

Essay Topic: What is a theme of *The Hobbit*, and how did Tolkein develop it over the course of his text?

You have five to choose from. They are as follows:

Loyalty

The importance of home

Wealth

Good vs Evil

Courage

Directions: Your assignment is to pick one of the themes and both show and explain how Tolkein develops this theme over the course of the text. Use specific examples **THROUGHOUT** the **ENTIRE** book to **SHOW** how he develops the theme, and then clearly and thoroughly **EXPLAIN** how the events you described advance the plot. Remember that the conflict was the adventure to reclaim Erebor **AND** Bilbo's internal conflict to become an unlikely hero. The plot = the series of events that end in the resolution of both conflicts.

You will arrange this chronologically.

1. First of all, go through the last pages and choose ONE of the five themes. The questions will HELP you answer the essay topic question/prompt, but they should NOT limit what you choose to put into your essay.

2. When you finish that, fill out the next page, the graphic organizer. Pick 2-3 specific incidents that will help PROVE your theme and how it was developed. In the boxes, write the event, a summary and paraphrase of what happened, and an explanation of how and why this event showed the development of your chosen theme.

3. Now, Monday night you are to write the first and second BODY paragraphs on the pages that I gave you. Don't write the intro and conclusion yet; we'll do that at the end tomorrow. Remember that you're answering WHAT THE THEME IS AND HOW TOLKEIN DEVELOPED THAT THEM OVER THE COURSE OF THE WHOLE BOOK. Use your graphic organizer and pick 2 of the specific incidents you chose

as PROOF of what you're saying. Use your questions to help you explain what you mean.

4. On Tuesday during school, we'll write the third body paragraph as well as the introduction and conclusion. Tuesday's homework will be to use the rubric I gave you to edit and revise so that you change everything that needs to be changed before Wednesday.

5. On Wednesday, we'll type and print out the final draft. You'll turn in the planning pages and rough draft on Wednesday.

Here are all five themes. You will choose ONE. The questions will help you prepare to write your essay, but those questions do not limit what you can put in the essay.

Theme Choice One: Loyalty

Loyalty in *The Hobbit* is often based on race. The goblins swear revenge against the dwarves because the dwarves have killed the Great Goblin. The elves and the dwarves have a long-standing mutual hatred because of some disagreement about payment for treasure many generations ago. Family also determines loyalty: Fili and Kili die beside Thorin because he's their uncle.

But this leaves us with the question: what generates loyalty between people who are not connected by blood and family ties?

Answer these questions with PLENTY OF DIFFERENT STORY DETAILS to help you prepare to write your final essay:

1. What kind of loyalty exists between Bilbo and the dwarves? Do they feel this loyalty equally?
2. How about Gandalf: what loyalty does he feel toward Bilbo and to the dwarves? How do these different characters prove their loyalty to one another?
3. Can we find a difference between loyalty out of duty and loyalty out of friendship? How loyal do the dwarves seem to be to Bilbo? And how loyal is Bilbo to the dwarves?
4. Is there any reason given for why Gandalf is so loyal to Bilbo? Do you find Gandalf's relations to the different characters of *The Hobbit* well-developed?
5. The line between good and evil is pretty well-maintained in *The Hobbit*. Men, elves, and dwarves = good (mostly). And goblins and Wargs = bad. But do we see any loyalty among the "bad" peoples – the goblins, for example? Is loyalty a trait that solely belongs to the "good" folks? Which groups in *The Hobbit* seem to feel the most loyalty to one another?
6. Bilbo's return to Bag-End to find that his relations have declared him "Presumed dead" could be seen as a kind of betrayal. So could the widespread

hobbit belief that Bilbo has gone nuts in the year he spent away from home. Why does this disloyalty from the other hobbits not bother Bilbo? What winds up being more important to him?

Theme Choice Two: The Importance of Home

The first thing we know about Bilbo (and Elrond and Beorn) is that they have homes. And one of the defining characteristics of Thorin and Gollum is that they do *not* have permanent homes (or else, they're separated from their places of origin). Having a home seems to give Bilbo a sense of security and moral stability that Thorin, even though he is a decent person, does not have. What's more, as we discuss in "Symbols, Imagery, Allegory," the most important treasures in *The Hobbit* also seem to represent different ideas of home.

Answer these questions with PLENTY OF DIFFERENT STORY DETAILS to help you prepare to write your final essay:

1. Bilbo's hobbit-hole is only one of many important refuges in *The Hobbit*. There's also Elrond's Last Homely House in Rivendell, and Beorn's giant home just beyond the Misty Mountains. How do these homes compare to Bilbo's? What do they have in common?
 2. Which of the characters in *The Hobbit* appear to be homeless? How does their loss of home change or harm them? In what ways is the dwarves' quest for treasure also a quest for home?
 3. Generally speaking, why might the idea of home be important in a novel about adventure? How do the different homes in the novel contrast with the book's more action-packed passages?
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Theme Choice Three: Courage

There are big, brave guys in *The Hobbit* like Bard who seem to have no doubts about their courage or ability in this world. Bard represents the human armies of

Lake-town, he directly confronts Thorin, and he fights hard during the Battle of Five Armies (in addition, of course, to shooting Smaug with a bow and arrow). So he's plenty brave. But consider Bilbo, whose greatest acts of courage are to face down Gollum in the goblin tunnels and to approach Smaug by himself in the Lonely Mountain. These are all acts that he does completely by himself, without fully knowing what he's even up against. While Bard's courage may be more open and recognizable, Bilbo's may take more actual bravery. After all, Bilbo is probably the least experienced and most vulnerable character in the whole novel, yet he's the one who is most willing to walk straight into the unknown by himself.

Answer these questions with PLENTY OF DIFFERENT STORY DETAILS to help you prepare to write your final essay:

1. Which moments in *The Hobbit* seem to require the most courage from Bilbo Baggins? How does Bilbo prove his courage to other characters such as the dwarves or Bard?
2. Are there virtues that Bilbo has that are more important than courage? If so, what are they? How does Bilbo show these traits?
3. Who's the bravest character in this novel? Why? What does this person's bravery tell you about his overall character?

Theme:

Beginning: 2-3 DIFFERENT incidents/examples that develop this theme:

Middle: 2-3 DIFFERENT examples/incidents of action that develop this theme:

End: 2-3 DIFFERENT examples/incidents of action that develop this theme:

(State

controlling idea; mention author and title of book).

(To begin with, now state your main idea for THIS paragraph. This is how

the development of the theme began.)
