytelling in his narrative, he creates intertextual references that add depth to the world of Middle-earth. Direct echoes of historic circumstances also emphasize the continuity of the world and show that core patterns of events rise and fall repetitively through time. Additionally, history can have great consequence in shaping future events. Overall, Tolkien creates a sense that *The Fellowship of the Ring* is the beginning of a legendary tale that will itself one day be celebrated in various cultures' shared histories and myths.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE ONE RING

The titular Ring was created by the Dark Lord Sauron to command all nineteen of the great rings of power that he gifted to the elves, dwarves and men in Middle-earth. It contains immense power and answers only to Sauron—it is a direct manifestation of the Dark Lord's will to

dominate all life on Middle-earth, and therefore symbolizes the desire for power that conditions evil. The One Ring features heavily in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, where it is found by the most unlikely of characters when Bilbo stumbles across it in the Misty Mountains. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Bilbo gifts it to his nephew Frodo. Frodo is horrified when Gandalf reveals its true nature, and embarks on a quest to destroy the Ring in Mordor to protect the Free Peoples of Middle-earth from Sauron's terrible domain. Yet the Ring corrupts those around it, including one of Frodo's trusted allies—in Boromir's desire to command the Ring's power to protect his homeland of Gondor, Boromir eventually betrays the Fellowship by trying to take the Ring by Force from Frodo. The Ring's influence suggests that power of any kind, even if held with the best of intentions, is susceptible to corruption. *The Fellowship* reveals that Frodo—although a traditionally unheroic character—is most suited to bearing the Ring to its destruction due to his humility and his genuine lack of desire to wield power over others.



THE SHARDS OF NARSIL / ANDURIL

Narsil was a famed longsword that symbolized the strength and fortitude of the Men of the West (Numenoreans) in withstanding evil forces in Middle-earth. During the High King Elendil's final battle with the Dark Lord Sauron in the War of the Last Alliance, Narsil broke into two shards beneath the Elendil's body when he was slain. His son, Isildur, then wielded the handle-shard to cut the **One Ring** from Sauron's hand. The heirs of Isildur have since handed down the shards of Narsil as an heirloom that represents their lineage to the thrones of Arnor and Gondor. Aragorn's decision to reforge the shards of Narsil in Rivendell signals that he is officially setting out to fulfil the prophecy of his ascension to those thrones. Elvish smiths reforge the shards into a bright new blade called Anduril, Flame of the West—this reconstruction parallels the transformation that begins to take place of the rugged Strider into the noble Aragorn. Names in Middle-earth are important; in this case Tolkien has called the Sword that was Broken "Narsil," meaning fire ("nar") and white flame ("thil") in the elven language Quenya, while the Sword that was Reforged is "Anduril," meaning west and sunset ("andunne") and brilliance ("ril"). The representation of Narsil as the flames of sun and moon, and Anduril as the literal Flame of the West, indicate the weapon's purpose in aiding noble men to combat enemies of the darkness. Specifically, Narsil and Anduril symbolize the greatness of the House of Númenor in their longstanding defiance of Sauron, when many other humans have fallen to the Dark Lord's corruption.



THE MIRROR OF GALADRIEL

The Mirror of Galadriel is a silver basin of water in Lothlórien that can show past, present, or future

visions, symbolizing the ambiguous power that knowledge can offer. The Mirror can reveal information about a viewer's specific desire for knowledge, or can be left to its own devices to show what it chooses. The mirror therefore holds some kind of agency as well as powerful magic. It is likely that Galadriel uses the mirror to scry news about the current events of Middle-earth, and to try to ascertain possible futures. However, viewers can never know whether to act on the knowledge that the Mirror reveals, as it may be a current truth or a possible future that will only play out through certain characters' decisions. Those who can foresee the future can be driven to madness by the possibilities they view without knowing how to manage that information. When Frodo and Sam look in the Mirror, Galadriel's repeated warnings that the hobbits must avoid touching the water signals the potential physical as well as psychological risks in using the Mirror.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Random House edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring* published in 1954.

Prologue Quotes

☞ At no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves. [...]

Nonetheless, ease and peace had left this people still curiously tough. They were, if it came to it, difficult to daunt or kill; and they were, perhaps, so unwearingly fond of good things not least because they could, when put to it, do without them, and could survive rough handling by grief, foe, or weather in a way that astonished those who did not know them well and looked no further than their bellies and their well-fed faces.

Related Characters: Frodo Baggins, Bilbo Baggins

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator details the character of Hobbits, a diminutive and good-natured people who chiefly live in the land of the Shire. Their race is generally overlooked and seen as being of little consequence by the rest of Middle-earth, as they appear a simple folk who enjoy quiet, domestic lives.

However, the portly and kindly appearance of hobbits does not suggest the true mettle of their character. The narrator reveals that despite their fondness of peace and simple pleasures such as good food, they are a resilient folk who

can be courageous and hardy in the face of adversity. Indeed, many of *The Fellowship's* powerful players are surprised by the tough streak that hobbits demonstrate. The most well-known of these hobbits is Frodo Baggins, a hobbit who shows great moral fortitude and selflessness in his volunteering to carry the One Ring (an evil weapon that endangers its bearer) into the deadly perils of Mordor (the stronghold of the Dark Lord Sauron). Soon, the fate of the world rests upon the success of this small and seemingly inconsequential being.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ “But my lad Sam will know more about [Bilbo’s gold]. He’s in and out of Bag End. Crazy about the stories of the old days he is, and he listens to all Mr. Bilbo’s tales. Mr. Bilbo has learned him his letters –meaning no harm, mark you, and I hope no harm will come from it.

Elves and Dragons! I says to him. *Cabbages and potatoes are better for me and you. Don’t go getting mixed up in the business of your betters, or you’ll land in trouble too big for you,* I says to him. And I might say it to others,” he added with a look at the stranger and the miller.

But the Gaffer did not convince his audience. The legend of Bilbo’s wealth was now too firmly fixed in the minds of the younger generation of hobbits.

Related Characters: Ham (The Gaffer) Gamgee (speaker), Bilbo Baggins, Samwise (Sam) Gamgee

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the elderly Gaffer holds court at a local pub in Hobbiton as he shares his opinion on Bilbo’s character and history. He has an attentive audience who are keen to learn about the eccentricities of the hobbit who is soon to throw the most extravagant birthday party that Hobbiton has ever seen. The Gaffer has authority on the subject because he has worked as Bilbo’s gardener all his life, although his son Sam has now largely taken over these duties.

The Gaffer explains that the legend of Bilbo’s wealth has been blown out of proportion by rumor. Sam would be able to confirm that Bag End is not filled with mounds of treasure, for he regularly seeks out Bilbo’s company to hear stories and myths about ancient times. Bilbo is an expert

storyteller and draws on his own fantastic adventures from his journey with dwarves to slay a dragon in the Lonely Mountain. Throughout *The Fellowship of the Ring*, stories and myths are notable as a means of preserving history. Sam is a pragmatic, down-to-earth character except for his love of fantasy and magic. Instead of chasing stories about elves and dragons, the Gaffer would prefer his son to adhere to practical, real-world matters such as the cabbages and potatoes of their trade. Most hobbits prefer this conservative, no-nonsense attitude. Despite the Gaffer’s account, his insular audience are fixed in their belief that mad Bilbo Baggins has hoards of gold stashed away in Bag End.

☞ “I feel I need a holiday, a very long holiday, as I have told you before. Probably a permanent holiday: I don’t expect I shall return. In fact, I don’t mean to, and I have made all arrangements.

I am old, Gandalf. I don’t look it, but I am beginning to feel it in my heart of hearts. *Well-preserved* indeed!” he snorted. “Why, I feel all thin, sort of *stretched* if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can’t be right. I need a change, or something.”

Gandalf looked curiously and closely at him. “No, it doesn’t seem right,” he said thoughtfully. “No, after all I believe your plan is probably the best.”

Related Characters: Gandalf the Grey, Bilbo Baggins (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

Bilbo tells Gandalf that despite his “well-preserved” appearance for his elderly age, the hobbit feels worn out. He has decided that he will leave his home of Bag End in Hobbiton to go on a permanent holiday, hoping that this will help him feel less “stretched.”

Gandalf appears thoughtful in response to Bilbo’s declaration, but readers later learn that he is quite alarmed by the way that Bilbo describes his existence. It matches with the experiences that an individual would contend with if they were bearing the corrupting power of the One Ring (a powerful weapon created by the Dark Lord Sauron to aid his domination of Middle-earth). Bilbo’s comparison of his

weariness to feeling “like butter that has been scraped over too much bread” is a vivid analogy for the Ring’s evil influence—as a Ring-bearer fades from view into a wraith, so does butter turn invisible if spread over too great a surface. For now, Gandalf keeps his suspicions to himself, but Bilbo’s comments spark the wizard’s actions in searching across many lands for more information on the Ring.

Book 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ For some years he was quite happy and did not worry about the future. But half unknown to himself the regret that he did not go with Bilbo was steadily growing. He found himself wandering at times, especially in the autumn, about the wild lands, and strange visions of mountains that he had never seen came into his dreams. He began to say to himself “Perhaps I shall cross the river myself one day.” To which the other half of his mind always replied “Not yet.”

[...] He took to wandering further afield and more often by himself; and Merry and his other friends watched him anxiously. Often he was seen walking and talking with the strange wayfarers that began at this time to appear in the Shire.

Related Characters: Frodo Baggins (speaker), Meriadoc (Merry) Brandybuck, Bilbo Baggins

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

For some time after Bilbo’s departure from Bag End, Frodo is content with his life. However, as time passes, he grows more restless. He is more adventurous than most hobbits, exploring the Shire’s countryside and speaking with strangers (presumably for news of the outside world). Frodo’s restlessness and his vague visions may be an effect of the Ring; the hobbit does not yet know that it is an evil weapon of great power that influences its bearer in subtle yet complex ways. Always the Ring wants to return to its creator, the Dark Lord Sauron who is rising in power far beyond the Shire’s borders.

Frodo’s ambivalence over whether he wants to depart the Shire is the beginning of an emotional strain that will plague him throughout his journey with the Ring. After leaving the Shire, Frodo feels a great sense of yearning for his

hometown and often wishes he had never left. This passage similarly elicits Frodo’s dual mindset: his wish for adventure contrasts with his love of the Shire. Overall, Frodo and his fellow hobbits’ love of their home and desire to protect the Shire is what provides them with the courage to carry on in their perilous quest to Mordor, in spite of their great fears of the evils that will challenge them.

☛ “A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is a weariness. And if he often uses the Ring to make himself invisible, he *fades*: he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the Rings. Yes, sooner or later – later, if he is strong or well-meaning to begin with, but neither strength nor good purpose will last – sooner or later the dark power will devour him.”

“How terrifying!” said Frodo. There was another long silence. The sound of Sam Gamgee cutting the lawn came in from the garden.

Related Characters: Frodo Baggins, Gandalf the Grey (speaker), Bilbo Baggins, The Black Riders / Ringwraiths / Nazgûl, Sauron, Samwise (Sam) Gamgee

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

Sitting at Bag End beside an open window looking out onto the garden, Gandalf has revealed the truth of Bilbo’s magic ring and now explains the evil influence of the Ring in more detail to Frodo. The immensely powerful weapon was created by the Dark Lord Sauron to control the nineteen great rings of power, and the One Ring only answers to him. However, he lost his creation in a bygone era, and it has found its way into Bilbo and now Frodo’s possession.

The effects on a Ring-bearer are manifold: over time the bearer stops aging, permanently fades from sight, and is corrupted into acts of evil. Even powerful beings who desire to wield the Ring’s power for noble purposes will be turned to evil by its insidious nature—later in the story, Gandalf, Elrond, and Galadriel’s wisdom and virtue are evident when they each resist the temptation to augment their noble powers with the Ring’s strength. The Ring is imbued with an

ominous agency that leads its bearer into a moral and atmospheric darkness, signaled by Gandalf's reference to "walking in the twilight." This is a critical conversation because Gandalf's account of the Ring explains much of *The Fellowship's* later events and character motivations. Frodo is shocked into silence by the enormity of the situation he unexpectedly finds himself in. The newly revealed danger attached to Frodo's Ring is undercut by the intrusion of the comically mundane sounds from Sam the gardener as he trims the lawn outside.

☞ "So now, when its master was awake once more and sending out his dark thought from Mirkwood, it abandoned Gollum. Only to be picked up by the most unlikely person imaginable: Bilbo from the Shire!

Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the Ring, and *not* by its maker. In which case you also were *meant* to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought."

Related Characters: Gandalf the Grey (speaker), Sauron, Gollum / Smeagol, Bilbo Baggins, Frodo Baggins

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 54-5

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Gandalf is explaining some of the history of the Ring to Frodo during the wizard's visit to Bag End bearing new information. Many years ago, in the Ring's desire to reunite with its creator Sauron, it abandoned the miserable creature Gollum in the bowels of the Misty Mountains and was stumbled upon by Bilbo.

Gandalf is quite certain that the strange set of circumstances that led to Bilbo's discovery of the Ring must be attributed to the powerful workings of fate. Because he believes that Bilbo and now Frodo are "meant" to have come into possession of the Ring, Gandalf takes hope that there is some greater overarching design for Middle-earth that favors good rather than evil. Contrastingly, in this scene the wizard is also beginning to offer Frodo enough information to make an informed decision about what he would like to do now that he possesses the evil Ring. Gandalf is therefore a character who promotes the right to free will while also believing in fate's overarching designs for all life on Middle-

earth; this tension is viewed in a number of scenes in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Book 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ "[Bilbo] used often to say there was only one Road; and that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary. 'It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door,' he used to say. 'You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to. Do you realize that this is the very path that goes through Mirkwood, and that if you let it, it might take you to the Lonely Mountains or even further and to worse places?' He used to say that on the path outside the front door at Bag End, especially after he had been out for a long walk."

Related Characters: Frodo Baggins (speaker), Peregrin (Pippin) Took, Samwise (Sam) Gamgee, Bilbo Baggins

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 72-3

Explanation and Analysis

Frodo speaks these lines to Sam and Pippin as they set off for Buckland after their first night of camping in the Shire's countryside. The three hobbits are standing on a hillside and surveying the road they want to follow as it winds through woodlands to the Brandywine River. Frodo's clear memory of Bilbo's words suggests his fondness and nostalgia for his uncle.

Reminiscing on Bilbo's advice, Frodo's speech reveals that there is always a road—a symbol of the potential for adventure—wherever one happens to be standing, even if it is outside of a quiet and ordinary hobbit hole such as Bag End. Bilbo likened the road to a river with numerous intersections, crossing points, and destinations. Bilbo's road led him to the Lonely Mountain for a fantastic adventure with dwarves, elves, and humans; Frodo is uncertain where this road might be taking him. It takes some courage to face the unknown happenings that will occur on the road, and Bilbo has highlighted that one can't avoid danger on a journey. Ironically, later in *The Fellowship* Frodo's road becomes an actual river as the Company of the Ring guide small boats down the River Anduin.

Book 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

☞☞ "If you don't come back, sir, then I shan't, that's certain," said Sam. "*Don't you leave him! They said to me. Leave him!* I said. *I never mean to. I am going with him, if he climbs to the Moon, and if any of those Black Riders try to stop him, they'll have Sam Gamgee to reckon with,* I said. They laughed."

Related Characters: Samwise (Sam) Gamgee (speaker), The Black Riders / Ringwraiths / Nazgûl, Gildor Inglorien, Frodo Baggins

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

Sam is telling Frodo about his conversation with Gildor and the elves the previous night, in which Sam promised he would not leave Frodo's side on the journey to Mordor. Despite the knowledge that Frodo will face great danger, the faithful gardener does not hesitate to selflessly pledge his support to the Ring-bearer. Sam's loyalty to Frodo is perhaps the key relationship throughout *The Lord of the Rings* series, for it is the bonds of fellowship that allow the quest to continue through great peril.

Sam's reference to Frodo as "sir" indicates his reverence for his former employer. In this passage, Frodo is beginning to understand the true depth of Sam's commitment to accompanying the Ring-bearer into peril. Once again, too, Sam offers comic relief to the plot—he exaggerates that he will travel to the distant Moon and even fight the menacing Black Riders if need be. The elves laugh, but Sam keeps his promise time and time again throughout *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and even stands with Frodo against the Black Riders at Weathertop. This is an amazing feat of courage for a homely hobbit who has only recently left the Shire for the first time.

Book 1, Chapter 8 Quotes

☞☞ There is a seed of courage hidden (often deeply, it is true) in the heart of the fattest and most timid Hobbit, waiting for some final and desperate danger to make it grow. Frodo was neither very fat nor very timid; indeed, though he did not know it, Bilbo (and Gandalf) had thought him the best Hobbit in the Shire. He thought he had come to the end of his adventure, and a terrible end, but the thought hardened him. He found himself stiffening, as if for a final spring; he no longer felt limp like a helpless prey.

Related Characters: Gandalf the Grey, Bilbo Baggins, Frodo Baggins

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 137

Explanation and Analysis

Frodo wakes up inside a burial mound at the mercy of an evil barrow-wight. Nearby he can see Sam, Merry, and Pippin, still unconscious. Frodo is terrified of the situation and wants to escape using the Ring. However, he is halted by the plight of his friends, and in the depths of his despair he suddenly finds himself rallying enough courage to form a plan to resist the barrow-wight.

This passage demonstrates that hobbits are not just simple folk without much depth of character. Bilbo and Gandalf have always been quite certain that Frodo is the opposite of the stereotypically insignificant hobbit. Throughout *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo surprises other characters with his uncanny ability to overcome hardship. This is the first scene in which Frodo proves his resilience by managing—if not overcoming—his fears in a true show of courage. He does not yet know exactly what he will do, but he will at least attempt something to defend himself and his friends. In this scene, and when facing future adversities, Frodo reveals that heroism is not about proving oneself the bravest and strongest. Instead it consists of courage despite fear, and loyalty and service to others.

Book 1, Chapter 10 Quotes

☞☞ "They come from Mordor," said Strider in a low voice. "From Mordor, Barliman, if that means anything to you."

"Save us!" cried Mr. Butterbur turning pale; the name evidently was known to him. "That is the worst news that has come to Bree in my time."

"It is," said Frodo. "Are you still willing to help me?"

"I am," said Mr. Butterbur. "More than ever. Though I don't know what the likes of me can do against, against—" he faltered.

"Against the Shadow in the East," said Strider quietly. "Not much, Barliman, but every little helps. You can let Mr. Underhill stay here tonight, as Mr. Underhill, and you can forget the name of Baggins, till he is far away."

Related Characters: Frodo Baggins, Barliman Butterbur, Aragorn / Strider (speaker), The Black Riders / Ringwraiths /

Nazgûl

Related Themes:  **Related Symbols:** **Page Number:** 165**Explanation and Analysis**

At The Prancing Pony inn in Bree, Barliman Butterbur enters the parlor to deliver Frodo a letter from Gandalf and to warn him against the mysterious figure Strider. The innkeeper is guilty of not sending Frodo the letter months ago as Gandalf asked, and wants to make up for this by aiding the hobbits in their journey. Strider reveals the evil nature of the foe they are up against.

Butterbur's response is heartening and showcases the courage that individuals can rally despite their great fears. The simple innkeeper is deathly frightened that Black Riders will likely target his inn, but he remains committed to helping the hobbits in whatever way he can. His actions follow in the tradition of surprising allies that the hobbits have been helped by throughout their journey. Strider demonstrates compassion when he forgives Butterbur for the charges he laid against the Ranger, and informs Butterbur about the small ways that he can help the hobbits against the Black Riders.

Book 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

☝☝ Slowly he drew it out. Bilbo put out his hand. But Frodo quickly drew back the Ring. To his distress and amazement he found that he was no longer looking at Bilbo; a shadow seemed to have fallen between them, and through it he found himself eyeing a little wrinkled creature with a hungry face and bony groping hands. He felt a desire to strike him.

The music and singing round them seemed to falter, and a silence fell. Bilbo looked quickly at Frodo's face and passed his hand across his eyes. "I understand now," he said. "Put it away! I am sorry: sorry you have come in for this burden: sorry about everything."

Related Characters: Bilbo Baggins (speaker), Gollum / Smeagol, Frodo Baggins**Related Themes:**   **Related Symbols:** **Page Number:** 225-6**Explanation and Analysis**

In Rivendell, Frodo's reunion with his dear uncle Bilbo is spoiled by Bilbo's needy desire to view the Ring. Frodo's reluctance to show Bilbo the weapon is likely an effect of the Ring's influence—Gollum and Bilbo's histories suggest that a Ring-bearer does not like to display the Ring for fear of losing it. It is concerning to think that the cycles of history are repeating once more as the Ring corrupts a hobbit to greed and obsession. Indeed, Frodo also acts out of his usual character when he is struck by the impulse to hit Bilbo.

Bilbo's reaction to the situation is worse, for the Ring's presence transforms him into a miserable, covetous creature who looks very similar to the shrunken Gollum. Even the elves' joyous singing is halted by the hobbit's confrontation with evil temptation. However, Bilbo is still strong enough to resist the Ring's pull. He comes to his senses, and through this episode he finally understands the depth of the Ring's evil power. He is then distressed that he has given such a perilous object to his beloved Frodo, now understanding the true burden of the Ring.

Book 2, Chapter 2 Quotes

☝☝ "If Gondor, Boromir, has been a stalwart tower, [the Rangers] have played another part. Many evil things there are that your strong walls and bright swords do not stay. You know little of the lands beyond your bounds. Peace and freedom, do you say? The North would have known them little but for us.

[...] Travellers scowl at us, and countrymen give us scornful names. 'Strider' I am to one fat man who lives within a day's march of foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly. Yet we would not have it otherwise. If simple folk are free from care and fear, simple they will be, and we must be secret to keep them so. That has been the task of my kindred, while the years have lengthened and the grass has grown."

Related Characters: Aragorn / Strider (speaker), Boromir**Related Themes:**    **Page Number:** 242**Explanation and Analysis**

At the Council of Elrond, Boromir praises Gondor's strength in combatting Sauron's evil forces, and casts doubt on Aragorn's power as the Heir of Isildur. Aragorn rises to acknowledge both his humble appearance and the courage of Gondor before educating Boromir on the role that the

Rangers play in driving back the evils of Sauron and other dark forces.

The Rangers toil ceaselessly across the Northern lands to protect numerous Free Peoples of Middle-earth. They receive no thanks for their protection, for they do not proudly brag of their efforts; this is to let the peaceful places they protect live carefree of the world's evils. The Shire is very likely one such place. In fact, the Rangers are often scorned by common folk who remain unaware of the warriors' noble purposes. Aragorn believes that this is a small price to pay for the Free Peoples of Middle-earth to remain safe from harm.

Aragorn's story reveals the little-known truth of his people's honorable history. The Rangers' selflessness in serving others suggests a type of heroism that is very different from the valor and glory that Boromir seeks as a Captain of Gondor. Their conversation at the Council of Elrond serves to highlight the vast difference in attitudes between two mighty warriors who both have strong claims to Gondor's leadership. It remains to be seen if Aragorn will take up Gondor's throne as prophesized, and if Boromir will challenge his authority.

supports their desires.

Gandalf's argument for Merry and Pippin's inclusion in the Fellowship rests on the strength of the values of loyalty and friendship. Both hobbits have already faced great danger in support of Frodo, and they want to continue to do so. Gandalf's belief that more powerful individuals such as Glorfindel wouldn't be able to help the Ring-bearer's cause in any substantial way also matches with Elrond's earlier foresight that Sauron can only be bested by seemingly insignificant beings that can slip by his fiery gaze. Merry and Pippin fit that description, while Glorfindel would be a beacon for the Dark Lord, who is warily searching for powers that could challenge his own. Both Elrond and Gandalf prove correct by the conclusion of *The Lord of the Rings* series, for Merry and Pippin play vital roles in opposing Sauron's evil, despite their lack of strength in arms or magic.

“Slow should you be to wind that horn again, Boromir,” said Elrond, “until you stand once more on the borders of your land, and dire need is on you.”

“Maybe,” said Boromir. “But always I have let my horn cry at setting forth, and though thereafter we may walk in the shadows, I will not go forth as a thief in the night.”

Book 2, Chapter 3 Quotes

“It is true that if these Hobbits understood the danger, they would not dare to go. But they would still wish to go, or wish that they dared, and be shamed and unhappy. I think, Elrond, that in this matter it would be well to trust rather to their friendship than to great wisdom. Even if you chose for us an Elf-lord, such as Glorfindel, he could not storm the Dark Tower, nor open the road to the Fire by the power that is in him.”

Related Characters: Gandalf the Grey (speaker), Glorfindel, Peregrin (Pippin) Took, Meriadoc (Merry) Brandybuck, Elrond

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 269

Explanation and Analysis

Elrond has two spaces to fill in the Company of the Ring, and Merry and Pippin are desperate to join their friends Frodo and Sam. Although Elrond is unwilling to send the two young hobbits into such peril, Gandalf unexpectedly

Related Characters: Boromir, Elrond (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 272

Explanation and Analysis

As the Company of the Ring sets out from Rivendell toward Mordor, Boromir blows a great blast on his war-horn that echoes mightily in the hills. Elrond cautions him not to repeat the action until the warrior is in need of aid and close to Gondor's borders.

Boromir's action and lack of remorse demonstrate his proud personality. He refuses to bow to the fear of discovery by Sauron, perhaps confident in his ability to overcome any foe sent to fight him. In this light he is cast in the image of traditional heroes who entertain risk for personal glory. The Captain of Gondor also refuses to give the wise Lord of Rivendell's advice much weight, for he is used to being his own person who gives advice and orders to others. Elrond's advice has a strange echo later in *The Lord of the Rings* series, for close to the borders of his homeland Boromir does blow his mighty war-horn in battle with fearsome foes. Again, Elrond's wisdom hints that he has the power of foresight to

tap into the overarching fate that shapes the world of Middle-earth.

Book 2, Chapter 4 Quotes

☞ "It was not the fault of the Dwarves that the friendship waned," said Gimli.

"I have not heard it was the fault of the Elves," said Legolas.

"I have heard both," said Gandalf; "and I will not give judgement now. But I beg you two, Legolas and Gimli, at least to be friends, and to help me. I need you both. The doors are shut and hidden, and the sooner we find them the better. Night is at hand."

Related Characters: Gandalf the Grey, Legolas Greenleaf, Gimli (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 295

Explanation and Analysis

The Company of the Ring has reached the place where there is a hidden West gate into Moria, and they are struggling to gain entry before nightfall when evil forces will be on their trail in high numbers. Gimli and Legolas begin a polite yet heartfelt argument about the historic enmity between their races, but Gandalf interrupts them by directing them to the urgent problem that "night is at hand." Night can refer to the Dark Lord's growing power as well as the fast-approaching dusk.

Gandalf shows two key character traits here. Firstly, he is a short-tempered wizard who is frustrated at the dwarf and elf's bickering. At the same time, Gandalf is wise and recognizes that he can facilitate fellowship through his request for Gimli and Legolas's combined help. He highlights that both of them are valued for the strengths and skills that they bring to the Fellowship. In this way, Gandalf is similar to Aragorn in that they favor mediation in their leadership styles.

☞ Pippin felt curiously attracted by the well. [...] Moved by a sudden impulse he groped for a loose stone, and let it drop. He felt his heart beat many times before there was any sound. Then far below, as if the stone had fallen into deep water in some cavernous place, there came a *plunk*, very distant, but magnified and repeated in the hollow shaft.

"What's that?" cried Gandalf. He was relieved when Pippin confessed what he had done, but he was angry, and Pippin could see his eye glinting. "Fool of a Took!" he growled. "This is a serious journey, not a Hobbit waling-party. Throw yourself in next time, and then you will be no further nuisance. Now be quiet!"

Related Characters: Gandalf the Grey (speaker), Peregrin (Pippin) Took

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 305

Explanation and Analysis

The members of the Company of the Ring are navigating their way through the complex tunnels in the Mines of Moria. Because Gandalf cannot decide between three paths that diverge in front of them, they have taken rest for the night in an adjacent, ancient guard room. The cover of a well that drops into Moria's depths has rotted away, and Pippin is strangely drawn toward the dangerous drop.

Pippin's "sudden impulse" to drop the stone down the well is mysterious in nature. Is it due to evil that tempts bored minds? Is it the overarching power of fate? Or mere chance? The narrative doesn't make this clear, but this scene does suggest that curiosity can result in harm if it is not tempered by wisdom. As the youngest and least perceptive of the hobbits, Pippin has much room for character development.

Gandalf fiercely rebukes Pippin's foolishness, for the stone echoes loudly down the well and perhaps causes evil forces below to become aware of the Fellowship's presence. The wizard's harsh insults that he delivers at Pippin are likely a result of the danger Pippin may have awoken, alongside Gandalf's frustration at not knowing which tunnel to guide the Company through next.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

☞☞ "The world was young,
The mountains green,
No stain yet on the Moon was seen,
No words were laid on stream or stone
When Durin woke and walked alone.
He named the nameless hills and dells;
He drank from yet untasted wells;
He stooped and looked in Mirrormere,
And saw a crown of stars appear,
As gems upon a silver thread,
Above the shadow of his head.

The world was fair, the mountains tall,
In Elder days before the fall
Of mighty kings in Nargothrond
And Gondolin, who now beyond
The Western Seas have passed away:
The world was fair in Durin's Day.

[...]

The world is grey, the mountains old,
The forge's fire is ashen-cold;
No harp is wrung, no hammer falls:
The darkness dwells in Durin's halls;
The shadow lies upon his tomb
In Moria, in Khazad-dûm.
But still the sunken stars appear
In dark and windless Mirrormere;
There lies his crown in water deep
Till Durin wakes again from sleep."

Related Characters: Gimli (speaker), Samwise (Sam) Gamgee

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 307-8

Explanation and Analysis

The Company of the Ring spends the night huddled together in a cavernous hall they have entered in Moria (an ancient dwarvish realm abandoned by the dwarves many centuries ago). Gimli is offended by Sam's naming of Moria's architecture as "holes," and sings the Song of Durin to share his people's fair history with the hobbits.

The Song of Durin tells the mythical tale of an ancient king who founded dwarvish landmarks such as Moria and the Mirrormere. There is no doubt it is grounded in actual history, and Durin's memorialization in song becomes a mechanism to preserve the memories of bygone eras. This is just one of many examples in the plot in which characters

share ancient stories: Tolkien steeped his tale in stories of mythical characters and events to offer historical context to readers, and to broaden his fictional world. The Song of Durin offers the Company of the Ring insights into the history of Moria and its people.

An added complexity is that the song's description of the decline of Durin and Moria matches the current ending of the Third Age. Despite the dwarf Balin's attempts to reclaim Moria, the mines' forges and fires remain "ashen-cold." Furthermore, as the dwarves once abandoned Moria, the elves are departing Middle-earth, leaving it "grey" with the loss of their enchantment. Songs about the past can therefore also relate directly to present day, suggesting that history is cyclical.

Book 2, Chapter 6 Quotes

☞☞ "And now we must enter the Golden Wood, you say. But of that perilous land we have heard in Gondor, and it is said that few come out who once go in; and of that few none have escaped unscathed."

"Say not *unscathed*, but if you say *unchanged*, then maybe you will speak the truth," said Aragorn. "But lore wanes in Gondor, Boromir, if in the city of those who once were wise they now speak evil of Lothlórien [...] only evil need fear it, or those who bring some evil with them."

Related Characters: Aragorn / Strider, Boromir (speaker), Galadriel

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 329

Explanation and Analysis

With evil forces in pursuit of the Company of the Ring when they exit Moria, Aragorn has decided that their only safe road is to reach the elf-forest of Lothlórien by nightfall. Boromir and Gimli would prefer to avoid Lórien, however. For Boromir, it is rumored to be a place of danger and enchantment from which few visitors emerge. Celeborn and Galadriel's formidable, immortal powers, coupled with the future that Galadriel can read in her enchanted mirror, are likely the origins of such rumor.

Aragorn rebukes Boromir and Gondor's folly, for he knows that the Golden Wood is a pure land that resists Sauron's probing evil. However, the Ranger does acknowledge that all who enter Lothlórien come out changed in some way. Boromir is a man of arms who dislikes the sound of this transformation. His anxieties are partly founded in truth, as

is Aragorn's warning that only evil needs fear Lórien, for Galadriel seems to be able to read Boromir's mind and understand his personal ambitions to take the Ring for Gondor's use.

Book 2, Chapter 7 Quotes

“Many things I can command the Mirror to reveal,” she answered, “and to some I can show what they desire to see. But the Mirror will also show things unbidden, and those are often stranger and more profitable than things which we wish to behold. What you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell. For it shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be. But which is it that he sees, even the wisest cannot always tell. Do you wish to look?”

Related Characters: Galadriel (speaker), Samwise (Sam) Gamgee, Frodo Baggins

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 352

Explanation and Analysis

The Company of the Ring spends time considering their next move in the safety of Lórien's forest. During this time, Galadriel approaches Frodo and Sam with an offer for them to use her magical mirror. Sam, who has always dreamed of seeing the magic of elves, is both eager and fearful to look. Frodo has no immediate answer to the Lady's offer.

Galadriel's description of the mirror is complex. It can show visions of past, present, and future, although it may not be clear which of these three periods it displays. The viewer can direct it to show certain things, or let the mirror choose visions itself, suggesting that the object has a type of agency similar to the One Ring. The Mirror of Galadriel is not described as obviously good or evil, but unlike the Ring, it can be wielded for noble purposes; Galadriel has done so for spans of time. In fact, she uses her mirror to aid her direct opposition against Sauron. The fact that the mirror can predict the future also does not guarantee the existence of fate in Middle-earth, for Galadriel acknowledges that visions of the future may not come true. It therefore remains a mysterious object of power; in Tolkien's story, it functions as a means to place a choice before Frodo and Sam of continuing into peril or returning home to protect the Shire.

“You are wise and fearless and fair, Lady Galadriel,” said Frodo. “I will give you the One Ring, if you ask for it. It is too great a matter for me.”

[...] She stood before Frodo seeming now tall beyond measurement, and beautiful beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful. Then she let her hand fall, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! she was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad.

“I pass the test,” she said. “I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel.”

Related Characters: Galadriel, Frodo Baggins (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 357

Explanation and Analysis

Frodo is so awed by Galadriel's beauty, wisdom, and power in resisting the Dark Lord Sauron that he offers her the Ring. It is a strange move by he Ring-bearer, for Gandalf and Elrond have advised that the Ring cannot be wielded by anyone of substantial power, for it will always turn them to evil and transform them into a new dark power like Sauron himself. Perhaps Frodo is so worn down by the Ring's psychological weight and frightened by the visions he has seen in the Mirror of Galadriel that he succumbs to the hope that someone else can successfully bear the evil weapon.

Galadriel knows the truth that the Ring would turn her to darkness, but she is still tempted by its power. After a terrible scene in which Frodo and Sam view the seed of the Dark Queen that she could become, the Lady of Lórien rejects the Ring's temptation. Her triumph in virtue is signaled by her return to her normal form, dressed in white. She is pleased that she has rejected the Ring's corruption, and resolves to depart from Middle-earth with the rest of the elves.

Book 2, Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ [Aragorn's] own plan, while Gandalf remained with them, had been to go with Boromir, and with his sword help to deliver Gondor. For he believed that the message of the dreams was a summons, and that the hour had come at last when the heir of Elendil should come forth and strive with Sauron for the mastery. But in Moria the burden of Gandalf had been laid on him; and he knew that he could not now forsake the Ring, if Frodo refused in the end to go with Boromir. And yet what help could he or any of the Company give to Frodo, save to walk blindly with him into the darkness?

Related Characters: Boromir, Gandalf the Grey, Frodo Baggins, Aragorn / Strider

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 359

Explanation and Analysis

As the Company of the Ring prepares to depart Lothlórien, Aragorn is torn between his duty to Frodo and his duty to Gondor. He is selfless in his desire to serve others, but two competing needs arise: he desires to protect the all-important Ring-bearer, but he is also the heir to the throne of Gondor where his people are in dire need of protection.

This passage emphasizes Aragorn's moral strength. He believes that prophecy, visions, and fate have called him forth to claim his noble heritage. He desires to lead Gondor to victory by wielding his reforged sword Anduril, Flame of the West, in a direct challenge against the Dark Lord Sauron. Yet Aragorn is also driven by compassion for Frodo's plight in the vital quest to destroy the Ring. In the end, he puts his trust on the right to free will and lets Frodo choose which path to take forward, knowing this may mean he cannot lead Gondor to safety. Aragorn's selflessness and genuine care for others cast him as a worthy hero in *The Lord of the Rings* saga.

☞ Then the Lady unbraided one of her long tresses, and cut off three golden hairs, and laid them in Gimli's hand. "These words shall go with the gift," she said. "I do not foretell, for all foretelling is now vain: on the one hand lies darkness, and on the other only hope. But if hope should not fail, then I say to you, Gimli son of Glóin, that your hands shall flow with gold, and yet over you gold shall have no dominion."

Related Characters: Galadriel (speaker), Legolas Greenleaf, Gimli

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 367

Explanation and Analysis

The Lady Galadriel gifts Gimli his request of a token of her beauty that will stand as a promise of goodwill between Gimli's homeland and Lothlórien. She rewards his courteous request and pure heart with strands of her golden hair, an image Tolkien has borrowed from traditional myth and fairytale. This almost seems like a scene from a fairytale, for Gimli has put aside his long feud with the elves to forge peace. His is accompanied by a growing comradery with Legolas that will develop into the firmest of loyal friendships.

The Lady of Lórien accompanies her gift to Gimli with a prophecy about his fortunes. Although she claims that predictions are currently too murky for accurate visions of the future, she states that if the Company of the Ring are successful in their quest, then Gimli will find himself enveloped in wealth without being slaved to its power. This foretelling is particularly significant because the Lórien elves have historically mistrusted the dwarves due to their waking an ancient evil in their greedy mining in Moria. Galadriel predicts that Gimli will rise above such greed, again showing a different aspect of traditional heroism.

☞ The travellers sat still without moving or speaking. On the green bank near to the very point of the Tongue the Lady Galadriel stood alone and silent. As they passed her they turned and their eyes watched her slowly floating away from them. For so it seemed to them: Lórien was slipping backward, like a bright ship masted with enchanted trees, sailing on to forgotten shores, while they sat helpless upon the margin of the grey and leafless world.

Related Characters: Peregrin (Pippin) Took, Meriadoc (Merry) Brandybuck, Boromir, Gimli, Legolas Greenleaf, Samwise (Sam) Gamgee, Frodo Baggins, Aragorn / Strider, Galadriel

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 367

Explanation and Analysis

The Company of the Ring are solemn and sorrowful when

they leave the land of Lothlórien, watching Galadriel and the elf-forest grow distant as their three boats float down the River Anduin. They are bidding farewell to a safe haven where they have rested and enjoyed the wonders of the Lord and Lady of the Golden Wood.

The Fellowship's departure more broadly signifies the departure of all the elves and their magic from Middle-earth, leaving it a bleaker "grey and leafless world." This is not a vision but a reality, for the elves are departing by the masses to sail West over the sea. The elves recognize the closing of the Third Age of Middle-earth, choosing to end their chapter with it. The narrator compares Lórien's forest of tall and enchanted trees to the masts of a ship that bears the elves away; soon the Lórien elves will indeed join their peers to sail West. In actuality the River Anduin is the conduit that bears the Fellowship from Lothlórien toward Middle-earth's changing landscapes. The river symbolizes the transient nature of the Fellowship's mortal lives (excepting Legolas) compared to the elves' immortal, timeless existences.

Book 2, Chapter 10 Quotes

☞ "We of Minas Tirith have been staunch through long years of trial. We do not desire the power of Wizard-lords, only strength to defend ourselves, strength in a just cause. And behold! in our need chance brings to light the Ring of Power. It is a gift, I say; a gift to the foes of Mordor. It is mad not to use it, to use the power of the Enemy against him. The fearless, the ruthless, these alone will achieve victory. What could not Aragorn do? Or if he refuses, why not Boromir? The Ring would give me power of Command. How I would drive the hosts of Mordor, and all men would flock to my banner!"

Related Characters: Boromir (speaker), Aragorn / Strider, Sauron, Gandalf the Grey, Frodo Baggins

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

After furtively following Frodo as the hobbit tries to decide what path the Company of the Ring should take next, Boromir tries to convince him that they must use the weapon to combat Sauron's evil forces. The Captain of Gondor begins to rant about what he could achieve if he were able to wield the power of the Ring. This is a critical

moment, because Frodo realizes that Boromir has fallen to the Ring's corruption; the Ring-bearer can no longer trust all of the members of the Fellowship of the Ring.

Boromir, one of the strongest leaders in the Company and a traditionally heroic figure, has fallen to the Ring's evil influence. The One Ring has preyed upon his arrogance and his desire for power—Boromir does not believe Elrond and Gandalf's wisdom that the weapon cannot be wielded for noble purposes. Instead he wants to bolster Gondor's defenses with its power. Boromir recognizes that Aragorn's lineage and leadership trump his own, but still desires to wield the Ring himself to endear him as Gondor's savior. Boromir's fall to momentary evil reveals that true heroism depends on moral fortitude rather than strength of arms; this is why Frodo is better suited to the task of bearing the Ring to its destruction.

☞ The Misty Mountains were crawling like anthills: orcs were issuing out of a thousand holes. Under the boughs of Mirkwood there was deadly strife of Elves and Men and fell beasts. The land of the Beornings was aflame; a cloud was over Moria; smoke rose on the borders of Lórien.

Horsemen were galloping on the grass of Rohan; wolves poured from Isengard. From the havens of Harad ships of war put out to sea; and out of the East Men were moving endlessly: swordsmen, spearmen, bowmen upon horses, chariots of chieftains and laden wains. All the power of the Dark Lord was in motion. Then turning south again he beheld Minas Tirith. Far away it seemed, and beautiful: white-walled, many towered, proud and fair upon its mountain-seat; its battlements glittered with steel, and its turrets were bright with many banners. Hope leaped in [Frodo's] heart. But against Minas Tirith was set another fortress, greater and more strong. Thither, eastward, unwilling his eye was drawn. It passed the ruined bridges of Osgiliath, the grinning gates of Minas Morgul, and the haunted Mountains, and it looked upon Gorgoroth, the valley of terror in the Land of Mordor.

Related Characters: Saruman the White, Sauron, Frodo Baggins

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 391

Explanation and Analysis

After Boromir's betrayal in trying to forcefully take the Ring from Frodo at Amon Hen, Frodo escapes by using the Ring to disappear. He runs up the hill and rests on the Seat of Seeing (an ancient human structure that gives excellent views of the surrounding countryside), still wearing the Ring. At first seeing only mist, clear images of distant lands suddenly accost Frodo. The power of the Ring allows him to see far beyond the range of normal mortal sight.

In every direction that Frodo looks, he sees signs of war—the participants cover Middle-earth like a great plague. Most of the activity comes from Sauron's evil forces that gather to wage war on the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. The treacherous wizard Saruman is also preparing great armies for combat in his realm of Isengard. Frodo gains hope when he recognizes Gondor's valiant resistance against the Dark Lord at the beacon of Minas Tirith, but this hope is dashed when he spies the even greater forces of Sauron opposing Gondor's might. Frodo's visions are the final encouragement he needs to directly press forward to Mordor to destroy the Ring, for he cannot afford the time to divert to a safe haven such as Minas Tirith. Frodo chooses to travel to Mordor alone, showing selflessness and courage in his attempt to protect his friends from the perils of the Dark Lord's stronghold.

☛☛ "But I must go at once. It's the only way!"

"Of course it is," answered Sam. "But not alone. I'm coming too, or neither of us isn't going. I'll knock holes in all the boats first."

Frodo actually laughed. A sudden warmth and gladness touched his heart.

[...] "So my plan is spoilt!" said Frodo. "It is no good trying to escape you. But I'm glad, Sam. I cannot tell you how glad. Come along! It is plain that we were meant to go together. We will go, and may the others find a safe road!"

Related Characters: Samwise (Sam) Gamgee, Frodo Baggins (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 397

Explanation and Analysis

This heartwarming scene in the final moments of *The Fellowship of the Ring* demonstrates the mighty courage of humble hobbits. Frodo has decided that he must sacrifice himself to bear the Ring alone to Mordor, thereby protecting his friends from this seemingly-suicidal task, but Sam discovers his plan and insists on accompanying Frodo. Sam, the most loyal of companions, will not let his friend make this great sacrifice alone, and is comic yet practical when he threatens to sabotage the boats if Frodo will not take him too.

Frodo has developed wisdom and insight over the course of the Ring's journey, and he realizes that he can do the greatest good by abandoning his friends. However, he is immensely frightened by the danger and the enormity of the task in front of him. He is therefore grateful as he accepts Sam's promise to accompany him wherever the Ring leads them. Frodo even suggests that in some way their travel together is fated to occur. Despite *The Fellowship's* dismal ending with the breaking of the Company of the Ring, readers can take heart from Frodo's selflessness and Sam's courage in his unwavering loyalty to his friend.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE

The prologue is an introduction to the character, culture, and history of the race of hobbits. Readers can find further details in the Red Book of Westmarch (also known as [The Hobbit](#)) that was written by a renowned hobbit named Bilbo Baggins.

Hobbits are a small and inconspicuous people who can move so quietly and swiftly that they may at times seem magic. They are related more closely to humans than dwarves or elves, and live in the land of the Shire where they enjoy quiet, rural lifestyles. As a people, they were largely disregarded by their fellow inhabitants on Middle-earth until the exploits of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins.

Hobbits have enjoyed generations of peaceful existence in the Shire, though they are largely unaware of the labors of others that allow their idyllic lifestyles. They have “lived a peaceful pastoral life, devoid of machinery,” and enjoy the simple pleasures of life—food, drink, song, and good company. Despite their comfortable lifestyles, hobbits are curiously tough and resilient characters.

Traditionally living in holes in the earth, over time hobbits have adopted the customs of other races to build low-lying dwellings above ground. They now populate a mixture of hobbit holes and traditional houses, and sometimes live in large numbers with extended family. Hobbits revel in the comfort of home and rarely travel. Indeed, the idea of the distant sea terrifies many hobbits, and boating and swimming is largely unpopular.

Through the prologue that is purely dedicated to discussing the race of hobbits, the narrator immediately signals to readers that hobbits will be key players in The Fellowship of the Ring. The reference to further literature gives the text a slightly scholarly feel by presenting information (and Tolkien's actual book [The Hobbit](#)) as a historical record.



Everything about hobbits—their physical appearance, their movements, their lifestyles, and their relationships to other races—suggests that they are inconsequential players in Middle-earth. The narrator is setting the scene for the great reveal that it is these seemingly insignificant hobbits who will decide the very fate of Middle-earth.



Overall, the narrator has painted hobbits as a peaceful, good-natured folk who live a blessedly serene life. The narrator also reveals their preference for nature over industry. Now readers become aware that the hobbits are being protected by other peoples from unknown harmful forces. Readers may also be surprised to learn that despite their love of creature comforts and their peaceful history, hobbits are also resourceful and hardy beings if the need arises.



The narrator again highlights that hobbits are creatures of comfort. They rarely travel and fear the distant sea, which speaks to their general dislike of adventure and change. Their aversion to bodies of water contrasts to hobbits' love of the earth; they do not just cultivate the land, but traditionally they live within the earth itself. Hobbits are also described as extremely social creatures who can enjoy living in large groups; this begins to foreshadow the intense sense of loyalty and fellowship that hobbits demonstrate later in The Fellowship.



Hobbits have an unusual fondness for smoking pipe-weed and are enormously proud of their claimed invention of the practice. It is from hobbits that humans, dwarves and wizards learned the art of smoking pipe-weed as tobacco. The narrator goes into great detail to explain hobbits' passion for pipe-weed, the intricate history of its cultivation, and the many varieties of the leaf.

The Shire is divided into numerous regions that are mostly governed within families, although there are some hobbits who work the more formal role of Shirriffs (police) and Bounders (overseeing the good behavior of outsiders). The chief pastime of hobbits is growing and eating food, and social disturbance is rare, although there are growing instances of trouble from strange people and creatures at the Shire's borders.

Bilbo Baggins was a seemingly ordinary hobbit who was thrust into adventure when Gandalf the Grey and thirteen dwarves knocked on the door of his hobbit hole. He set out with his new acquaintances to the distant Lonely Mountain, undertaking a quest to destroy a dragon and reclaim great hoards of dwarf treasures.

Bilbo's adventure would have barely registered in the history books except for a chance event that happened on his journey to the Lonely Mountain. Bilbo stumbled upon a magic **ring** in the tunnels under the Misty Mountains, and partook in a game of riddles with the ring's previous owner—a miserable, hobbit-like creature called Gollum. When Gollum realized that Bilbo had found his "precious" ring in the tunnels, he rushed at Bilbo in a jealous rage, intending to kill him. Bilbo then accidentally chanced upon the ring's ability to render its wearer invisible, and used this gift to escape Gollum and exit the mountain tunnels. Gollum was both furious and devastated to lose his treasure, and cursed the name of Baggins as the thief who stole the ring.

Hobbits are not creative beings except in one aspect—their invention of smoking pipe-weed. The narrator presents their pride in this art form in great detail. This meticulous account of one aspect of hobbits' culture reflects the narrative style throughout The Fellowship. Tolkien imbues his story with intricate detail to ground the narrative in a realistic history.



The considerable lack of formal authority in the Shire evidences the hobbits' peaceful histories. The names of the "Shirriffs" and "Bounders" are traditionally English and pastoral in nature, reflecting Tolkien's upbringing in rural Worcestershire and its surrounding areas. The Shire is almost an idealized version of Tolkien's pastoral England; the prologue becomes a gentle introduction to a Middle-earth which, as readers will soon find out, is home to fantastical creatures, powers, and landscapes.



Bilbo's adventures contain fantastical elements of myth and fairytale, and have already become renowned in many of Middle-earth's regions. Gandalf seemed to know that he was the right hobbit for the quest, and Bilbo's character grew from a tame and timid hobbit to a courageous and steadfast adventurer. The narrator is setting up a similar journey for Bilbo's nephew and the protagonist of The Fellowship, Frodo.



The strange set of unlikely circumstances that led to Bilbo discovering the One Ring in the Misty Mountains and escaping Gollum's malice—a side story in [The Hobbit](#) but the seed that begins the quest in The Lord of the Rings—suggests that there is a greater force at work in Middle-earth: fate. This is a thread that will be picked up on many times throughout The Fellowship as characters comment on predetermined actions and events. Bilbo's naivety and luck, integral to his success in his worldly adventures, also suggest that simplicity is an asset to survival in a realm where powerful players overlook the humble.



For no obvious reason, when recounting this story to trusted friends, Bilbo alters some of the details about his finding of the magic **ring** and his encounter with Gollum. This does not sit well with Gandalf, who is surprised that the usually honest hobbit tells fibs about the ring.

The narrator begins to hint at the effects of what we later learn is the evil Sauron's One Ring: its dark influence taints Bilbo's usually forthright and ethical character by causing him to lie. Gandalf is so unsettled by his friend's change in character that he begins to suspect the Ring's true nature.



Upon his return to the Shire, Bilbo keeps the **ring's** existence quiet and lives a long and happy life in his homeland. Only Gandalf and Bilbo's nephew Frodo know that Bilbo keeps it on him at all times on a chain in his pocket. Beyond the ring, he also keeps a number of mementos from his adventures in various places about his home; he stores his old traveling cloak and hood in a drawer, and his sword, Sting, hangs above the fireplace.

The narrator foreshadows the Ring's corrupting influence through Bilbo's need to have it on his person at all times. Bilbo's nostalgia for the adventures of his youth is evident in his careful preservation of traveling items. His value of the thrill of travel highlights how unusual he is compared to his mostly cautious and traditionalist fellow hobbits.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

Bilbo Baggins, a wealthy and eccentric hobbit who lives at Bag End in the Shire, announces that he will be throwing an extraordinary party to celebrate his "eleventy-first" birthday. This unusual announcement prompts local townsfolk to gossip about the legends and myths that surround Bilbo and his past adventures. As a young hobbit, he mysteriously disappeared from the Shire before returning home, apparently laden with treasure. Furthermore, since his unexpected journey, hobbits have marveled at his seeming lack of aging. Despite their mistrust of unusual characters and behaviors, the conservative hobbits tolerate Bilbo's oddities because he is generous with his wealth.

Readers are privy to Bilbo's "happy ever after" since the events of [The Hobbit](#)—he has gained both advantageous and unfavorable status since his adventures, becoming the subject of silly gossip and enduring myth. Again, the narrator foregrounds the conservative nature of hobbits, who tend to dislike anything that does not agree with their insular worldviews.



Bilbo is on good terms with all of his relatives except for the Sackville-Bagginses, obnoxious hobbits who hope to inherit Bilbo's luxurious hobbit hole at Bag End. Bilbo is particularly close with his favorite nephew, Frodo Baggins, and they curiously share the same birthday of September 22. At the age of 99, Bilbo adopted Frodo as his heir, and they have lived together at Bag End ever since. While Bilbo turns 111 this year, Frodo will come of age by turning 33.

Since his journey to the Lonely Mountain, the only evils Bilbo must deal with are the Sackville-Bagginses' trivial irritations. The fate of characters is also hinted at in the strange rhythms of time and chance surrounding Bilbo and Frodo's existences—the hobbits share their birth date, and both have significant birthday milestones this year.



Excitement builds as September arrives and the much-anticipated joint birthday party grows near. Rumors of marvelous fireworks spread like wildfire, and hobbits gawk at the outlandish guests who visit Bag End—dwarves drive wagons laden with goods, and Gandalf the Grey unloads great bundles from his cart. The wizard is known in these parts for his party tricks, with hobbits unaware of his hidden great powers.

Bilbo's unusual friendships are evident in Gandalf and the dwarves' arrivals. The local hobbits' staring shows their general suspicion of anything foreign or unusual. However, they are happy to embrace Gandalf's fireworks as a known entertainment that only demonstrates a hint of magic.



After unloading the goods and shooing away curious hobbit children, Gandalf and Bilbo sit together at Bag End, looking out on the well-tended gardens. Bilbo confirms that he means to follow through with a plan, information that Gandalf is pleased to hear, although neither hobbit nor wizard elaborate further.

The next day more carts arrive bearing goods to Bag End, and orders go out across the neighborhood for provisions of every kind. Even more exciting are the invitations that flood the local post. Almost everyone from Hobbiton has been invited, and many more from the wider Shire regions. Bilbo busies himself with all things administrative for the party, barring entry to Bag End except for those on official party business.

The day of the celebration finally arrives, and guests flock to the great tents that have been erected in a large field near Bag End. As is customary, guests receive presents from the host, and this year Bilbo has outdone himself with strange and wondrous gifts for all of the partygoers. The birthday party is a great success, with every kind of food, drink, and entertainment one could think of. A crowd favorite is the magnificent fireworks show that Gandalf designed and created; it culminates with the flight of a spectacular simulated dragon.

After supper, the party's special guests who are squeezed into the central tent listen to a speech from Bilbo. The audience is full of great cheer, but become rather confused by Bilbo's muddling words as he mixes compliment with insult and recalls obscure details about his youthful adventures with the dwarves. The crowd is then outright shocked at the elderly hobbit's sudden and outlandish declaration that he is leaving the Shire permanently. He then suddenly disappears from sight in a flash of light. Many party guests consider this to be a joke in poor taste, or even rude. Frodo is the only hobbit present who seems unfazed by his uncle's strange behavior. After privately toasting good health to Bilbo, Frodo slips from the great tent to make his way home.

Meanwhile, Bilbo has slipped on his magic **ring** to become invisible at the climax of his speech. He exits the party and returns to Bag End, where he prepares for travel, wearing his old garments and sword from the Lonely Mountain adventures of his youth. He puts his ring in an envelope addressed to Frodo, but suddenly decides to take it back and slips the ring in his pocket.

This type of hinted detail without elaboration is typical of Tolkien's narration—characters often briefly introduce people, places, and ideas without further explanation. The effect is an increased sense of reader suspense alongside general worldbuilding.



The buildup to the party reinforces many aspects of hobbit culture that readers have learned about from the prologue: a love of food and drink, appreciation for orderliness, and a delight for social interaction bordering on intrusiveness.



The party again affirms hobbits' love of homely comforts and also demonstrates the generous nature of hobbits when hosting one another. Hobbits can be hypocritical creatures—they are happy to embrace foreign influence if benefits them, as in the case of Bilbo's marvelous gifts. The feature of a dragon in the fireworks show pays homage to the myth and history surrounding Bilbo and Gandalf's adventures together in the journey to the Lonely Mountain.



Bilbo's strange speech gives the audience another reason to exclude him as an eccentric and unlikeable hobbit, yet Bilbo clearly enjoys shocking his audience, as he chooses to put on the ring for a climactic disappearance with all eyes on him. Unlike the other hobbits, Frodo is in on the secret and demonstrates an unwavering loyalty to Bilbo. Frodo's integrity and curiosity mark him as of similar character to his adventurous uncle.



Bilbo's plan to leave the Shire is now revealed. The Ring is a major player in this plan, functioning as a device that enables action and as an object that creates interior conflict for Bilbo. Bilbo's dressing in his old travel clothes demonstrates the power of history to imbue objects and people with particular qualities—in this case, the well-used clothes and sword prepare Bilbo for the excitement and unknown of the road ahead.



Gandalf enters the study, and they discuss Bilbo's plans to leave the Shire. Gandalf is intrigued to hear how tired and old Bilbo feels, which is surprising given the hobbit's well-preserved appearance. Bilbo's one regret in leaving Bag End is that he will miss Frodo dreadfully. Bilbo explains that he has left everything he owns to Frodo, although Gandalf calls the hobbit out on the **ring** that remains in his pocket.

Bilbo gets angry at Gandalf's insistence that he leave the ring for Frodo—a reaction that is very out of character for the hobbit. Gandalf intentionally heightens his stature to loom over Bilbo to help persuade him to leave the ring behind. Bilbo finally relents and offers Gandalf the ring. Gandalf carefully refuses to touch it, suggesting that Bilbo leave it on the mantelpiece for Frodo as he originally planned to do. As soon as Bilbo lets go of the ring, he experiences a deep sense of relief. Whistling merrily, the hobbit steps out his front door with three dwarf companions, bidding Gandalf farewell as he eagerly sets off down the road on one last adventure.

Shortly after, Frodo enters Bag End to find Gandalf sitting in the darkness of Bilbo's study, thinking deeply. Confirming that Bilbo has left as planned, Gandalf also draws Frodo's attention to **the ring** that is waiting for him on the mantelpiece. The wizard advises Frodo to keep the ring secret, but says no more on the matter.

With Bilbo departed, Frodo is the new master of Bag End and feels it is his duty to see off the guests from the party. He finds the responsibilities of the next few days tiring, with numerous queries and intrusions from hobbits who are curious about Bilbo's whereabouts. Upon learning that Bilbo has truly gone, hobbits—including the devious Sackville-Bagginses—converge upon Bag End to claim any valuables they can get their hands on. All are disappointed to be firmly turned away. Some need a firmer hand than others, as Frodo finds three young hobbits knocking holes in the walls of Bag End, searching for Bilbo's legendary gold from the adventures of his youth.

Because of these disturbances, Frodo bars the door to all but his close friend Merry—a level-headed and responsible hobbit who has come to help Frodo deal with the aftermath of Bilbo's party. Frodo is surprised but delighted when Gandalf appears one day and demands entry to Bag End. The wizard has stopped by to wish Frodo farewell and to repeat his grave warning to keep **the ring** secret. Again, he will say no more on the subject. As Gandalf walks off into the distance, Frodo reflects that the wizard looks burdened by troubling thoughts.

Bilbo's statement about feeling his age despite his well-preserved looks raises alarm bells for Gandalf. The narrator has hinted that the wizard is more wise and powerful than his shabby appearance suggests, so readers should take note of his intuition.



It is Gandalf's loyalty to his friend's wellbeing that causes him to confront Bilbo about the Ring. Gandalf alters his appearance to reveal some of his true power to Bilbo: this establishes a recurring pattern in which characters are slowly revealed as more powerful and noble than they appear. The Ring's influence is hinted at when Bilbo feels a weight fall from his shoulders upon relinquishing it. Furthermore, there are cyclical echoes of history when Bilbo sets out for far-away lands by intentionally starting off down the road outside his front door.



Gandalf tempers his advice to his young friend with a warning to keep the Ring hidden. Again, he will not yet elaborate on his suspicions.



If all that a person had to put up with was infuriating family members, it would be a blessed life indeed. Although he despairs at his obnoxious relatives, Frodo has not yet encountered true evil. The rumors caught up in Bilbo's legendary adventures provoke young hobbits into a small adventure of their own as they forcefully inspect Bag End's walls.



Frodo is familiar with Gandalf's tendency for unexpected comings and goings, but he is alarmed by the wizard's troubled demeanor. Gandalf's second foreboding warning that Frodo must keep the Ring secret heightens readers' suspense even further—there is the sense that something enormous and sinister is about to happen.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

Bilbo's disappearance endures as a favorite talking point in Hobbiton for approximately a year, and eventually "Mad Baggins" becomes a character of legend who vanishes with a flash before reappearing laden with jewels and gold. In the meantime, Frodo deals with the gossip surrounding his associations with the "unnatural" characters of Bilbo and Gandalf, whose reputations are tarnished due to their associations with adventure, magic, and dealings with outsiders. Frodo's determined resolve to continue celebrating Bilbo's birthday each year also sparks rumors of madness. However, Frodo lives happily at Bag End throughout the following years, and begins adventuring further afield in the Shire, sometimes alone, sometimes with his close friends Merry and Pippin. As time progresses, people begin to notice that just like Bilbo, Frodo seems to barely age—as he nears his fiftieth birthday, he still appears an energetic and youthful hobbit barely into adulthood.

As he nears the age of fifty, Frodo is also becoming restless for adventure. Shire locals observe him interacting with strange travelers that are becoming more common in the Shire; Frodo is trying to learn about the rumors of outside troubles that are starting to reach even Hobbiton. These odd rumors about the outside world begin to circulate among common hobbits, and Frodo's gardener, Sam, is particularly interested in stories of magical creatures that are interwoven with the rumors.

Gandalf, who has barely visited the Shire in the seventeen years since Bilbo's departure and has not been seen at all there in the past nine years, suddenly calls on Frodo at Bag End. They stay up late into the night discussing worldly news.

The next morning Frodo and Gandalf sit by the open window of the study, where they can hear Sam cutting the hedges in the garden. Frodo presses the wizard to tell him information about **the ring** that Gandalf had refused to comment on in the darkness of the previous night. Gandalf reveals the magic ring's true nature—it is none other than the One Ring, a powerful weapon created by the Dark Lord Sauron to dominate all of Middle-earth. The wizard began to suspect its true nature after observing its unusual effects on Bilbo.

The narrator has already described the way that Bilbo's discovery of the Ring made him famous in the wider Middle-earth world. Bilbo's exploits are so unusual for a hobbit that he also becomes a beloved character of myth in the Shire, where his fellow hobbits are mostly unaware of his actual adventures. Like all myths, the legend of "Mad Baggins" is based on elements of truth and preserves some of the hobbits' cultural history. The narrator also acknowledges Frodo's anti-aging qualities that are later revealed to be a direct influence of the Ring. This directly doubles Frodo with Bilbo, and the younger hobbit also begins to show a yearning for adventure, although at this stage his wandering is safely confined to the security of the Shire.



Despite the Shire's comfortable existence, trouble abroad signals that some problems—even evils—exist in the world at large and are beginning to encroach on the Shire's borders. Rumors of magical beings begin to infringe on the narrative; the usually pragmatic Sam is fixated on these fantastical tales.



Gandalf is an agent of action and his appearance suggests that Frodo may be pushed into adventure sooner than desired. Such episodes again echo the original relationship between Gandalf and Bilbo, when the wizard appeared on the doorstep and inspired Bilbo into departing the Shire.



Finally, Frodo clearly learns about Middle-earth's overarching confrontation between forces of good and evil. Gandalf embodies the archetype of a wise and elderly character who bestows knowledge and a quest upon a possible hero figure.



Gandalf says that he has spent these last seventeen years searching for information about **the Ring**, which Sauron lost during his defeat in the War of the Last Alliance in the Second Age. Gandalf can now tell Frodo a detailed history of the Ring, which is master of the nineteen rings of power that Sauron gave to humans, elves, and dwarves in a bygone era. Like the rings of power, over time the One Ring corrupts its wearer to evil. It also actively seeks to return its creator, Sauron.

The Ring's true nature is confirmed when Gandalf casts it in the fireplace. The flames reveal script in the Black Speech on the Ring's surface: "One Ring to rule them all, One ring to find them / One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them." Finally, Gandalf tells Frodo that Sauron has risen again and is searching for the Ring in the Shire—for the Dark Lord caught the wretched creature Gollum and tortured him for information about Bilbo.

After being momentarily frozen in terror at this new knowledge of **the Ring**, Frodo seeks advice from Gandalf about what to do in response to the threat of Sauron and his evil servants (the Black Riders) who are closing in on the Shire. When Frodo laments that Bilbo did not kill Gollum in the Misty Mountains—therefore allowing news of the Ring to reach Sauron—Gandalf remarks that he is thankful that pity stayed Bilbo's hand from murder. The wizard suggests that Gollum still has some part to play in the saga of the Ring, although what that part is, he does not know.

Gandalf reveals that the only way to destroy **the Ring** is to cast it into the fires of Mount Doom in Mordor, which is where the Ring was created. Frodo shrinks at the idea of such a dangerous journey, and offers the Ring to Gandalf to take care of. The wizard jumps to his feet, alarmed by the offer; he wisely recognizes that if he takes the Ring—even for noble purposes—it will corrupt him and use its great power to distort him into an evil entity like Sauron. After calming himself, Gandalf reassures Frodo that although the wizard cannot take the burden of the Ring, he will always be there to help Frodo bear it for as long as the hobbit has it in his possession.

Through Gandalf's accounts of the Ring, The Fellowship's storytelling suddenly broadens in scope from a history of hobbits to a history of the great happenings of Middle-earth. Historic events of bygone eras rise to confront the naïve Frodo, and the Ring is revealed as possessing an evil agency of its own.



The Ring's prophetic inscription is the fabric of myth and legend, and Frodo now finds himself caught up in a legendary story. Gandalf reveals that the Ring is an inherently evil weapon that can enslave beings and represents power, ambition, and control. Even worse is the fact that Sauron is actively seeking his Ring in the Shire—this is the first instance that Frodo is confronted by an ominous threat.



Gandalf highlights the importance of Bilbo's decision not to harm Gollum in the Misty Mountains. Pity stayed his hand, and it is likely Bilbo's decent and morally nature that has prevented the Ring from corrupting him to its evil. Gandalf approves of Bilbo's mercy, suggesting that a moral compass is more important than strength of arms. Gandalf also reveals himself as a character with the gift of foresight, as he correctly predicts that Gollum still has a part to play in the fate of the Ring. Readers learn just how important Gollum's part is at the conclusion of The Lord of the Rings series, although the devious creature begins to show his face in the events of The Fellowship.



Gandalf demonstrates a complex self-awareness when he tells Frodo why he cannot take the Ring. This is the first sign that Frodo's mentor Gandalf is fallible. Readers can acknowledge Gandalf's strength in revealing this vulnerability—no one, not even the great wizard, is perfect. Through Gandalf, Tolkien also suggests that evil occurs when a person succumbs to the desire to wield power for personal or collective gain—even when that person has honorable intentions.



The two friends take time to sit and reflect on the options before them. At last, Gandalf asks Frodo what he is thinking. The hobbit admits that he is frightened, but he knows it is his responsibility to carry **the Ring** away from the Shire so that he doesn't endanger his homeland. Despite his terror, Frodo also feels a small sense of excitement at the thought of adventuring beyond the Shire. The hobbit also recognizes the grave reality that the Ring will begin to corrupt his character, and he hopes to take it to a more worthy bearer who can resist its temptations better than he can.

Gandalf is quite flabbergasted by Frodo's candid and thoughtful response—once again, the wizard says, he has been surprised by the bravery demonstrated by hobbits, similar to his previous experiences traveling with Bilbo. Gandalf advises that it is no longer safe to use the name “Baggins,” and suggests that Frodo travel using the name “Underhill.” He also recommends that Frodo travel with trustworthy companions.

Gandalf suddenly stops speaking, listening to the silence that envelopes them. Suddenly springing to the window sill, the wizard reaches outside and hauls an eavesdropper into view—the gardener, Sam, has been eagerly listening to their conversation about magical creatures and objects. The loyal gardener is petrified that the wizard will turn him into something “unnatural”—Frodo jokingly suggests a spotted toad—but he also asks to accompany Frodo as a trustworthy companion. Sam is particularly keen to visit the elves if at all possible on their journey. Gandalf laughs heartily at this new development and decides that Sam will indeed join Frodo on his quest to bear **the Ring** away from the Shire.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

Over the next three weeks, Gandalf helps Frodo make plans to leave the Shire and set out for the elf-haven Rivendell. To conceal this plan, Frodo makes a pretense of merely moving to a different house, selling Bag End to the Sackville-Bagginses and buying a cottage in the sleepy village of Crickhollow, which is situated in Buckland just beyond the Shire. After staying with Frodo for two months, Gandalf suddenly departs south to gather news on a worrying matter that he does not elaborate on. The wizard promises Frodo that he will back for his birthday party, which will also mark his farewell to Bag End.

Gandalf's character development continues—he is a facilitator who sets things in motion and a guide who advises and will offer protection, but he always leaves his charges to make choices of their own free will. It is Frodo's choice to accept the mantle of Ring-bearer (note that he is perhaps partly influenced by recent desires for adventure, and a growing attachment to the Ring). Frodo's dual desires for the comforts of home and the excitement of adventure are again on display here. His humility in admitting his weaknesses and fears with regard to the Ring will become his greatest strengths on his journey from the Shire.



The surprising streak of courage and resilience that hobbits can demonstrate surfaces in Frodo, echoing Bilbo's past enterprises. Already the Ring's influence (despite good intentions) can be seen: Frodo undertakes deception in order to carry the danger away from his homeland.



Here is the first scene of surveillance that occurs in The Fellowship. In this case it is friendly ears that are listening in the hopes of hearing about the legendary elves. Sam's subsequent commitment as a companion for Frodo promotes him as a foil for the serious and responsible Ring-bearer—Sam demonstrates relentless positivity and is often comedic in his straightforward manner of thought and speech. Here, he is the opposite of a noble hero—caught listening in a hedge, hauled by the ear through an open window, and threatened with being turned into a toad. However, Sam's lack of hesitation in joining Frodo signifies his loyal character and the unexpected yet innate courage of hobbits to undertake perilous action if the situation calls for it.



Gandalf takes on the role of guide for Frodo before the wizard suddenly leaves the Shire without explanation (yet again). Alongside Frodo, readers are not yet privy to the preoccupations of the wise.



As autumn sets in and the party approaches, Frodo grows anxious at Gandalf's failure to return. He celebrates his birthday with a small dinner with his friends Merry, Pippin, Fatty, and Folco, who over the past few days have been helping him pack for the move to Crickhollow. All four hobbits are good friends whom Frodo has known since he was a child growing up in Buckland. Frodo has decided that he and Sam will travel to his new cottage and then quietly leave for Rivendell in order to avoid rousing suspicion. Despite his friends' merry company through dinner, Frodo is melancholy at the thought of later parting with them.

The next morning, Folco returns home while Merry and Fatty drive a cart of belongings ahead to the cottage at Crickhollow. Frodo, Sam, and Pippin intend to follow on foot, enjoying the Shire's beautiful countryside as they walk and camp from Hobbiton to Buckland. Just before they leave Bag End, Frodo overhears a strange voice talking to Sam's father, the Gaffer, next door. The voice is asking for "Baggins," but the Gaffer incorrectly replies that Frodo has already left for Buckland. Frodo hears the stranger walk away, and he swiftly dismisses the strange incident; shortly thereafter the three hobbits shoulder their packs and take leave of Bag End. They begin their journey, traveling on the road in the quiet, almost invisible manner that hobbits innately seem to possess.

On their second day of crossing the Shire's countryside, the hobbits hear hoofbeats approaching behind them. Frodo feels a sudden urge to hide, and so they conceal themselves in long grass, planning to surprise Gandalf if it is the wizard searching for them. Instead, Frodo sees that it is a Black Rider coming down the road—a tall figure astride a large black horse and shrouded in a black cloak and hood—and the Rider seems to be sniffing for a scent on the air.

Frodo is frightened by the appearance of this strange Black Rider, and is considering putting on **the Ring** when the Rider suddenly moves away down the road. Frodo describes the stranger's appearance to Sam and Pippin, who were hidden further back from him. Sam recalls that his father, the Gaffer, had spoken to a similar Black Rider the day they left for Buckland. Frodo realizes this must have been the strange voice he overheard before leaving Bag End.

This is not the last time that Gandalf will disappear in the novel. He is such a powerful leader and warrior that Tolkien needs to remove him from the plot to let other characters develop their own skills and talents. In this case, Frodo will be forced to set off on his travels alone. Before leaving he starts to feel the burden of the Ring weigh heavily as he misleads his friends about his intentions. Frodo's secrecy is not to advantage himself, but to protect his friends, demonstrating a strong sense of courage and service as he sacrifices his own wellbeing for the good of the Shire.



The narrator reveals that Frodo, Sam, and Pippin are unusual hobbits who can wander the countryside without the homely comforts of hobbit holes and houses. The almost magic stealth that hobbits seems to possess will certainly come in handy during their travels. They walk down the road, a motif that signals transition: like Bilbo before him, Frodo departs Bag End to greatly impact the world through the saga of the Ring. The direct echoes of history emphasize the continuity of the world and show that core patterns of events rise and fall repetitively through time.



The narrative soon demonstrates the unpredictable, even dangerous nature of the road. The injection of evil Black Riders into the Shire frightens the hobbits and showcases Tolkien's tendency to represent good and evil through color: the Black Riders are clearly malevolent creatures because of their dark clothing and horses. The intrusion of adversity into the predictable Shire demonstrates that the hobbits' home is no longer safe for them.



Frodo almost falls to temptation to wear the Ring due to the Black Rider's sinister presence. The threatening omnipresence of evil imposes on the good-natured Shire as Frodo realizes he almost encountered a Black Rider outside of Bag End. Chance, or fate, seems to have ensured that Frodo departed in the nick of time.



The hobbits continue their journey, walking along the road by starlight, when they are again frightened into hiding by the sound of an approaching horse. It is another Black Rider, and once again Frodo feels a strong urge to use **the Ring** to disappear. However, the sudden sounds of song and laughter drive the Black Rider away.

The hobbits are relieved to stumble across a company of wandering elves; their leader, Gildor, offers the hobbits safe company for the night after hearing of their encounters with the Black Riders. While Sam is particularly delighted to meet the elves (he has long dreamed of meeting them), Gildor and his company are especially taken by Frodo—they name him “Elf-friend” for his knowledge of their language and customs. The hobbits enjoy a feast with the elves, and Gildor guesses much about Frodo’s journey, advising that he carry on without Gandalf and avoid the dangerous Black Riders. Gildor also promises to send word of Frodo’s journey to other allies he may encounter on the road, although Frodo learns that the elves of Middle-earth are increasingly departing its shores to travel West over the sea. That night, the hobbits sleep peacefully in woodland tree roots in the safety of the elves’ company.

This scene again highlights the unpredictable nature of journey and adventure—travelers are just as likely to stumble upon allies as adversities. Readers also recognize that the Black Riders are somehow connected to the Ring, and likely Sauron, as Frodo is increasingly influenced by the Ring’s temptation in their presence.



There is a stark contrast between the hobbits’ first impression of the evil Black Riders compared to the virtuous elves. The latter have noble faces, light clothing, and bright and clear voices as opposed to the Black Riders’ dark, shrouded garb and hissing speech. That the elves are safe allies is also made obvious by their joyful singing. They offer fellowship and hospitality when they comprehend the hobbits’ danger. The elves take their power from the natural world. This is the first of many instances in which the hobbits experience protection by other powerful and wholesome characters. During their meeting, the elves also acknowledge the power of knowledge and language—they are much taken by the respect Frodo shows through his mastery of some of their customs and tongue. Frodo begins to show a skill that he will rely on as he develops into the hero role.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

Frodo, Sam, and Pippin wake the next morning to find that the elves have departed, leaving fresh provisions for the hobbits. Frodo tells his friends that the roads are no longer safe, and they take to the woods to avoid the Black Riders. It is slow going through the underbrush toward the Buckleberry Ferry that connects the Shire to Buckland, and the hobbits become disheartened as they lose their way. They also hear frightening cries nearby that may belong to Black Riders closing in on them.

After many hours of pushing through the woods, the group emerges from the trees and realizes that they have navigated too far south. Pippin recognizes fields belonging to Farmer Maggot. This alarms Frodo almost as much as the Black Riders, for he has been terrified of the farmer ever since Maggot set his dogs on a young Frodo who used to steal mushrooms from his fields. Pippin advises that Farmer Maggot is a friend of his and Merry’s who will help them evade the Black Riders, so they make for the farmhouse.

The hobbits’ allies have moved on and once again the naïve hobbits must rely on their own wits and sheer luck to avoid the evil Black Riders. Despite their fears, they carry on through danger toward safety.



Frodo feels fear of a different kind here—not fear of evil, but fear of the righteous wrath of a farmer aimed at a mischievous trespasser. The hobbits’ desperate situation means that he has no other choice but to go along with Pippin’s plan to ask Farmer Maggot for help.



Farmer Maggot is at home, and he and his family warmly welcome the three hobbits with food and beer. The farmer also reveals that a Black Rider stopped by the farm earlier in the day, searching for a hobbit by the name of Baggins. Farmer Maggot is an astute person who begins to piece together much of Frodo's story, realizing that the three hobbits are in trouble. Frodo, Sam, and Pippin gratefully accept his offer to conceal them in his farm cart and drive them to the Buckleberry Ferry under the cover of darkness.

On the way, Frodo, Sam, and Pippin hear muffled hoof steps, but luckily it is Merry, not a Black Rider, who appears out of the darkness. He has come to meet his friends after expecting their arrival earlier at Crickhallow. The hobbits thank Farmer Maggot for his aid, and before he turns back to his home, he gifts Frodo a covered basket. Frodo laughs when he realizes it is a basket of mushrooms.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

Merry leads Frodo, Sam, and Pippin onto the Buckleberry Ferry, the only way to cross the Brandywine River and enter Buckland until the Brandywine Bridge twenty miles further ahead. The hobbits are greatly relieved to have entered Buckland safely—especially when they spy a creature that may be a Black Rider who has followed them but cannot cross the river. Buckland is better protected than the Shire, for it is bordered by the barriers of the Brandywine River and a purpose-grown hedge.

The hobbits walk from the Ferry to Frodo's cottage in Crickhollow, where they are welcomed by Fatty. Under Merry's direction, Fatty has helped set up the cottage in a warm and homely manner. Frodo, Sam and Pippin are relieved to take baths and eat supper. Frodo finally reveals his plan to journey to Rivendell to Merry, Pippin and Fatty, but is shocked to find that his friends already know. Furthermore, they are fully aware of **the Ring's** existence and the danger it brings its bearer. Frodo is flabbergasted to learn that his friends have long formed a conspiracy to work out Frodo's plans, with the chief spy being his loyal gardener, Sam. Despite being terribly afraid, Merry and Pippin have determined to join their two friends on the adventure to Rivendell and will not be persuaded otherwise.

It is not just Frodo, Sam, and Pippin who recognize the inherently evil nature of the Black Riders, for Farmer Maggot recognized it immediately too. The scenes with Farmer Maggot speak to the sometimes surprising nature of hobbits and the generosity of strangers in aiding their travelers on the road.



In these early encounters with danger, the hobbits prove resourceful and courageous as they evade the Black Riders (even if this is the result of luck as much as skill). This bodes well if Frodo is to continue his all-important role as Ring-bearer.



Unlike the Shire, Buckland has physical protective barriers against evil entry that the hobbits can rely on to slow down their enemy's pursuit. These defenses stem from the historic threat of wolves and of malevolent trees from the neighboring Old Forest. This is also an important moment for all the hobbits, as it is their first time leaving the borders of the Shire.



Frodo, Sam, and Pippin are relieved to be able to luxuriate in the comforts of baths and supper; they still have much development until they become hardened travelers. Frodo cannot believe that he has experienced another bout of deception at the hands of friends—in this case the hobbits have been spying on him in their concern for Frodo's wellbeing. It due to this concern (and perhaps due to their strong sense of curiosity) that Merry and Pippin demand to join Frodo's quest. In spite of their fears of the road, they naively but earnestly demonstrate great courage in wanting to face peril alongside their friends.



Frodo is shocked by his friends' collective deceit, but he is thankful for their courage and friendship in accompanying him into danger. With Sam the chief investigator of the conspiracy, Merry has taken on the role of chief planner; he has organized appropriate travel packs and ponies so that the four hobbits can leave immediately, while Fatty will stay behind at Crickhollow to keep up the pretense that Frodo is now living there. Fatty is relieved with his part, for he is less adventurous than Merry and Pippin and not as wholly devoted to Frodo as the loyal Sam.

Readers are surprised once more by the pluck and ingenuity of hobbits. Merry is revealed as wise beyond his years; like Farmer Maggot, he is shrewder and more discerning than most hobbits. His organizational skills will likely be useful on the road. Fatty is terrified by the events of the Ring, and shows less courage than his friends because he cannot manage his fear to accompany the group beyond the Shire. The compassionate Merry has decided Fatty can still feel valued by looking after the Crickhollow cottage.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

Because the Black Riders may be closing in again, the hobbits leave Crickhollow at first light the next morning. Frodo wants to avoid established roads, so they enter the sinister Old Forest, where Merry has a vague idea of the paths that lead through the trees. However, he soon finds that the Forest has a mind of its own, and the paths and landmarks have changed since he last entered. Eventually the despondent hobbits realize that the trees have closed in on them, forcing them to travel southeast rather than their intended northeast movement.

The hobbits' progressively dreary outlook matches the gloomy and foreboding atmosphere of the Old Forest, where trees actively herd them in the wrong direction. This a pattern that continues throughout The Lord of the Rings series, in which the physical landscapes reflect characters' states of mind.



Eventually the group descends into a steep valley in the heart of the forest, coming to the River Withywindle. As they follow the river's winding path, Frodo, Merry, and Pippin are overcome by an unnatural tiredness and fall asleep beside the river. Sam barely stays conscious, when two distinct noises startle him. Checking on his friends, he sees that a great willow tree is holding a motionless Frodo in the river, while Pippin and Merry have been almost wholly swallowed within the willow's great trunk.

The hobbits are introduced to an example of the danger that is regularly experienced beyond the Shire and Buckland. The supernatural willow is the stuff of fairytales, experienced in real life. Sam is the only hobbit to resist the willow's magical drowsiness, perhaps because he is the most pragmatic and down-to-earth member of the group.



Sam swiftly rescues Frodo from the water. Frodo immediately wakes up, but the two cannot free their trapped friends from the tree's grasp. It becomes apparent that the willow tree is a malevolent being who will not let go of Merry and Pippin. In a state of absolute panic, Frodo runs down the riverbank calling frantically for help. He is surprised to be answered by the comical character of Tom Bombadil.

Sam's first loyalty is always to Frodo, and he rescues him first. After they unsuccessfully try to rescue Merry and Pippin from the willow tree, Frodo gives in to sheer terror as he wildly yells for help. It is highly fortuitous that the one person who can help them in the desolate Old Forest happens to be walking nearby at this moment.



Bombadil approaches the distressed hobbits while loudly singing nonsensical songs. He is quite a sight, dressed in a tall crown, blue coat, and yellow boots, and he hops and dances as he sings his silly tunes. He appears to be familiar with the dangers of the tree that he identifies as Old Man Willow, and sings into its trunk to order its release of Merry and Pippin; the tree complies.

Tom Bombadil is a magical and almost childish entity who can seem out of place in the events of The Lord of the Rings. This can be explained by the fact that Bombadil was an earlier fictional creation that Tolkien transplanted into The Fellowship of the Ring. Here, he stands in as one of the many allies who aid the hobbits in their times of need.



The relieved hobbits follow Tom Bombadil back to his home, which is perhaps the only abode in the Old Forest. Tom and his wife, Goldberry, have invited them to stay for supper. As the hobbits approach the charming home, they are welcomed with a beautiful duet as Tom and Goldberry sing together.

Tom and Goldberry's welcoming nature sharply contrasts the perils of the Old Forest, and is reminiscent of the Shire's good cheer, which the hobbits need on a spiritual level after falling into a frightening situation beyond their capabilities in their encounter with the willow tree.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7

Frodo, Sam, Pippin, and Merry find cheer and comfort at the house of Tom Bombadil. Meeting Goldberry, they are struck by her elegance and beauty, but she soon makes them feel at ease with her warm reception. The four hobbits are washed, fed, watered, and refreshed; they enjoy themselves so much in the company of their wondrous hosts that they find themselves communicating by song in their joy. After a merry supper, they fall into a deep sleep. The hobbits' rest is interrupted by terrifying dreams, although they quickly relax and fall back asleep after waking to the safe feelings of Tom Bombadil's house. Sam sleeps contentedly all night.

As in their meeting with Farmer Maggot, the hobbits are struck by the unlooked-for generosity of strangers during their travels when they enter the house of Tom Bombadil. He and his wife Goldberry are clearly characters aligned with good rather than evil, for they are a mixture of good cheer, beauty, and clear voices, similar to the elves. That night, despite their safety, three of the hobbits have nightmares before settling back into sleep. Their dreams may symbolize the rapid changes and challenges they have been facing on the road, as well as the lingering presence of Old Man Willow. Sam is again depicted as an everyday man who acts as a practical (and sometimes comic) foil to the sensitive Frodo.



The hobbits wake the next morning to Tom's whistling as he moves about the house. Because it is raining, they gladly accept his invitation to stay another night under his hospitality. While Goldberry makes use of the heavy rain for a washing day, Tom entertains the hobbits with stories of plants, animals, and peoples. The hobbits learn more about Old Man Willow (the tree that attacked them), the Old Forest, and the dangerous Barrow-downs that border the Forest. Tom's tales blend into a great myth that details the very fabric of Middle-earth itself. When Frodo asks Tom who he really is, Tom replies that he is "Eldest," who was present long before humans and hobbits arrived to these lands. Tom is older even than the ancient Dark Lord Sauron.

Tom is a mysterious being of myth who personifies nature and time. As the most ancient of creatures, he shares a great number of stories with the hobbits to preserve knowledge of previous eras as well as present day concerns. Tom's art of storytelling is a type of magic in itself, for his stories weave together in such a way that the hobbits become privy to the underpinnings of Middle-earth as a whole.



It is following this chilling reminder of the hobbits' quest that Goldberry appears in the house, drawing their attention to the improved weather. Tom says they should have supper, and somehow it is even better than the fare they consumed the night before. After supper, Goldberry sings them a number of songs before wishing them a good night and retiring to bed. Tom, however, is wide awake, and peppers the hobbits with questions.

Tom and Goldberry distract the hobbits from their evil enemies to allow them rest and rejuvenation.



Tom seems to know much about the individual hobbits' backgrounds and the history of the Shire at large. He has received much of this information from the elves, as well as his friend Farmer Maggot, whom he holds in high regard. Tom demands to see **the Ring** and even puts it on, but he is immune to its power of invisibility, shocking the hobbits. Frodo is somewhat annoyed at Tom's flippant regard for the Ring as he puts it to his eye and makes it vanish and reappear.

Tom ends the night by offering advice for their journey around weather and routes. He also teaches the hobbits a song that they can sing to call for his help if they run into danger the next day. Frodo, Pippin, Sam, and Merry fall asleep, with no dreams to trouble their rest tonight.

Tom's extensive knowledge about the hobbits stems not from his ancient powers but from his relationships with other hobbits. Frodo's annoyance at Tom is perhaps a sign of the Ring's corrupting influence, for this sudden change of character regarding the Ring reflects Bilbo's past words and actions. In this case Frodo is especially alarmed when Tom hides the Ring, demonstrating Frodo's growing attachment to the evil weapon.



Tom arms the hobbits with a song; Tolkien again promotes the power of language as a weapon of courage against terror. The hobbits rest easy that night, perhaps feeling safer in the knowledge that Tom can be called upon if they run into danger the following day.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 8

The next morning, Frodo, Merry, Sam, Pippin, and their ponies leave the house of Tom Bombadil and travel north into the hills of the Barrow-downs—a series of burial mounds crowned by monoliths. At midday, the hobbits stop for rest and food, and after their long morning ride they accidentally fall asleep under the warm sun.

They awake to find that it is dusk and that a thick fog surrounds them. Disheartened by the ominous shift in weather, the hobbits move slowly through the fog in what they believe is a northerly direction. Frodo hurries ahead of the group when he believes he spies the exit from the Barrow-downs. He finds that he is mistaken, and turning back, has lost his companions to the fog. Suddenly he hears cries through the mist and tries to find their source. Ascending a hill and surrounded by an increasingly icy wind, he sees a barrow before him. Frodo hears a sinister voice before being confronted by the spectral figure of a barrow-wight. The creature sizes Frodo with an iron-like grip, and he falls unconscious.

The hobbits have taken heart from their stay with Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, feeling ready to move forward in their journey. They must pass through ancient burial grounds, an environment that stands as tribute to the history of human kings of old. However, evil has infected the burial mounds and they are now well known as the domain of evil barrow-wights.



A shift from warmth to gloom occurs in the weather and in the hobbits' moods. Again Tolkien broadens the world of Middle-earth, demonstrating that evil forces exist beyond Sauron. The hobbits' folly in falling asleep and then becoming separated shows that they still have much to learn.



When Frodo awakes, he realizes that he is trapped inside the burial mound. He is desperately afraid to be at the mercy of a barrow-wight, but steels his nerve to try and formulate a plan. He can see Sam, Merry, and Pippin lying near him, wrapped in white clothing, gold, and jewelry, with a long sword lying across their necks.

There is a notable contrast between the safety of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry's hospitality and the hobbits' terrifying experiences immediately preceding and following their stay. The darkness of the forest and within the barrows is the opposite of a bright and warm home. Frodo is terrified to be within the barrow-wight's evil grasp, but he does not give in to his fear and instead tries to find a way out of the dire situation.



Suddenly a chanting song wafts through the darkness, and Frodo is chilled to the bone. When he sees a long arm groping toward Sam from a passage behind the hobbits, Frodo panics even further and considers putting on **the Ring** and running away. But his loyalty to his friends stops him, and his growing courage allows him to take hold of a short sword lying in the barrow's treasure. He hacks at the advancing arm, severing the hand at the same moment that the sword shatters. All light in the barrow vanishes as snarling noises echo around Frodo.

Frodo demonstrates immense courage in dealing with his fear to try and protect his friends. He will not give in to the evil Ring's temptation to disappear from sight and run away, as he will not abandon the others to the barrow-wight's clutches. Frodo's actions are in two ways heroic: his internal struggle as he resists the Ring's influence is matched by his external struggle when he attacks the barrow-wight's groping arm.



Tripping over Merry, Frodo suddenly remembers Tom Bombadil's song that he taught to the hobbits in case of emergency. Frodo nervously begins to sing and hears a reply from far away, followed by Tom Bombadil's entrance to the barrow in a stream of light. Bombadil swiftly vanquishes the barrow-wight and revives the other hobbits. He then spreads the barrow's treasures on the green grass atop the burial mound, choosing from the piles a brooch for Goldberry and daggers for each of the hobbits to wear. He also retrieves the hobbits' ponies, who ran away from the barrow-wight's presence.

Singing helps to maintain Frodo's hope in the face of adversity. The hobbits survive their ordeal by once more relying on the strength and fellowship of another character, the ancient Tom Bombadil, who is aligned with light and goodness.



Tom leads the hobbits out of the Barrow-downs and accompanies them to the road. He takes his leave to return home to Goldberry, advising the group to make for an inn called The Prancing Pony at the nearby town of Bree. The hobbits hurriedly ride toward the warmth and safety of the inn.

Tom reminds readers of Gandalf, for both are wise and powerful beings who offer their guidance to the hobbits. Tom's interventions have been crucial to the hobbits' survival in Gandalf's unexplained absence.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 9

Humans and hobbits are the chief inhabitants of the town of Bree, which is also a bustling stopover for travelers. Upon entering the town by nightfall, Frodo, Pippin, Merry, and Sam are uneasy about the gatekeeper's questions concerning their identities and business. The gatekeeper does not notice the dark shadow that slips over the gate after he lets the hobbits through.

The hobbits have reached the presumed safety of Bree, but a possibly evil presence follows them into the town.



Frodo and his companions enter The Prancing Pony, where the innkeeper Barliman Butterbur settles them in cozy rooms. The appearance of hobbits from the Shire seems to remind Butterbur of something, but he cannot place it. After dinner, Merry rests in the rooms while Frodo, Sam, and Pippin venture into the common room for some company and news. They find a mixture of hobbits, humans, and dwarves drinking and eating food.

While the humans and dwarves mostly speak of troubling events occurring beyond Bree, the Bree hobbits warmly welcome the three Shire hobbits and are curious about their travels. Frodo is using the name Underhill, as Gandalf suggested, and invents a story that he is collecting information about hobbits beyond the Shire to possibly write a book. During conversation, Frodo becomes aware of a mysterious hooded stranger smoking a pipe at the edge of the room. Butterbur identifies the figure as a Ranger called Strider, and warns Frodo to steer clear of him.

Strider waves Frodo over to join him, which the hobbit uneasily agrees to. The Ranger seems to guess that Frodo's name is not Underhill, and warns him to keep his friends from giving away any secrets. Strider and Frodo become alarmed when they realize that Pippin is close to revealing Frodo's and **the Ring's** identities as the young hobbit tells a crowd about Bilbo's eleventy-first birthday party.

Frodo steals the crowd's attention with a few words of thanks for their hospitality, during which he resists a strong and sudden urge to put on **the Ring**. His audience is in good cheer and demands a song from Frodo, who obliges with a tune that grows increasingly silly. The hobbit begins to leap around the tables in performance, but slips, and is horrified when he vanishes from sight by accidentally putting on the Ring. The crowd is amazed and then angry, moving away from Pippin and Sam in suspicion.

Frodo crawls to the edge of the room and removes **the Ring**, feeling immensely foolish and uncertain as to how it suddenly ended up on his finger. Strider addresses Frodo by his real name of Baggins and exclaims "You have put your foot in it! Or should I say your finger?" Although Frodo tries to play ignorant, Strider demands to talk with the hobbit in private. Frodo agrees and then steps forward to address the upset audience in the common room, but they do not believe him when he states he merely fell down and crawled away under the tables.

Butterbur tries to grasp at a memory that may be important in regard to his new guests, but he cannot remember it. This is later revealed to be a message from Gandalf—one that would have made the hobbits' journey much easier had they heard it when it was delivered.



Strider's humble and mysterious appearance disguises goodwill and noble heritage, continuing the theme of heroism appearing in unlikely places. At first, however, Frodo believes he may be a threat to the hobbits, and clearly the townspeople like Butterbur are suspicious of him.



Strider's conversation does nothing to ease Frodo's suspicions that the man is aligned with forces of evil. Indeed, Strider seems too invested in the hobbits' background to be a mere onlooker at the inn.



Frodo once again resists the Ring's influence, but somehow the weapon slips onto his finger as he capers about on the tables. The Ring has some agency of its own, and as Gandalf said previously, it wants to be found and returned to Sauron.



The Ring's accidental use highlights a tension between free will and fate in the novel—was it chance or some greater power that caused Frodo's disappearance from sight? Strider's use of the name Baggins and his pointed comment about Frodo's finger reveals the Ranger's knowledge of Frodo and the Ring, but Frodo still cannot tell if he means them harm. The crowd at the inn does not believe Frodo's story that he fell down out of sight, and now views the hobbits suspiciously as troublemakers.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 10

Frodo, Sam, and Pippin return to their rooms and find that Strider is already there, while Merry is absent. The Ranger tries to convince the hobbits that he is an ally who wants to aid them on their journey. It turns out that he has been trying to find Frodo and has followed the hobbits since their exit from the Barrow-downs, slipping over the gates and into Bree behind them. The hobbits distrust Strider's strange story and appearance, although Frodo notes that a servant of Sauron would likely assume a "fairer" appearance than the rugged Ranger. Strider fills them in about the Black Riders, who are likely aware of their current whereabouts. Finally, the Ranger offers to guide the hobbits away from Bree using little-known wild paths.

As the hobbits argue among themselves about whether to trust Strider, they are interrupted by Butterbur, who bears a letter for Frodo from Gandalf. The innkeeper was meant to send it to Frodo three months ago, but had forgotten all about it. He begs Frodo and Gandalf to forgive his error. Butterbur is anxious to help the hobbits, even when he learns that Black Riders from Mordor are searching for them, putting the entire inn at risk. He notices Merry's absence and sends his servant, Nob, to look for the missing hobbit.

Upon Butterbur's exit, Strider prompts Frodo to read Gandalf's letter. It reveals that the wizard urged them to leave the Shire two months earlier than their actual departure, instructing them to make for Rivendell and to trust Strider if they meet him. The Ranger further convinces the hobbits of his good character by reminding them he has not attacked them, despite having the skills to easily overpower them. Sam is scared by the sight of a great sword hanging from the Ranger's belt, but Strider pulls it out to demonstrate that it is broken below the hilt, the two **shards** ineffective for combat. Strider reveals his real name as Aragorn, and pledges his service to the hobbits. They accept Strider as their guide to Rivendell.

Like Gandalf, Strider is a vital source of history who informs the hobbits of the various powers in the world of Middle-earth. The hobbits try to work out whether they should trust this strange man who offers to aid them in their journey. Frodo thinks that an agent of Mordor would try to deceive them by disguising its evil nature, but Strider makes no attempt to disguise his battered and threatening appearance, suggesting that he is not actually a danger.



The return of Butterbur's memory reveals some of Gandalf's past movements and helps shape the hobbits' future choices in trusting Strider. Butterbur proves himself a simple yet goodhearted man who aids the hobbits against evil despite his poor memory and great fear of the Black Riders.



The contents of Gandalf's letter are crucial, as they prove that Strider is a friend of the wizard's and an ally to the hobbits. Strider's revelation of his true name and his display of a broken sword play into the myth and prophecy that surround his character. The hobbits will learn more on this count in Rivendell.



Shortly after, Merry and Nob enter the room in a hurry. Merry explains that he has encountered a Black Rider while taking a stroll outside the inn: after observing the Rider colluding with men of Bree including Bill Ferny and Harry the Gatekeeper, Merry attempted to track the creature before he involuntarily surrendered to a strange, dreamlike state. Nob found him lying by the roadside. Strider suggests that Merry was put to sleep by the “Black Breath,” presumably a Black Rider’s exhalation that puts a person into a deep, almost unconscious state. The Ranger judges it unsafe for the hobbits to sleep in their own rooms, so they settle in another. Frodo, Sam, and Pippin fill Merry in about Strider and Gandalf’s letter while the Ranger and Nob arrange their original rooms to look like the hobbits are sleeping there. Strider returns to keep watch over the hobbits, who fall asleep despite their deep anxiety.

Bill Ferny and Harry the Gatekeeper’s scheming with the Black Rider suggests that men more easily give in to the greed and fear attached to evil forces compared to hobbits. Merry has demonstrated courage (and naivety) in trying to track the Black Rider, as the sinister creatures reveal another strange and evil power. Strider’s prediction that the hobbits will not be safe if they sleep in their own rooms this evening is based on his knowledge of evil creatures’ movements; this might even be considered a form of foresight.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 11

While Frodo, Pippin, Sam, and Merry prepare for sleep in Bree, back in Crickhollow Fatty is alarmed when he sees ominous shadows approaching Frodo’s cottage. He runs out the back door to the safety of neighbors, and the ancient horn of Buckland is sounded in alarm to warn hobbits of danger. The horns force three Black Riders to openly ride out from Buckland after realizing that Frodo is not at the cottage.

Fatty and the Buckland residents’ actions in the face of danger from Black Riders once again demonstrates the toughness and resilience of hobbits. The Bucklanders practice a traditional form of heroism when they sound the alarm and take up arms to protect each other from an evil presence in their midst.



The next morning, back in Bree, Strider wakes Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin at first light. They discover that their original rooms have been ransacked, and all ponies and horses have been let loose from the stables. The group’s departure is delayed as they search for at least one pony to purchase as a packhorse to carry their provisions into the wild. The only pony for sale is owned by the malicious Bill Ferny, who demands an outrageously high price for the malnourished beast. After purchasing the pony, Strider and the hobbits leave Bree at mid-morning. Many of the town’s suspicious inhabitants watch the group depart.

Strider deals with the necessary minor evil that is Bill Ferny in order to outfit their party with an indispensable packhorse. The hobbits cannot hide their departure from Bree locals as planned, and are uncomfortable at the surveillance and suspicion that is directed their way after the strange happenings of the night.



After walking some miles down the main road, Strider cuts left to lead the hobbits into the wilderness. The small company spends two days walking through the woods without trouble until they reach the boggy Midgewater Marshes. It is slow and hazardous going through the marshes, and insects attack the hobbits relentlessly. On their fourth night since they set out from Bree, Frodo and Strider notice strange flashing lights far off in the distance. The next day, the group finally reaches the opposite side of the marshes. Strider points out the ancient ruins of Weathertop on a hill in the distance, explaining that it was once a watchtower for the men of Númenor. They strike out for the ruins to gain a view of the journey before them.

A miserable landscape reflects a miserable mind as the hobbits tire quickly during their struggles through the marshes. However, they do not give up in their quest together and put their trust in Strider’s navigation. Strider’s knowledge of the ancient men of Númenor again hints at his noble lineage.



Reaching Weathertop after a day's march, Strider discovers signs of a great battle and a stone marked with hastily made scratches. He believes that Gandalf may have left the stone as a sign to indicate he was at the ruins three days earlier before great danger caused him to flee. Strider suggests that it was Gandalf's power that he and Frodo witnessed flickering in the night sky three days ago—the wizard was likely attacked by Black Riders and abandoned his camp at Weathertop.

The party decides to light a small fire in a hollow on the side of the hill. Frodo suddenly sees black shapes moving toward the bottom of the hill, warning his friends that Black Riders may be approaching. Strider advises that they should stay put, as they are better protected by the fire. He shares myths with the hobbits to raise their spirits. This includes the Song of Beren and Lúthien, an ancient tale of an elf princess who fell in love with a man. Together they were able to successfully destroy an ancient enemy who was Sauron's master at the time. Lúthien then chose to give up her immortality so she could join Beren in death. The hobbits notice a noble change in Strider's disposition as he speaks of great deeds and peoples long past.

After Strider finishes his stories, Frodo, Pippin, Merry, and Sam rest and keep watch. The hobbits suddenly feel a sense of dread creep over them, and Strider organizes them with their backs to the fire in preparation for an attack by Black Riders.

Several dark figures suddenly materialize at the edge of the campfire's light. Merry and Pippin throw themselves down in terror, while Sam huddles at Frodo's side. As five Black Riders advance on the Ring-bearer, Frodo cannot resist the overwhelming urge to slip on **the Ring**. He does so, and at once can see the figures of the Riders more clearly—they have fearsome appearances and carry menacing weapons. The tallest of the figures, wearing a crown and bearing a long sword and a knife, springs forward at Frodo.

Still wearing **the Ring**, Frodo leaps downward to stab the feet of his attacker, meeting the crowned Black Rider with a cry of "O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!" At the same time, he feels an icy stab to his shoulder. Reeling from the pain, he sees the bright figure of Strider leap into battle wielding a flaming brand (a burning piece of wood) in each hand. With a final push, Frodo manages to slip the Ring from his finger before he falls unconscious from the pain of his wound.

Strider's powers of observation allow him to "read" recent history. If his reading is correct, then Gandalf undertook a battle of epic proportions with Black Riders before escaping them. The hobbits begin to realize the extent of Gandalf's power when they imagine one individual combating multiple Black Riders; he can certainly do more than just make fireworks.



Cultures memorialize the feats of their ancestors in storytelling and song. In the story he sings to distract the hobbits from approaching evil, Strider describes the meeting and courtship of Beren and Lúthien Tinúviel. The song weaves a vision that offers characters (and readers) insights into bygone eras and establishes the power of myth to both ground a narrative and to broaden its world. It will later be revealed that this story also reflects Strider's own life, as he too is a human beloved by an elf (Arwen) who chooses to give up her immortality for his sake.



Evil bears down on the hobbits, and they are organized into a defense by Strider. The Black Riders again show their power in not just their strength, but also the sense of dread that accompanies them.



The light of the fire helps protect the hobbits from the shadowy threats of the Black Riders. Despite their terror, the hobbits show courage in that they do not abandon one another to the enemy. However, Frodo can no longer resist the evil power of the Ring; his loss of free will results in his entry to the shadowy realm walked by Sauron's wraithlike servants.



By invoking the name of an ancient Elvish deity, Frodo's attack shows that words and language can be powerful weapons against evil. However, the hobbits are no match for the strength of the destructive Black Riders. Through his courage and strength of arms in driving away the evil beings, Strider proves his character to the group beyond doubt. Once more, it is fortuitous that there are constantly allies to step in and guide, and sometimes save, the hobbits during their journey.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 12

When Frodo regains consciousness, he is clutching **the Ring** in his hand and lying beside the fire. His friends are overjoyed that he is awake, sharing the news that the Black Riders retreated at Strider's fiery attack, but that Strider has also disappeared for the past hour. The Ranger then startles them with his return, explaining that he has been trying to discover the Black Riders' movements.

When Strider learns of Frodo's wound, he is gravely concerned, especially when he later discovers the hilt of the weapon used to pierce Frodo's shoulder. Strider recognizes it as a cursed blade—its influence will soon permanently corrupt Frodo. Strider finds a plant named "athelas" that he uses to treat the hobbit's wound, although it will not stop the curse for long.

At daybreak the next morning, Strider and the hobbits hasten from Weathertop toward Rivendell. For approximately ten days they struggle through the wilderness, with Frodo's wound growing increasingly worse. The group keeps away from the road as much as possible, fearing another encounter with Black Riders. Their chilling journey is interrupted only by Strider finding a hopeful token as they approach a bridge—it is a green elf-stone jewel that has been placed on the road—as well as the party's stumbling upon three stone trolls. These are the very same creatures that Bilbo, Gandalf, and the dwarves had outwitted at the beginning of their journey to the Lonely Mountain long ago. The reminder brings brief cheer to the hobbits.

Strider and his charges are forced to return to the road for the final leg of their journey to Rivendell. Hiding at the sound of hoof beats coming fast from behind them, they are amazed to be discovered by Glorfindel—a powerful elf-lord, well-known to Strider, who has been sent by Elrond to aid their party's journey. It was he who left the elf-stone token before the bridge. As Frodo's health declines, Glorfindel places him atop his horse so that Frodo can race ahead if they are attacked by the Black Riders. Frodo is unwilling to leave his friends, but Glorfindel reminds him that the Riders are focused on pursuing only the **Ring**-bearer—the others will be safe.

The hobbits are thankful that Frodo awakens, while Strider judges them safe enough to try to leave briefly and search for information on the Black Riders.



Frodo has been stabbed by an evil blade that spiritually as well as physically harms the hobbit. Strider demonstrates some proficiency in healing, adding to his already apparent strengths in navigation and combat.



It is essential that Frodo reaches the elf-haven Rivendell for treatment of his dire wound. Strider's discovery of the green elf-stone symbolizes his destiny as a future king who is known as "Elessar," or "Elf-stone," although readers are unaware of his heritage at this stage of the novel. Finally, the group find by chance creatures from a more recent myth (Bilbo's experiences in [The Hobbit](#)) when they strangely happen upon the three stone trolls.



Frodo's loyalty and selflessness in remaining with his friends through danger is only trumped by Glorfindel's rationale that Frodo can better protect them by actually drawing the Black Riders away. Once again a powerful external force appears to help the hobbits on their way.



For the next two days, Glorfindel and Strider push the hobbits hard toward safety. As they approach the Ford of Bruinen that borders Rivendell's lands, five Black Riders burst into pursuit behind the party. Glorfindel commands his horse to run forward with Frodo, and the swift steed manages to evade four more Black Riders who appear from Frodo's side to cut off his escape. Sauron's nine servants race after the hobbit, and their power over Frodo and **the Ring** wills the hobbit to pause and look back after he has crossed the Ford of Bruinen.

The foremost Black Rider walks to the edge of the Ford and commands Frodo to return to meet them. The hobbit retaliates by invoking the names of Elbereth and Lúthien, but is struck silent when the Riders begin to cross the Ford. The enemy is almost upon Frodo when great waves of foaming white riders and horses come rushing down the River Bruinen. The magical waves sweep away the Black Riders who are in the middle of the river, and the rest of the dark creatures' steeds bear them into the rushing current, mad with fear. After seeing all nine of the Black Riders swept away, Frodo falls from his own horse, unconscious.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1

Several days later, Frodo wakes and finds himself in Rivendell. Resting in bed to gain his bearings, he sits up sharply in amazement when he realizes that none other than Gandalf the Grey is sitting beside him. The wizard explains that Elrond, Lord of Rivendell, has healed Frodo's wound by removing a splinter of the cursed knife that was buried deeply in Frodo's torso. Gandalf also fills in many other details for Frodo, including the nature of the Black Riders, their vanquishing at the Ford of Bruinen through Gandalf and Elrond's combined magic, and Strider's true identity as a descendant of ancient kings.

Frodo reunites with the ever-loyal Sam, and they accompany their friends to a feast-like dinner in the House of Elrond. Frodo looks in wonder upon the particularly noble figures of Glorfindel, Elrond, and Elrond's daughter Arwen, all of whom sit near one another at a great table.

Frodo is close to being overcome by the evil of the Black Riders and the Ring, despite having almost reached the safety of Rivendell. The full strength of the Black Riders is bent on turning him to their will and recovering the Ring.



Once again Frodo rallies his courage and invokes the names of ancient Elvish beings to protect him from harm. He is rescued not through his own design but by magic belonging to Elrond and Gandalf. The hobbits have required regular rescue and guidance during their escape from the Shire. The end of this book marks a change in this pattern, as they learn to rely on themselves as well as others. Overall, Frodo's general lack of power has actually been an asset, because he is less likely to be tempted by the Ring's dark influence.



The mighty wizard has returned to the story in his original role as a guide and a communicator of knowledge. He fills in gaps in recent history that Frodo has missed while unconscious. Elrond's skill in healing is presumed to be great due to his removal of the evil knife shard from Frodo's body.



Rivendell is a haven of light and goodness that is clearly linked to morally good forces. It acts as a refuge for the protagonists, offering them the chance to heal and make plans. Arwen appears only briefly here, but she is actually a major figure in Aragorn's story.



After attending to the business of food, Frodo is also delighted to meet the person sitting beside him, for it is Bilbo's old acquaintance Glóin (one of the thirteen dwarves who journeyed to the Lonely Mountain with Bilbo and Gandalf long ago). Glóin has many stories to share with Frodo, who is happy to simply listen. For example, the paths between the mountains and Mirkwood forest are still clear for travel due to Grimbeorn the Old and his warriors, and the men of Dale have become a strong ally to the dwarves. Frodo is particularly interested to learn that some of Bilbo's previous companions in the journey to the Lonely Mountain, three of the dwarves (Balin, Ori, and Óin) are currently unaccounted for. Glóin has come to seek Elrond's advice on the matter.

Frodo can once again indulge in his love of good food as per life in the Shire. He meets a dwarf of legendary feats beside him, for Glóin is one of Bilbo's companions in [The Hobbit](#). The dwarf shares knowledge of happenings of the world through the many stories he tells Frodo.



After their meal, the company of diners follows Elrond and Arwen through to a great hall to enjoy singing and storytelling. Frodo is astonished to reconnect with Bilbo in the hall. They sit together happily as Bilbo relates his travels since leaving the Shire on his eleventy-first birthday. However, Frodo's delight disappears when Bilbo asks to see **the Ring**. As he asks, Bilbo suddenly seems to transform into an unrecognizable, obsessive creature, and Frodo feels a sudden desire to hit his uncle. The moment is brief, with Bilbo lapsing back to his usual self as he takes back his request and recognizes the corruptive power of the Ring.

Frodo's joy in reuniting with Bilbo is interrupted by the Ring's evil, which tempts Bilbo into asking for it and makes him seem temporarily almost Gollum-like. Frodo is similarly influenced by its corruption when he feels a sudden desire toward violence, very unlike his usual character.



Next, Frodo and Sam tell Bilbo of all the eventful Shire news he has missed. For several minutes they do not notice that Strider has joined them. Bilbo greets the Ranger fondly, and man and hobbit step away to complete a song they have been working on together. Frodo dozes in the warmth of the hall and then, as if still in a dream, wakes and listens as Bilbo recites the song of ancient heroes to a small audience of elves. Uncle and nephew retire to Bilbo's room to talk further, and finally Sam comes to insist that the still-recovering Frodo heads to bed so he can rest.

Alongside the renewal of dear relationships, Rivendell is a haven for stories and song. Even Bilbo the hobbit partakes in this tradition, as he and Strider have crafted a song that memorializes ancient heroes.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2

The next day, Gandalf summons Frodo and Bilbo to the Council of Elrond. Many individuals from far-off lands have recently arrived to Rivendell bearing news and seeking counsel. Elrond, the Lord of Rivendell, has convened the meeting to address these concerns and to determine the fate of **the Ring**.

The diverse members of the Council of the Ring come together by happenstance, as for various reasons they have been drawn away from their homes to Rivendell at the same time. Each brings their own concern to the tale of Sauron's rising evil. Their unanticipated gathering hints at an overarching sense of fate that has specific plans for the beings of Middle-Earth.



Glóin reveals that a servant of Sauron has recently approached the dwarves, offering an alliance and new rings of power in exchange for news of a hobbit by the name of Baggins. Glóin also communicates his fears for his kinsman Balin, who has not been heard from since setting out some years ago leading a host of dwarves to reclaim their ancestral homeland of Moria.

Glóin's news reveals that Sauron is actively recruiting forces to his evil intent. Furthermore, Balin (another of Bilbo's former companions) has journeyed to reclaim an ancient dwarvish homeland in a similar fashion to the thirteen dwarves' prior quest to reclaim their home of the Lonely Mountain.



Next, Elrond shares the history of **the Ring** with the gathered Council. This is not news to Frodo, for Gandalf had already revealed much of it to him in his final visit to the Shire. Many others present are alarmed to hear that the Dark Lord Sauron has risen again and is searching for his One Ring—the only weapon he requires for total domination of Middle-earth.

Elrond repeats much information that readers are already aware of; the repetition of the Ring's history serves to emphasize the intensity of the evil that accosts the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. This also shows a consolidation of a story that most members of the Council only know fragments of.



Boromir, a warrior from the south, takes advantage of a pause from Elrond to stand and speak of his home country of Gondor. He talks proudly of his people's noble and courageous toil in protecting the western lands from the wild folk of the east. Boromir confirms that Sauron has risen and is quickly gaining power, having allied himself with the cruel warriors of the east. Gondor has been driven back from its defenses before Mordor, but continues to try to shelter the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. Boromir reveals that he has traveled for 110 days to reach Rivendell, due to a dream that he and his brother have shared that directs them to the elf-haven. The dream includes a riddle with mention of a Sword that was Broken, a "Halfling" (hobbit), and "Isildur's Bane."

Boromir's pride and sense of honor is established here and remains important throughout the book—though ultimately, his arrogance leads him to betray Frodo the Ring-bearer. Boromir seems to define heroism through the traditional definition of seeking personal glory through combat. The riddle that has led him to Rivendell demonstrates how the nuances of language can define various characters' destinies.



Aragorn rises to reveal the Sword that was Broken, laying the **shards of Narsil** before the Council. These are the two pieces of the longsword that the Ranger has been carrying in the sheath at his side. Elrond tells Boromir of Aragorn's lineage as the direct descendant of Isildur, the ancient king of Gondor who cut **the Ring** from Sauron's hand during the War of the Last Alliance. Bilbo also relays the Riddle of Strider to the Council—the final lines state that "Renewed shall be blade that was broken: / The crownless again shall be king." Solving the final pieces of Boromir's riddle, Frodo steps forward to present Isildur's Bane, the One Ring.

The Shards of Narsil are a symbol of Aragorn's true heritage, for while he appears a mere wanderer, he is in fact the heir of ancient kings. The Riddle of Strider tells the prophecy attached to Aragorn's identity and predicts that he will re-forged the ancient blade Narsil and claim the thrones of Gondor and Arnor. It is not until the later books in The Lord of the Rings series that these predicted events transpire as truth. Beyond preserving the past, then, history and myth can also guide individuals toward specific destinies.



In response to Boromir's questions, Aragorn discusses the history of the Rangers as protectors of oblivious peoples. He indicates that he is ready to officially begin to claim his rightful authority as king of Gondor. Bilbo then tells the Council of his part in the story of **the Ring**, followed by Gandalf's account of how it is that the Dark Lord Sauron has come to rise again. The wizard also relates the story of why he came to suspect the true nature of Bilbo's ring and how he and Aragorn scoured the lands for the creature Gollum to learn about the Ring's origins.

Although Aragorn has mighty skills in combat, selflessness in serving others is his (and the Rangers at large) guide to virtuous action and seems to eclipse his more traditionally heroic qualities. The Rangers' collective heroism in protecting unknowing peoples from evil, including the blissfully unaware Shire hobbits, demonstrates their core values of selflessness and humility.



Legolas, an elf, then informs the Council that Gollum has escaped his imprisonment from the elves in Mirkwood. There are fears he will return to offer information to Sauron. Gandalf speaks once more to finish the final chapter in his tale. The Grey Wizard was betrayed by Saruman, head of the Middle-earth wizards and formerly a trusted ally of Gandalf and Elrond. Saruman desires to wield **the Ring**, and he prevented Gandalf from aiding Frodo on his journey to Rivendell by imprisoning him atop Saruman's tower Orthanc. Gandalf was finally rescued by Gwaihir the Great Eagle, who carried him to the nearby country of Rohan. There, Gandalf tamed Shadowfax, the swiftest of all horses and reminiscent of the mearas of old. Shadowfax carried the wizard at great pace back to the Shire, but he was unable to find Frodo there or in Rivendell.

With everyone having spoken their piece and heard the combined story of **the Ring**, the Council considers what to do with the dangerous weapon. The elf-lord Erestor suggests they should take it to Tom Bombadil, for it holds no corruptive sway over him. Gandalf and Glorfindel reject the idea, for Tom is too unreliable in matters unrelated to his realm, and such a move would only delay Sauron's inevitable rise to power. The Council also recognize they cannot destroy the Ring themselves—only the fires of Mount Doom in Mordor can melt the Ring into nothing.

Boromir suggests they take **the Ring** to Gondor to wield its immense power against the gathering might of Sauron, but Elrond and Gandalf advise that the Ring will ultimately corrupt all but the most powerful of beings. If such a being were to master it, they would transform into another dark power similar to Sauron due to the Ring's unavoidable evil nature.

Elrond and Gandalf agree that the only hope is to send messengers into Sauron's stronghold of Mordor to destroy **the Ring**. Sauron is unlikely to suspect such a quest, as he cannot imagine anyone wanting to destroy an object of such great power. Bilbo bravely volunteers his service as Ring-bearer, but accepts Gandalf's gentle rebuke that he is too old for such an adventure. A heavy silence sits on the Council as they consider the perils of such a journey.

Gollum's escape may cause great evil for the Free Peoples of Middle-earth; Saruman's betrayal has certainly done so. Gandalf's escape from Orthanc is a story of legend as he is aided by fantastical creatures. All the characters mentioned in Gandalf's tale (including Shadowfax the horse) will reappear later in the trilogy.



Many ideas are suggested to deal with the menace of the Ring, but fate has ensured there is only one possible path toward its destruction—the path to Sauron's evil stronghold of Mordor.



Elrond and Gandalf prove their wisdom in refusing to wield the power of the Ring, for whatever their noble intentions, the Ring would sway them toward evil through ambition. Elrond and Gandalf thus prove themselves as wholly good characters, whereas Boromir is clearly tempted by the Ring. He has good intentions, but is also vulnerable to its corrupting power.



The entire Council, despite all of its mighty members, is halted by the thought of the immense and seemingly suicidal task before them. Bilbo bravely volunteers as Ring-bearer for the perilous quest, perhaps prompted by his desire to hold the Ring once more. The evil of the Ring is insidious and never lets go.



Finally, Frodo—although he is very frightened—tells the Council that he will shoulder responsibility for delivering **the Ring** into Mordor, though he does not know the way. Elrond admits that he believes Frodo is the best choice as Ring-bearer, although he did not want to lay such a burdensome charge on the hobbit. The Lord of Rivendell believes Sauron may be defeated by someone seemingly weak who will be overlooked by the arrogant Dark Lord. The uninvited Sam then springs from up from a corner of the Council to exclaim that he will not let Frodo go on such a journey without him, to which Elrond agrees.

From all the might of the gathered council, it is Frodo and Bilbo who stand forward to offer their services to bear the Ring into the perils of Mordor. They are selflessly willing to attempt to defy Sauron, despite the ultimate personal cost of a likely death. In hurriedly joining Frodo to face evil without question, Sam demonstrates that loyalty and optimism are just as valuable as strength of arms in a quest. Foreshadowing occurs when Elrond suggests that Sauron will be beaten by seemingly insignificant beings. The hobbits' small stature and fairly simple natures—the qualities that have caused other races to pay no heed to them—become strengths that the Free Peoples of Middle-earth now pin their hopes on.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3

Later that day, Elrond sends out scouts for news, and the hobbits meet in Bilbo's room. Merry and Pippin are offended that Elrond has confirmed that Sam will accompany Frodo the **Ring**-bearer, but that they have not been considered for the journey. Gandalf joins their gathering and reveals that he will travel with Frodo and Sam. The hobbits continue to trade conversation with one another, and Frodo agrees to help Bilbo write books that detail their adventures. Over the next few days, the hobbits find that the evil memories and heartaches from their flight from the Shire begin to fade in the extraordinary setting of Rivendell.

While the hobbits, Gandalf, and Strider stay in Rivendell for a long time, they accomplish relatively little beyond regaining their strength and enjoying one another's company. This suggests that peace, for all its pleasures, isn't terribly interesting and is certainly not the material of history and myth.



Two months later, Elrond's scouts return to Rivendell. They bear little news of Sauron and his servants, who have been quiet since the events at the Ford of Bruinen, but Elrond decides that they need to take action. He appoints Nine Walkers to the Company of the Ring that will oppose Sauron's nine Black Riders in a quest to destroy **the Ring** in Mordor. Frodo, Sam, and Gandalf are already decided. Elrond then names representatives of the Free peoples of Middle Earth to form the Company—Legolas for the elves, Gimli for the dwarves, and Aragorn and Boromir for the human race. With Gandalf's support, Merry and Pippin secure the final two places in the Company—despite Elrond's desire to choose two powerful members from his household, Gandalf suggests that the four hobbits' loyalty to one another is more valuable.

Elrond comments on the fortuitous nature of it all—the fact that Nine Walkers of complementary talents have volunteered to oppose Sauron and his nine Black Riders seems too circumspect not to be fate. Situations like these abound in The Fellowship of the Ring, suggesting an overarching presence that directs the events on Middle-earth. The hobbits show their fierce camaraderie in volunteering their services to the Company of the Ring despite likely death. This selflessness arises from a loyalty to one another and to their home, contrasting with the goal of earning personal glory that drives traditional heroes.



As the Company of the Ring—more informally known as the Fellowship of the Ring—makes plans to depart Rivendell, Aragorn instructs elven smiths to reforge the **shards of Narsil** that he carries in his scabbard. The Sword that was Broken is reforged into Anduril, Flame of the West. Frodo also gains a new weapon when Bilbo gifts him the magical short sword Sting, whose blade glows blue if orcs are near. Bilbo also gifts Frodo a coat of dwarf-mail for the younger hobbit to wear under his clothes.

Swords with names are given a power beyond that of anonymous weapons—Anduril's purpose is to challenge the evil in the east, while Sting's legacy is to protect its owner from orcs through magic and steel. Language, specifically the power of names, can offer insight to both histories and future destinies.



The time comes for the Nine Walkers to set off, taking with them Bill the pony, who is almost a different creature under the care of the elves and hobbits rather than the malicious Bill Ferny. The Company makes for the Misty Mountains, deciding to try their luck at crossing the pass of Caradhras. The first part of their journey is tense, cold, and cheerless as the Fellowship travels mostly by night to conceal their travel from any unfriendly eyes.

After two weeks of marching toward the Misty Mountains, the peaks have drawn closer and the weather has shifted for the better. The Company has reached the barren land of Hollin and must hide from great flocks of black crows that scour the landscape, likely looking for any sign of the **Ring**-bearer, Frodo.

Two more nights of walking bring them to the foot of the mountain of Caradhras. They still desire to cross the dangerous pass, despite the threat of foul weather and evil watchers. Boromir persuades the Company to cut down wood to take up the mountain. It proves wise advice, for during their ascent, the Fellowship is engulfed by an intense blizzard in which the hobbits are almost overcome by the cold. Defeated by Caradhras, it takes a blazing fire and the strength of Boromir and Aragorn to keep the party alive in the heavy snow. They retreat down the mountain, defeated but grateful to have survived.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4

Gandalf suggests an alternative path to cross the Misty Mountains by traveling underground through the Mines of Moria. Aragorn does not want to take this route, but it is the only option. He warns that Gandalf in particular should avoid Moria, but does not explain why. Feeling differently, Gimli is excited by the opportunity to visit the abandoned dwarf kingdom of his forefathers. He also wants to seek his missing friend Balin, who set out on a quest to reclaim the ancient kingdom and has not been heard from since.

The Company is desperate to avoid detection by evil forces, as their quest depends on the ability to slip into Mordor unnoticed. They also know that if Sauron discovers them, he can quickly pit his great forces against the party.



Bleak landscapes symbolize the increasingly serious nature of the quest against evil. Even animals can be corrupted for evil purposes.



Numerous evil forces are at work to prevent the Fellowship's success in their quest; even the weather defies them. The two humans show traditional heroism in protecting the smaller hobbits from the life-threatening snow through physical toil.



Aragorn's warning that Gandalf should not enter the Mines of Moria proves prescient, for the wizard will be lost to Fellowship there. This is one of many moments of accurate prediction by various characters in the novel. Such foresight suggests there is an overarching power of fate that drives the events of Middle-earth, thereby troubling the concept that individuals have free will.



The Company moves away from Caradhras quickly when they hear the howling of wolves nearby. The creatures attack that same night. Backing the Fellowship against a great bonfire they have built, Aragorn, Boromir, Legolas, and Gimli each fight with skill and bravery—Aragorn and Boromir use their swords to lethal advantage, Gimli staunchly wields his axe, and Legolas fires volleys of arrows into the wolf pack. When Gandalf casts a great spell of fire, lightning, and thunder to set the surrounding trees ablaze, the group finally manages to beat the great host of wolves back. The hobbits have drawn their swords but have not taken part in the battle, and are in awe of their fellow warriors. The aftermath of battle reveals that the wolves were actually magical wargs, for there are no bodies on the ground belonging to the slain creatures.

In the light of the morning, the Fellowship advances to the western gate of Moria. Sam is distraught to let Bill the Pony loose, but the packhorse cannot be taken through the Mines. Gandalf solves a riddle to open the great doors, and just in the nick of time, for a monstrous creature rises out of the deep pool beside the gate to attack the Fellowship. One of the monster's great tentacles drags Frodo into the water, and it is only quick action with a knife from Sam that saves the Ring-bearer; the rest of the Company are momentarily frozen in shock. Then Gandalf orders them all inside the gate, where they are trapped, for the great creature uses its strength to permanently shut the doors on them before retreating to its pool.

After catching their breath in the darkness, Gandalf leads the Company into Moria using a dim light atop his staff to guide the way. The nine walk through miles of intricate passages that are littered with great pits that drop into the deep. They are aiming for the eastern gate as their exit. Except for Gimli and Aragorn, the Fellowship's anxiety heightens with each crossroads in which Gandalf stops to take time to choose his direction. Aragorn assures the hobbits that they do not need to be afraid—he has faith in Gandalf's navigation, for the wizard has undertaken far mightier and more complex feats. However, Frodo feels certain of evil ahead, and **the Ring** weighs heavily around his neck. He also hears the possible patter of faint footsteps tracking their journey.

Using a combination of arms and magic, the wargs are defeated. The story's established pattern of protection of the hobbits continues, as their survival at this stage depends entirely on other, more powerful allies rather than own abilities or heroism. This will change as they face more varied situations that require other skills than mere strength.



Another diverse evil confronts the Fellowship, and for once it is the hobbits who spring into action—Sam's unwavering loyalty to Frodo saves the Ring-bearer from peril. The party is now trapped in the ominous mines, and has nowhere to go but onward.



Trapped in Moria, the Fellowship have no option but to move forward through the darkness. The increasing threat of evil is felt most keenly by Frodo as Ring-bearer, as he is consistently portrayed as extremely sensitive to external forces. The sound of footsteps following them is the first mention of what is later revealed to be Gollum.



After several more hours of travel, they reach a crossroads where Gandalf struggles to choose which of three passages to take. Deciding to halt for the night while the wizard considers the possible decisions, the Fellowship sets up camp in an old guardroom to the side of the passages. Pippin throws a pebble down a deep well shaft, and it echoes loudly deep into the Mines. Gandalf berates Pippin for his foolishness, and in the aftermath of the falling stone, rhythmic sounds like the taps of a hammer echo up the well before dying away. The wizard takes the night watch, for he is too anxious to sleep.

Gandalf awakens his companions after six hours, having decided on a path using his feelings and sense of smell. After marching until the hobbits are exhausted, the members of the Company suddenly find themselves in a great empty hall where they spend the night huddled together for warmth. Gimli entertains the hobbits by singing Durin's Song, a chant that tells of the ancient splendor of the dwarf-king Durin's realm before its great fall into ruin. Gandalf then describes the history of the dwarves in mining the wondrous and rare metal called mithril, which is prized for its unparalleled beauty, lightness, and strength. Frodo realizes that the chain mail he wears beneath his clothes is made from the priceless metal. On guard that night, Frodo thinks that he sees luminous eyes watching the Company from across the hall.

Following breakfast the next morning, some light brightens the hall slightly through deep window shafts built into the mountain. While exploring the cavernous room, Gandalf leads the Company into a large side chamber where they find a tomb. The members of the Fellowship grieve to learn that the tomb is Balin's, with Gimli casting his hood over his face.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5

From a written record of events that he finds beside the tomb, Gandalf learns that Balin and his people were trapped in Moria, besieged by orcs and a more frightening, unnamed presence. The final page in the book simply reads "We cannot get out. The end comes, ... drums, drums in the deep ... they are coming."

Unnerved, the Company turns to leave the chamber when they hear the great "doom" and "boom" of loud drums alongside harsh cries and trumpeting horns. Lamenting their foolishness, the Fellowship springs into action to block the doors to the chamber, shouting, "They are coming!" and "We cannot get out."

Gandalf's fierce anger at Pippin's folly is likely a reflection of the wizard's frustration in not knowing the way forward. However, it will soon be revealed that Pippin's stone has alerted evil forces to the Company's presence in Moria.



Gimli's recital of Durin's Song is another example in the novel of song as a method of keeping memories of the past alive. The song furthermore reflects the repetitive nature of history, for the decline of Durin's kingdom is paralleled by the current decline of the Third Age of Middle-earth. Song is therefore a medium that expresses both nostalgia and the idea that history is cyclical. Frodo also realizes that there is more to Bilbo's gift of chainmail than he first realized, for it is a priceless item that will likely prove valuable in protecting the Ring-bearer from harm. The watching eyes again foreshadow Gollum's eventual appearance.



The Company's grave fears for the plight of Balin and his people have been realized. Readers familiar with Balin from [The Hobbit](#) will relate more to the character's deep grief here.



The written record forebodes great evil ahead of the Fellowship in their journey through the Mines. Unlike the dwarves' attempt to reclaim the Lonely Mountain in [The Hobbit](#), their mission to Moria clearly ended in disaster.



History repeats itself as the Company find themselves trapped by approaching evil forces in the same manner as the slain dwarves were.



A cave troll and a company of orcs force their way through the barricade. The Fellowship fights valiantly to stave off the attack, including Frodo and Sam, who bravely enter combat. However, Frodo is then speared in the side by a great orc-chieftain. So great is the thrust that Frodo is pinned to the wall. Aragorn smites the orc, and picks up the **Ring**-bearer. As the Company flees through a door to an eastern passage, Aragorn is amazed to find Frodo alive and well.

While trying to spell their exit door closed, Gandalf is blocked by powerful counter spells and ends up using up most of his energies to bring down the roof of the chamber. Delighted by Frodo's uncanny escape from harm, the wizard then leads the Company down toward the lower halls, closing in on the eastern gate. There they cross the perilous Bridge of Khazad-dûm, a narrow stretch of rock that spans a great abyss.

With orcs pursuing closely, the members of the Company are horrified when a powerful foe appears. It is a balrog, an elemental demon of the deep wreathed in fire and darkness—this is the magical force that Gandalf was matched by earlier in the battle. Recognizing that the others do not stand a chance against such an enemy, Gandalf instructs them to flee while he makes a stand on the bridge. Aragorn and Boromir ignore his command, holding their ground behind the wizard. After breaking the balrog's sword, Gandalf destroys the bridge, and the demon falls into the chasm. But as Gandalf turns to join the others, the balrog sweeps its fiery whip up to grab the wizard's ankle. Gandalf is dragged from the bridge and falls into darkness with the balrog.

The Company is wracked with grief at Gandalf's presumed death, but Aragorn forces them to move towards Moria's exit. With hordes of orcs trapped behind them, they run through the halls and reach the eastern gates quickly, where Aragorn dispatches the captain of an orc troop that guards the doors. They keep running until they are far enough away from Moria to feel safe in the bright sunlight of Dimrill Dale. Many of the Company fall to the ground, weeping at their loss.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6

Aragorn guides the devastated Company toward the elf-forest of Lothlórien. He stops briefly in their haste to tend to Frodo's injured torso and a head wound of Sam's. Aragorn is amazed to discover that a coat of precious mithril is what protected Frodo from being killed, and he realizes that it must be Bilbo's old coat of mail.

Despite still experiencing great fear in the face of adversity, the hobbits are learning to cope with this fear and work together with the group. They take up arms successfully, until Frodo is seemingly critically wounded in battle. Once again evil creatures seem to seek out Frodo in particular, perhaps sensing his role as Ring-bearer.



Gandalf, previously unwavering in his confidence and talents, is now afraid of a fearsome but unseen enemy.



The balrog is revealed as a fearsome and powerfully dangerous foe. Selflessly, Gandalf sacrifices himself to face the demon alone, for he knows he is the only one with any chance to stand against the balrog's might. Gandalf's fall casts him as a savior figure sacrificing himself for the Fellowship, and Aragorn's prediction of Moria's threat to the wizard comes true.



Aragorn steps further into his prophesized mantle of leadership by guiding the Fellowship to safety despite their great loss. In Gandalf's absence, he is now the de facto leader of the Fellowship.



The members of the Company barely have time to grieve, for with the onset of dusk orcs will start their pursuit (they are known to avoid the sunlight). Aragorn is pragmatic in his haste towards Lothlórien.



The Fellowship presses on, running for three hours beyond dusk to ensure they are not caught by orcs. Aragorn and Legolas are glad to arrive at the border of the forest of Lórien, while Gimli and Boromir would prefer not to enter due to rumors of enchantment they have heard about the forest. Frodo is concerned that there is something that is following them, but he knows from Sting's blade that it is not an orc, as the blade does not glow.

Finally taking some rest in the outer edges of the woods, Legolas shares ancient elvish stories. These include a song about the elf-maiden Nimrodel, which relates the tale of how sorrow came to Lothlórien after the dwarves awoke an evil in the mountains by digging too deep in their search for precious metals—this is likely a reference to the balrog. Gimli is unimpressed by this assertion.

Moving further into the forest, the Company is soon addressed by Lórien guards who are led by an elf named Haldir. They know something of Frodo's quest as **Ring**-bearer, and welcome their Northern cousin Legolas. The Fellowship is grateful to be invited into the elves' tree platforms, for later that night a formidable company of orcs passes below them. Despite avoiding that danger, Frodo is once again aware that there may be a strange creature lurking near the Fellowship. Haldir confirms that it is not Frodo's imagination, but the creature is too cunning for them to learn more.

In the pale light of day, Haldir and his guards take the Company to meet the Lord and Lady of the Wood. The elves' distrust of dwarves is so great that they blindfold Gimli to protect Lothlórien's secrets. To calm Gimli's outrage, Aragorn requests that all of the Company be blindfolded as well. Thus the Lórien elves guide them into the heart of the forest.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7

After a day of walking, the Company reaches Caras Galadhon, the central city of the forest. Here they are able to gaze in awe at the wondrous treescapes as they meet Lothlórien's rulers, Celeborn and Galadriel. The Lord and Lady of Lórien seem ancient, fair, and wise to all their guests, and they grieve to hear of Gandalf's fall. Galadriel seems to test the moral resolve of each member of the Company by looking into their eyes and speaking to them inside their minds; all of them pass a test of desire, although Boromir will not reveal what the Lady offered him.

Gimli and Boromir are suspicious of the elf-forest for different reasons: dwarves have a longstanding enmity with elves, while Boromir fears the power of another person to read his mind. Meanwhile, Frodo cannot work out if he is imagining something tracking them, or what purpose its intentions are.



Again, Tolkien uses song to emphasize the importance of preserving history and explaining myth. By prioritizing characters' storytelling in his narrative, he creates intertextual references that add depth to the world of Middle-earth.



The members of the Fellowship are grateful to be met by allies at the edge of the elf-forest, having only just escaped from pursuing orcs. Frodo is alarmed by the confirmation of a strange creature following their group.



The traditional enmity between elves and dwarves is perhaps heightened by the distrust that exists in this dangerous period of the end of an age. Aragorn's wisdom settles the brewing tension between Gimli and the elves: the Ranger's compassion establishes him as a hero just as much as his resilience and combat skills do.



Like Rivendell, Tolkien portrays Lothlórien as a destination of moral virtue. He shows this through the beauty and elegance of its people and its environment, where everything appears beautiful and in harmony with nature. The elvish names also reflect this innate goodness as they roll softly off the tongue.



The Fellowship spends many days resting in the elf-forest, during which Legolas and Gimli begin to develop a strong friendship. Frodo uses these restful days to craft a song that memorializes Gandalf. Also of note is the day that Galadriel shows Frodo and Sam her Mirror. The Lady of Lórien uses this magical basin filled with stream water to receive visions of possible futures. She offers the two hobbits the chance to look into her Mirror, warning them not to touch the water. The two hobbits choose to look into the **Mirror of Galadriel**, and both see frightening scenes—Sam’s beloved home, family, and friends are in danger, while Frodo sees a host of frightening images including a great, fiery eye that is intently searching the land. Galadriel reminds Frodo not to touch the water, and the sound of her voice disrupts his visions.

Through her powers, Galadriel has also experienced the visions Frodo has seen. She comforts the **Ring**-bearer against the seemingly undefeatable might of Sauron, revealing that she actively resists Sauron’s psychological attacks. During this conversation, Frodo becomes aware of a bright ring on her hand and guesses that it is an elvish ring of power. Galadriel confirms his hunch.

Frodo is so awed by Galadriel’s power and wisdom that he offers her **the Ring**, feeling that she is more appropriate to bear it than he is. Despite her desire for the power she could wield with the Ring, Galadriel acknowledges that it would corrupt her into a Dark Queen, and she rejects Frodo’s offer. She leads Frodo and Sam back to the rest of the Company.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8

Celeborn gathers the Company together and tells them that it is time to leave Lothlórien. He gifts them three swift boats so that they can travel down the nearby River Anduin until they reach unpassable falls, where they will have to decide whether to move east or west. Considering the Fellowship’s future path, Aragorn feels torn between protecting Frodo on a direct quest to Mordor—especially now that they have lost Gandalf—or accompanying Boromir to his homeland of Gondor to aid their people. Frodo is worried when Boromir hints aloud that the Company should take **the Ring** to Gondor so that they can use its power directly against Sauron.

Galadriel has the power of foresight through her use of the magically enhanced mirror. Foresight is again a prediction that seems to stem from the mysterious, overarching power of fate. Sam and Frodo are frightened by their visions, but when offered a choice to abandon the quest and return home, they selflessly choose to continue in order to defy Sauron’s evil. The fiery eye will come to be closely associated with Sauron, as he relentlessly seeks the Ring.



Frodo is greatly heartened by the knowledge that there are powers great enough in Middle-earth to actively resist Sauron’s might. His status as a Ring-bearer perhaps gives him greater insights into understanding other magical objects, such as Galadriel’s ring. The fact that she possesses another ring of power marks her as one of the major figures of Middle-earth.



Like Gandalf and Elrond before her, Galadriel proves her wisdom and virtue by refusing the great temptation of the Ring. She knows it would ultimately consume her and lead her to commit great evils. In fact, these three characters are ultimately revealed to be the bearers of the three elven rings of power, and the fact that they all resist the One Ring shows their worthiness.



The Fellowship teeters on disaster due to numerous factors, including Gandalf’s loss and the unclear path before them. Boromir again shows himself vulnerable to the temptation of the Ring. He has noble intentions—defending his home and fighting Sauron’s armies—but he doesn’t recognize the danger of his ambitions and the corrupting power of the Ring.



Before leaving, Celeborn provides them with food and clothing as well as the boats. This includes a marvelous hooded cloak for each member of the Company that will hide the wearer from prying eyes, and stores of nourishing “lembas” cakes that will give the travelers strength even through great exertions.

The Lord and Lady of Lórien gift each of the Company special individual items—a magic sword sheath and green-jeweled brooch in the shape of an eagle for Aragorn; belts of silver or gold for Merry, Pippin, and Boromir; a great bow and quiver of arrows for Legolas; and a box of magic Lórien earth for Sam. Galadriel then asks Gimli what he would request of the Lord and Lady. Having grown to revere Galadriel, Gimli elegantly asks for a strand of the Lady’s golden hair. She presents him with three, which he promises to treasure forever as a token of the goodwill between dwarves and elves. Finally, Galadriel presents Frodo with a crystal phial of starlight. The Company now takes their leave, sailing out from the safety of Lothlórien. All of them weep at the sadness of leaving such fair lands and peoples, with Gimli hit the hardest.

The gifts of the hosts of Lórien will prove invaluable upon the Fellowship’s departure, providing nourishment and safe travel for months to come.



Lothlórien represents the last safe haven on the Fellowship’s journey for a long time. The individual gifts fall into a tradition of fantasy and myth whereby special objects are bestowed upon heroes depending on their strengths and needs. Many of the Fellowship’s gifts will become invaluable later in their journey. Gimli’s depth of feeling upon his departure from Lórien is evidence of his change in heart toward the elves.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 9

The Company spends several days sailing swiftly down the river, letting the water’s current do most of the work. On the third day, the landscapes on their left grow barren as the group looks east towards Mordor. The western banks of the river shift between forests of reeds and great grassy plains. Despite barely seeing any living creatures, the Company feels exposed between these flat landscapes.

On the fourth evening, Sam is startled awake from dozing in the boat he shares with Aragorn and Frodo. He thinks he has seen a log that is moving unnaturally quickly in the river, approaching the boats—for a moment it even seemed to have eyes and limbs. However, by the time Sam rubs his tired eyes, the strange apparition has disappeared. Upon sharing this story with Frodo, the Ring-bearer is disturbed by its similarity to the earlier times he has suspected the Company is being followed. The two hobbits guess that it is the cunning Gollum who is tracking them, waiting for an opportunity to steal back **the Ring**. Aragorn reveals that he is aware of their tail, but has failed to catch the slippery creature.

The change in landscape from the lush forests of Lothlórien to the bare landscapes either side of the River Anduin reflect the Fellowship’s movement from safety into danger. There are no more havens of comfort and beauty ahead of them now.



Aragorn, Frodo, and Sam keep the knowledge of Gollum’s presence to themselves, as they do not want to alarm their companions any more than needed. This is another example of the selfless burdens that individuals take on to protect others.



The Fellowship paddles faster the next day, their eighth day on the river, worried that Gollum may be feeding information to Sauron's troops about their location. They run into some difficulties that night as they approach rapids, and with great effort they paddle back upstream to avoid the increasingly strong current and great rocks that protrude from the river. At the same time they are attacked by orcs who fire arrows at them from the eastern bank. It is perhaps the grey cloaks of Lórien that prevent any of the Company from being hit.

Through the strength of the party's paddling, the three boats are maneuvered out of the orcs' bow range and onto the river's western bank. Legolas has just strung his great bow when a dreadful shadow falls upon the Fellowship as a great winged beast flies toward them. The orcs on the opposite bank shout with excitement while Frodo feels a chilling echo of his old shoulder wound. But suddenly Legolas fires a Lothlórien arrow, hitting the creature and sending it crashing down to the opposite shore.

The next morning, Boromir encourages the Company to leave the boats and travel west to Gondor. However, Aragorn desires to travel a little further down the river to behold the ancient site of Amon Hen and the great pillars of kings that stand over the River Anduin. These are carved in the likeness of his ancestors—the brothers Isildur and Anarion, who jointly ruled Gondor. Frodo agrees with Aragorn's plan, and Boromir decides to accompany them a little further.

To avoid the upcoming set of rapids, the Company makes use of an old portage road. Settled in boats on the river once more, Aragorn is deeply affected when they pass under the grand pillars of the kings. That same day, they reach the lake before the Falls of Rauros, disembarking near the hill of Amon Hen. After ten days on the river, they have now reached the point where they must decide whether to strike out east or west, in one or two groups.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 10

That night, while camping on the lawn at the foot of Amon Hen, Aragorn and Frodo see from Sting's blade that there are orcs some way off. After breakfast the next morning, Aragorn calls the Company together to discuss their next move. No one is able to make a compelling decision, so Aragorn lets Frodo as Ring-bearer make the choice. The hobbit requests an hour to reflect on the matter, walking away from the group to think. Sam notices that Boromir watches Frodo intently.

After some days of safe passage down the Anduin, the Fellowship are suddenly confronted by dangers on the river alongside the threat of attacking orcs. Already, the gifts from the Lord and Lady of Lothlórien prove their value.



Frodo's increased vulnerability to evil is signaled by the pain in his old wound, and he is terrified of what the winged shadow might be. Because of its connection to Frodo's wound, readers can guess that it is a Black Rider on a new and more formidable steed.



Frodo's loyalty and trust of Aragorn results in his decision to follow the Ranger's path rather than Boromir's suggestion to move immediately toward Gondor. Aragorn has proven himself a wise and capable leader, and resistant to the temptation of the Ring.



Aragorn is struck by emotion when he views the great pillars of his ancestors for the first time. It is a timely first viewing, as he is on a journey toward Gondor to claim his royal lineage, thereby fulfilling the destiny that has been foretold since his birth.



Like Gandalf, Aragorn—currently leading the Fellowship—lets others make crucial choices about the wellbeing of Middle-earth. Here, it becomes Frodo's choice to decide which path the Fellowship should take from Amon Hen. Despite the Ranger's own destiny foretold in prophecy, Tolkien also uses Aragorn as a character who champions the power of free will.



Meandering about the hill, Frodo finds himself climbing to a pretty spot on the hill of Amon Hen. While considering the many events that have occurred in the journey of **the Ring** so far, Frodo is startled by Boromir's sudden appearance. The man of Gondor states that he has followed Frodo to protect him if any danger arises.

They discuss the Ring-bearer's looming decision, with Frodo admitting that he knows the difficult road he must take, although he is afraid of it. Boromir once more argues for **the Ring** to travel to Gondor, but Frodo has a strong feeling that he cannot take an easy or safe road—it is his responsibility to bear the Ring directly into Mordor itself. Boromir fixates on the mention of the Ring, and asks if he can see it. Frodo is wary and refuses to bring it out. The Captain of Gondor begins to rant about the glory and success that he could achieve if he was able to use the powerful weapon. Upset that Frodo will not let him have it or even borrow it, Boromir angrily leaps at Frodo to take the Ring by force. The frightened hobbit slips on the Ring to escape by disappearing from sight.

Frodo races away from Boromir, eventually reaching the summit of Amon Hen. He stops fortuitously at the ancient Seat of Seeing, taking in the views around him. The hobbit is still wearing **the Ring**, which allows him to view regions near and far; everywhere there are signs of war. Frodo's use of the Ring draws the malevolent attentions of Sauron's great eye, and the hobbit only removes the Ring just in time to avoid being detected at Amon Hen.

Meanwhile, in his wild lust to take **the Ring** from Frodo, Boromir has tripped onto his face. The fall shocks him into reality, and he cries out to Frodo, apologizing for the fit of madness that had overtaken him. Unable to find the hobbit, he returns to the rest of the Company. He states that he has tried to convince Frodo to take the Ring to Gondor, upon which the hobbit used the Ring to evade him. Sam realizes that Boromir is not telling the whole truth, and the panicked Company runs in numerous directions looking for Frodo. Aragorn, trying to keep them together, charges Boromir with following and protecting Merry and Pippin, while he chases after Sam.

Frodo seems to be wasting time as he wanders about Amon Hen. He is likely attempting to delay his inevitable choice—his fate—to bear the Ring to Mordor alone.



The narrator confirms that Frodo needs time to steel his nerves to begin the dangerous journey onward. He also feels that he should travel alone in order to spare his companions the terrible danger. Frodo's moral integrity sharply contrasts Boromir's betrayal of the Fellowship. The Captain of Gondor's surrender to his lust for power suggests that the strongest and bravest individuals of Middle-earth are not necessarily the most heroic—instead it is the humble Frodo who persistently rejects the Ring's evil power by embracing his fears and weaknesses. Elrond and Gandalf's advice to Boromir in Rivendell has not been heeded, and the man has fallen to momentary evil in the false belief that he can wield the Ring to protect his country.



The narrative takes a sudden turn to widen the scope of Frodo's perspective (and the reader's), as Frodo's heightened vision reveals Sauron's rising power across the world. Gathering armies convince Frodo that he needs to act on his decision to travel to Mordor at once. Once again, he manages to resist the lure of the Ring and avoids detection by a foe that is far mightier than he is.



After coming to his senses, Boromir tells half-truths to the Fellowship to avoid facing the consequences of his actions, but Sam is shrewd enough to read the situation. In the frenzy that follows, Aragorn's focus on protecting the hobbits again shows that heroism is founded on selflessness and the bonds of fellowship in taking care of others. This is ultimately what distinguishes Aragorn from the similar character of Boromir: although both men are great warriors and leaders dedicated to protecting their people, Aragorn's actions are genuinely driven by the needs of those around him, whereas Boromir's commitment to protect Gondor is matched by his desire for personal acclaim and glory.



Aragorn easily catches up to Sam and tells him to follow him up Amon Hen to find Frodo. Using his head, though, Sam realizes that Frodo will not want to endanger any of the Company and will leave for Mordor alone. Racing back to where the Fellowship left their gear, Sam is just in time to catch Frodo immediately after he launches a boat for the eastern shore. In fact, Sam throws himself into the river (despite his inability to swim and his great fear of drowning) to attempt to reach Frodo, who is some distance offshore already. Frodo hauls the drowning Sam out of the river; he is glad to accept Sam's firm declaration that he is going with him to destroy **the Ring**.

While the rest of the Company are scattered around the hillside of Amon Hen, the two hobbits successfully cross the River Anduin. They land their boat on the shore, concealing the vessel behind a large boulder. With a range of grey hills before them, they begin seeking a path to take the **Ring** into perilous lands toward Mordor. The Fellowship is broken, but the quest to destroy the Ring continues.

Frodo and Sam, who throughout the journey have largely been dependent on their companions for guidance and protection, voluntarily enter great peril alone in their desire to save their friends from danger while completing the noble quest to destroy the Ring. Sam's loyalty to Frodo trumps his own desire for self-preservation: here he literally demonstrates that he is ready to risk his life for his friend.



In considering the role of a hero, Tolkien demonstrates that a person's strength and courage is not determined by their stature, skills, or talents. Indeed, The Fellowship of the Ring relates the story of how the most unlikely of characters can be central to the fate of a world. Frodo and Sam's final scene mirrors their actions at the beginning of The Fellowship in choosing to undertake a journey of great risk. Their courage is admirable in that now, the stakes have been raised and each hobbit has knowledge of the terrifying and likely deadly dangers ahead. Their moral integrity makes them heroes. The novel ends on a daunting note, but not without hope: the Fellowship is split into two groups, but they remain committed to the fight against Sauron's evil.





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