

# The Hobbit

by J.R.R Tolkien · Language: EN

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## Overview

The Hobbit, or There and Back Again, chronicles the unexpected journey of Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, comfort-loving hobbit, who is swept into an epic adventure by the wizard Gandalf and a company of thirteen dwarves led by Thorin Oakenshield. Their quest is to reclaim the dwarves' ancestral treasure and homeland, the Lonely Mountain, from the fearsome dragon Smaug. Bilbo, initially reluctant and ill-suited for adventure, gradually discovers hidden depths of courage, cunning, and resourcefulness as he faces trolls, goblins, wargs, spiders, and the enigmatic creature Gollum, from whom he acquires a magical ring.

Bilbo's transformation from a timid, domestic hobbit into a hero capable of independent thought and action is central to the narrative. The book explores themes of heroism, greed, and the comforts of home versus the allure of the unknown. It serves as a foundational work for J.R.R. Tolkien's larger mythology of Middle-earth, introducing readers to its rich history, diverse races, and moral complexities, while maintaining a lighter, more whimsical tone than its sequel, The Lord of the Rings. The Hobbit is a timeless tale that celebrates the potential for greatness in the most unlikely of individuals and the profound impact of small acts of bravery.

## Key Takeaways

- Even the most ordinary individuals possess untapped courage and resourcefulness when faced with extraordinary circumstances.
- True heroism often involves acts of cunning and compassion, not just brute strength or martial prowess.
- The allure of wealth and power can corrupt, leading to conflict and suffering, even among allies.
- Home, comfort, and simple pleasures are valuable and worth returning to, but adventure can enrich one's understanding of them.
- Unexpected friendships and alliances can form in the face of common dangers, bridging divides between different peoples.
- Greed can lead to isolation and destruction, as exemplified by Smaug and later by Thorin's 'dragon-sickness'.
- The world is full of wonders and dangers beyond one's familiar surroundings, making exploration a path to self-discovery.

## Chapter Summaries

### An Unexpected Party

Bilbo Baggins, a respectable hobbit, finds his peaceful life disrupted when the wizard Gandalf and thirteen dwarves, led by Thorin Oakenshield, arrive at his home. They reveal their plan to reclaim the dwarves' ancestral treasure from the dragon Smaug in the Lonely Mountain, and to Bilbo's dismay, declare him their 'burglar' for the expedition. Despite his protests, Bilbo is swept into the adventure, marking the end of his quiet, predictable existence.

### Riddles in the Dark

After being separated from the dwarves in the goblin tunnels, Bilbo stumbles upon a dark lake where he encounters Gollum. They engage in a game of riddles, with Bilbo's life as the stake. During their encounter, Bilbo unknowingly picks up a magical ring that Gollum considers his 'precious'. Bilbo wins the riddle game and escapes Gollum, using the ring's invisibility to slip past the goblins.

### Flies and Spiders

The company enters Mirkwood Forest, where Gandalf leaves them. Lost and starving, the dwarves are repeatedly ensnared by giant spiders. Bilbo, using his newfound courage and the invisibility of the Ring, manages to free his companions by distracting and fighting the spiders. However, the dwarves are then captured by the Wood-elves, leading to another predicament.

### Barrels Out of Bond

Imprisoned by the Wood-elves, the dwarves refuse to reveal their quest. Bilbo, invisible with the Ring, devises a plan. He steals the keys, frees the dwarves, and hides them in empty wine barrels that are then floated downriver. They escape the Elvenking's halls, albeit bruised and uncomfortable, making their way towards Lake-town and the Lonely Mountain.

### A Warm Welcome

The dwarves and Bilbo arrive at Lake-town, a settlement built on the Long Lake, near the Lonely Mountain. The townspeople, particularly the Master, welcome Thorin Oakenshield as the prophesied King Under the Mountain, hoping for a share of the dragon's treasure. The company enjoys a brief period of comfort and celebration before continuing their perilous journey to Smaug's lair.

### Inside Information

At the Lonely Mountain, the company finds the secret door. Bilbo, as the 'burglar', is sent in to scout. He encounters Smaug, who is sleeping on his vast hoard. Bilbo bravely steals a golden cup, provoking the dragon. During a second visit, Bilbo converses with Smaug, learning about a vulnerable spot on the dragon's underside, which he later relays to the dwarves.

## **Fire and Water**

Enraged by Bilbo's theft and the dwarves' presence, Smaug flies from the mountain to attack Lake-town, believing them to be responsible. The town is set ablaze, but Bard the Bowman, a descendant of Dale's ancient lords, uses the information about Smaug's weak spot (a missing scale) provided by a thrush, to shoot and kill the dragon with a single arrow, saving his people.

## **The Gathering of the Clouds**

With Smaug dead, the treasure is unguarded. Thorin and the dwarves reclaim the mountain, but news of Smaug's demise draws others: the men of Lake-town, led by Bard, and the Wood-elves, led by the Elvenking, both seeking a share of the treasure. Thorin, succumbing to 'dragon-sickness', refuses to share, leading to a tense standoff and the threat of war.

## **A Thief in the Night**

To prevent war, Bilbo secretly takes the Arkenstone, the dwarves' most prized jewel, and gives it to Bard and the Elvenking as a bargaining chip. He hopes this will force Thorin to negotiate. When Thorin discovers Bilbo's betrayal, he is furious, but the arrival of Gandalf prevents immediate conflict and reveals Bilbo's true motive: peace.

## **The Battle of the Five Armies**

As men, elves, and dwarves prepare for battle over the treasure, an army of Goblins and Wargs arrives, forcing the three races to unite. Bilbo, wearing his Ring, witnesses the brutal conflict. Thorin, realizing his folly, leads a charge and is mortally wounded but reconciles with Bilbo before his death. The Goblins are defeated with the timely arrival of Beorn and the Eagles.

## **The Return Journey**

After the battle, Bilbo journeys home with Gandalf, passing through Rivendell and stopping at Beorn's house. He returns to find his hobbit-hole being auctioned off, as he was presumed dead. Bilbo reclaims his home, now a much-changed hobbit, richer in experience and a little wealthier, but content to be back in the Shire, though forever marked by his adventure.

## **Themes**

- Heroism of the ordinary
- Greed and its consequences
- The comforts of home
- Adventure and self-discovery
- Good versus evil
- Friendship and loyalty

## Notable Quotes

- "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort." — The opening lines of the book, introducing Bilbo Baggins and the nature of hobbit life.
- "Go back to your books and your cooking! Make yourself comfortable and let us do the fighting!" — Thorin Oakenshield's dismissive words to Bilbo when the hobbit tries to offer advice or participate more actively in the quest.
- "I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone." — Gandalf's initial proposition to Bilbo, setting the stage for the entire journey.
- "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." — Thorin Oakenshield's dying words to Bilbo, expressing his regret and acknowledging Bilbo's true worth.
- "Never laugh at live dragons, you fools!" — Bilbo's internal thought or a warning from Gandalf, highlighting the danger of underestimating Smaug.
- "It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him." — Bard the Bowman's grim observation about the constant threat Smaug posed to Lake-town.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is The Hobbit about?

The Hobbit is about Bilbo Baggins, a home-loving hobbit, who is recruited by the wizard Gandalf and a company of dwarves to reclaim their ancestral treasure and home in the Lonely Mountain from the dragon Smaug. It chronicles Bilbo's transformation from a timid individual into a resourceful hero as he faces various dangers and ultimately plays a pivotal role in the quest.

### Is The Hobbit worth reading?

Yes, The Hobbit is highly worth reading. It's a foundational work of fantasy literature, offering a captivating adventure story with memorable characters, rich world-building, and enduring themes of courage, greed, and the importance of home. Its accessible style makes it enjoyable for readers of all ages, and it serves as an excellent introduction to Tolkien's Middle-earth.

### How does The Hobbit end?

Spoiler: The Hobbit ends with the dragon Smaug being slain by Bard the Bowman. This leads to a conflict, the Battle of the Five Armies, where dwarves, elves, and men unite against goblins and wargs. Thorin Oakenshield is mortally wounded but reconciles with Bilbo before dying. Bilbo

returns to the Shire, a changed hobbit, having gained wisdom, courage, and a small share of treasure, content to be home.

### **Who should read The Hobbit?**

The Hobbit is suitable for a wide range of readers. It's an excellent choice for young adults and children due to its engaging narrative and clear moral lessons. Adults who enjoy fantasy, adventure, or classic literature will also find it deeply rewarding. It's also a perfect starting point for anyone interested in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth before delving into The Lord of the Rings.

### **How long does it take to read The Hobbit?**

On average, it takes approximately 6-7 hours to read The Hobbit. This estimate is based on an average reading speed of 250 words per minute and the book's typical length of around 95,000 words. Individual reading times may vary depending on reading speed and engagement with the text.