



## The Lord of the Rings: *Trilogy*

by J.R.R. Tolkien

### THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

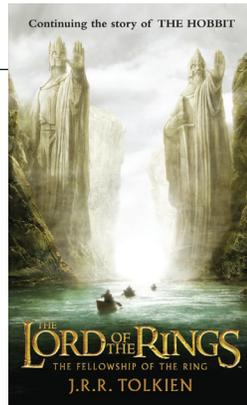
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### THE RETURN OF THE KING

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### a note to teachers

J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* complete manuscript, which is longer than *War and Peace*, was predicted to be a financial failure when it was first published in 1954. Ironically, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* have enjoyed an extended popularity and have earned their place as a favorite amongst readers of all ages.

What J.R.R. Tolkien captured almost a half century ago has been enjoyed by generations. While you and your students are reading *The Lord of the Rings*, you'll find yourself whispering Rivendell and Elrond. You'll catch an elven gleam in the eyes of friends or note the hobbit sense of others. *The Lord of the Rings* is intensely intimate and personal. Bilbo is your wise and jolly uncle, Gandalf your sage and aloof grandfather. Frodo could be a noble friend, while Sam is your best buddy. Imagining the places and characters is the essence of the reading experience of *The Lord of the Rings*.

This guide is designed to direct and enhance your reading as well as supply a number of research and interdisciplinary options for your students. There are also many useful appendices at the end of *The Return of the King*, such as a chronological list of events and family trees.



### about the author

J.R.R. Tolkien was a scholar of the English language. He was a Professor of Anglo-Saxon (Old English) at the University of Oxford and, according to biographer Daniel Grotta, he was forced to take on a part-time job of school examiner to make ends meet. He created the vast landscape of Middle-earth and populated it with Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Trolls, and Men. He created an entire world into which millions of readers have escaped.

### THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

#### about this book

*The Fellowship of the Ring* picks up where *The Hobbit* left off. The strange and precious Ring has taken its toll on Bilbo through the years and he decides, with help from the mysterious Gandalf, to leave it to his adopted heir and cousin, Frodo Baggins, along with his dwelling at Bag End. This sets Frodo on a collision course with Sauron, The Dark Lord himself, later in the trilogy. *The Fellowship of the Ring* tells the story of the Ring, its departure from the Shire and its delivery into the Land of Mordor. The Fellowship consists of members of the remaining forces for good as they struggle to quell the rising darkness in Middle-earth.



## book I: plot summary & discussion questions

Book I begins with a party Bilbo is throwing for himself. As Gandalf leaves to learn more about the Ring, Bilbo reluctantly gives the Ring to Frodo and leaves the Shire. Frodo is told he too must leave his home. Chased all the way to Rivendell by The Black Riders—evil servants of Sauron, the Dark Lord—the hobbits are joined by their friends Merry and Pippin and take a detour through the Old Forest to elude the Black Riders. After meeting Tom Bombadil and escaping the Barrow-wights, the hobbits reach their destination in the town of Bree. There, with the help of their new friend, Strider, the hobbits escape Bree just as the Black Riders arrive. Frodo is wounded by the Nazgul, but is saved by Strider. The group races to Rivendell with the assistance of Glorfindel. Frodo crosses the Ford just before the raging river washes the Black Riders away.

### chapter 1

How does Hobbit talk fuel the anticipation around Bilbo's birthday party? What is the significance in the way Bilbo leaves the Shire? What does Gandalf contribute to the party? How does Bilbo show his strength over the Ring?

### chapter 2

What is the news that enters the Shire? What does Gandalf tell Frodo about the Ring? Who is Sméagol or Gollum? Who is Sauron?

### chapter 3

Why is Gandalf trying to piece together the story of the Ring? What does Gandalf tell Frodo he must do with the Ring? Who will travel with Frodo when he leaves the Shire?

### chapter 4

Who do the hobbits meet on the road to Buckland? What do the hobbits do to pass time and ease their fears? How do the hobbits elude the Black Riders? Why does Frodo fear Farmer Maggott? Who meets the group as they prepare to cross the Brandywine?

### chapter 5

What is the conspiracy planned by Pippin, Merry and Sam? Why do they choose to travel through the Old Forest? What is Frodo's dream?

### chapter 6

How does the Old Forest force the direction of the hobbits? Why do they want to get to the East Road? Who is Tom Bombadil?

### chapter 7

Who is Goldberry? What is Frodo's dream? What keeps the hobbits at Tom's house? Why does Frodo put the Ring on?

### chapter 8

What happens to the hobbits in the Hollow? How does weather effect their journey? What are the Barrow-wights? How does Frodo display his courage? How are the hobbits rescued? What gift is given to the hobbits? What is the next destination for the hobbits?

### chapter 9

What mood pervades the scene at the Prancing Pony Inn? What mistakes do the hobbits make at the Inn? How does Frodo break up the party? What does the stranger in the corner call Frodo?

### chapter 10

What does Strider want? What did Butterbur forget to do? What did Merry see on his walk? What does Aragorn predict will happen?

### chapter 11

What happens in the Shire at the beginning of chapter 11? What events delay the group's departure from the Prancing Pony? Who is Bill Ferny and what does the group get from him? What do they see in the night sky over Weathertop? What are the signs at Weathertop that Gandalf is near? What story does Aragorn tell during the night on Weathertop? Why does Frodo decide to put the Ring on and what does he see that the others can't?

### chapter 12

What is the nature of Frodo's injury? What does Strider do to help Frodo? What sign does the group find at the River Hoarwell to know it is safe to cross? Who finds the group on the path to Rivendell? Why is it that Frodo cannot remain with his friends? Describe the scene at the

Ford of Rivendell? How many Black Riders chase Frodo and how does he escape? What do the hobbits, Aragorn and Glorfindel do to ensure Frodo's escape?

## book II: plot summary & discussion questions

The decision is made to send the Ring to be destroyed on Mount Doom at The Council of Elrond. The Fellowship of the Ring includes Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin (hobbits), as well as Gandalf (wizard), Strider (Aragorn) and Boromir (men), Legolas (elf) and Gimli (dwarf). Deterred in crossing the mountains, Gandalf leads the fellowship to the Mines of Moria where he confronts the Balrog and disappears. The others escape and flee the pursuing Orcs into the Elven land of Lothlórien. There, they rest and are given gifts by the Elf Queen, Lady Galadriel for their journey. As they leave Lothlórien, they are pursued by Orcs and Gollum, who still desire the Ring. Once they reach the Rauros Falls, the Fellowship must decide between traveling to Minas Tirith or continuing to Mordor to destroy the Ring. Boromir attempts to take the Ring by force from Frodo who puts on the Ring and disappears. Sam discovers Frodo and joins him, as the rest of the members.

### chapter 1

Who is in the room when Frodo wakes up in Rivendell? Considering that Frodo has proved his courage in several ways already, how does this prove him to be special? Gandalf reports the islands of power are under siege. What is Gandalf's prediction for Frodo? Who commanded the flood that washed away The Nine? Who is Glóin? Who is the cloaked figure in the Hall of Fire? What does Frodo see when he shows his old friend the Ring? What story does Bilbo tell in song?

### chapter 2

What is the purpose of the Council of Elrond? What does the Enemy know now and who gave them most of their information? How and why was Gandalf's trip to accompany Frodo delayed? What does it mean for the Council? What are the two options for the Ring? Which course of action does the Council advise? Boromir suggests using the Ring for good. How does Elrond show this to be folly? What is the weakness in Sauron and how will the group catch him off guard? What is the strategy of the Council of Elrond? Frodo again shows his courage, as do other members of the group. Who are they and how do they display it?

### chapter 3

Who are the nine members of The Fellowship of the Ring? Why is each one chosen? What gifts does Bilbo give to Frodo? How is the weather controlled by the Dark Lord at the mountain pass of Caradhras?

### chapter 4

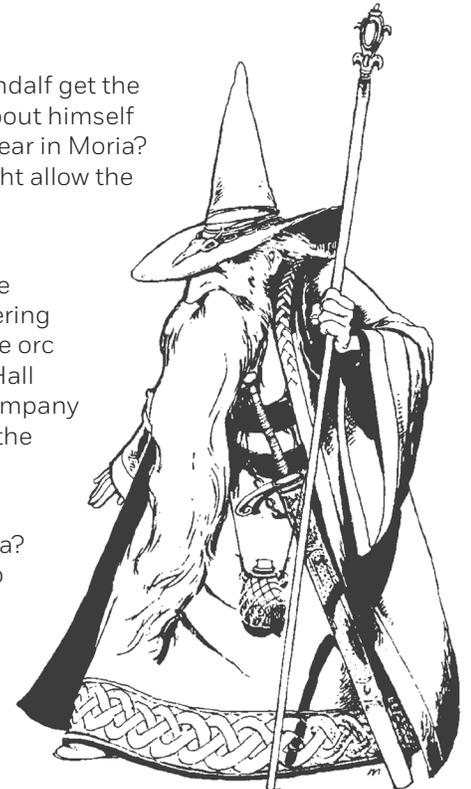
What is the only option left to the Company? How does Gandalf get the Company into the Dwarf doors? What does Frodo notice about himself since receiving the wound on Weathertop? What does he hear in Moria? Why does Gimli tell Durin's tale? What does the morning light allow the Company to find?

### chapter 5

What does Gandalf find in the tomb? What does it teach the Company? Sam saves Frodo for the second time since entering Moria. How does he do it? What secret saves Frodo from the orc chieftan's spear? The company must descend to the First Hall and cross the Bridge of Khazah-dûm. What pursues the Company and how do they escape? What does Gandalf do to ensure the Company's safe passage out of Moria?

### chapter 6

What strange land does the Company arrive into from Moria? What is revealed during the healing of Frodo's wound? Who does the Company meet in the trees of Lothlórien? What does Frodo see climbing up the tree in the night? Why do the elves not want Gimli in the trees or in the forest? How does Aragorn keep the Company moving and divert a disaster? What power does the Dark Lord possess that keeps forces of good separated? What do the elves sing



about? Where are they planning on going? Who sends the news to unmask the Company? What is the nature of time in Cerin Amroth?

chapter 7

Who entertains the Company in Caras Galadon? What happens when Lady Galadriel holds each of the Company in her gaze? What does Sam see in the Mirror and what does Lady Galadriel say about what the Mirror shows? What does Frodo see that Sam can't see? Why does Lady Galadriel refuse Frodo's offer?

chapter 8

How is the decision making process of the Company delayed? How do the elves prepare the Company for their journey? Name the gift each member of the Company receives and tell why it is significant to each. What wound does Gimli receive in leaving Lothlórien?

chapter 9

What is Sam's dream while floating down the Great River? How is Nature bent toward destroying the Company down stream? What is Aragorn's plan and why does Boromir disagree with it? What significance is there in the hands of the Pillars of Kings?

chapter 10

What decision is forced upon the Company in the shadow of Tol Brandir? Who must make that decision? What does Boromir advise Frodo to do with the Ring? What does Frodo see on Amon Hen? What action does he take which shows his strength and courage? How does Frodo elude the Company and who isn't fooled by his plan?

## — discussion & writing

1. Considering that the *Lord of the Rings* was published in the early 1950s. What influences of the post-WWII era do you see in *The Fellowship of the Ring*?
2. The elves in Lothlórien discuss a Nirvana or Heaven across the Sea. For Tolkien, could America have been the imagined, distant land of peace and prosperity?
3. Throughout *The Fellowship of the Ring*, characters long for the peaceful days of freedom in the past, or an idealized future into which they hope to move. How do these idealized notions of freedom keep the struggle for freedom alive in the Company?
4. What is Frodo's relationship to the Ring compared to Bilbo's relationship to it?
5. The power of the Ring saves Frodo at first, but then threatens to destroy him. Gandalf, Elrond and Lady Galadriel all refuse to be the possessor of the Ring because they fear its strength. How does the power of the Ring affect its owner?
6. Haldir, an elf in Lothlórien, describes the power of the Dark Lord, "Indeed in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides all those who still oppose him." (p. 411) Discuss how fear and mistrust are everywhere in Middle-earth.
7. Discuss how the Elves and Dwarves have feuded, how men lost Gondor to the rising Dark Lord because "... the blood of Numenoreans became mingled with that of lesser men." (p. 294) Discuss themes of racial superiority in the book and consider the racial attitudes present in pre-WWII Germany, Bosnia, Kosovo, African Congo, etc.
8. Discuss Tom Bombadil. When he wore the Ring, nothing happened, making Frodo think the power of the Ring was lost. Bombadil is mentioned at the Council of Elrond, but it is decided that he will not be called because he is his own master. What does it mean to remain neutral in a battle of Good vs. Evil?
9. While at Tom Bombadil's on the edge of the Old Forest and in Lothlórien, members of the group have a different sense of time. Discuss the differences between a linear concept of time and one that tends to be spatial or non-linear.
10. How is the Fellowship of the Ring like the Commonwealth that existed in England?
11. Throughout much of the book, weather or natural objects play a role in deterring the group from reaching its goal, sometimes the natural environment takes action against the Company. Discuss the role of nature (natural environment, natural phenomena) in the service of Good or Evil.
12. The noblest characters in the book seem to be those who resist the power of the Ring and thus the Dark Lord. Who are those characters and how are they able to resist the temptations of the power of the Ring?

13. "But the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it." says Gandalf. (p. 322) Discuss how the Company plans to use this approach to surprise the Dark Lord.
14. Gandalf the Grey, Saruman the White, Radagast the Brown, The Black Riders. Discuss the connection of color to characters.

## THE TWO TOWERS

### about this book

*The Two Towers* begins with Book III in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Boromir had just tried to take the Ring from Frodo. Frodo decides to take the burden of the Ring to Mount Doom by himself and not endanger the entire fellowship, but before he escapes Sam finds him and insists on going too. *The Two Towers* follows the two paths taken by the members of the fellowship: Frodo and Sam go south to Mordor, and Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas pursue the Orcs who have Merry and Pippin hostage.

### book III: plot summary & discussion questions

Book III begins with the separation of the Fellowship as Merry and Pippin are taken prisoner by the Orcs. The remaining three members of the fellowship decide to pursue Merry and Pippin and the rest of the book switches back and forth between the hobbits and the men trying to rescue them. In Chapter 9, the company is reunited at the gates of Isengard. The hobbits are responsible for raising the army of Ents and Huorns by explaining the recent history to Treebeard, while the men fight victoriously at Helm's Deep with the Riders of Rohan. This is the first battle of the war against the dark lord, Sauron, but with the return of Gandalf, there is hope.

#### Chapter 1: The Departure of Boromir & Chapter 2: The Riders of Rohan

1. Boromir succumbed to the power of the Ring when he tried to take it from Frodo by force. This action breaks the fellowship. Why was his physical strength not enough to take the Ring from the hobbit? What is his punishment? Does he understand his punishment?
2. Why does Aragorn decide to follow the Orcs and Merry and Pippin? And what does he find that convinces him he has made the correct decision?
3. Who are the Riders of Rohan and what are they doing so far away from their homeland? How do they give Aragorn hope? What do the riders give them?
4. When Eomer laughs at the ideas of halflings as something from legend, Aragorn introduces the idea of storytelling. "For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time." What does Aragorn mean? Is he correct?
5. "Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men." What does Aragorn's quote tell you about him? Are things better or worse now than they were in the old days?

#### Chapter 3: The Uruk-Hai & Chapter 4: Treebeard

1. Pippin and Merry's journey with the Orcs is grueling and dangerous, but the hobbits take several chances that end up saving their lives. What chances do they take?
2. Both Uglúk and Grishnákh want to take the hobbits back to their master, but both also have different plans. Which is better?
3. How do Pippin and Merry trick Grishnákh with the use of the Ring? What has Pippin done—and concealed from the Orcs—that allows him to get free?
4. Who is Treebeard and where does he take the hobbits? Even though Treebeard's motto is "Don't be hasty," what does he decide to do? What do the hobbits see as they march toward Isengard?

#### Chapter 5: The White Rider & Chapter 6: The King of the Golden Hall

1. Who returns to Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas in Fangorn? What does the old beggar tell them? Saruman's double treachery is that he wants to have power over the men of Minas Tirith and he wants the power of the Ring for himself. Was Saruman always evil? What does Gandalf say about the leader of the Council?
2. At the mention of Balrog, Gandalf says, "Name him not!" What power is there in a name and/

or a word? Who saves Gandalf and where did he save Gandalf from at an earlier time? Who is helping Gandalf now?

3. Why is the company detained at the gates of the Golden Hall and what must they leave at the door? Whose rule is it that all who enter must be unarmed? In what condition is the king when the company enters the hall and how does he change during their visit?
4. Wormtongue is the most obviously named character in the trilogy. What makes him so wicked? What options does Gandalf give him as the Men of Rohan prepare to fight?
5. Eowyn is left in charge of Theoden's people. Who is she? What will she be responsible for in the absence of the king?

#### **Chapter 7: Helm's Deep & Chapter 8: The Road to Isengard**

1. What is Helm's Deep, who is there and how does it help the men of Rohan?
2. Why does Gandalf leave the men of Rohan? Where does he go?
3. Who does Saruman send to fight at Helm's Deep?
4. After surviving the battle in the night, what do the riders see below Helm's Gate? Who appears to help them?
5. Gandalf leads a small party of men to Isengard. What do they see along the way? What do they find once they arrive at the walled fortress? Who is protecting the gates of the city?

#### **Chapter 9: Flotsam and Jetsam, Chapter 10: The Voice of Saruman & Chapter 11: The Palantír**

1. What seems peculiar to Aragorn about the hobbits? Who are the Huorns and how have they helped the men and Ents?
2. What mistakes does Saruman make? How is the spell of Saruman's voice broken?
3. Gandalf reveals his new strength to Saruman and to the company. What offer does he make to Saruman?
4. Gandalf learns that the globe has been the key communication tool between Isengard and Mordor. How does this help the company?

### **book IV: plot summary & discussion questions**

Book IV goes back in time to the separation of the fellowship and follows Frodo and Sam in their attempt to reach Mount Doom in Mordor. Gollum, or Smeagol, makes a pact with Frodo to be a guide into Mordor. Frodo and Sam need Gollum because he knows the way, but they also know the potential for his treachery because of his desire to obtain the Ring again. Along the way, Frodo meets and makes friends with a rebel band of men led by Faramir, Boromir's younger brother. Frodo and Sam are at the mercy of Gollum's plan to lead them to Cirith Ungol and Shelob, the spider giantess, but he is their only hope having been in Mordor and escaped (or was he allowed to escape?). After passing many tests of courage and strength, the hobbits enter Shelob's lair and find they have several weapons with which to defeat the hungry arachnid. After the victory, Sam thinks Frodo has been killed and chooses to carry the burden of the Ring to Mount Doom himself. When he learns from the orc leaders that Frodo is not dead, he chastises himself for making the wrong decision when actually, he saves the Ring and keeps it from Sauron by becoming the Ring Bearer for a brief time. Sam's choice allows the Ring to enter Mordor undetected.

#### **Chapter 1: The Taming of Smeagol, Chapter 2: The Passage of the Marshes & Chapter 3: The Black Gate is Closed**

1. As Frodo and Sam begin their journey, what item from the Elves helps? How does the fight between Sam and Gollum end? What deal do Frodo and Gollum make?
2. Why do Frodo and Sam decide to follow Gollum through the Dead Marshes? What do they see in the marshes, and what happens to frighten them even more?
3. With the Black Gate heavily guarded, which way does Gollum suggest? What new enemy appears that weakens their hope?

#### **Chapter 4: Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit, Chapter 5: Window on the West & Chapter 6: The Forbidden Pool**

1. Who finds the hobbits and what is this group about to do? What does Sam see that he thought was just a myth?
2. Who is Faramir and what does he know about Boromir? With Faramir's trust, Frodo and Sam are led to the secret camp. Faramir's family claims stewardship of Minas Tirith.
3. How does Frodo trick Gollum and protect him? What does Frodo decide is his only hope?

### Chapter 7: Journey to the Cross-Roads & Chapter 8: The Stairs of Cirith Ungol

1. There is an eerie silence as Frodo, Sam and Gollum begin to climb into the mountains to reach Cirith Ungol. What do they hear? What does Frodo see lying on the ground that gives him hope?
2. What is the reaction of each character when he sees the city of the Ringwraiths? Gollum leads them out of the path of the marching army, but who stops and senses something after crossing the bridge?
3. What change might the hobbits have seen had they been awake after the Straight Stair? What does Sam accuse Gollum of doing?

### Chapter 9: Shelob's Lair & Chapter 10: The Choices of Master Samwise

1. What does Sam remind Frodo of in the tunnel? What does Frodo say that seems outside of himself? How do they get Shelob to retreat? What was Gollum's plan all along? Who wins the fight between Gollum and Sam this time?
2. In what condition does Sam find Frodo? How does Sam wound Shelob? What two items does Sam take from his master? Sam remembers looking into Galadriel's glass and seeing Frodo sleeping. What does he think now about Frodo's condition?
3. How does Sam elude the Orcs? What do the Orcs take and what does Sam learn from them?

## discussion & composition questions

1. When Merry and Pippin are forced to run with the Orcs it is a reminder of the history of cruelty and suffering by one group of people on another. Discuss the suffering of ethnic groups at the hands of their oppressors—the Jewish Exodus, the Huguenots, The Trail of Tears, Nazi death marches, marches in the Philippines, the reign of Mao in China and most recently the struggles in the Balkans. The goal is to demoralize, dehumanize and weaken the perceived enemy. What stories return? What do we learn from these about the human ability to dole out cruelty and to endure suffering?
2. Design your own fortress. Think of the design of Minas Tirith, Isengard, Helm's Gate and Mordor.
3. Frodo and Sam get into a conversation about how stories get told and why they are passed on. "I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten." (p. 378) What about this conversation allows the reader to step out of the immediacy of the story and see it as a story that has happened and is now being told? What events do we choose to remember? Which are forgotten? Look for current events in recent newspapers. What stories will stay with us? What stories won't? Why?

## THE RETURN OF THE KING

### note to teachers

The importance of the Stewardship held by Denethor's line until the return of a king should be carefully explained to students. A steward is one who runs the city in place of the king. Over the long years in the absence of the king, Denethor has grown strong and wise. His, and his favored son Boromir's, failing is the desire to hold power. For Boromir, his desire for the Ring left him unprepared for the Orc attack. For Denethor, his weakening position made him look into the palantir of Minas Tirith and he descended into madness. The stewardship sets up a great deal of bureaucratic maneuvering by Gandalf and Aragorn and should be made clear from the outset.

### about this book

While the evil might of the Dark Lord Sauron swarmed out to conquer all Middle-earth, Frodo and Sam struggled deep into Mordor, seat of Sauron's power. To defeat the Dark Lord, the accursed Ring of Power had to be destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom. But the way was impossibly hard, and Frodo was weakening. Weighed down by the compulsion of the Ring he began finally to despair.



## book V: plot summary & discussion questions

Book V tells of the gathering of the armies under the leadership of Gandalf, Aragorn and Theoden. The book begins with Gandalf's meeting with the Steward of Minas Tirith, Denethor, Boromir and Faramir's father. After looking into the palantir, Aragorn rides with Legolas and Gimli, as well as the Rangers of the North through the Paths of the Dead to gather the army of ghosts and to gain speed in arriving at Minas Tirith. Eowyn begs to travel with Aragorn, but he refuses. Merry rides with Dernhelm, who is Eowyn in disguise, and the Riders of Rohan into the battle at Minas Tirith where Denethor has gone mad and Faramir is gravely wounded. Theoden confronts the Lord of the Nazgul and is killed, but Eowyn, assisted by Merry, kills the Nazgul as the Men of Rohan arrive to turn the tide of battle. Aragorn arrives on dark ships to drive the orc armies back in preparation for the final battle. Meanwhile, Pippin calls Gandalf to save Faramir from Denethor's madness. With the help of Beregond, they save Faramir, but Denethor burns himself in his own pyre. Aragorn goes as a captain to the Houses of Healing to save Faramir, Eowyn and Merry. Once the city is healed, a group of Captains of the West plan to offer themselves as bait in the hope that the Ring-Bearer is still busy on his quest. When the messenger of Sauron greets the Captains with Frodo and Sam's garments, the Captains know there is still hope. The final battle begins with Pippin killing a troll-chief and the arrival of the eagles.

### Chapter 1: Minas Tirith & Chapter 2: The Passing Of The Grey Company

1. Why is Pippin selected to ride with Gandalf? Why does Denethor favor his dead son Boromir over his son Faramir?
2. Who is the Grey Company and how were they summoned to join Aragorn? Look up the word fealty in the dictionary. Who does Merry pledge his service to and why? What do they plan to talk about in a more peaceful time?
3. Why does Aragorn decide to take the Path of the Dead? What is Eowyn's reaction to his plan to take this path? Gimli is usually comfortable in caves and mines. What happens to him on the Path of the Dead? What does Aragorn say inside the cavern which allows the Grey Company to pass?

### Chapter 3: The Muster of Rohan & Chapter 4: The Siege of Gondor

1. What do Eowyn and her father Theoden think has happened to Aragorn? How many men will Theoden ride with to Minas Tirith? Why doesn't Theoden take all of his men?
2. What happens to Merry? Why isn't he allowed to go to battle?
3. Faramir's return to Minas Tirith is almost arrested by the Black Riders. Who saves him and what news does he bring back to the City? What does Denethor think should be done with the Ring? What does Aragorn think stirred Sauron into battle?
4. What devices does the Enemy use to weaken and then enter the first gate of the City? What happens on Faramir's retreat into the city? What is Denethor preparing to do as Gandalf takes control of the City? What do Pippin and Gandalf hear as Gandalf faces the Nazgul?

### Chapter 5: The Ride of the Rohirrim, Chapter 6: The Battle of the Pelennor Fields, & Chapter 7: The Pyre of Denethor

1. What unexpected source helps speed the men of Rohan into Minas Tirith? What is the Enemy doing when the Riders of Rohan charge into battle?
2. How does Theoden fall and who stays to fight? When Dernhelm reveals that he is really Eowyn, what fear does this strike into the Lord of the Nazgul? How does Merry help Eowyn?
3. How is Eomer cut off in the Battle of the Pelennor Field? What does he see that first gives him despair and then hope?
4. What has happened to Denethor? What does he hold as he sets his own pyre ablaze? Who saves Faramir?

### Chapter 8: The Houses of Healing, Chapter 9: The Last Debate & Chapter 10: The Black Gate Opens

1. Which three important characters are sent to the Houses of Healing and what are their injuries? What old saying does Loreth remind Gandalf of?
2. What does Gandalf counsel the Captain of Gondor to do? Why is the size of the Army that marches into Mordor significant?
3. What does the Mouth of Sauron show as proof that the Ring-Bearer has been captured? What are Sauron's list of demands? What does Gandalf accept? Pippin finally gets a taste of battle. What valiant deed does he perform and what does he hear as he falls?

## book VI: plot summary & discussion questions

Book VI begins where *The Two Towers* left off; with Sam looking for Frodo and bearing the Ring. He hears the battle going on between Orcs in the Tower. Although tempted by the power of the Ring, Sam's hobbit sense returns and he finds Frodo, who demands the Ring back. The hobbits struggle toward Mount Doom, pursued by Gollum and unknowing Orcs. With food and water running out, Sam carries Frodo up Mount Doom before Gollum attacks them. Sam spares Gollum, remembering the words of Gandalf and then chases his master to the fires of the mountain. Once inside, Frodo decides not to give up the Ring, puts it on, is attacked by Gollum who bites the Ring and Frodo's finger off, then dances backward in his glee, into the Crack of Doom. Gandalf and the Eagles rescue Sam and Frodo off the mountain.

Great feasts and celebrations greet the Ring-Bearers and all the hobbits are celebrated by Aragorn, King Elessar. Eowyn and Faramir are wed, as well as Aragorn and Arwen. Beregond becomes first captain of Faramir's Guards. The Fellowship is reunited and marches to Rivendell to see Bilbo and then eventually, the Shire. But the Shire has been under the rule of Saruman and his ruffians, who have looted and burned much to spite the hobbits. The battle-wizened hobbits raise the Shire with the help of Eomer's horn and defeat the ruffians. Wormtongue kills Saruman and then is killed by hobbit archers. Sam and Frodo ride away from the Shire and meet the elves heading west to the Sea with Bilbo. They meet Gandalf on the white boat. Sam, Merry and Pippin ride home as the heroes of the Third Age ride over the sea to the Grey Havens.

### Chapter 1: The Tower of Cirith Ungol & Chapter 2: The Land of Shadow

1. What does Sam use to enter the Tower of Cirith Ungol? What started the fight between the Orc chiefs? How does Frodo react to the fact that Sam has carried the Ring?
2. Name two glimmers of hope that the hobbits see during their escape from the Tower. What decision do the hobbits make to speed their journey to Mount Doom? How do they blend in with the marching Orcs and how do they escape?

### Chapter 3: Mount Doom & Chapter 4: The Field of Cormallen

1. What gives Sam the strength to carry Frodo and what do they leave behind for their final ascent? Where is the Dark Eye focused? Why does Sam spare Gollum?
2. What does Frodo decide to do with the Ring at the brink of the Fire of Doom? With the Dark Eye now firmly fixed on Frodo, how does Gollum complete the journey of the Ring?
3. What interrupts the final battle of the Captains of Gondor and Sauron's forces? How are Frodo and Sam saved from the eruptions of Mount Doom? What treatment do the hobbits receive from the King? What is the subject of Legolas's song?

### Chapter 5: The Steward and The King & Chapter 6: Many Partings

1. Where does Eowyn wish to go? What does Merry tell Faramir about Eowyn? Who are Eowyn's loyalties torn between? What does Faramir say that makes her change her mind? What does Eowyn want to be?
2. What happens in the meeting of Faramir and Aragorn? In what order does Aragorn wish to receive the crown? What is the punishment of Beregond? What does Gandalf tell Aragorn about the Third Age? What does Aragorn find on his mountain walk with Gandalf? What is the special event that Aragorn has been waiting for?
3. What gifts are given and what grudge is settled before the weddings and funeral? Where do Legolas and Gimli go? Why did Treebeard let Saruman and Wormtongue go? Who does the party meet on the road to Rivendell?

### Chapter 7: Homeward Bound, Chapter 8: The Scouring of the Shire & Chapter 9: The Grey Havens

1. What record is Bilbo trying to break? What peculiar thing does Elrond say to Frodo? What does Frodo feel near the approach to Weathertop? What does the company learn at The Prancing Pony? Why does Gandalf leave the hobbits before they enter the Shire? Why does he have confidence in them?
2. Who escorts the hobbits into the Shire? What does Frodo keep reminding the hobbits about? How does Merry raise the Shire and how did his travels prepare him for this encounter?
3. Who do the hobbits confront inside Bag End? What is the outcome of the confrontation?
4. What has happened to the Shire and how does Sam use Lady Galadriel's gift? Where do Sam and Frodo go and who do they meet? Who tells Merry and Pippin to meet Sam by the Sea? Where are the travelers going?

## • discussion & writing topics

1. Boromir is given a very different burial than the Orcs who are killed by the Riders of Rohan. In Christian culture it is traditional to bury a body in a coffin with a marker above that place to say who lies beneath. Research different types of burial in Egypt, South America and China. How do people attempt to preserve the identity of the person who died? What is the notion of an after-life in each culture? Compare these with the variety of burials in the *Lord of the Rings*.
2. Throughout history there have been a great many military victories and blunders. The battle of Waterloo (Napoleon), The Spanish Armada, The Battle of Hastings, The Battle of the Bulge, Pearl Harbor, The Invasion of Normandy, The Tet Offensive. Research a military battle. What plans did one side make that helped them win. What mistakes were made? Compare these with the major battles at Isengard and Mordor. What did the enemy know and what information were they lacking?
3. Legolas has one way of dealing with pain and fatigue during the march of the Orcs. Pippin and Merry comfort themselves another way. What do the different characters do to endure pain? Find examples of how the power of the mind can assist the healing power and return the strength of the body.

## • beyond the books

1. Considering that the *Lord of the Rings* was published in the early 1950s, what influences of the post-WW II era do you see in *The Fellowship of the Ring*?
2. Wilderness survival, tracking, knowing time and location by sun and moon—skills of a naturalist—these may be foreign to suburban and urban students. Human beings survived in the natural world for ages without convenience stores and the internet. Research wilderness survival or tracking. What parts of the day and year are still tied to the natural world? How is our environment still part of almost everything we do? Would you survive in this setting? How?
3. The elves in Lothlórien discuss a Nirvana or Heaven across the Sea, the Grey Havens. For Tolkien, could America have been the imagined, distant land of peace and prosperity?
4. Gandalf the Grey, Saruman the White, Radagast the Brown, The Black Riders. Discuss the connection of color to characters.
5. “The West Road seems easiest. Therefore it must be shunned. It will be watched. Too often the Elves have fled that way. Now at this last we must take a hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be. To walk into peril—to Mordor. We must send the Ring to the Fire,” says Elrond. (p. 320 *Fellowship of the Ring*) Discuss this poem in connection with Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken.”
6. There are very few women in *The Lord of the Rings*, but those we encounter are extremely powerful. Discuss Lady Galadriel and Eowyn. What strengths does each possess? Discuss strong female characters in literature and history. Do they share any of the strengths of Galadriel and Eowyn?

## • cast of characters

**Frodo Baggins**—Hobbit who inherits the Ring from Bilbo Baggins. He endures the nearly impossible struggle of carrying the Ring to its end with dignity and nobility. His surprising courage inspires those around him as he continually thwarts the evil temptation of the Ring.

**Sam Gamgee**—Friend and loyal servant to Frodo, Sam was the gardener at Bag End, but is a valiant and thoughtful assistant to Frodo against the Dark Lord.

**Pippin Took**—Friend of Frodo. Pippin is a member of the Fellowship and pledges his sword to Denethor, Steward of Minas Tirith.

**Merry Brandybuck**—Merry is a member of the Fellowship. He pledges fealty to Theoden and helps Eowyn in her final battle.

**Boromir**—A man from Minas Tirith, son of Denethor and heir to the Stewardship of the City of Gondor. Boromir is tempted by the power of the Ring and tries to take it from Frodo by force. This act divides the Fellowship of the Ring.



**Legolas**—An elf and member of the Fellowship from Lothlórien. Legolas has keen vision and is a master archer.

**Gimli**—A fierce and proud dwarf from Lonely Mountain, son of Gloin who assisted Bilbo (in *The Hobbit*).

**Aragorn** (Strider)—A Ranger from the North, Aragorn is the heir of Isildur, last of the descendants of Numenor. Aragorn leads the Fellowship after Gandalf's disappearance. He will become King of Middle-earth after the War of the Ring.

**Gandalf** (Mithrandir)—A wizard, Gandalf's imprisonment by Saruman delays the beginning of the journey of the Ring. He leads the Fellowship until his fall in the Mines of Moria, but he returns to lead the forces for good in the War of the Ring.

**Sauron**—The Dark Lord of Mordor, who never actually appears in the trilogy, casts a pall of darkness over Middle-earth. His desire to possess The One Ring throws Middle-earth into war and brings about the end of the Third Age.

**Saruman**—Leader of the White Council, wizard, living in Isengard, Saruman is seduced to the Dark Lord and imprisons Gandalf in a tower.

**Lady Galadriel**—Elf Queen whose gifts assist the Fellowship.