

## *The Hobbit*

**J. R. R. Tolkien**

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Since the beginning of mankind, good and evil have been battling each other for supremacy in the world, though both good and evil have never had clear, objective denotations. In fact on Dictionary.com, “good” has more than twenty-eight definitions while “evil” has more than fourteen definitions, all going to show that both of the two words cover a wide array which previews many aspects on the nature of both good and evil. The lack in lucidity of good and evil’s definitions leads them towards having a high level of subjectivity, an issue that is constantly used perversely or negatively. For example, the cradling of a baby, if sought for, can be deemed evil, while the murder of that same baby can, perversely, be considered good. The subjectivity of good and evil is only increased by the fact that many religions exist whose definitions of good and evil differ from others. For example, Christian and Sharia law are completely incommensurable, with an example being that modern Christianity looks fairly upon women, yet Sharia law dictates women to be mere parcels for children and sexual pleasure. Author J. R. R. Tolkien takes use of his Judeo-Christian background, a culture that states all issues have certain objective absolutes, to explore, convolute, and thoroughly define battles between good and evil. In the book *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Tolkien’s Judeo-Christian definition of good—moral, logistic, and spiritual—constantly conflicts with evil, ultimately winning through a climactic battle.

The notorious wizard Gandalf comes to The Shire and tricks Bilbo, a hobbit who as a specie are rather quaint and archaic, into discussing a possible adventure. Gandalf, accompanied by a group of Dwarves led by Thorin, talk of regaining their treasure back from Smaug, the dragon. Gandalf unveils a map showing a secret door into the Mountain where Smaug lives, proposing that Bilbo serve as the expedition's "burglar". The dwarves ridicule the idea, but Bilbo, feeling his inner Took side awaken, joins. The group travel into the wild where Gandalf saves the company from trolls and leads them to Rivendell, where Chief Elf Elrond reveals more hidden secrets hidden in the map such as moon writing. After eating and regaining their energy, the group heads out once again until they are caught by Goblins who take them to the Chief Goblin. Gandalf rescues them, killing the Chief Goblin in the process, and escapes with the Dwarves. Bilbo though gets separated and, lost in the goblin tunnels, stumbles across a mysterious ring (discussed further in *Lord of the Rings*) and encounters Gollum, a sickly creature who challenges Bilbo to a game of riddles for the path out of the tunnels. With the help of the ring that makes him invisible, Bilbo escapes and rejoins the dwarves, gaining the respect of the Dwarves in the process. The Goblins and Wargs (wolf-like creatures) give a chase but the company are saved by eagles before resting in the house of Beorn, a skin-changer.

The company, after getting horses and food, enter the black forest of Mirkwood without Gandalf where Bilbo saves the group from giant spiders and the dungeons of the Wood-elves. Nearing the Lonely Mountain, the lair of Smaug, the human inhabitants of Lake-town welcome the travelers who hope the dwarves will fulfill prophecies of Smaug's demise. Bilbo scouts the dragon's lair, stealing a great cup and learning of a weakness in Smaug's armour (a missing patch of armor plating in his lower belly). The dragon, assuming Lake-town has aided the intruder, sets out to destroy the town when a noble thrush who overheard Bilbo's report of Smaug's weakness reports it to Bard (a Lake-town human), who then slays the Dragon. When the dwarves take possession of the mountain, Bilbo finds the Arkenstone, an heirloom of Thorin's dynasty and

takes it as his payment. The Wood-elves and Lake-men besiege the Mountain and request compensation for their aid, reparations, and settlements of old claims. Thorin refuses and Bilbo, in an effort to spread peace, tries to ransom the Arkenstone to impede a possibility of war. Thorin, hearing of this, exiles Bilbo and battle seems inevitable until Gandalf reappears to warn the company of an approaching army of Goblins and Wargs (angry over the Great Goblin's death). The dwarves, men, and elves band together and with the timely arrival of the eagles and Beorn win the climactic Battle of Five Armies. Thorin is fatally wounded and reconciles with Bilbo before he dies, realizing the futility of material greed in death. Bilbo accepts only a small portion of his share of the treasure, having no want or need for more and still returns home to the Shire.

Throughout *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins aims at maintaining a diplomatic, friendly environment with an objective good intended for every creature involved. Evil's pervasiveness is consistent throughout Bilbo's adventure, emphasizing the Judeo-Christian sins of stealing, coveting, and murder. Thorin Oakenshield's avarice toward the Arkenstone blinds his judgment, leading him to push away both friends and well wishers to suffice his greed. Thorin is only able to atone for his sin through death, where he finally sees the futility of gold and enlightens. Bilbo Baggins attempts to rationalize murder, while resisting malicious situations as well as a bruised ego. By sticking with a strict moral code, by always looking for a logistic good and fending off spiritual struggles and sticking on the righteous path, Bilbo is able to defeat a persistent evil and finish his adventure. Bilbo's magnanimity towards others, such as the Elvenking as well as Gollum justifies his adventure that, though rooted in a bruised ego, becomes an adventure of both friendship as well as a tribute of good winning over evil. Bilbo plays the part of a diplomat as well as a politician, playing a politician's role while giving Bard the Arkenstone as terms for negotiations and a diplomat's role when trying to convince Thorin to give Bard a portion of his treasure. Though affirming the Judeo-Christian belief that evil seeds exist in good deeds, good prevails over evil in climactic spiritual, moral, and logistic battles in *The Hobbit*. The Hobbit is a feel good book with an easy going writing style and easy flow making it a great read for anyone wishing to read.

#### Recommended Titles:

*The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*- J. R. R. Tolkien

*The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*- J. R. R. Tolkien

*The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*- J. R. R. Tolkien

*The Silmarillion*- J. R. R. Tolkien