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Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Two Towers

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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Notes

The Two Towers is the second book in J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy trilogy that tells the story of the Great War of the Rings. Students must have read the first book in this series to understand and appreciate *The Two Towers* fully. In this novel, the students will be reacquainted with the beloved Hobbits and with Gandalf the wizard. In addition, they will be enchanted by the new and interesting races Tolkien introduces in *The Two Towers* as he continues this enduring story of the battle between good and evil. The conflicts and action in the story are not resolved by the end. Tolkien's creative fantasy masterpiece, and his fascinating Middle Earth inhabitants, will draw the students back to read the next book, *The Return of the King*.

All reference come from the Ballantine Books edition of *The Two Towers*, copyright 1965.

Objectives

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

1. recognize the following symbols and comment on their significance in the story:
 - light versus dark
 - the red eye.
2. define vocabulary words from the text.
3. relate and explain the thematic significance of details about the various races in the story including: Ents, The Riders of Rohan, Wizards, Orcs.
4. point out instances of foreshadowing and irony as literary devices.
5. discuss the techniques Tolkien uses to add suspense and believability to the story.
6. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the following theme: Even though there is a benevolent guiding force influencing our lives, people have free will to decide the course of their lives.
7. discuss the life decisions each of the following characters must make and how these decisions relate to the war between good and evil: King Theoden, Wormtongue, Aragorn, Eomer, Gollum, Treebeard, Sam, Faramir.
8. point out examples of Tolkien's use of descriptive imagery and how this imagery serves to enhance and illustrate the themes in the story.
9. discuss what each of the following evil characters reveal to the reader about the nature and power of evil: Gollum, Saruman, Sauron, Shelob.
10. cite incidents from the story to discuss the extent to which Sam, Pippin, and Boromir are heroes.
11. discuss what each of the following good characters reveal to the reader about the responsibility, and power, of good to overcome evil: Gandalf, Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, King Theoden, Eomer.
12. cite incidents from the story which parallel incidents in Biblical stories and discuss what each pair of incidents suggests to the reader about the conflict between good and evil.
13. point out incidents in the story that support the following idea: The inhabitants of Middle Earth are surprised to discover that many of their legends are based on true events and historical figures.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Saruman, Sauron, and Gandalf are all three wizards. What characteristics do they have in common? In what ways are they different?
2. Which characters in the story do you consider to be heroic and why?
3. One of the themes of this story is that characters have free will to decide whether or not to follow the path of evil. In addition, evil characters are given the opportunity to repent and be rehabilitated. Cite three incidents from the story to support one or both of the above ideas.
4. What difficult decision must Aragorn make concerning Frodo and Sam? After completing the book, do you think he makes the correct decision?
5. What evidence is there that Frodo and Sam are being guided by a powerful, but benevolent guiding force that is helping them battle evil?
6. Some critics believe that Tolkien is making a political statement in this book. They believe he is saying that nations, like men, have the responsibility to go to war to destroy evil, even when that evil is not yet directly threatening. In what ways does the behavior of the Ents and the attitude of King Theoden in this story help to illustrate this idea?
7. In what ways does Tolkien's writing style help to make the creatures and adventures of Middle Earth believable?
8. To what extent do you think Sam's unfriendly behavior toward Gollum contributes to Gollum's evil nature and behavior?
9. In what ways are each of these items useful in the battle against evil: Sam's rope, Frodo's sword, the star-glass, the palantir?
10. What decisions must Sam make at the end of the story? To what extent do you think his decisions are being guided by a benevolent guiding force or fate?
11. Cite incidents from the story to prove or disprove the following statement: Shelob is the embodiment of pure evil.
12. Why is Gandalf called the White Rider?
13. Find a passage in the book to illustrate the following idea: Light and dark in this story represent good and evil.
14. Based on the "evil" characters in the story, list three characteristics of evil.

The Two Towers

BOOK III

Synopsis

1. What is significant about the One Ring?

2. Who is Frodo? What is his connection to the One Ring?

3. What does the great Council of Elrond decide to do about the One Ring, Frodo, and the threat to the peace of the area by the Black Riders of Mordor?

4. Who are the companions selected by the Council to accompany Frodo to Mordor? (Include the names of the companions and the race they represent.)

5. What happens to Gandalf the Grey in the Mines of Moria?

6. Who is following Frodo and the others when Aragorn, the heir to the Kings of the West, leads the company to the Falls of Rauros?

Chapter I – The Departure of Boromir

VOCABULARY

carrion – dead body fed upon by scavengers

cloven – divided or split

perplexity – bewilderment, confusion

smote – to hit or strike hard

- At the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Boromir tries to take the One Ring from Frodo, who manages to slip the ring on his finger to become invisible and escape from Boromir. When he is wearing the One Ring, Frodo is able to see the evil around him. He realizes that the evil is beginning to corrupt or influence his companions, so he decides to continue the journey to Mordor alone. Sam, Frodo's trusty servant, anticipates the decision to leave the group so he follows Frodo and insists on accompanying him on the remainder of the journey. In this way, Frodo and Sam are separated from Boromir and the other members of the Company.

How are the Company alerted to Boromir's fight with the Orcs, who normally dwell in caves and hide in darkness, but under the influence of The Dark Lord, are able to tolerate the daylight?

- Briefly describe Boromir's death and his burial. What evidence is there that Aragorn believes Boromir dies an honorable death despite the traitorous behavior of trying to take the One Ring from Frodo?

- What evidence is there that Merry and Pippin have been captured by the Orcs?

Chapter X – The Voice of Saruman

VOCABULARY

commodious – spacious, roomy
enthralled – enchanted or bewitched
gainsaid – contradicted
livid – contorted with anger
uncouth – rough; without manners

1. Why does Gandalf warn Pippin and the others to beware of Saruman’s voice?

2. Gandalf says, “I must pay Saruman a farewell visit. Dangerous, and probably useless; but it must be done.” Why must Gandalf talk to Saruman?

3. Describe Saruman’s appearance. Why does Gimli say, “Like, and yet unlike,” when he first sees Saruman?
