

Dreams and omens in the hobbit and julius caesar

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The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien is an adventure story about Bilbo Baggins, who is a mythical creature called a hobbit. Bilbo goes on an adventure with thirteen dwarves and a wizard to capture a treasure from a dragon. Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare is a play about Julius Caesar, a real Roman Emperor who is assassinated by political enemies that he thinks are his friends. These stories are very different, but in both dreams and omens are very important.

The dreams in The Hobbit and Julius Caesar are similar because they show what happens if you do not pay attention to what is going on around you and what happens if you do not listen to warnings in dreams. In The Hobbit, when they first get to the cave in the Misty Mountains, the dwarves, Bilbo, and Gandolf all look around to see if it is safe. Since they do not find anyone inside, they decide it is ok to sleep there.

At first Bilbo has a hard time falling asleep. Once he does, he has a bad dream. In his dream, “ a crack in the wall at the back of the cave got bigger and bigger, and opened wider and wider.

” After that, “ he dreamed that the floor of the cave was giving way, and he was slipping—beginning to fall down. ” When Bilbo wakes up, he sees that part of his dream is actually happening. Their ponies are being lead away through a crack in the cave wall, and soon the same thing happens to the dwarves and Bilbo (Tolkien, 59). Since Bilbo had a hard time falling asleep, it seems like he knew something was wrong, but did not know what it was. In the dream though the problem became obvious. Later, Bilbo dreams about

black bears dancing around when Beorn and other bears are outside the window having a meeting.

Part of this is because J. R. R. Tolkien once said that he made hobbits “small in size because it reflects the generally small reach of their imaginations—not the small reach of their courage or latent power” (Carpenter, 180). Many of Bilbo’s dreams are not very imaginative. Except the one dream he has where he is looking for something in his house, he usually either dreams of something that is actually happening, like when he dreams of “a warrior, altogether insignificant in size but provided with a bitter sword and great courage” (215) or he dreams of food because he is very hungry (152).

In the play *Julius Caesar*, Cassius and Brutus are plotting to kill Caesar, but Julius Caesar thinks they are his friends. When they are all standing together, the Soothsayer tells Caesar “Beware the ides of March” (I. ii. 18). It would be impossible for Caesar to know the day that Cassius and Brutus were going to kill him, but if Caesar were paying more attention, he might have noticed that they were not really his friends and were going to try to overthrow him. One difference in the role of omens and dreams in *Julius Caesar* and *The Hobbit* is how the characters react to them.

In *Julius Caesar* people notice the bad omens and dream but ignore them. For example, when the Soothsayer tells Caesar to beware of the ides of March, Caesar tells everyone to ignore him. Also, when Calphurnia tells Caesar she has had a bad dream and he should not leave the house, Caesar first disagrees with her, and then tells her he will stay home. Then when Decius makes fun of him for listening to his wife’s dreams, and says “that

for Caesar to withdraw would make him seem frightened in the eyes of the Roman plebeians, Caesar hurriedly agrees to go to the Senate” (Cahn, 15).

When Caesar gets to the Senate, the men there kill him. In *The Hobbit*, the dreams are different. Either they are like the one Bilbo has in the cave and cannot be ignored, or they are about something that Bilbo and the dwarves can do nothing about, like hunger, and so they have to be ignored. The one time that they do have notice about an omen is when Elrond tells them how to enter the Lonely Mountain. When it is finally time, they do what he told them to do, and get into the secret entrance (209).

Dreams and omens are very important in *Julius Caesar* and *The Hobbit* because they sometimes show the characters something that they did not realize. In *Julius Caesar*, the characters have enough notice about what is going to happen, but they ignore the meanings of the dreams and omens and *Julius Caesar* dies because he does everything they tell him not to do. In *The Hobbit*, the characters do not usually have enough time to do anything about the dreams because they have them about things that are already happening, but when they do have a chance, they listen to the omen from Elrond and are able to enter the Lonely Mountain.

In both books, the omens and dreams are right, and the characters have to decide if they want to follow them. If they do not follow them bad things happen, but if they do, they can be successful. Bibliography Cahn, Victor, *The plays of Shakespeare: A Thematic Guide*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2003. Carpenter, Humphrey, J. R. R. Tolkien: *A Biography*, New York: Harcourt Press 2000. Shakespeare, William, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*,

New York: Penguin 2000. Tolkien, J. R. R. The Hobbit, New York: Ballantine Books 1996.