

“not all those who
wander are lost”



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" Not All Those Who Wander Are Lost" Steph Johnson ENG 155 January 23rd, 2012 Professor Jan Ward Not All Those Who Wander Are Lost A long, white beard and curious eyes peering from underneath a largely pointed hat often leave an imprinted image in mind. A scholarly grin and archaic tobacco pipe complete the picture formed. The faint imagery of what a wizard is can only be complete when thinking of Gandalf the Grey. A magic staff and a knowledgeable mind are cause for the quest that Gandalf sets out on in the novel " The Hobbit" by J. R. R. Tolkien. He can overcome adversity and aid his fellowship of 14 unlikely creatures in their attempt to regain their long-lost home. Gandalf is a venerable wizard and exemplifies a mythological hero throughout his entire written history. Gandalf always seems to be in the right place at the right time with a sort of grace about him, as if always waiting for the perfect moment. His knowledge of Middle Earth is inexplicable; he rarely misses a beat. Although he is not on a personal quest, he is quick to help those he sees fit. Several times over the fellowship found themselves in a sticky situation, and Gandalf appeared only just in time. Knowledge, a keen eye, the desire to do what is right, and also a grain of mystery are all characteristics residing in Gandalf the Grey. According to " Tolkien-Online" (2007), " Tolkien was likely heavily influenced by one of the tales found in the Elder Edda which tells of the Norse god Odin traveling the Earth in the guise of a bearded old man with a staff. " Gandalf the Grey shares several similarities with the " Father God" known as Odin. For instance, he is seen as the overseer of the group. He unintentionally becomes a father figure within the fellowship. He is constantly keeping them out of the trouble they so easily find themselves in on their adventure. Gandalf finds himself in a difficult situation in " The Fellowship of the Rings" <https://assignbuster.com/not-all-those-who-wander-are-lost/>

and essentially dies. However, he is simply reincarnated from “ Gandalf the Grey” into a more powerful and poignant “ Gandalf the White, ” which is similar to Odin. “ Odin's 'death' upon the tree is really more of a shamanic ritual descent to discover magic runes than an actual death” (Leeming, 1990, p. 162). Although there is physical death, it is not enough to keep these figures from life. Gandalf the Grey exemplifies a mythological hero in the sense that he defies the odds against him (which are a great deal) and overcomes the darkness attempting to pull him in. As a wizard, he is eccentric and hard-headed. He is a necessary character in the story of Middle Earth and without him, the chain of events written about by Tolkien would not have been possible. The purpose of Gandalf's quest in “ The Hobbit” is to take back the Lonely Mountain from the devious dragon known as Smaug, and regain the home for Thorin and his kind once more. Gandalf knows what dismal troubles lie before them and feels a burglar is necessary to join the fellowship. With this information, he invites a hobbit with the name of Bilbo to join the quest, and ultimately shapes the stories that follow with one simple scene. Bilbo encounters a ring and hastily shoves it into his pocket. He thinks little of this and is eventually safely back within the fellowship. Gandalf is curious and aware of what Bilbo may have taken ownership of, but does not mention it for several years (and the following story). The fellowship is successful in defeating Smaug and the dwarves take their original place within the Lonely Mountain. Gandalf is a classic character with simple qualities; he is a strong-willed wizard with more knowledge, and cunning than meets the eye. His quest proves dangerous and he prevails by using several of the mythological characteristics he portrays. He attains striking similarities to the Norse god, Odin. “ Tolkien himself acknowledged

the similarity in a 1946 letter, calling Gandalf an “Odinic wanderer” (Tolkien-Online, 2007). Gandalf is a venerable wizard and exemplifies a mythological hero throughout his entire written history. References Tolkien-Online. (2007). Retrieved from <http://www.tolkien-online.com/gandalf.html> Leeming, D. A. (1990). *The world of myth*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.