

# THE HOBBIT

J.R.R. TOLKIEN

## SAMPLE LESSONS

YEAR 7



### Context of lesson

This lesson can be used immediately after a class reading of *The Hobbit*.

### Objectives

Read accurately, and use correctly, vocabulary which relates to key concepts in each subject.

**Focus:** vocabulary for literary analysis

Use appropriate reading strategies to extract particular information, e.g. *highlighting, scanning*.

**Focus:** finding quotations

Give a considered response to a play, as script, on screen or in performance, focusing on interpretation of action, character and event.

**Focus:** reader's report

Write reflectively about a text, taking account of the needs of others who might read it.

**Focus:** reviewing *The Hobbit*

### Starter

- Explain to the students about characteristic ways of speaking – how you can identify someone from either what they say or how they say it.
- Invite them to think of examples from people known to them in school or through television.
- Explain the role of quotations in literary analysis.
- Give students **Worksheet 1** and ask them to identify the speakers for each quotation. Students can quickly scan the text to find answers that are not immediately obvious.
- Invite students to discuss the strategies they used to complete the task.

### Introduction

- Explain how quotations and close references to texts can help to communicate the 'feel' of a text to someone who hasn't read it.
- Ask students to recall or refer to quotations that give a sense of *The Hobbit*.

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## Development

- Hand out copies of **Worksheet 2** and read the text through with students. An OHP copy can be used to help students decipher some of the handwriting.
- Ask them to identify any words or phrases that give a sense of the book and its style.
- Allow students some time to assess the qualities of the reader's report and make suggestions on how it could be improved.
- Ask students to begin writing their own readers' reports. Encourage them to use quotations and references to the text as well as following the guidance given on the sheet.

## Plenary

- Rayner Unwin's report was written in 1936. Do the students notice anything about its language and style that would be out of place today?
- Return to Rayner Unwin's comment about the book being suitable for 5–9-year-olds. Discuss with the class the difficulties of providing books for an age range that includes non-readers as well as highly competent readers.

## Homework

- Complete the readers' reports begun in the lesson.

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WORKSHEET 1



## Rayner Unwin's reader report

Below is a copy of the report that the young Rayner Unwin wrote on *The Hobbit*.

Report on "The Hobbit"  
by  
30 OCT 1936

Bilbo Baggins was a hobbit who lived in his hobbit-hole and never went for adventures, at last Gandalf the wizard and his dwarves persuaded him to go. He had a very exciting time fighting goblins and wargs. at last they got to the lonely mountains; Smaug, the dragon who guards it is killed and after a terrific battle with the goblins he returned home - snob!

This book, with the help of maps, does not need any illustrations it is good and should appeal to all children between the ages of 5 and 9.

Rayner Unwin

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- 1 In pairs discuss whether you think this is a well-written report or not.
  - Does it tell you enough about the story?
  - Does it give an impression of how good the book is?
  - Do you think the comments about the audience who would enjoy the book are accurate?
- 2 Now that you have read *The Hobbit*, write your own report. You will need to:
  - summarise the plot briefly
  - talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the story
  - try to describe what kind of audience you think the book might appeal to
  - say whether you think that it would be a good idea to publish the book and why.

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## WORKSHEET 2



### Who said that?

What's a burrahobbit  
got to do with my pocket  
anyways?

Slash them! Beat them!  
Bite them! Gnash them! Take them  
away to dark holes full of snakes,  
and never let them see the light of  
day again!

Thag you  
very buch

We are met to discuss our plans,  
our ways, means, policy and  
devices.

A dozen! That's the first time  
I've heard eight called a dozen.

Bless us and  
splash us, my  
preciousss!

If you don't like my  
Burglar, please don't  
damage him.

The Eagles! The Eagles!  
Confusticate and bebother  
these dwarves!

You have nice manners  
for a thief and a liar.

Why did you and your folk three times try to  
attack my people at their merrymaking?

Aye, they'll make fine eating  
when they're hung a bit.

- 1 For each quotation write on a separate sheet of paper:
  - the name of character speaking
  - what they are talking about
  - when in the story the words were spoken.
- 2 With a partner, discuss how easy it was to guess the name of the character who was talking. Think about these questions:
  - Did you remember the words from the story?
  - Did you recognise a particular way of speaking?
  - Did the words themselves give you a clue?
  - Which character was the easiest to recognise?
  - Which was the most difficult?

Share your findings with the rest of the class.

# THE HOBBIT

J.R.R. TOLKIEN

YEAR 8



## Context of lesson

Students should have completed their reading of *The Hobbit* before attempting this lesson.

## Objectives

Explore and use different degrees of formality in written and oral texts, e.g. *formal speeches, informal journals*.

**Focus:** the language of Thorin

Trace the development of themes, values or ideas in texts.

**Focus:** leadership

Analyse the overall structure of a text to identify how key areas are developed, e.g. *through the organisation of the content and patterns of language used*.

**Focus:** the character of Thorin

Read a substantial text (novel, play or work of one poet), revising and refining interpretations of subject matter, style and technique.

## Starter

- Remind students about the differences between formal and informal language.
- Ask them about their likely attitude to someone who speaks formally all the time.
- Ask students, in pairs or small groups, to scan quickly *The Hobbit* for examples of Thorin's language and characteristic expressions.
- What conclusion would an analysis of the way Thorin speaks lead to?

## Introduction

- Ask the class who was the leader of the expedition to Lonely Mountain.
- Discuss, if necessary, Gandalf's official role as guide and Bilbo's role as 'mission specialist'.
- Ask students how they felt about Thorin as official leader.

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## Development

- Use **Worksheet 3** to allow students to investigate quickly some of the leadership roles taken up by characters in the story.
- An example box can be filled in on an OHP version of the worksheet to give students guidance on the kinds of comments required.
- As students fill in their charts they should discuss the leadership qualities of their chosen character and compare them with others.
- Using **Worksheet 4** students can focus on Thorin's strengths and weaknesses as a character and his role as leader.

## Plenary

- The final question on **Worksheet 4** (discussion of whether Thorin is a 'good' or a 'bad' character) should provoke some interesting ideas. This can be extended to other characters in *The Hobbit*. Bilbo's role throughout is that of burglar, Gandalf and Beorn are ambiguous in their motives and even Gollum might garner some sympathy.
- Invite the class to discuss how Tolkien has made many of the characters morally ambiguous and shown that different characters can 'lead' at different points in the story.

## Homework

- Ask students to choose a character other than Thorin and write a brief account of how the character changes during the story.

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## WORKSHEET 3



### Follow the leader

1 Working in groups divide the following characters between you:

Gandalf

Thorin

The Elvenking

Bilbo

Bard

The Master of Lake-town

2 For each character, fill in as many of the boxes in the table below as possible. You can add in any qualities that are particularly appropriate for your chosen character in the 'Other qualities' box.

Quality	How shown
Ability to inspire others	
Ability to organise	
Bravery	
Coolness in a crisis	
Generosity to followers	
Ingenuity	
Respected by others	
Sympathy for others	
Other qualities	

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## WORKSHEET 4



### The decline of Thorin?

- 1 Our attitude to Thorin and the dwarves' quest changes during the course of *The Hobbit*. Use the chart below to note down some of these changes.

Incident/comment	What it shows	How it affects our attitude towards Thorin
Thorin doesn't do the washing up.		
Thorin and the others attack the trolls.		
The dwarves don't get on with the elves.		
Elrond says he doesn't 'altogether approve of dwarves and their love of gold.'		
Beorn shows no interest in gold or treasure.		
Thorin will not admit to the Elvenking the true nature of his quest.		
Thorin announces himself as 'King under Mountain'.		
None of the dwarves will enter Smaug's lair.		
Smaug sows suspicion in Bilbo's mind about whether the dwarves will truly reward him.		
Thorin refuses to share his treasure with Bard and the Elvenking.		
Thorin disowns Bilbo for his taking of the Arkenstone.		
Thorin and the dwarves join in the Battle of the Five Armies.		
Thorin forgives Bilbo before he dies.		

- 2 In groups discuss whether you think that Thorin is a 'good' or a 'bad' character.



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YEAR 9  
WORKSHEET 3



## Context of lesson

Students should have read Chapters 5 and 12 of *The Hobbit* before starting this lesson.

## Objectives

Recognise layers of meaning in the writer's choice of words, e.g. *connotation, implied meaning, different types or multiple meanings.*

**Focus:** riddles

Analyse and discuss the use made of rhetorical devices in a text.

**Focus:** riddling techniques

Discuss a substantial prose text, sharing perceptions, negotiating common readings and accounting for differences of view.

**Focus:** questions in the dark

Cite specific and relevant textual evidence to justify critical judgments about texts

**Focus:** comparing similar situations

## Starter

- Explain the idea of riddles – naming something via its qualities – and the fact that solving riddles was a popular pastime even in the Anglo-Saxon era.
- Use **Worksheet 5** to look closer at riddling techniques.
- If there is time, students' own versions of riddles can be shared around the class.

## Introduction

- Remind the class about the use of riddles in *The Hobbit*. They should remember the encounter with Gollum.
- Check that they have picked up on Bilbo's less formal use of riddles in his meeting with Smaug.
- Ask if anyone has come across other uses of riddles as a defensive mechanism in stories – for instance Odysseus and his words to the Cyclops Polyphemos.

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## Development

- Explain to the class that you are going to be comparing closely two similar episodes from *The Hobbit*.
- Use **Worksheet 6** to help students focus their discussion and find points of comparison. An OHP copy of the worksheet can be filled in as an example and used to collect feedback from students.
- Remind students to look for specific references and quotations to back up their ideas about the two encounters.
- When the work is completed ask students to explain why they think Tolkien chose to write two such very similar episodes. What light do they throw on the development of Bilbo's character during the course of the novel?

## Plenary

- Students should be invited to discuss which of the two episodes works best.
- Responses should be well backed up by reference and quotation.
- Students should be able to discuss the emotional tone and impact of the two episodes.

## Homework

- Students can either complete neat versions of their riddles or write a brief account of Tolkien's use of riddles in *The Hobbit*.

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## WORKSHEET 5



### Riddles

'He knew, of course, that the riddle-game was sacred and of immense antiquity...'

*The Hobbit*, page 84

- 1 Riddles are very ancient. The four riddles on this sheet are at least a thousand years old, but that does not stop them being enjoyable! With a partner try and work out the answers.

<p><b>A</b></p> <p>I am a lonely being, scarred by swords, Wounded by iron, sated with battle deeds, Wearied by blades. Often I witness war, Perilous fight, nor hope for consolation, That any help may rescue me from strife Before I perish among fighting men; But hammered by swords, hard edged and grimly sharp, Batter me, and the handiwork of the smith Bites in the castles; I must ever wait A contest yet more cruel.</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>My dress is silent when I tread the ground Or stay at home or stir upon the waters. Sometimes my trappings and the lofty air Raise me above the dwelling-places of men, And then the power of clouds carries me far Above the people; and my ornaments Loudly resound, sending forth a melody And clearly sing, when I am not in touch</p>
<p><b>B</b></p> <p>I saw a creature in the homes of men Which feeds the cattle. It has many teeth. Its beak is useful to it. It points downwards. It plunders gently and goes home again, Wanders among the mounts and seeks out herbs. It always finds out those that are not firm. It lets the fair ones stand upon their roots, Firm, undisturbed in their established place, And brightly shine and blossom and grow tall.</p>	<p><b>D</b></p> <p>A moth ate words; a marvellous event I thought it when I heard about that wonder, A worm had swallowed some man's song, a thief In darkness had consumed the mighty saying With its foundations firm. The thief was not One whit the wiser when he ate those words.</p>

- 2 Do you know any riddles? Tell them to a partner and see if they can guess the answers.
- 3 Write some new riddles. To do this you need to:
- think of an object
  - think of some of its qualities like its shape, colour, or how it is used
  - write down a series of statements that describe but do not name the object
  - try to think of a new or different way of looking at your object to put guessers off the scent.

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## WORKSHEET 6



### Questions in the dark

Bilbo meets two of his most dangerous enemies in the dark and both times Bilbo talks in riddles.

- 1 Look again at Chapter 5, 'Riddles in the Dark', and Chapter 12, 'Inside Information', (from page 272 onwards) and then complete the table below to compare the two meetings.

Gollum	Smaug
How does Bilbo feel just before he meets Gollum?	How does Bilbo feel just before he meets Smaug?
Why doesn't Gollum kill Bilbo?	Why doesn't Smaug kill Bilbo?
Why do Bilbo and Gollum speak in riddles?	Why does Bilbo speak in riddles?
How does Bilbo escape from Gollum?	How does Bilbo escape from Smaug?
How does Bilbo feel about Gollum as he leaves?	How does Bilbo feel about Smaug as he leaves?
How does Bilbo feel about the dwarves?	How does Smaug feel about the dwarves?

- 2 With a partner, discuss what you think are the most important differences between the two meetings.
- 3 Which of the two meetings do you think was the most successful? Explain your answer as fully as possible.