

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 1



Key Passage, p. 2-3

“The mother of our particular Hobbit- what is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the big people, as they call us. They are (or were) a little people, about half our height and smaller than the bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort, which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants, which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colors (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long, clever brown fingers, good natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day if they can get it)” (p. 2-3).

Writing Prompt

Using a computer, write at least 2 descriptive paragraphs about hobbitses. In the first paragraph, introduce your audience to the main character Bilbo Baggins by using descriptive language to present his physical appearance and personality traits. In a second paragraph, explain the differences between the Took clan and the Baggins Clan. Make sure each paragraph has plenty of sensory language and telling details. Provide an appropriate introduction and conclusion to each paragraph. When you are finished with your assignment, upload it to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog, etc.)

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 2



Key Passage, p. 23

“Undoubtedly that was what brought the dragon. Dragons steal gold and jewels, you know, from men and elves and dwarves, wherever they can find them; and they guard their plunder as long as they live (which is practically forever, unless they are killed), and never enjoy a brass ring of it. Indeed they hardly know a good bit of work from bad, though they usually have a good notion of the current market value; and they can’t make a thing for themselves, not even mend a little loose scale of their armor...” (p. 23).

Writing Prompt

Bilbo finds out exactly what this adventure entails. He also learns about dragons and how they do not value the riches they steal.

Using a computer, write 2 paragraphs: in one, describe the mission and explain why Thorin wishes to lead it; in another, use sensory language and telling details to demonstrate why this will be a harrowing and difficult journey. Provide a description of dragons in your second paragraph and use language and techniques that create a sense of danger. Be sure to provide appropriate introductions and conclusions to your paragraphs. When you have completed the assignment, upload your work to an online forum of your choice (Google docs, blog, etc.).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 3



Key Passage, p. 29

“Thorin and Company to Burglar Bilbo greeting!

For your hospitality our sincerest thanks, and for your offer of professional assistance our grateful acceptance. Terms: cash on delivery, up to and not exceeding one fourteenth of total profits (if any); all traveling expenses guaranteed in any event; funeral expenses to be defrayed by us or our representatives, if occasion arises and the matter is not otherwise arranged for.

Thinking it unnecessary to disturb your esteemed repose, we have proceeded in advance to make requisite preparations, and shall await your respected person at the Green Dragon Inn, Bywater, at 11 a. m. sharp.

Trusting that you will be *punctual*.

We have the honour to remain yours deeply,
Thorin & Co.” (p. 29).

Writing Prompt

The Dwarves left Bilbo early in the morning. He woke to find they were gone, his kitchen a mess, and a letter on his mantel.

What kind of impression does the formal tone of this letter give to the reader? Rewrite this letter using a more informal tone, or one that you would expect a rowdy dwarf to use. Feel free to use colloquial language, narrative, or other techniques to create an uncivilized and impolite tone. When you have completed your assignment, upload it to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, blog, etc.).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 4



Key Passage, p. 56

“Even the good plans of wise wizards like Gandalf and of good friends like Elrond go astray sometimes when you are off on dangerous adventures over the Edge of the Wild, and Gandalf was a wise enough wizard to know it” (p. 56).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Bilbo, and have decided to keep a journal while you are on your adventure. In today’s journey entry, **write one paragraph describing what ‘over the Edge of the Wild’ means to you. Are you prepared to face the things that await you there? In a second paragraph, describe your feelings towards Gandalf. What skills does he have and how can you learn from them? Use language and techniques that contribute to a sense of awe and admiration. Make sure to include a heading, an inside address, the salutation, a body, a concluding statement that supports your entry, and your signature. Your narrative should be in the first-person. When you have completed your assignment, upload it to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog, etc.).**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 5



Key Passage, p. 73

“An eye in a blue face
Saw an eye in a green face.
‘That eye is like to this eye’
said the first eye,
‘But in low place,
Not in high place’” (p. 73).

Writing Prompt

Bilbo and Gollum are in a riddle war. Bilbo is relying on his mind to save him from a certain death.

First, rewrite and explain the above riddle line for line. In addition, create your own riddle, using a variety of literary techniques. Implement various narrative approaches to create a complex riddle. Remember, your goal is to stump your reader.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 6



Key Passage, p. 85

“On they went, Gollum flip-flapping ahead, hissing and cursing; Bilbo behind going as softly as a hobbit can. Soon they came to places where, as Bilbo had noticed on the way down, side-passages opened, this way and that. Gollum began at once to count them” (p. 85).

Writing Prompt

Bilbo is using the invisibility ring to help him escape. He uses it to follow Gollum out of the tunnel. Pretend you are Bilbo.

Using a word processor, write a letter to yourself in your journal. In it, write the directions for getting from the “front porch” to the lake and then back up to the secret entrance. Be as logical as you can be and use as many details as you can to convey the directions. Use reflection and inner dialogue to create a sense of excitement and adventure. When you have completed your assignment, upload it to the inline forum of your choice (blog, Google Doc).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 7



Key Passage, p. 105

“Fifteen birds in five firtrees,
their feathers were fanned in a fiery breeze!
but, funny little birds, they had no wings!
O what shall we do with the funny little things?
Roast ‘em alive, or stew them in a pot;
fry them, boil them and eat them hot?” (p. 105).

Writing Prompt

Gandalf and his troupe are stuck in trees that are surrounded by wolves and being lit on fire by goblins.

Pretend you are Gandalf, up a tree with the fire burning at the base. Compose a magic letter “To Whom It May Concern” and ask for help. Explain your situation. Using a variety of techniques (pacing, description, reflection) describe why you are worthy of saving and why the goblins should be thwarted. Explain why your troupe is in need of assistance and create a sense of urgency.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 8



Key Passage, p. 115

“Who calls it? Who knows it?”

‘This somebody I spoke of—a very great person. You must be very polite when I introduce you. I shall introduce you slowly two by two, I think; and you must be careful not to annoy him, or heavens knows what will happen. He can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humored. Still I warn you he gets angry easily’” (p. 115).

Writing Prompt

Gandalf is taking the time to describe Beorn to the troupe. During this time, they are planning their introductions and the next step in their journey. As Gandalf describes Beorn, he refers to him as a very great person. What do you think makes a great person? Based on the author’s description of Beorn is he a great person?

Using a word processing program, write 1-2 paragraph describing someone who you believe to be a great person. If you chose a historical figure or someone you do not personally know, you may conduct research using informational texts to support your opinions. What makes this person great? Are they courageous? How can you be more like this person? Use a variety of techniques to create a tone of admiration. When you have completed this assignment, upload your work the online forum of your choice (i.e. Blog, Google Docs).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 9



Key Passage, p. 130

“‘It was a good story, that of yours,’ said Beorn, ‘but I like it still better now I am sure it is true. You must forgive my not taking your word. If you lived near the edge of Mirkwood, you would take the word of no one you did not know as well as your brother or better. As it is, I can only say that I have hurried home as fast as I could to see that you were safe, and to offer you any help that I can. I shall think more kindly of Dwarves after this. Killed the Great Goblin, Killed the Great Goblin!’ he chuckled to himself” (p. 130).

Writing Prompt

Today, Gandalf and the troupe earn the respect, loyalty, and trust of Beorn. **In 1-2 paragraphs describe a situation in which you had to earn someone’s trust. Use a variety of techniques (sensory language, description, reflection, dialogue) to create a realistic depiction of the instance you are describing. How did earning someone’s trust make you feel? How has the experience changed you? In your writing, create a sense of loyalty, and when you have completed your assignment, upload a word processed final version to the online forum of your choice (Blog, Google Doc).**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 10



Key Passage, p. 154-155

“Bilbo found himself running round and round (as he thought) and calling and calling: ‘Dori, Nori, Ori, Oin, Gloin, Filli, Kili, Bombur, Bofur, Dwalin, Balin, Thorin Oakenshield,’ while people he could not see or feel were doing the same all round him (with an occasional ‘Bilbo!’ thrown in). But the cries of the others got steadily further and fainter, and though after a while it seemed to him they changed to yells and cries for help in the far distance, all noise at last died away, and he was left alone in complete silence and darkness” (p. 154-155).

Writing Prompt

When Gandalf leaves the group his final words are, “Don’t Leave the Path.” In today’s reading, the troupe gets discouraged; they are hungry and tired. They leave the path and Bilbo is now alone and can’t find his friends. Do you think Gandalf’s words were to be taken literally? What made the troupe disregard his directions?

Pretend that you are Bilbo, writing in a journal that you have kept throughout the journey. In today’s entry, write a formal letter of apology to Gandalf. Explain why your group chooses not to follow directions and provide an explanation of how you are going to remain focused on your goals as you continue on your journey. Restating the problem and conclude with a possible solution to the problem that can be implemented in the future. Use a variety of techniques (i.e. reflection, description) and include sensory details and language that contributes to an apologetic tone.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 11



Key Passage, p. 166

“...Knowing the truth about the vanishing did not lessen their opinion of Bilbo at all; for they saw that he had some wits, as well as luck and a magic ring—and all three are very useful possessions. In fact they praised him so much that Bilbo began to feel there really was something of a bold adventurer about himself after all, though he would have felt a lot bolder still, if there had been anything to eat” (p. 166).

Writing Prompt

Today Bilbo started to have faith in himself and in his skills. He feels like he has something to offer.

Pretend you a Bilbo, adding an entry in your ongoing journal. In this entry, write 2-3 paragraphs describing the changes that you have gone through on your journey. Use reflection and description to convey a sense of transformation. In the 1st person point of view, feel free to include inner-dialogue or other techniques to develop your opinion towards the experiences you’ve had. What does courage mean to you, and how have you had to be courageous on your journey? Who has helped you uncover your potential? Use specific evidence from the text to defend your statements. Conclude your entry with possible ways you can use courage in the future and predict what will happen next to you on your journey.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 12



Key Passage, p. 178

“No time now!” said the hobbit. ‘You must follow me! We must all keep together and not risk getting separated. All of us must escape or none, and this is our last chance. If this is found out, goodness knows where the king will put you next, with chains on your hands and feet too, I expect. Don’t argue, there’s a good fellow!’” (p. 178).

Writing Prompt

Bilbo has changed very much since he was first visited by the Dwarves in Baggsend. He has found courage. Reflect upon Bilbo’s adventure thus far. Recall the trouble he got the group in when he mistook foolish bravery for courage.

Write two paragraphs: in the first, explain a situation in which someone displayed foolish bravery, or risk for thrills instead of a reason. In a second paragraph, describe a situation in which someone displayed true courage and exercised risk for a reason. Also, define the word fortitude. You may conduct research using informational texts to help with this assignment. You may use personal examples, or draw on historical, literary, or mythological examples for inspiration. Conclude your assignment by providing reasons why true courage is better than foolish bravery. Use descriptive language and techniques to convey sensory details and develop the two different examples.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 13



Key Passage, p. 197

"The King beneath the mountains,
the king of carven stones
The lord of silver fountains,
Shall come into his own!

His crown shall be upholden,
His harp shall be restrung,
His halls shall echo golden
To songs of yore re-sung
The woods shall wave on mountains.
And grass beneath the sun;
His wealth shall flow in fountains
And the rivers golden run.

The streams shall run in gladness.
The lakes shall shine and burn,
And sorrow fail and sadness
At the Mountain-king's return" (p. 197).

Writing Prompt

Once the townspeople had heard of Thor's return they began to sing and celebrate. However, Thorin did not correct them that he was Thor's grandson. He allowed them to sing and celebrate anyway.

Describe a time when you let others celebrate or react to news that was not entirely true. Write 2-3 paragraphs explaining the situation from a first-person narrative perspective and include dialogue, pacing, and reflection to illustrate the situation clearly. Use techniques and sensory details and imagery to convey a realistic sense and describe the experience in the most clear and concise manner possible. Conclude with your own opinion: Is it better for others to be ignorant, yet happy? Or is the truth always the best option? When you have completed the assignment, upload a word-processed version of your final product to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 14



Key Passage, p. 202

“Not at any rate until the songs have come true!’ said they. It was easier to believe in the Dragon and less easy to believe in Thorin in these wild parts. Indeed their stores had no need of any guard, for all the land was so desolate and empty. So their escort left them, making off swiftly down the river and the shoreward paths, although night was already drawing on” (p. 202).

Writing Prompt

The troupe is getting closer to the mountain. They have come a long way on their journey. They are tired and in a strange and desolate place, soon to encounter a Dragon. They are trying to maintain a good attitude but it is getting harder to believe in the cause because of the looming smoke breathing dragon.

Think of a time that you had to believe in someone else, or yourself, when times were getting really tough. **Write a multi-paragraph story describing the situation and what you did to maintain a positive attitude. Use reflection, description and multiple plot lines and sensory details and imagery to coherently develop the experience and create a sense of perseverance. Did you rely on someone else for motivation or seek advice from a friend or mentor? How were you able to keep your focus and motivation? Do you have a plan if it happens again? Provide a conclusion that explains how you exercised courage and how the experience changed you. When you have completed your story, upload a word-processed final version to the online forum of your choice (i.e. Blog, Google Docs).**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 15



Key Passage, p. 227

“‘Never laugh at live Dragons, Bilbo you fool!’ he said to himself, and it became a favorite saying of his later and passed into proverb. ‘You aren’t nearly through this adventure yet,’ he added, and that was pretty true as well” (p. 227).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Bilbo. After your interaction with Smaug you have barely escaped with your life, it is clear that Smaug will not put up with your presence much longer.

Pretend you are Bilbo, writing a journal entry. **In 1-2 paragraphs lay out a possible plan to defeat Smaug within the next 24 hours. In your plan, include descriptive details and sensory language to create coherence and develop your experience with the dragon.**

In your entry, be sure to create an adventurous tone, and use straightforward language to convey your plan. Recall the weakness you discovered when you were speaking with the dragon. Convey your ideas logically and correctly. Be as detailed as possible. When you have completed your assignment, upload a final word-processed version to the online forum of your choice (Blog, Google Docs).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 16



Key Passage, p. 236

“After a while, a twinkling gleam showed them returning, Oin with a pine-torch alight in his hand, and Gloin with a bundle of others under his arm. Quickly Bilbo trotted to the door and took the torch; but he could not persuade the dwarves to light the others or to come and join him yet. As Thorin carefully explained, Mr. Baggins was still officially their expert burglar and investigator. If he liked to risk a light, that was his affair. They would wait in the tunnel for his report. So they sat near the door and watched” (p. 236).

Writing Prompt

Bilbo is definitely taking over as the leader. He also has some sort of plan for the Arkenstone. While Bilbo is likely making a mental note of what to take with him and what to do with the stone, if he had a few more things to remember, he might write himself a memo.

Pretend you are Bilbo. Write a journal entry for today listing three things you need to do tomorrow as a leader. You may wish to research different inspiring leaders and historical figures to gain knowledge of the qualities that make a successful leader. Feel free to use reflection, description and dialogue to create a detailed and coherent picture of your plans and experience. When you have finished your assignment, upload it to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 17



Key Passage, p. 260

“Your own wisdom must decide your course, but thirteen is small remnant of the great folk of Durin that once dwelt there and now are scattered far. If you will listen to my counsel, you will not trust the Master of the Lake men, but rather him that shot the dragon with his bow. Bard is he of the race of Dale, of the line of Girion; he is a grim man, but true. We would see peace once more among dwarves, and men and elves after the long desolation; but it may cost you dear in gold. I have spoken” (p. 260).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Thorin. Take in what the Raven has told you. You will likely have either to give up a share or two of treasure to Bard and his army, or you will have to fight them.

What do you think is the right thing to do? Be sure to consider all that has happened to the townspeople and do not forget your family history.

Write a response to this passage. If you were Thorin what would you chose to do? Write 2-3 paragraphs explain your choice. Give details from the text to support your answer, and use narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description and reflection to be as precise as possible. Provide a conclusion in which you propose what the most courageous and ethical thing for you to do is. When you have completed your assignment, upload a final word-processed version to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 18



Key Passage, p. 272-273

“This is the Arkenstone of Thrain,’ said Bilbo, ‘the Heart of the Mountain; and it is also the heart of Thorin. He values it above a river of gold. I give it to you. It will aid you in your bargaining.’ Then Bilbo, not without a shudder, not without a glance of longing, handed the marvelous stone to Bard, and he held it in his hand as though dazed” (p. 272-273).

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Bard. Draft a proposal to Thorin for how to settle this now that you have the Arkenstone to bargain with.

Write a persuasive letter to Thorin using a first-person narrative style from Bard’s point of view. Use sensory language and details to create a coherent description of your views. Also, utilize various narrative techniques (reflection, description, pacing) to create an overall argumentative tone. When you have completed your assignment, upload a word-processed version to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 19



Key Passage, p. 284

“Goblins had scaled the mountain from the other side and already many were on the slopes above the Gate, and others were streaming down recklessly, heedless of those that fell screaming from cliff and precipice, to attack the spurs from above. Each of these could be reached by paths that ran down from the main mass of the mountain in the centre; and the defenders had too few to bar for long. Victory now vanished from hope. They had only stemmed the first onslaught of the black tide” (p. 284).

Writing Prompt

Things are not looking good for Bilbo and his friends. The ordeal is never easy, however, if victorious, the rewards may very well be worth it. Think about an ordeal that you went through. Reflect on the rewards of having hung on when you could have given up. How did getting through it make you feel? What did you learn?

Write 2-3 paragraphs describing your ordeal. Relate the events to your reader and communicate why those events were significant to you. Use narrative techniques such as pacing, description, dialogue and reflection to create a vivid picture of your experience. Be as descriptive as possible and incorporate sensory details and descriptive language. When you have completed your assignment, upload a final word-processed version to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Day 20



Key Passage, p. 290

“No!” said Thorin. ‘There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world. But sad or merry, I must leave it now. Farewell” (p. 290).

Writing Prompt

Imagine a great triumph you will achieve in the future. Imagine the awards ceremony that would follow to congratulate you on your achievement.

Write 1-2 creative paragraphs vividly describing the scene and your emotions during the ceremony. Feel free to be as creative as possible – use sensory language, reflection, description, dialogue and even multiple points of view to contribute to a feeling of satisfaction. Think about the award you are receiving and describe it thoroughly. What did you have to do to receive it? What were some challenges you had to overcome? How did you display courage or leadership in order to receive it? When you have completed your assignment upload it to the online forum of your choice (Google Docs, Blog).

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Hobbit, Final Writing Product



Outcomes for Today

W3. Write narrative to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a.) Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- b.) Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c.) Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (i.e., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
- d.) Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- e.) Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

W10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single setting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes.

Pretend you are Bilbo Baggins and you are writing a memoir.

Write a business letter to the readers of your memoir to be used as your cover letter.

- Introduce yourself and explain the context of the tale you have written.
- Discuss the most important thing you learned on your adventure
- Suggest what you hope readers will get out of your memoir.
- Close how you see fit.
- Use a variety of narrative techniques (reflection, description) to support your personal experiences
- Use descriptive language and sensory details to create and develop a vivid picture of your experiences and a sense of accomplishment
- Be sure to revise after your first draft and edit your final copy.

The second option for the final writing product for *The Hobbit* is a Literary Criticism/Response to literature. Review and provide the attached historical context of *The Hobbit* with your students.

Write a 5-paragraph essay comparing *The Hobbit* with the period it was written in.

How are the themes present in the novel influenced by the period in which it was written in? How was the author influenced by the events occurring in the 1930's?

Your essay should include a strong focused introductory paragraph, 3 body paragraphs citing examples from the text or other literary or informational sources, and a conclusion.

Use descriptive techniques to build your argument; your main points should build off one-another to and create a strong claim.

Use the attached historical context, "What is a hobbit?" inside cover of the novel, and prior knowledge of the time period to help support your answer. You may use authoritative digital or print resources to help provide information and research that will help you create your critique. Think about the following questions as you start your writing:

- How does Bilbo's Baggins, a hobbit that just wants to be left alone, compare to the world in turmoil during WWI and WWII?
- How did the final battle of the book compare to WWI and WWII?
- How does Bilbo's friends and enemies compare to the world during this time period?
- Is it significant the author chose to write a fantasy book during this time period? How is fantasy used to help people cope?

Historical Context

Pre-World War II England

When *The Hobbit* was published in 1937, Europe was in turmoil. The German dictator Adolf Hitler made no secret of his plan to expand German territory and rid his country of certain minorities, in particular the Jewish people. Many English politicians, including Winston Churchill, recognized the potential danger of Hitler's regime. However, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sought to avoid conflict with Hitler. In March 1938, Hitler's forces annexed Austria and created a crisis throughout Europe. Chamberlain's controversial response was a policy of "appeasement," which allowed Hitler certain territories like Austria. He signed the Munich Pact with Hitler after the Austrian annexation to avoid war and proclaimed, "I believe it is peace in our time." A month later, Germany occupied the Czech Sudetenland. Yet when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later. Chamberlain was forced to resign in May 1940; Churchill took over and led the country through the difficult years of World War II.

With the start of World War II, constant air raids and threats of invasion from the European continent endangered the English. Meanwhile, English casualties mounted and the German forces (as well as Benito Mussolini's Italian army) gained much ground early in the war. Tolkien believed that fantasy literature comforted people in such anxious and difficult times, and certainly *The Hobbit* serves as an excellent example of escapist literature.

Oxford University and the Inklings

Oxford University is the oldest English-speaking University in the world. Since 1096 teaching has existed at Oxford in some form. The university is comprised of thirty nine independent, self-governing colleges, including Exeter College, which Tolkien entered in 1911.

At Oxford, Tolkien studied the classics, including Greek and Roman languages, literature, art, history, and philosophy, as well as modern languages, literature, and

philosophy. He was awarded a degree with first-class honors in English Language and Literature just before he left for France to fight in World War I.

After the war Tolkien returned to Oxford to work as a teacher and tutor for the English School. Over the next several years, he established a reputation as a brilliant philologist and linguist. From the mid-1930s until 1962, Tolkien was part of an informal literary club at Oxford known as the Inklings. The group included several famous English writers, poets, essayists, and critics of the time, including Tolkien's close friend C. S. Lewis, as well as Owen Barfield, Hugo Dyson, and Charles Williams.

The Inklings would read and discuss their writings with each other. Many of the members encouraged Tolkien to publish *The Hobbit*. Tolkien also read most of *The Lord of the Rings* to the group years before it was published. The Inklings dissolved when Lewis became ill in 1962 and died the following year.

Compare & Contrast

- **Late 1930s:** Hitler occupies Austria and the Czech Sudetenland in 1938. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain adopts his controversial "appeasement" policy in an effort to mollify Hitler. The strategy is doomed when Hitler's aggression leads Germany to invade Poland on September 1, 1939. Two days later Great Britain and France declare war on Germany.
Today: The European Economic Community (EEC) is an economic powerhouse. A new European currency, the Euro, is issued. However, political events threaten economic progress for Europe as the conflict in Yugoslavia wreaks havoc in the Balkans. Also, Serbian aggression in Kosovo leads to the NATO bombing of Belgrade.
- **Late 1930s:** In South Africa, Tolkien's birthplace, the Native Laws Amendment Act is passed. This law extends the long-established system of pass laws, which require blacks to carry special papers to stay in the cities. This law is only one in a series over many years establishing the apartheid (apartness) system in South Africa.
Today: Nelson Mandela retired as President of South Africa and passed away in 2013. Imprisoned in 1961 for protesting the apartheid system, he was freed in 1988 and elected president of South Africa. Apartheid has been dismantled for many years, yet the effects of the policy are still evident throughout South African society.
- **Late 1930s:** With the advent of World War II, military production provides a spark for American manufacturing and industrial production. As a result, the United States begins to reverse the economic collapse of the Great Depression.
Today: The economies of the United States and Europe are strong. Due to the government's efforts to adopt a more democratic system, the Russian economy experiences a difficult transition. Japan suffers from a recession because of various factors, including a banking crisis.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/the-hobbit-novel-5>