

Free the hobbit essay example

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Compare The Hobbit to The Natural, in terms of a main character's journey from the start of the novel to the end. Both Roy Hobbs and Bilbo Baggins have their "heroic" moments, and both experience quite a different end to their respective journeys. Analyse the two characters in a comparison/contrast, argumentative discussion of where their respective paths diverge.

Introduction

The Hobbit and The Natural are both excellent novels in their own right, and that treat broadly similar themes. Both characters are on a life journey of sorts, Bilbo Baggins is in search of a share of the treasure while Roy Hobbs also has his own personal quest to achieve in the arena of professional baseball. Both characters mature and increase their wisdom throughout the journey, although their endings are quite different. Bilbo Baggins grows in stature along the way but in contrast, Roy Hobbs ends up losing all he has due to a series of misjudgements and errors both on a personal as well as a professional level.

The Hobbit's name is actually 'There and Back Again' and was published in 1937. It set the sound for juvenile fiction and was also the recipient of the Carnegie Medal as well as a special award from the New York Herald and Tribune. The story is basically the journey of the main character who is Bilbo Baggins from his rural surroundings as he attempts to win his share of the treasure that is guarded by the wicked dragon by the name of Smaug. The initial beginnings of the story are quite light hearted but as we delve deeper into the book, the journey becomes extremely hazardous. Chief amongst

these characters is Gollum, the monster who inhabits the underworld that makes up most of Tolkien's Wilderland.

There have been several attempts to categorize the story of *The Hobbit* although the central themes seem to be personal growth and various methods of heroism. The latter is most probably a throwback to Tolkien's times in the First World War where he was undoubtedly affected by the harrowing experience. Bilbo's character also changes considerably over the journey, since he becomes a romantic person whilst also accepting certain negative traits such as occasionally being disreputable and adventurous. The level of wisdom and maturity that is eventually reached by Bilbo can be compared with Tolkien's own wartime experiences. The novel's climax that is reached in the Battle of the Five Armies is undoubtedly a direct comparison to the Battle of the Somme in that Tolkien was an active participant. Baggins is an observer of the conflict that includes a re run of the characters that have appeared before. An interesting facet of the novel is that the planned sequel, *The Lord of the Rings* was not conceived immediately but was gestated as the work progressed. The world that Bilbo inhabits also changes substantially in *Lord of the Rings*. Of particular interest is Bilbo's encounter with the fantastically grotesque and ugly water sprite Gollum, who lives underground and constantly describes himself as 'my precious'.

The Natural

In his novel, Bernard Malamud follows the career of Roy Hobbs, who is a child prodigy. Hobb's career comes to a premature halt when he is shot by a woman but the novel is chiefly focused on Hobb's attempts to get back to competitive baseball. The author creates a fictional team called the New

York Knights and even comes up with a bat that is called Wonderboy, and that is also another main focus of the story.

Unlike the Hobbit that is very loosely based on real life experiences, The Natural has as its model, the legendary Philadelphia Phillies player Eddie Waitkus as its role model. However apart from the single incident where Waitkus and Hobs are shot by a woman, the novel's story takes on a completely different twist.

Hobbs is a complex character and the novel shows us some of his most undesirable traits such as his propensity to throw games, and the final scene is a terrible ending to a career that promised so much.

Comparisons and quote analysis

Bilbo Baggins's and Roy Hobbs are similar in the way they approach their challenges, but there is far more to the argument than that. Maturity is definitely an issue, especially when Baggins confronts several unpleasant demons and creatures, through these situations he becomes far more experienced in dealing with others and also recognizes his own faults.

On the contrary, Hobbs had a brilliant career in baseball up for grabs but the shooting destroyed his career and he had to turn to bribery to make ends meet although the sums mentioned are quite exaggerated. Baggins is a far more gregarious character than Hobbs with the latter facing personal and psychological dilemmas.

The Hobbit differs from The Natural in the way it is structured with everything leading up to set goals and achievements. The latter novel is a negative sort of plot with the disastrous consequences of bribery becoming immediately apparent at the end.

Hobbs' sense of elation and achievement is immediately apparent in this quote:

" Noticing Toomey watching her, Roy stole a quick look. He caught the red dress and a white rose [he was] drawn by the feeling that her smile was for him she seemed to be wanting to say something, and then it flashed on him the reason she was standing was to show her confidence in him he became aware that the night had spread out in all directions and was filled with an unbelievable fragrance" (Malamud p 85).

Although Roy appears to be slightly vegetative, the comparison with Iris Lemon, the other female character in the book is particularly instructive. By watching him and smiling at him, Roy is elated and feels his sexual prowess returning to him with the bat named Wonderboy, providing that phallic power. This situation shows Roy improving his game considerably and we are led to assume that his game will consistently improve if he ends up being with Iris Lemon. The comparison with Bilbo's sword can be seen later in the essay.

Another quote demonstrates how little Roy Hobbs has learnt from life, since he is trying to attract a woman who does not want him or love him:

" Experience makes good people better." She was staring at the lake. " How does it do that?" " Through their suffering." " I had enough of that," he said in disgust. " We have two lives, Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live with after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness All it taught me was to stay away from it. I am sick of all I have suffered." (Malamud p 67).

Although it is Iris Lemon who is the woman that is perfect for Roy, he seems to have set his heart on Memo who does not even want him. Iris talks with depth and intensity that is certainly not found in Memo. Roy does not take

Iris' words seriously but the cost for him is very great since he realises at the end that nothing is achieved without suffering. Roy dreams of excess wealth and considerable fame but he ends up losing everything as we observe in the final part of the novel.

The change in character can also be analysed in this quote from 'The Hobbit'. After Bilbo's encounter with the spider and his eventual victory, he feels far more emboldened and courageous than ever before. Bilbo has now embarked upon the process of maturing with the naming of the sword a characteristically important gesture.

" Somehow the killing of this giant spider, all alone by himself in the dark . . . made a great difference to Mr. Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder in spite of an empty stomach, as he wiped his sword on the grass and put it back into its sheath. ' I will give you a name,' he said to it, ' and I shall call you Sting.'" (Tolkien p 150)

This quote that comes from Chapter 8 clearly shows Bilbo's ecstatic reaction as he narrowly escapes the giant spider of Mirkwood. It can be seen as one of the novel's most important turning points since Bilbo has now managed to be victorious during combat, something that he had never experienced before. This episode also demonstrates that Bilbo is wholly capable of taking the initiative and he has now achieved a further stage in his life. The difference between Bilbo and Ray Hobbs is even more apparent here. The sword naming ritual is also of some importance since the sword takes on its own claim to heroism. Although the sword can also be compared to the baseball bat owned by Roy Hobbs, the comparison ends there as the bat is an instrument of failure for Hobbs while the sword is one of success for Bilbo.

In the final part of 'The Hobbit', exactly before the Battle of the Five Armies, the elder Thorin begs forgiveness from Bilbo and indicates that a better life lies ahead. Bilbo is described as a child of the kindly West by Thorin, and there is also an allegory in comparison to the riches of the earth as well as food and basic ingredients of life.

Here we can observe that Bilbo has really turned full circle, from the shy and fearful trekker at the beginning, to the bold leader who is now the undisputed authority over the dwarves.

Conversely, the novel 'The Natural' has a very depressing ending that shows how Roy Hobbs has fallen in the world. He ends up being struck out by a boy who is almost Roy's own age when he made his first strike. The bat is a far cry from Bilbo's sword that almost achieves King Arthur like status in 'The Hobbit', since Roy is eventually caught out in his bribing scheme and loses everything. Whilst Bilbo grows from strength to strength in The Hobbit, Roy Hobbs' life cycle is a continuous period of decline that ends up in the ultimate disgrace. It can be argued that Roy gets nothing less than he deserved since he was incredibly thick-headed throughout the whole novel, and the final roar that sums up everything is hair raising in its dramatic essence.

Works Cited:

Tolkien JR; The Hobbit; Paul Hamlyn 2002, Reprint

Malamud B; The Natural; Alfred A Knopf 2001, Reprint