

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Two Towers

by J. R. R. Tolkien

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Notes

The Two Towers is the second book in J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy trilogy that tells the story of the Great War of the Rings. Students must have read the first book in this series to understand and appreciate *The Two Towers* fully. In this novel, the students will be reacquainted with the beloved Hobbits and with Gandalf the wizard. In addition, they will be enchanted by the new and interesting races Tolkien introduces in *The Two Towers* as he continues this enduring story of the battle between good and evil. The conflicts and action in the story are not resolved by the end. Tolkien's creative fantasy masterpiece, and his fascinating Middle Earth inhabitants, will draw the students back to read the next book, *The Return of the King*.

All reference come from the Ballantine Books edition of *The Two Towers*, copyright 1965.

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. recognize the following symbols and comment on their significance in the story:
 - light versus dark
 - the red eye.
2. define vocabulary words from the text.
3. relate and explain the thematic significance of details about the various races in the story including: Ents, The Riders of Rohan, Wizards, Orcs.
4. point out instances of foreshadowing and irony as literary devices.
5. discuss the techniques Tolkien uses to add suspense and believability to the story.
6. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the following theme: Even though there is a benevolent guiding force influencing our lives, people have free will to decide the course of their lives.
7. discuss the life decisions each of the following characters must make and how these decisions relate to the war between good and evil: King Theoden, Wormtongue, Aragorn, Eomer, Gollum, Treebeard, Sam, Faramir.
8. point out examples of Tolkien's use of descriptive imagery and how this imagery serves to enhance and illustrate the themes in the story.
9. discuss what each of the following evil characters reveal to the reader about the nature and power of evil: Gollum, Saruman, Sauron, Shelob.
10. cite incidents from the story to discuss the extent to which Sam, Pippin, and Boromir are heroes.
11. discuss what each of the following good characters reveal to the reader about the responsibility, and power, of good to overcome evil: Gandalf, Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, King Theoden, Eomer.
12. cite incidents from the story which parallel incidents in Biblical stories and discuss what each pair of incidents suggests to the reader about the conflict between good and evil.
13. point out incidents in the story that support the following idea: The inhabitants of Middle Earth are surprised to discover that many of their legends are based on true events and historical figures.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Saruman, Sauron, and Gandalf are all three wizards. What characteristics do they have in common? In what ways are they different?
2. Which characters in the story do you consider to be heroic and why?
3. One of the themes of this story is that characters have free will to decide whether or not to follow the path of evil. In addition, evil characters are given the opportunity to repent and be rehabilitated. Cite three incidents from the story to support one or both of the above ideas.
4. What difficult decision must Aragorn make concerning Frodo and Sam? After completing the book, do you think he makes the correct decision?
5. What evidence is there that Frodo and Sam are being guided by a powerful, but benevolent guiding force that is helping them battle evil?
6. Some critics believe that Tolkien is making a political statement in this book. They believe he is saying that nations, like men, have the responsibility to go to war to destroy evil, even when that evil is not yet directly threatening. In what ways does the behavior of the Ents and the attitude of King Theoden in this story help to illustrate this idea?
7. In what ways does Tolkien's writing style help to make the creatures and adventures of Middle Earth believable?
8. To what extent do you think Sam's unfriendly behavior toward Gollum contributes to Gollum's evil nature and behavior?
9. In what ways are each of these items useful in the battle against evil: Sam's rope, Frodo's sword, the star-glass, the palantir?
10. What decisions must Sam make at the end of the story? To what extent do you think his decisions are being guided by a benevolent guiding force or fate?
11. Cite incidents from the story to prove or disprove the following statement: Shelob is the embodiment of pure evil.
12. Why is Gandalf called the White Rider?
13. Find a passage in the book to illustrate the following idea: Light and dark in this story represent good and evil.
14. Based on the "evil" characters in the story, list three characteristics of evil.

Chapter II – The Riders of Rohan

VOCABULARY

chafes – burns; feels an intense desire

escarpment – ridge along the edge of a cliff

league – a unit of measurement, usually about 3 miles

raiment – clothing

waxing – the phase of the moon in which it gradually grows to full size, opposed to waning

wroth – angry; wrathful, incensed

1. Where does Aragorn believe the Orcs are heading? What evidence is there that the Orcs are quarreling amongst themselves?

2. What evidence is there along the trail which leads Aragorn to believe that Pippin and Merry are alive?

3. In what way(s) are these Orcs different from other Orcs Aragorn has encountered in the past?

Chapter VIII – The Road to Isengard

VOCABULARY

hovels – dirty huts or dwellings
riven – split apart
ryot – very small island

1. Why is Gandalf going to Isengard? Who is going to travel with him?

2. What evidence is there in this chapter that a *just* people will give men who have chosen the path of evil the chance to repent and be rehabilitated?

3. Why does Gimli want to return to Helm’s Deep?

4. Why is it fitting that the wolves feast on dead Orcs, rather than dead men?

- 4. Gollum seems to have two distinct personalities, one called Gollum and the other called Smeagol. Find a passage in this chapter to support this idea. What do you think these two personalities might symbolize or represent in this book?

- 5. Gollum agrees to help Frodo and Sam reach Mordor. He swears by “the precious” that he will be “very very good.” Frodo accepts his promise, but Sam still does not trust Gollum. In your opinion, can Gollum be trusted? Cite incidents from the chapter to support your answer.

- 6. Frodo’s behavior in this chapter is very unhobbitlike. In what ways has Frodo changed?

Chapter X – The Choices of Master Samwise

VOCABULARY

impudence – nerry
indomitable – unable to be defeated
smote – struck
writhing – twisting

1. Find a quotation that explains the natural force that gives Sam his rage against Shelob.

2. In what sense is Shelob’s defeat ironic? State a theme about good and evil based on this incident.

3. What characteristics of a hero does Sam illustrate in his fight with Shelob?
