

"i said i'd carry him, if  
it broke my back...  
and i will:" an analysis  
of the devel...



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In the Lord of the Rings trilogy, author J. R. R. Tolkien creates a relationship between Frodo and Sam that people struggle to define in modern parlance because of its depth and complexity. Neither lovers nor merely friends, the essence of Frodo and Sam's relationship cannot be captured by contemporary words because they oversimplify the nature of the relationship. At the beginning, their relationship is reciprocal as both Frodo and Sam benefit from one another, however their reciprocity develops into codependence throughout the course of the novel. At the conclusion, Frodo and Sam's relationship evolves into an altruistic one in which they are able to let each other go at a cost to themselves because they want to benefit the other. There is no contemporary all-encompassing definition for Sam and Frodo's relationship because it is not one sole thing as it evolves over time and eventually reaches the pinnacle of Agape, demonstrating that their love for each other is true.

The suggestion that Frodo and Sam are actually homosexual lovers is a common conjecture about the characters' relationship in today's popular culture as a result of " the enormous outpouring of fan fiction" after the Peter Jackson film adaptations (Smol 949). Many people began to write alternate origins and endings of Sam and Frodo's relationship, " the majority [of which] incorporate a sexual element as an expression of a strong, romantic love between the two males" (Smol 970). Frodo and Sam exhibit " an intimacy that includes emotional attachment and gestures of physical tenderness" (Smol 955). Suggesting that Frodo and Sam are homosexual simplifies the depth and complexity of their relationship. Sam and Frodo share " a love beyond that of a traditional male friendship" and " raise

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questions about the role of male friendships" that people are unfamiliar with in today's society because of homophobia (Madill par. 12; 14). "Homophobia is a strategy to police and regulate masculinity for males" and so the phobic language that exists today is insufficient in describing the male intimacy present in *Lord of the Rings* (Madill par. 11). The fan fiction about Frodo and Sam's homosexual relationship proves that there is an intensity between the two male characters, however contemporary culture struggles to discuss strong emotional bonds between men. The response of the fans with this fiction shows the need for a more nuanced description of their relationship.

Frodo and Sam's relationship at the beginning of the narrative is reciprocal as both Sam and Frodo benefit from one another at no personal cost to themselves. Sam Gamgee works for Bilbo and Frodo Baggins and tends to their garden. Sam is a curious hobbit who "has more on his mind than gardening" and dreams of the world outside of the Shire filled with Elves and Tree-men (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* 60). Sam's only resources to learn more about legends and tales are Bilbo and Frodo, and Sam "listens because [he] can't help [himself]... he love[s] tales of that sort... and believe[s] them too (Tolkien, FR 84). While the other hobbits dismiss Frodo and Bilbo as being "cracked," Sam's longing for knowledge about the world outside the Shire strengthens (Tolkien, FR 60). He is unlike the traditionally happily ignorant hobbit and Frodo's stories provide him with the knowledge he craves. When Sam is invited to go away with Frodo, he "spring[s] up like a dog invited for a walk" and "burst[s] into tears" (Tolkien, FR 85). He acquires knowledge and experience from Frodo, which is something he

cannot get from anybody else in the Shire. He is elated to discover that he, too, will get to travel with Frodo and see all of the legends he believes in.

In his own way, Frodo benefits from having Sam accompany him on the journey. At first, Frodo is terrified of the journey that lies before him, crying that he is “ not made for perilous quests... wish[ing] [he] had never seen the Ring!” (Tolkien, FR 81). He fears the quest bestowed upon him and as he speaks to Sam he “ realize[s] that fleeing from the Shire [will] mean more painful partings than merely saying farewell to the familiar comforts of Bag End” (Tolkien, FR 84). Frodo’s pain at the idea of leaving home suggests the comfort and safety both Bag End and Sam provide for him. It would be very tough for Frodo to leave the Shire on his own and conquer the quest by himself. Sam is a necessary element of Frodo’s journey as he provides Frodo with someone he “ can trust, and who [is] willing to go by [his] side — and that [Frodo is] willing to take into unknown perils” (Tolkien, FR 83). Sam follows through with all of these requirements and proves to be the most loyal and daring companion Frodo could have on the quest. Sam and Frodo’s reciprocal relationship at the beginning of the quest is beneficial to both of them without either character having to sacrifice anything, but it does not stay at this point of reciprocity for long.

The transformation of their relationship along the journey complicates the nature of Sam and Frodo’s relationship as the pair become increasingly codependent. At the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo decides to continue the quest on his own because he sees the dangers of war that lie ahead of the Company. However just as he is about to leave, Sam stops him

and is appalled that Frodo would continue " all alone...without [Sam] to help [him]" (Tolkien, FR 534). Sam cries out: " I couldn't have borne it, it'd have been the death of me," demonstrating Sam's dependency on Frodo and his need to serve him (Tolkien, FR 534). Sam's insistence that he would die if Frodo left him behind shows his dependency on Frodo and his need to stay with him. Sam needs to go with Frodo on the quest because they depend on one another. Their relationship is no longer just reciprocal, but rather intensifies to a codependency. Later on, Frodo collapses under the weight of the ring on the way up Mount Doom and even though Sam knows the road is dangerous and " would dearly like to see Bywater again, and Rosie Cotton and her brothers, and the Gaffer and Marigold and all" he still insists that he " said [he'd] carry [Frodo] if it [breaks his] back...and [he] will!" (Tolkien, Return of the King 225; 233). Frodo heavily relies on Sam for survival and the success of the quest. Sam helps complete the task of the Ring-bearer and Frodo would likely die if not for Sam's help when climbing Mount Doom. When compared with the early stage of their relationship on the quest when it was just beneficial to have one another, the relationship is now necessary for both characters. The nature of their relationship evolves as they depend on each other more and more.

At the end of the series Frodo and Sam's relationship becomes even more intense as it transforms into an altruistic relationship. After their return to the Shire and the scouring of the Shire, one would expect Sam and Frodo to live happily ever after in a blissful friendship, however " Tolkien is much too honest to end with such a pious fiction" (Auden 98). Over the course of the quest Frodo is " wounded with [a] knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden," <https://assignbuster.com/i-said-id-carry-him-if-it-broke-my-back-and-i-will-an-analysis-of-the-development-of-frodo-and-sams-relationship-in-j-r-r-tolkiens-lord-of-the-rings-trilogy/>

and " though [he] may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for [he] shall not be the same" (Tolkien, RK 290). Frodo endures the most physical and mental pain on the quest and returns to the Shire as a completely different hobbit who is unable to reintegrate into society. Sam transforms into a leader with great potential and the knowledge he longed for and more before they left for the quest. Sam is capable of reintegrating into society and settles down to start a new life, however, " Frodo's presence is an unsettling reminder of the disruptive force of war that hampers Sam's full return to ordinary life" (Smol 967). Frodo knows that he is " wounded" and that " it will never really heal" but that Sam is " meant to be solid and whole, and [he] will be" (Tolkien, RK 333; 335). As hard as Frodo tries to heal in the Shire by living with Sam and his wife Rosie, he knows he cannot heal here and that Sam is " torn in two" between his year away with Frodo and his new life in the Shire (Tolkien, RK 337). Frodo decides to depart for the Havens and leave Sam as the heir to everything he has. Frodo does not ask Sam to come with him, even though he can as a Ring-bearer, because he knows Sam will be " as happy as anyone can be" staying in the Shire with his family in Bag End (Tolkien, RK 338). Leaving Sam behind and giving him everything he owned is an entirely selfless act as Frodo could have easily asked Sam to come with him. However, Frodo wants what is truly best for Sam, demonstrating an ultimately altruistic love. He sacrifices his desire to keep Sam in his life because he loves him so truly.

Similarly, Sam understands that Frodo no longer belongs in the Shire and as much as it pains him to see Frodo leave as " tears started in his eyes," he

returns to his family and acknowledges his spiritual wholeness and return to <https://assignbuster.com/i-said-id-carry-him-if-it-broke-my-back-and-i-will-an-analysis-of-the-development-of-frodo-and-sams-relationship-in-j-r-r-tolkiens-lord-of-the-rings-trilogy/>

the Shire, holding his child and saying "' Well, I'm back'" (Tolkien, RK 337; 340). The development of the relationship is illustrated by Sam's tears. As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the quest Sam bursts into tears because he is so happy he will get to leave the Shire to see all the legends he hears about. In this instance, his tears are out of happiness for himself and the benefit he derives from his relationship with Frodo, demonstrating their originally reciprocal bond. As Frodo leaves, however, Sam's tears are not for himself but rather for Frodo and the loss of his friend. The difference of the feelings behind the tears at the beginning of the novel and at the end show the development of their relationship from a reciprocal one to an altruistic one. Sam sacrifices his relationship with Frodo and understands why he must leave. As much as Sam wants Frodo to stay in the Shire, he lets him go because he knows it is what will heal Frodo. Both Sam and Frodo endure a major loss by parting ways, but by letting each other go they know they are benefiting one another, demonstrating Agape love. Agape is neither erotic or brotherly, but a description of a self-sacrificial love with the purpose of benefitting another. By the end of the novel, Frodo and Sam reach the epitome of Agape when they let each other go selflessly for the benefit of the other.

Frodo and Sam develop a deep and complex relationship over the course of the novel that evolves so intensely that it cannot be defined by just one word. While the relationship they share begins reciprocal, it quickly intensifies into a codependency where the two need each other to survive.

Their self-sacrifice at the conclusion in order for the other to heal exhibits

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type of close male intimacy is foreign to people in contemporary society because of the insufficiency and phobic nature of today's language, and therefore no single modern word is able to accurately capture the true essence of Frodo and Sam's relationship. Tolkien creates a complex relationship that is too nuanced to be described by one word. The evolution of Frodo and Sam's relationship, eventually reaching a peak of Agape, the highest form of love, cannot be described by any single word because it is not just one thing — it is deep and complex as true love often is.