

[Sample]

The Hobbit (1937) by J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

Young Reader's Guide with Writing Activities and
Quiz Questions

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Note to Parents

In its complete form (this is only a small sample), this guide contains concise summaries of the most important aspects of *The Hobbit*: plot, characters, themes and context. It will be used to enrich and consolidate students' knowledge of the text during the course.

Plot Summary

Chapter One: An Unexpected Party

Gandalf the Wizard visits Bilbo Baggins, a home-loving hobbit who enjoys a quiet life. He secretly makes a mark on his door and sends thirteen dwarves to visit him the next day. These thirteen dwarves, led by Thorin Oakenshield, have a plan to return to the Lonely Mountain, where Thorin's grandfather Thror was once a wealthy and powerful king. Thror lost his kingdom when the terrible dragon Smaug attacked. Thorin and company long to recover their wealth and their kingdom, and wish to recruit a burglar to help them retrieve the treasure now guarded by Smaug. At first Bilbo is convinced that they are mistaken, but his pride is hurt when they dismiss him, and the more adventurous side of his personality, which he inherited from his mother's family, the Took, is roused. He tells the dwarves that he will prove them wrong, and he will go with them on their adventure. For his part, Gandalf is sure he has picked the right person for the job, and reprimands the dwarves for their lack of trust in his judgement.

Themes

Adventure

Adventure is a thrilling and dangerous thing that is contrasted with the quiet, comfortable life. Bilbo is torn between his desire for one and the other. His Baggins side wishes only to remain in his comfortable hobbit-hole, while his Tookish side, from his mother's family, is more adventurous and less respectable. The elves of Rivendell also express this contrast in their song in the last chapter of the novel:

*The fire is more shining
On hearth in the gloaming,
Than gold won by mining,
So why go a-roaming?*

Writing Activities

Chapter One: An Unexpected Party

Extract: Bilbo's Mixed Motives

At this point in the novel, Bilbo has just been carried out to recover, after reacting with panic and hysteria to the dangerous expedition which the dwarves are proposing.

After a while and a drink he crept nervously to the door of the parlour. This is what he heard, Gloin speaking: "Humph!" (or some snort more or less like that). "Will he do, do you think? It is all very well for Gandalf to talk about this hobbit being fierce, but one shriek like that in a moment of excitement would be enough to wake the dragon and all his relatives, and kill the lot of us. I think it sounded more like fright than excitement! In fact, if it had not been for the sign on the door, I should have been sure we had come to the wrong house. As soon as I clapped eyes on the little fellow bobbing and puffing on the mat, I had my doubts. **He looks more like a grocer than a burglar!**"

Then Mr. Baggins turned the handle and went in. **The Took side had won. He suddenly felt he would go without bed and breakfast to be thought fierce.** As for *little fellow bobbing on the mat* it almost made him really fierce. **Many a time afterwards the Baggins part regretted what he did now**, and he said to himself: "Bilbo, you were a fool; you walked right in and put your foot in it."

"Pardon me," he said, "if I have overheard words that you were saying. I don't pretend to understand what you are talking about, or your reference to burglars, but I think I am right in believing" (this is what he called being on his dignity) "that you think I am no good. I will show you. I have no signs on my door—it was painted a week ago—, and I am quite sure you have come to the wrong house. As soon as I saw your funny faces on the door-step, I had my doubts. But treat it as the right one. Tell me what you want done, and I will try it, if I have to walk from here to the East of East and fight the wild Were-worms in the Last Desert. I had a great-great-great-grand-uncle once, Bullroarer Took, and—"

"Yes, yes, but that was long ago," said Gloin. "I was talking about you. And I assure you there is a mark on this door—the usual one in the trade, or used to be. *Burglar wants a good job, plenty of Excitement and reasonable Reward*, that's how it is usually read. You can say *Expert Treasure-hunter* instead of *Burglar* if you like. Some of them do. It's all the same to us. Gandalf told us that there was a man of the sort in these parts looking for a Job at once, and that he had arranged for a meeting here this Wednesday tea-time."

"Of course there is a mark," said Gandalf. "I put it there myself. For very good reasons. You asked me to find the fourteenth man for your expedition, and I chose Mr. Baggins. Just let anyone say I chose the wrong man or the wrong house, and you can stop at thirteen and have all the bad luck you like, or go back to digging coal."

He scowled so angrily at Gloom that the dwarf huddled back in his chair; and when Bilbo tried to open his mouth to ask a question, he turned and frowned at him and stuck out his bushy eyebrows, till Bilbo shut his mouth tight with a snap. "That's right," said Gandalf. "Let's have no more argument. I have chosen Mr. Baggins and that ought to be enough for all of you. If I say he is a Burglar, a Burglar he is, or will be when the time comes. **There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself.** You may (possibly) all live to thank me yet."

Starting Sentence	Vocabulary
Bilbo's decision to go adventuring has mixed motives.	pride, embarrassment, anger, courage

Quiz Questions

Plot

1. **Chapter One: A U P**
2. What is the plan of the thirteen dwarves led by Thorin Oakenshield?
3. Why have the dwarves come to visit Bilbo Baggins?
4. Why does Gandalf tell the dwarves off?

Image of a hobbit from [Wikimedia Commons](#). Author: Antoine Glédel.