

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Hobbit

by

J.R.R. Tolkien

Book Information

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit
Quiz Number: 511
Houghton Mifflin, 2001
ISBN 0-618-16221-6; LCCN
330 Pages
Book Level: 6.6
Interest Level: UG

This stirring adventure is a fantasy that introduces the far-wandering hobbit, Bilbo Baggins.

Award: Bilby Award; Book Sense Book of the Year Award/Honorees; Misc./Other; SLJ Best Book

Topics: Classics, Classics (All); Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; Recommended Reading, YALSA Popular Paperbacks

Main Characters

Bard the wise man of Esgaroth who frees his people from Smaug's tyranny by slaying the dragon

Beorn a strong skin-changer who sometimes takes the shape of a huge black bear

Bilbo Baggins an unassuming hobbit who somewhat reluctantly embarks on an adventure that takes him far from his comfortable hobbit-hole

Gandalf a legendary wizard who is instrumental in Bilbo's participation in the adventure

Giant Spiders huge creatures who temporarily delay the expedition

Gollum a small, slimy creature who lives in the darkness under a mountain

Smaug a mountain-dwelling dragon who long ago destroyed Thorin's kin and stole treasures from many

the dwarves Dwalin, Balin, Kili, Fili, Dori, Nori, Ori, Oin, Gloin, Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur; homeless characters who begin a journey to reclaim what is rightfully theirs

Thorin Oakenshield an important dwarf, who is the leader of the expedition

Wood-elves elves who capture the dwarves and imprison them for a period

Vocabulary

Attercop an insulting name to call a spider

cram a biscuit-like morsel, usually used by men on long journeys

dwarves bearded, stubborn creatures who enjoy adventure, jewels, and metal

goblins cruel, wicked, bad-hearted creatures who hate everybody and everything

hobbit a small beardless creature who enjoys comfort and stability

scimitar a curved sword

Wargs large wolf-like creatures

Synopsis

Bilbo Baggins is a hobbit who is living contentedly in his hobbit-hole. With a wizard's encouragement, he reluctantly joins an expedition with a group of adventuresome dwarves who seek to reclaim their treasure. Along the way he experiences many strange, frightening and wonderful things, including encounters with trolls, giant spiders, goblins, elves of all sorts, and a fire-breathing dragon. Though he continually misses the comforts of his hobbit-hole, his slight but persistent curiosity for adventure continues to prevail, and he presses on. Throughout the trials and tribulations of the journey, Bilbo gains courage, knowledge, self-respect, and the respect of others. His presence on the journey proves to be important many times along the way. As the story races to its climactic conclusion, it is Bilbo who has an important impact on its outcome. The hobbit who returns to his comfortable hobbit-hole at Bag-End is very different from the one who left.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Hobbit

by

J.R.R. Tolkien

Initial Understanding

Bilbo knew that Gandalf had tricked the dwarves into believing that he was a professional burglar. Why did he agree to accompany the dwarves anyway?

When he heard the dwarves derogatory comments concerning his abilities, his pride was hurt. In addition, his mother had been a Took, an adventuresome clan of hobbits.

Literary Analysis

How did Bilbo change in the course of his adventure?

He became more confident in himself and in his abilities. In leaving his comfortable life at The Hill, he experienced great joys and great sorrows. He was wiser in the ways of the world, and he understood that Hobbiton was just a small part of it.

Inferential Comprehension

How did Bilbo, the hobbit, differ from his companions, the dwarves?

They differed in many ways both in appearance and in personality. Dwarves were larger, and they had beards. Hobbits were beardless and had large hairy feet. Dwarves were more blunt, and, some might say, stubborn. Bilbo was sensitive. He was concerned with what others thought of him, and tried to be persuasive without being offensive.

Constructing Meaning

Why did Gandalf have the party approach Beorn two at a time?

He knew that Beorn was independent and distrustful of strangers. He could also be very dangerous. Gandalf's method was less threatening than allowing the whole party to arrive at once. The interval between arrivals allowed Gandalf to get Beorn interested in their story and prepare him for more company.

around Bilbo's reluctant adventure and to a lesser point, recovering a treasure. Write about a fictitious adventure in which you reluctantly participated. It can take place in the present in your town or in the future in a fantasy world. Describe the adversity you encountered, and how you changed as a result of your journey.

Recognizing Setting The author uses detailed descriptions to help the reader visualize the mythical land in which the story takes place. Describe a fantasy place of your own. It could be a vacation cabin, the ultimate high-tech bedroom, an ice palace, a ship's cabin, or any mythical place. Describe details in words that will evoke vivid images for the reader.

Understanding Literary Features The theme of the story is about how Bilbo grew from his adventure. Write about an incident in your life that resulted in some sort of growth for you. It could be changing schools, the death of a loved one, you and a good friend finding yourselves growing apart, a parent getting (or losing) a job, the birth of a sibling, or any change that had an effect on you. Describe your initial feelings about the incident, and then write about how it changed you.

Understanding Characterization The author used both physical description and personality traits to describe each main character. Create another character or group of characters who could fit into the story. They can be good or bad, human or otherwise. Include a physical description and personality traits. Describe the leader (if applicable) and include details about clothing, meals, housing, and talents. Or, write a story from Smaug's point of view. Was he just misunderstood?

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Plot The plot of the story revolves