

The Hobbit

J. R. R. TOLKIEN

Study Questions & Essay Topics

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1. Is Thorin in any sense a heroic leader? Do his actions in the novel make him deserving of his death at the end?
2. Given his development throughout the book, does Bilbo belong in Hobbiton at the end of the novel? He is not completely accepted by the hobbit community, but he seems to be perfectly happy there. How do you think Tolkien views the relationship between heroism and the simple life?
3. Where do humans fit in among the other races of Middle-Earth? Are humans a “good” race?

Suggested Essay Topics

1. What factors define a person’s identity in *The Hobbit*? Do individuals have any power over who they become, or are their characters entirely determined by static factors such as family and race?
2. Describe the narrative form of the novel. How is the work’s episodic plot structure related to its frequent use of plot elements from ancient epic literature?
3. Describe Tolkien’s use of humor in *The Hobbit*. From what authorial techniques and sources does the book draw much of its wit? How does Tolkien’s lighthearted tone impact the portrayal of the more serious elements of the plot? Is *The Hobbit* primarily a comedy?