

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Hobbit

by J. R. R. Tolkien

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Chapter I

An Unexpected Party

1. J. R. R. Tolkien comments on the differences in the families of Bilbo's mother and father, "...but the fact remained that the Took's were not as respectable as the Bagginses, though they were undoubtedly richer." Write a letter to a person you respect. In your letter, tell him or her what your definition of respectable is, and why you think he or she fulfills your idea of what a respectable person is. You could begin your letter as follows:

Dear _____,

The word "respectable" came up in class today. I wanted you to know that...

2. Bilbo's initial response to the idea of having an adventure is very negative. "We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures! Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them." Imagine you have been asked to write a first person account of an adventure you have had for the magazine *Today's Adventurer*. In your article, tell the story of that adventure and how much risk, if any, is involved. Be sure to tell if you think you would want or not want to repeat that adventure. The title for your article could be, "Experiencing Life at the Edge."
3. Bilbo is offended when he overhears Gloom discussing Gandalf's assessment that Bilbo is fierce. Imagine that your best friend has to write an assessment of your character as a reference for you to receive a scholarship to a college. Then
 - A. Write the assessment that you think your friend would have written.
and
 - B. Write a paragraph about whether you secretly agree or disagree with what your friend has written.

Response Journal

4. Bilbo then does “his best to appear wise and prudent and professional and live up to Gandalf’s recommendation.” Adults can sometimes see teenagers in ways they do not always see themselves. Write a journal entry about an adult in your life who always seems to believe the best about you. Be sure to tell also how important that opinion of you is and why you feel that way. Begin your journal entry as follows:

Date_____

It always amazes me that _____ thinks...

5. Gloin continues to question the wisdom of allowing Bilbo to be their fourteenth man. When Gandalf unequivocally insists that they include Bilbo, they do as he says, even though they do not think it is a good idea. Gandalf seems to be quite loyal to Bilbo. Loyalty is a character trait that is highly thought of. Write a paragraph about someone you know or someone from the media who would qualify in your eyes as being an exceptionally loyal person.

Chapter II Roast Mutton

6. Bilbo wakes up in the morning to discover the dwarves have gone on without him and have left him their mess to clean up. “Indeed he is really relieved after all to think they had all gone without him...and yet in a way he could not help feeling just a trifle disappointed.” Describe a time, when, like Bilbo, you felt two conflicting emotions at the same time (relief-disappointment, resentment-gratitude, sorrow-joy, fear-excitement, etc.). Write about this conflict in an email to a friend; try to explain why you think you felt both emotions. Begin your email as follows:

Hey, old friend,

Maybe you can help me sort something out. I’ve...

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7. When Bilbo begins his adventure with the dwarves, it is a fine morning, and he is enjoying himself. But then “they came to lands where people spoke strangely, and sang songs Bilbo had never heard before.” Perhaps you have had Bilbo’s feelings when you have found yourself in a place where you have never been before. Suppose that a younger child you know who is afraid of going off to a new place asks you if you have ever had to do that. Complete the following dialogue you might have which you feel would reassure that child:

You: Well, listen here, there’s nothing to be afraid of. When I...

8. When the dwarves see a light in the woods, they decide to risk whatever danger there might be to see if they can find food or a dry place to sleep. Some people are described as being “adrenaline junkies,” i.e., they just love taking risks. Bungee jumpers are one good example. Write a paragraph about how you feel about people who take risks unnecessarily. That last word is important, because there are very brave people who take risks, such as firefighters and police officers, who deserve our admiration for taking risks. Begin your paragraph

The “for-the-thrill-alone” risk taker is, in my estimation...

9. Bilbo starts behaving like a burglar based on expectations, even though he is not really a burglar. Like Bilbo, we often assume different roles at different times. We also, at times, pretend to think or be one way, when we actually believe or actually are the opposite. Think of a time when you were “pretending.” Write about that experience in a long paragraph. Be sure to tell whether or not you enjoyed the experience and whether or not there were any problems as a result of your pretense. Your first sentence could be:

One time, just for fun...

Chapter III

A Short Rest

10. Bilbo has conflicting feelings about elves. “He loved elves, though he seldom met them; but he is a little frightened of them too. Dwarves don’t get along well with them.” Being “different” from others is something that most people have some fear of. Many different religious groups feel different from each other and we see in the conflicts in the world what that comes to. Think of ways that groups of people might feel different from each other which may cause fear. Choose any group and complete the following dialogue in the sample format below:

You: Yes, there is a certain fear among _____. And why wouldn’t there be? Look at ...

11. The author of *The Hobbit* says, “Now it is a strange thing, but things that are good to have and days that are good to spend are soon told about, and not much to listen to; while things that are uncomfortable, palpitating, and even gruesome, may make a good tale, and take a deal of telling anyway.” Storytelling has been a part of human existence forever. It serves many purposes from handing down people’s history before writing began, to sheer enjoyment in listening to a story. Make a list of the ten favorite things in stories that you like hearing about. First on your list is your favorite subject matter; number ten is your least favorite subject matter.

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12. Bilbo describes Elrond's house by saying, "His house is perfect, whether you liked food, or sleep, or work, or story-telling, or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all." Perfect places are hard to come by, that is for sure, but you may have found at least one near-perfect place sometime in your life. Then again, you may not have found any place you consider perfect. You can do that, however, if you imagine that you are an adult and can have any perfect place of you have imagined. In your secret journal write about your adult perfect place. Be sure to give as many details about it as you can (where it is, what kind of structure it is, what is in it, who would be there with you, if anyone, etc.). Your first sentence could be:

I never thought I could have such a perfect place, but here I am, twenty-three years old, and...

13. Elrond looked over their provisions and plans before the dwarves left to continue their journey. "Their plans were improved with the best advice." Young adults are always receiving more advice than they could want in a million years. In two separate paragraphs, write about
- A. The best advice you ever received and if you took it, how you benefited from it.
- and
- B. The worst advice you ever received and what you did about that.