



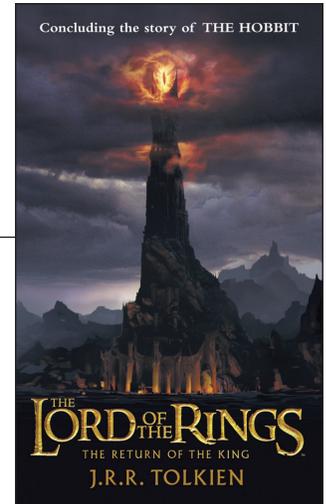
## The Return of the King

*The Lord of the Rings—Part Three*

by J.R.R. Tolkien

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Reading Level: 7.0



### 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.

### discussion and writing

#### 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. Beregon 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 and 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.