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**Literature**  
Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



## The Fellowship of the Ring

by J.R.R. Tolkien

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# Literature Teaching Unit

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# The Fellowship of the Ring

## Notes

Based on the characters he created in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien wrote *The Fellowship of the Ring* in 1954. It is the first book in a fantasy trilogy telling the story of the Great War of the Rings and the classic battle between good and evil. The prologue in this book provides students with an overview of the racial groups, characters, and action introduced in *The Hobbit*. This information is necessary for a complete understanding of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and must not be overlooked. Since this novel is part of a trilogy, the end of the novel does not resolve all of the conflicts in the story. This novel is an excellent introduction to fantasy fiction and to the creative writings of master storyteller, J. R. R. Tolkien. Students will likely be encouraged to read the other two novels in the trilogy to discover the fate of Frodo and the other creatures of the Third Age of Middle-earth.

All references come from the Ballantine Books edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, copyright 1993.

# The Fellowship of the Ring

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. recognize and comment on the significance of shadows and stars as two symbols in the novel.
2. define vocabulary words from the text.
3. relate significant details about hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Black Riders, Wizards, and Rangers including their physical descriptions, their cultures, and their responses to the conflict between good and evil.
4. point out examples of foreshadowing and irony used in the novel.
5. relate details from the story concerning setting, characters, and plot, illustrating that this is a fantasy novel and, therefore, does not realistically portray the known world.
6. discuss how Tolkien develops verisimilitude in the novel.
7. recount details from the Prologue that are pertinent to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, specifically references to *The Hobbit* and to Bilbo's history.
8. explain how the Ring influences the Ring-bearer's life, why the Ring is difficult to destroy, and the reasons that wearing the Ring is dangerous, even for wise and good characters.
9. cite incidents from the story to support the following theme: Even though there is a benevolent guiding force influencing the characters, they still have free will to determine their lives.
10. provide evidence from the story to support the following statements about the nature of evil:
  - No one is born evil.
  - Evil is destructive.
  - Evil cannot understand motivations for good or selfless acts of heroes. This lack of understanding is a weakness that can be used to destroy evil.
  - Those who succumb to the power of evil can repent and be rehabilitated.
11. discuss the extent to which Frodo, Gandalf, and Aragorn are heroes.

# The Fellowship of the Ring

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Why does Gollum hate Bilbo Baggins?
2. For what reasons does Gandalf warn Frodo not to wear the Ring?
3. How does Gandalf know that Frodo's ring is the Master-ring?
4. Discuss how each of the following shows that Frodo is courageous:
  - his decision to leave the Shire
  - his fight against the Barrow-wights
  - the Dark Riders who attack at Weathertop
  - the Council meeting
  - the ending of the book
5. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement: Gandalf and the Elves believe evil-doers can be rehabilitated.
6. Gandalf suggests that Frodo is fated or selected to be the Ring-bearer. What evidence is there in this story that Frodo also has free will?
7. One of the themes of this novel is that the common people have the courage and the power to overcome evil. Select three characters from the story and discuss how each character's actions illustrate this theme.
8. Some critics believe that Tom Bombadil's home represents the Garden of Eden or paradise and that Tom is immune to the effects of the Ring because he is pure, lives without sin, and maintains a close tie to nature. Cite two other incidents from the story that also may be interpreted as supporting Christian beliefs.
9. Tolkien has been criticized for portraying his female characters in an unrealistic, idealistic way. Cite incidents from the story to discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion.
10. The Willow Tree tries to capture the hobbits, but does not seem to be an agent of the Dark Lord. Which other incidents in the story are dangerous for Frodo and his friends, but are probably not the work of the Dark Lord?

# The Fellowship of the Ring

## Prologue

### Student Copy - Study Guide

1. Briefly describe a hobbit. Include in your description what a hobbit looks like and what general personality traits hobbits share.

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2. *The Fellowship of the Ring* is a fantasy novel. The setting, characters, and actions in the story do not realistically portray the known world. In the Prologue, the author invents a history for the hobbits. Based on this history, what is the fantasy time period for this story? What is the Shire? How do hobbits feel about the traveling on the Brandywine River?

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3. What kind of home do the hobbits prefer?

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4. How do hobbits feel about other family members?

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## Chapter XII – Flight To The Ford

### VOCABULARY

**brandished** – waved in a menacing way  
**cleave** – to adhere or cling  
**fell** – fierce, terrible, cruel  
**ford** – a shallow place in a stream where one can cross  
**sombre** – dark and gloomy  
**sullen** – gloomy, dismal

1. Why is Strider worried about Frodo’s knife wound?

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2. What is the “sign” Strider receives telling him that it is safe to cross the bridge to the Ford of Bruinen?

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3. Describe Glorfindel. What special skills does Glorfindel possess? Why is he looking for Frodo and the others?

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4. Why does Frodo agree to ride Glorfindel’s horse to Rivendell?

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