

# Lotr thematic analysis



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Tolkien's novel also shares many similarities with The Holy Bible, prevalent examples include The Garden of Eden story found in Genesis and Jesus in the Desert in the book of Luke. Throughout Tolkien's novel many different characters, such as Frodo, Bilbo, Smeagol, Gandalf and Boromir become tempted because of the Ring's great power. In the Prologue of The Fellowship of the Ring Tolkien makes it clear that hobbits are comparable to human beings " It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of ours. " (Tolkien Prologue).

Tolkien then goes on to describe the typical lifestyle of the Hobbits and how they then enjoy a quiet lifestyle filled without worries. The Hobbits are more worried about what they will have for dinner rather than what a distant leader is doing. While Tolkien makes the Hobbit out to seem unimportant " these little people seemed of very little importance" (Tolkien Prologue), the reader soon finds out their actions are far bigger than anyone suspects. Bilbo stumbles upon the Ring out of luck while trying to escape a cave. Bilbo did not want to find the Ring nor did he know about the power that it possess.

Little does Bilbo know what he has just discovered and how it will change his life for good. Throughout the novel many of the Hobbits major decisions are based off luck, just like Bilbo's acquiring of the Ring. J. R. R Tolkien's The Fellowship of the Ring opens with Bilbo Baggins celebrating his 111th birthday. Here Bilbo passes the Ring along to his heir, Frodo Baggins, although he is hesitant at first, Gandalf successfully urges him to do so. After Frodo receives the Ring, Gandalf tells him the Ring must be taken away from the Shire, as Sauron's power is growing.

As Frodo sets out from the Shire with his three friends- Sam, Merry and Pippin, they are pursued by nine Ringwraiths, which take the form of Black Riders. Their first night in the Old Forest, the three hobbits must be saved by Tom Bombadil, the oldest creature in Middle Earth. The hobbits eventually make it to the town of Bree, where they meet Aragorn, a ranger who roams the wilderness. At the inn, Frodo attempts to keep a low profile but fails when he accidentally slips the Ring onto his finger and vanishes. That night, Aragon advises the hobbits not to sleep in their rooms, which in turn, saves their lives.

A letter left by Gandalf months before advises the hobbits to head to Rivendell, a realm of the Elves. The next day the hobbits and Aragon set out toward Rivendell but end up in a skirmish in which Frodo is injured. As the company heads eastward, Frodo's wound becomes infected and causes great concern from Aragon and the rest of the company. Near Rivendell the company meets the Elf lord, Glorfindel, who has been watching out for them. Just outside of Rivendell, the company collides with a group of Black Riders, but the company escapes due to a flood created by Elrond, the master of Rivendell.

Inside Rivendell, Elrond heals Frodo's wound and holds a meeting in which they discuss the Ring. During this meeting, Frodo learns about the history of the Ring and accepts the burden of taking the Ring to the only place where it can be destroyed, Mordor. As the meeting concludes the Council creates a group to aid Frodo in destroying the Ring. The Fellowship of the Ring includes Sam, Merry, Pippin, Aragon, Gandalf, and Elf named Legolas, a Dwarf named Gimli and a man from the south named Boromir. As the Fellowship heads

south and attempts to cross the Misty Mountains their path is blocked due to snow and debris.

They are forced to divert their path and head through the Mines of Moria, an ancient underground realm of the Dwarves. While their journey through Moria, Gandalf falls into a chasm fending the company off from a terrible demon, Balrog. The company devastated by their loss, continues on to Lorien. Inside Lorien, the company's hearts are tested by Lady Galadriel. After leaving Lorien and heading towards Anduin, the company spots a Gollum, a deformed creature who had once owned the Ring, following them. Boromir who is tempted by the Ring's great power confronts Frodo. Frodo defends Boromir off and hastily decides that he must go onto Mordor.

However, Frodo cannot bear the thought of his friend's enduring the dangerous journey, so he attempts to leave secretly and continue the quest alone. However Sam, Frodo's best friend, realizes what Frodo is doing and the two of them set off to Mordor together. All of the characters in Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring that interact with the Ring are tempted by it. Even though "it is quite plain" (Tolkien 54) the characters seek its great power. This quote shows that the characters are not seeking the Ring due to its aesthetics, but rather the power that comes along with it. The characters who do not have the Ring in their possession want it.

Those who do have the Ring want to keep it and use it. Just because the Ring is small and seems unimportant, that does not mean that it is powerless, "All that is gold does not glitter" (Tolkien 193). One could also connect Genesis' famous story, The Garden of Eden. The story states that Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from all the trees in the garden, with the exception

of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The story of Adam and Eve states “ When the women saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it” (Genesis 3: 6-13).

Even though the apple seemed like an innocent desire, just like Tolkien’s Ring, there were great repercussions for eating it. This story parallels Tolkien’s Fellowship of the Ring because those tempted by the Ring may get what they desire temporarily, but pay the ultimate price in the end. A prime example of a character that pays a major price for possessing the Ring is Smeagol. In the early stages of the novel, Gandalf reveals to Frodo that Smeagol was of “ hobbit-kind” and “ inquisitive and curious minded” (Tolkien 57).

Smeagol first caught sight of the Ring when his friend, Deagol, found “ a beautiful golden ring; and it shone and glittered in the sun” (Tolkien 58). The temptation inside Smeagol smoldered until he could not take it anymore and “ caught Deagol by the throat and strangled him because the gold looked so bright and beautiful” (Tolkien 58). Even Gandalf, one of the most powerful characters in the novel, struggles with temptation from the Ring. Gandalf’s strong will is exemplified when Frodo offers the Ring to him; Gandalf ferociously refuses saying “ Do not tempt me!

For I do not want to become the Dark Lord Himself...” (Tolkien 67). Gandalf often repeats himself throughout the novel realizing that the Ring could corrupt even the greatest man. This parallels the story of Jesus in the Desert when Jesus overcame the temptation from the Devil (Luke 4: 3-13). Gandalf is not the only powerful wizard who has pondered what life would be like if

they had acquired the Ring. The Lady of the Wood, Galadriel also wonders what she would do with the Ring, and is almost tempted to say yes when the lovestruck Frodo offers it to her. “ I do not deny that my heart has greatly desired to ask what you offer.

For many long years I have pondered what I might do, should the Great Ring come into my hands..." (Tolkien 410). But like Gandalf, Galadriel is able to withstand the temptation of the Ring because she knows of the great corruption to come. The theme that power corrupts first appears with Smeagol. At first glance Smeagol just wanted the Ring because it was shiny and beautiful. But as time moved forward and Smeagol continued to use the Ring, the Ring eventually started to use him. Smeagol would often use the Ring for evil and mischievous reasons, eventually earning himself the nickname Gollum due to the gurgling in his throat.

Towards the end of his tenure with the Ring, Smeagol became crazy as the Ring tormented him. The novel states “ He hated the dark, but hated the light. He hated everything, but hated the Ring most of all. ” (Tolkien 54). When Smeagol eventually lost the Ring due to treason, he became a servant of the Dark Lord, Sauron, with the hopes that he would regain the Ring. Another character who is corrupted by the power of the Ring is the dwarf Boromir. Boromir does not know the true evil that the Ring brings, and thinks he thinks could do great things for the Dwarves with all of the Ring’s power.

Boromir innocently thinks that with all the power one acquires from using the Ring, he would be able to make all of the problems in Middle Earth disappear. Later, Boromir devises a plan in which he would get the Ring from Frodo and says to himself “ But if you wished to destroy the armed might of

the Dark Lord, then it is a folly to go without force into his domain; and folly to throw it away. " (Tolkien 435). Frodo mistakenly hears what Boromir, and says realizes what Boromir is attempting to do. Boromir truly does not understand the true evil the Ring can bring.

While Boromir's intentions are innocent at first, those intentions may eventually become corrupt due to the Ring. Throughout the novel Tolkien reinforces the theme of corruption of power in many different circumstances, whether it is when Bilbo does not want to give the Ring up to Frodo or when Boromir attempts to take the Ring from Frodo. Boromir's demise shows the reader that even the most innocent man with the best intentions can succumb to the Ring's dark powers and turn evil and eventually end up like Smeagol. During *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the reader is introduced to a vast number of characters who demonstrate loyalty.

One of the most preeminent examples is shown between the Sam and Frodo. While considering the novel, the reader questions the true initiative behind Sam's loyalty for Frodo. The reader might wonder if it is simply for the fear of Gandalf. During the early stages of the novel, Sam is seen eavesdropping on a private conversation between Frodo and Gandalf. Following the conversation the reader witnesses Gandalf practically bully Sam into joining the fellowship. The reader might ponder if Sam's loyalty to Frodo is nothing more than just fear of Gandalf.

Sometimes loyalty is due to a perceived potential benefit; the Ring. The plot in the novel centers on Frodo's quest to destroy the One Ring. Throughout the novel, it is revealed that the Ring is capable of making good men make bad decisions in order to acquire the Ring, which ultimately leads to the

demise of Boromir. The reader must wonder if Sam's loyalty for Frodo is truly out of friendship or just Sam's lust for the Ring and its power. An example that is prevalent in the novel is when Sam attempts to swim after Frodo, even though Sam knows he cannot swim.

As seen earlier in the novel, the lust of the Ring drives characters to do things they normally would not do. Sam swimming after Frodo, even though he cannot swim, speaks volumes for Sam's true intentions. Sam's loyalty to Frodo is incomparable to any other relationship in the novel. This is due to its depth and Sam's true incentive; whether it be for the lust of the Ring, fear or Gandalf or simply an innocent Hobbit doing what he knows is morally right. In J. R. R Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the reader follows Frodo and his company on a quest to destroy the Ring where it was forged, Mordor.

Along the journey the Fellowship runs into many different and unique characters that help them fend off Black Riders and other obstacles in order for the company to complete their quest of destroying the Ring. During their journey the reader sees many characters lured to the Ring due to its great power.

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