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**The character of Samwise Gamgee in J.R.R.  
Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings**

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### Čestné prohlášení

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V Olomouci dne .....

Podpis .....

Jíří Adámek

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# Contents

<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Literary Characters.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1 Flat and Round characters .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.2 Static and Dynamic.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.3 Protagonist and Antagonist .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Inspiration Behind the Character of Sam.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1 Life of Tolkien.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2 World War I.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2.1 English Batman .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3. The Shire and Hobbits.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.1 Family Names of Hobbits And Their Importance In Story.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.2 Society, Class System, and Nobility.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.2.1 The Gamgee Family .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4. Samwise Gamgee .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.1 First Outline of Sam.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.2 The Role of Sam In the Story .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.2.1 The Fellowship of the Ring .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.2.2 The Two Towers .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.2.3 The Return of the King.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>4.3 Master Samwise Gamgee.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.4 Frodo's Personal Batman .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.5 Sam as the counterpart of Aragorn.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Resumé.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Annotation .....</b>	<b>37</b>

## **List of Abbreviations**

Sam	Samwise Gamgee
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LotR	Lord of the Rings
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WWI	World War One
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WWII	World War Two
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FotR	Fellowship of the Ring
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RotK	Return of the Ring
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## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the analysis of the character of Samwise Gamgee in *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. The thesis provides definitions of various types of literary characters along with a brief introduction to Tolkien's biography, which is helpful in the analysis. The thesis also provides information about the society of the Shire and a brief commentary on the family of Samwise Gamgee. The aim is to define the importance of Sam in each part of *The Lord of the Rings* including the relationship with Frodo and heroic elements in the character of Sam. The analysis of Samwise showed the purpose of his character and Tolkien's inspiration on the batmen in World War I. Based on the findings, it may be concluded that, despite the undeniable importance of his character, the need for two heroic characters, Frodo, and Sam, is needed for the successful ending of the story.

## Introduction

Tolkien changed the world of fantasy with his epic story set in Middle-earth. Even though it was published more than sixty years ago, his legacy lives on and people look up to the characters he created. In one of the letters, Tolkien expressed an idea: “I think the simple 'rustic' love of Sam and his Rosie (nowhere elaborated) is absolutely essential to the study of his (the chief hero's) character (...)” (Carpenter and Tolkien, 1981, letter n. 131). This statement provided an opportunity for a new perspective at Sam's character and therefore created a possibility for a new interpretation where we consider Sam to be a chief hero of the story.

This bachelor's thesis aims to analyse the character of Samwise Gamgee, an ordinary hobbit who lives in the Shire. The objective is not only to find out the story behind creating this particular character but to also point out the undeniable importance of Sam's character. The subsequent objective is to find out whether we can argue that Samwise Gamgee is the chief hero of the story. The unexpected and fascinating development of Sam influenced the choice of this topic with the addition of the author's interest in publications by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The first part of the thesis is focused on the various type of characters in literature, their categorisations, and main features. We refer to the terminology stated in this part later on when we analyse the character of Sam in each part of *The Lord of the Rings*. Furthermore, we briefly discuss the important events in Tolkien's life which help us understand the character. Experiencing both world wars had an indisputable consequence on his life, which is visible in the character of Sam. The personal experiences, his love for mythological texts, and lastly his passion for the culture of England is reflected in the lore of the *LotR*. The attention is then shifted to the Shire, the customs of hobbits, and the society within.

In the next part, the focus is solely on Sam and his role in the story. We discuss the importance in the story and the relationship with Frodo. Continued by Sam's position in the company and the clever, yet tricky implementation of the title “master” which Tolkien used to emphasize the hierarchy between characters. Lastly, we compare the differences and similarities of Sam's character to the character of Aragorn.

The complexity and popularity of Tolkien's world resulted in many different interpretations of his work and characters. One can say there is no space for a new perspective and yet the author hopes for his insights to be helpful in a fresh meaningful way.

# **1. Literary Characters**

## **1.1 Flat and Round characters**

There are several ways how to categorize the character types in literature. In order to understand the character in depth, we must analyse the inspiration behind writing this particular character and how the character developed throughout the story. One of the ways how to describe a character is to say whether the character is flat or round.

The flat and round character type is described in E.M. Forster's "*Aspects of the Novel*" (1927, 48-54). According to Forster's theory, flat characters tend to be simpler, and the reader can easily describe and understand them. When the flat character is introduced to the reader, it is more or less the definitive version of the character. When you reach the end of the story, the flat characters are unchanged since the introduction. On the other hand, round characters are more complex and the events and achievements throughout the story shape their personality and development. The round characters can surprise us with their choices and the reader cannot guess the final form of the character at the end of the story.

Alex Woloch (2009, 22-43) continues with Forster's definition of flat and round characters and follows up with his idea, that even though this character type separation is convenient for the readers and writers, it is not always that simple. We as readers decide whether the character is flat or round based on the lines in the books, however, Woloch (2009, 12-42) thinks, that writers do not always have space for deeper development of all characters.

Even though it sounds that flat characters are inferior to the story, it is not exactly true. Forster (1927, 49-50) states that flat characters are as much important to the story as the round characters. It does not simply mean, that flat characters are not liked by the audience. There is also a possibility, that character who appears to be flat at the beginning of the story will end up as a complex round character at the end (Forster 1927, 52).

## **1.2 Static and Dynamic**

Another way to categorize the character is to distinguish whether the character is static or dynamic. According to Forster (1927, 48-52), a static character does not develop throughout the story and changes in his character are not relevant. On the other hand,

a dynamic character does experience a development and the final version of character differs from the one at the beginning of the story.

When we apply this definition to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the typical dynamic character is Gandalf. As the story goes, Gandalf's storyline develops and his character experience things, that completely change his character and appearance, such as the events at the Khazad-dûm. On the other hand, the typical static characters can be the Black Riders, who are already introduced as the antagonists of the story in the *LotR* and do not undergo any major changes throughout the story. We can also state, that these characters are flat according to Forster's (1927) definition.

As stated in the article by Sean Glatch (2021), a story with many characters would not be comprehended by the readers, if it contained a larger number of dynamic characters. On the other hand, the static characters are vital for the development of the story and the dynamic characters themselves. It is not a rule, whether the dynamic characters are the main protagonists or antagonists.

### **1.3 Protagonist and Antagonist**

Both of these categorizations are closely related to each other. According to G. Wiehardt (2019), the protagonist is the synonym for the main character or the hero of the story. On the other hand, the antagonist is the opposition to the protagonist. However, it is never a good thing to confuse the antagonist with the villain of the hero, even though they can be the same figure. The protagonists and antagonists can also change throughout the story, which happens exactly in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (henceforth *LotR*). When we look at the *LotR*, it is a single volume novel divided into six books (Books 1-6) or three parts – *The Fellowship of the Ring* (henceforth *FotR*), *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* (henceforth *RotR*). We can define protagonist and antagonist in each of the six books.

According to E. Ermalina et al. (2015, 2-6), there are five main characters in divided single volume of the *LotR*. The analysis states, that those five main characters contain four protagonists, who are Frodo, Aragorn, Sam, and Gandalf. On the other hand, the main character, who can be later categorized as the antagonist, was Gollum.

However, Hawkins (2014, 32-37) describes that there are more characters, who possess the traits which are typical for the antagonist, such as lust, greed, pride, and arrogance. As they are the complete opposite of what traits the protagonists, such as Frodo,

Aragorn, Sam, and Gandalf have. With this suggestion, we can say that Saruman and Sauron both possess these sinful traits.

It is clear, that the opinions on the protagonists and antagonists of the *LotR* can be quite complicated, as the readers tend to understand the traits of protagonists and antagonists by their own perception.

## 2. Inspiration Behind the Character of Sam

### 2.1 Life of Tolkien

To understand the background of creating the novel and the character of Sam, we have to briefly describe the life of Tolkien. There are various books and articles about his life, therefore we focus only on the important parts, which directly influenced his characteristics and traits of Sam. However, it is also important to describe the creation of the fantasy world itself. The information about Tolkien's life provided in the biography by Humphrey Carpenter (1977) was especially beneficial in writing this text.

When we summarise the things we learn about his life, it is clear that Tolkien admired the mythology texts in past. For instance, these influential texts were Finnish epic stories by E. Lönnrot called Kalevala or Norwegian mythology texts in the Poetic Edda collection. The influence is indisputable in numerous cases, as in creating the name for a place in Tolkien's books, Middle-earth, which is only a part of the world Arda, takes inspiration from the name of Norwegian mythology world "Midgard" (Carpenter 1977, 107). Another thing is, that Tolkien wanted to create a story, which would be more serious after his published novel *The Hobbit*, which was supposed to be children's literature. However, when Tolkien started thinking more seriously about the story and characters he just created, he wanted to elaborate on something bigger. This led to the creation of the sequel called *The Lord of the Rings*.

He struggled with organizing his thoughts about this world at the start. Even though Tolkien wanted this story to be more serious, the beginning of the book does not appear so. When we start reading the first book – *The Fellowship of the Ring*, it gives us a feeling remarkably similar to *The Hobbit* (Carpenter 1977, 218). The first chapter describes an enormous party, which celebrated the 111<sup>th</sup> birthday of Bilbo Baggins. It is not common for epic fantasy literature to start with a party, where the focus of the chapter is setting up the tents and how Hobbits loved celebrations and feasts. The description of the characters introduced in this chapter is likewise not extremely detailed. We can support this argument thanks to Ch. Tolkien's (1988) published book, where he discussed the initial thoughts and notes of his father. Ch. Tolkien stated that the first chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* was truly intended to be the first chapter of *The Hobbit* and his father changed it later on. However, the world became darker and much more serious later on in the book. This argument is

supported by the fact, that when we learn about the character Ham Gamgee, who is the father to Samwise Gamgee, he is introduced with his nickname the Gaffer. Tolkien wrote in his letters:

“To amuse my boys I named him Gaffer Gamgee, and the name became part of the family lore to fix on old chaps of the kind. At that time I was beginning on *The Hobbit*. The choice of Gamgee was primarily directed by alliteration; but I did not invent it. It was caught out of childhood memory, as a comic word or name. It was in fact the name when I was small (in Birmingham) for 'cotton-wool'. (Hence the association of the Gamgees with the Cottons.) I knew nothing of its origin” (Carpenter and Tolkien, 1981, letter n. 257).

The character based on the amusement of his kids is something that would rather fit in the style of *The Hobbit*. Tolkien admitted, how he realized it when he intended to name the main character “Bingo,” however, he decided to change it later on to “Frodo” (Carpenter 1977, 221).

With these given details we can assume that Tolkien decided the tone of the novel after he wrote the first chapter and after he gathered more notes and thoughts about his new fantasy world.

## **2.2 World War I**

World War I (henceforth WWI) had an impact on many lives, and we cannot ignore this piece of history, which deeply affected Tolkien and his life. Because this part of Tolkien’s life is so extensive that dozens of pages could be written about it, we focus only on the information that is important to us and the character of Sam.

Tolkien was 22 years old when WWI started. He studied English Literature at the University of Oxford and decided not to enlist immediately after England joined the war. His decision was surprising, considering all his colleagues and friends from university were eager to join the war (Carpenter 1977, 88). When we contemplate the fact that England was without any major conflict since the Napoleonic wars, the young English generation had no idea what it means to go to war, to go to the front (Geppert, Mulligan and Rose 2015, 344). Another thing is, that during this period, the war was completely different from the previous wars. The usage of poisonous gas, artilleries and long-range rifles changed the conflict in a never-seen way. The image of war was crushed right at the moment they arrived at the front.

Tolkien had no desire to join the war as he focused on education at the University of Oxford. Garth (2013, 42-44) speculates that the knowledge of Germanic and mythology literature gave Tolkien a distinct perspective on the war. As we stated before, the generation back then viewed the war as something prestigious. It is possible, that they hoped to march into the war as heroes they were all learning about, such as Achilles or Hector (Garth 2013, 42). However, as stated earlier, new inventions changed warfare completely. WWI did not allow soldiers to heroically march into shoulder-to-shoulder combat and fight in the way Achilles and Hector fought. On the other hand, it allowed us to see that the true heroes of the war are soldiers were those who never intended to do the heroic act for fame, but because of their conviction of doing good. The true heroes were in many cases those who were not seen or remembered. This description fits very well with the previously discussed term “unlikely hero.”

As we already know, Zimbardo (2004, 21) categorized the four leading hobbits of the story as unlikely heroes. We can assume that Tolkien was inspired in creating the characters in the story by his own experience during WWI. When he was fighting in the trenches and survived one of the most brutal battles of the Somme, he earned the ability to see the value of true heroes in the war.

### **2.2.1 English Batmen**

The role of batmen was introduced in the British military during WWI. It was a position where the privates had to fulfil any requirements set by their assigned officers and they had to make his life as easy as possible, as they all fought at the frontline. The thing is, that the private is the lowest rank in the regimental system used by the British army during WWI (French 2005, 292-294). With this information, we can conclude Tolkien wanted to honour especially those soldiers who were not high-ranked yet managed to do great and heroic things.

When we look at the duties of the batmen. The major thing is the hierarchy. Batman was a soldier who was always on hand for his commander. It was therefore necessary that his commander was on a higher level of rank. The rank system was not only based on the experience of the soldiers, but also the education level. As we discussed previously, there were numerous men with university education who were eager to join the war. After they were assigned to specific units, their ranks were much higher than what soldiers from the lower class and without education had. The problem is that the education level and

degrees from university do not reflect the experiences in the war, which means that the soldiers who were in the lowest ranks were a better fit for the war and they were often much more experienced. Additionally, the relationship had to be close and trustworthy so the commander would be confident in batman's abilities to accomplish all his requirements. The function of batman was to take care of the daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the horses (Garth 2013, 171-172).

### **3. The Shire and Hobbits**

#### **3.1 Family Names of Hobbits And Their Importance In Story**

When we look at the family names of the four hobbits who were part of the company, we find some resemblance to Great Britain's family names. Especially the area around Birmingham, which was a city where Tolkien grew up.

Hoffman (2016, 2-8) focused in his academic paper on the similarities and patterns in family names in *Lord of the Rings* and Great Britain. By using the appendices by Tolkien and analysing the family names of English citizens back then, it is clear that Tolkien was cautious in giving family names to characters. Tolkien gave the family names, which were common in the area of Birmingham, to characters who were important to the story or frequently mentioned. The statement is supported by the Baggins family, which the main character Frodo is part of. Additionally, the family names of Merry and Pippin, two important hobbit characters, follows the pattern. On the other hand, Gamgee was an exception. According to Hoffman (2016, 7), it should indicate that the characters within the Gamgee family would not be important to the story, and they should be mentioned only briefly. However, Sam Gamgee does not go according to this theory, because his character is vital in the story and the Gamgee family is mentioned more than frequently.

The reason behind it is, that Gamgee's family name was rather a nickname, and it does not, therefore, undergo the previously mentioned theory. It originates in the village called Gamwich, which was located in the Shire and the ancestors of Sam lived there. However, as Hoffman (2016, 2-8) pointed out in his paper, Sam goes according to the theory of the importance of family names. It happens at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, where his name was not Sam Gamgee, but it was Sam Gardner, given to him as an acknowledgement for repairing the Shire. This surname was common in the Birmingham area and hence it confirms the theory. The name also originates in traits or attributes of the character, and it fits more to the final image of the character.

#### **3.2 Society, Class System, and Nobility**

The class system and social status had their place in the Shire. Even though Tolkien denied any resemblance with the real world, there are without a doubt many similarities to the English rural society during the Victorian era.

Weidner (2002, 75-84) pointed out the clear correlations between The Shire and Victorian England. The first and most clear is the location. The Shire is, exactly like England,

located in a place not easily accessible by the outer world. We can even argue that the Shire is living in its world as they are not affected by the outer conflicts in Middle-Earth apart from two major battles. When we focus on the hobbits and their similarities with English nobility during the Victorian era, several characteristics are common for both societies. First, the hobbits were divided into social classes just like in Victorian England. There were three classes – upper class, middle class, and lower or working class. It was common for landowners and nobility to be part of the upper and middle class while the working class were the manual workers employed by them. (Mitchell, 1996) Another thing that they had in common was the importance of traditions and cultural life. As we know, hobbits loved to throw a lot of parties and celebrate every possible occasion. Their emphasis on such traditions and celebrities is as-well related to typical Englishmen (Weidner 2002, 75-84).

Tolkien described the social and economic situation in the Shire in his appendices. These appendices were later on analysed in the journal *Mallorn* (Crawford 1975, 24-29).

According to Crawford (1975, 24-29), the social status in the Shire is highly dependent on the land and property owned by the family. In addition, it also comes with titles that improve their standing and prestige. The most prestigious hobbits were either from noble families or elected officials. There are two main positions – the Mayor and the Thain. The similarity with the Old English word “thegn or thane” is not random. This title was used during the Anglo-Saxon era for noblemen (Loyn 1955, 529-549) and Tolkien used it similarly. The difference is that the position of the Mayor is elected, but the Thain title is the family legacy. We find out in the story and appendices that it was the Took family who had the honour to carry this title and who was elected to that position. It means that other citizens of the Shire addressed hobbits with such titles as “Master.” We can say that Took family, who inherited the money and Thain title from their ancestors can be considered the upper-class.

### **3.2.1 The Gamgee Family**

Tolkien presented the family tree of the Gamgee family in the Appendices at the end of the 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary edition of *The Lord of the Rings* (2010). However, the two most important characters, which were mentioned in the story are Hamfast Gamgee and Samwise Gamgee. We do not yet focus on our future family of Sam after the marriage, as they are not important to our point. When we concentrate on the two mentioned characters, we find out that their background is quite different from the families of Frodo, Pippin and Merry.

The difference is in the social class of his family. Sam is the only one in the group of hobbits who was not equal in terms of social status and he and his family belonged to the lower-class group of hobbits.

The first-ever introduced character from the Gamgee family in *The Lord of the Rings* is Hamfast “Gaffer” Gamgee, who worked at Bag End for many years as a gardener. However, as he grew older, he passed this position to his son, Sam. We learn, that Hamfast was a skilful gardener with expertise in root vegetables. Even though he was valued by others for his knowledge and manual skill, it was clear that he belonged to the lower class. The thing is, that manual labour was not common for hobbits from the higher class as they would prefer to hire somebody to do that and earn money as landowners. The difference in social status was reflected for instance at the Bilbo’s Farewell Party. We are informed by Hamfast, that Bilbo invited almost everyone from The Shire and that all the attendants will receive a present. Although, when we look at Appendices C, there are underlined all the attendants and, to our surprise, both Hamfast and Sam were not invited. This indicates, that even though they were both close friends to Bilbo and Frodo, they were not considered for an invitation to a prestigious party. We can only guess the reason behind it, but the possible explanation could be that the other hobbits, who were invited and who were all part of either middle or upper class, would not tolerate the presence of somebody like Hamfast or Sam.

We also learn, that Hamfast was in fact illiterate and Sam could read and write only thanks to Bilbo’s teaching. The lack of education was projected in the language Sam use throughout the story. In opposition to Frodo, Pippin or Merry, his language is predominantly simple, and the usage of informal language is more frequent.

Bilbo was also responsible for Sam’s fascination with Elves and epic stories. The lack of literacy was typical for the hobbits who were part of the working class. We can therefore call attention to the importance of Bilbo in the guidance and education of Sam’s early age. His kindness and politeness helped in shaping the personality of Sam without a doubt.

## **4. Samwise Gamgee**

### **4.1 First Outline of Sam**

Before we focus on Sam in detail, we can discuss the earliest ideas and thoughts about Sam by Tolkien. Christopher Tolkien (1988) in the book called *The History of Middle-Earth* describes the initial concepts of his father.

We learn that Sam was never intended to accompany Frodo on his journey to destroy the Ring. Sam was not even considered to be part of the company and his character did not exist at the beginning. The original members who travelled to Rivendell were Bingo, Frodo, Odo, and Marmaduke (Ch. Tolkien 1988, 83). Tolkien later renamed these characters and even changed some of their attributes. Sam's character was introduced after some chapters were already written and his position as a gardener remain unchanged. Tolkien only changed his purpose in the story. He intended to replace Odo's character with a new one. However, he decided not to simply transfer the Odo's traits to the newly introduced Sam but rather presented his unique character development not linked to the previous attributes of Odo. On the other hand, Pippin was the one who gained a lot of traits of the Odo's character such as foolhardiness or nonchalance. This caused that Tolkien had to rewrite some chapters and change the motivation along with the purpose of newly created characters.

Tolkien was convinced that his early drafts and ideas had to be preserved and he worked with them in a way to keep as many original ideas as possible (Ch. Tolkien 1988, 228).

### **4.2 The Role of Sam In the Story**

Sam is, without a doubt, the crucial element in the story and one of the protagonists. There are moments in the story where if it were not for Sam, things would have turned out differently. He is the friend and servant of Frodo who he accompanies from the beginning to the absolute end. As we follow his journey, we have a hard time finding something unlikeable in his decisions. When we start reading *The Lord of the Rings*, we find out that the character of Sam is introduced as one of the first characters. In addition, when we finally reach the end of this epic story, we find out, that it is indeed Sam who concludes the whole story in the company of his wife and daughter. The apparent ordinariness is something that allows the readers to feel empathy for his suffering and joy. We have to take into consideration, that apart from Frodo, readers can relate to his character as he is not influenced

by the mystical power of the Ring. We cannot simply understand the burden that lays on Frodo and that changes his behaviour and mind throughout the story. In the real world, there is no such power that would do this and even though the story is pure fantasy, Sam's character can be considered to be the most real one. There are even moments in the story, where Sam's ineptitude pushes the story forward and helps to complete the quest.

### **4.2.1 The Fellowship of the Ring**

Sam has had an important position since the beginning of the story. We learn that Sam was, thanks to his work position and positive relationship with Frodo and Bilbo, the "...chief investigator" (*FotR*, p. 105) of the group of hobbits, who tried to collect information regarding rumours about the Ring, which were around the Baggins family. Sam was not the only one who spied on them, as it was in fact Merry who started it when he noticed something golden in Bilbo's pocket after the famous party. Even though it might seem like it cast a negative light on Sam, who spied on his friend and employer, we have to take into consideration his immature age at the time of spying and the argument that they were in fact worried about Frodo. However, the decision to spy on Frodo resulted in the positive fact that Sam was chosen to be the companion of Frodo on his quest. While we read the part where Gandalf caught Sam, who was eavesdropping, there is a possibility that fate entered the story and allowed Gandalf to notice Sam exactly at the moment of discussion of choosing the right companion. We do not have to be far from the truth since fate and destiny play a significant role in Tolkien's stories. It was hinted in the letters by Tolkien (Carpenter and Tolkien, 1981, letter n. 192) that there is a possibility of some higher power taking control over such things that happened in Middle-Earth. However, this theory is pure speculation and own interpretation that was created during our reading as there are no valid sources or theories according to a particular situation.

When we look at the role of Sam since he started travelling with Frodo, the most obvious one is to take care of his master. Sam always put his difficulties aside and Frodo's needs were for him in the first place. A good example is when Frodo started complaining about his heavy bag and Sam responded: "'I could take a lot more yet, sir. My packet is quite light,' said Sam stoutly and untruthfully" (*FotR*, p. 70). We can see that Sam lied for the benefit of Frodo's comfort. When they were preparing to leave Rivendell, it was decided that the Ring has to be destroyed and Frodo is the ringbearer. Sam understood that Frodo's

worries were about the Ring and therefore he took over the role of somebody who thinks about all the practical things that could come in handy: "...his chief treasure, his cooking gear; and the little box of salt that he always carried and refilled when he could; a good supply of pipe-weed (...)" (*FotR*, p. 280) and he did not forget on his master: "(...) various small belongings of his master's that Frodo had forgotten and Sam had stowed to bring them out in triumph when they were called for" (*FotR*, p. 280). We can also see that Sam was happy to carry these items and hoped for an appraisal by Frodo when the items would come in handy. We can also debate, that because Sam was, apart from Frodo, Pippin, and Merry, the only hobbit from the working class. Therefore, his connection to the items like cooking gear, ropes, and flints was more common to him as he probably used them every day either at his job or at home. We can say it was normal for him to think about the practical part of the journey.

We can also point out the role of a close friend and trustful companion of Frodo. When we look at the several occasions where Frodo was in danger or any stressful situation, we find out that the first name he called for was in fact Sam's. We can mention some of the examples to support this statement. For instance, when the four hobbits travel across the Barrow-downs, they lost themselves and Frodo calls for help: "Sam! he called. 'Pippin! Merry! Come along!... 'Sam! Sam! Merry! Pippin!'" (*FotR*, p. 139). And another occasion was right after he woke up in Rivendell: "Where's Sam?" Frodo asked at length. 'And are the others all right?" (*FotR*, p. 219). To show that it is truly not random, we can point out two more examples, when Frodo was in danger. First, when the Black Riders were approaching their position: "Terror overcame Pippin and Merry...Sam shrank to Frodo's side" (*FotR*, p. 195) and second when they were threatened by the Balrog and orcs: "Frodo breathed heavily and leaned against Sam, who put his arms about him" (*FotR*, p. 326). We can therefore say that Sam's role was to be the personal protector of Frodo and that he trusted him the most when Frodo felt vulnerable.

Sam also has the role of an observer, and he is the kind of member who alerts the others in the group of the incoming dangers or strange moments. For instance, there was a situation when the four hobbits travelled through the Old Forest, which was a dangerous place full of magical creatures. Sam was the one who alerted Frodo about the tree that he was laying under: "I don't like this great big tree. I don't trust it..." (*FotR*, p. 117) which was a foreshadow of the attack that came right after. Thanks to Sam's alertness, he was able to save Frodo from drowning as he was being dragged underwater by the tree. It was not the last time Sam saved Frodo during

However, Sam's distrust of the strangers and his suspicion were not always justified. When the four hobbits meet Strider for the first time, they find out that he can guide them to Rivendell, which was the ultimate goal of their journey. Sam says to Frodo his opinion on Strider: "With your leave, Mr. Frodo, I'd say no! This Strider here, he warns and he says take care; and I say yes to that, and let's begin with him" (*FotR*, 165). Nevertheless, Frodo does not listen to his advice and agrees with Strider's help. This particular moment shows us that even though Sam's opinions were heard, they were not always taken into consideration. And, as we learn later in the story, Strider's intentions were always trustworthy, and he becomes a vital member of the company. Sam was therefore not flawless, which is not particularly bad as it helps to empathize character and bring reality to his feelings and actions.

When we summarize the role of Sam in the first part of the story, we find out that he takes a role of a supportive companion. We cannot deny the importance he already had in the story and how his character started evolving. He had to leave the Shire, leave his father behind, and face the danger of the outer world. Sam also manages to slay the orc for the first time. Therefore, we can already say that his character is dynamic and round, based on the terminology set in the first chapter.

## 4.2.2 The Two Towers

At the beginning of the story, Sam stayed true to his loyalty to Frodo and decided to accompany him on his journey. He was aware of the dangers that might face him, but his loyalty and friendship with Frodo were stronger than the fear of the journey. The bond they had was so strong that Sam put aside all his worries and cared only for the safety of Frodo.

We can find evidence about the importance of Sam quite early as the stuff Sam carried all along came in handy. First, we find out that the rope that was given to Sam by the Elves helped him to save Frodo after he tripped down the cliff. After that, the rope not only helped them with overcoming difficult terrain, but it also came in handy when Sam used it to tie the new member of the party, Gollum. However, this resulted in the first moment the Gollum started disliking Sam because the rope caused pain to him: "Gollum lay quiet and tried no further tricks. He did not answer Sam, but gave him a swift venomous look." (*The Two Towers*, p. 617). As we can see, Sam's actions greatly influenced the story and

even though we have not discussed it yet, Sam also influenced the future decisions of Gollum.

Sam also becomes the one who starts caring about the food, shelter and of course Frodo, as the power of the ring started taking its cost on Frodo's thinking and physical strength. He never takes his eyes off Frodo and always makes sure that he is not lagging: "...Sam had often to beg Gollum to wait and not to leave their master behind" (*The Two Towers*, p. 630). Sam was therefore the moral and also physical support to Frodo. Thanks to Sam's presence, Frodo is allowed to continue in moments where he would probably give up.

We also mentioned that Sam's decisions were not always perfect and how they affected the development of the story. The perfect example of it is when Sam decides to cook, with the help of the cooking gear he carried all along, the rabbits that Gollum caught: "And it will bring enemies, yes it will. 'I don't think so,' said Sam." (*The Two Towers*, p. 654). We can see that Gollum tried to warn Sam about the possibility of unwanted attention from the smoke of the fire that he made. However, he decided to ignore such a warning. Gollum was actually right and it truly did bring the attention, only it was the attention of Faramir and his group of soldiers. Which, as we find out later on, was helpful for both Frodo and Sam.

When we summarize the role of Sam in the second part of the story, we learn that his character gains more responsibility. He continues with his supportive role; however, his concerns are now only with Frodo as they are separated from the rest of the company. With the rising responsibility, we can see the results of his decisions either from the first part of the story or during their travel. Whether he decides to carry the rope or cook food. His character also starts to bring a new perspective on the journey and he is more helpful to Frodo, who starts being more corrupted by the Ring.

### **4.2.3 The Return of the King**

As the story develops, the role of Sam's character becomes increasingly vital. The crucial moment is when they are betrayed by Gollum and attacked by the powerful monster, Shelob.

First, Sam's role is to give the courage to Frodo when they try to escape the tunnel where Shelob lived. He constantly supports Frodo and gives him hope that they will both make it alive. Even, when they are both scared to death, Sam is the one who remembers that

Frodo carries the star-glass that was given to him by Galadriel which helps them while attempting to escape. Therefore, his role is to keep Frodo alive and help him overcome the fear even though he is afraid just like him.

However, as the Shelob succeeds with her ambush and paralyzes Frodo, Sam's role in the story changes. After he manages to fight off Shelob, his only concern is the life of his master. Sadly, he believes that Frodo is dead and the rage consumes him for a moment. The reader then enters the point of view of Sam and we are meant to empathize his grief. After that, he decides to continue with the quest, even though he questions his abilities to complete it, and becomes the ring-bearer. This new role opens up a completely new view of the effects of the Ring and the character of Sam. As the Ring starts to have its effect on Sam, he realizes the burden that Frodo had all along. We know that Sam always tried their best to give hope and courage to his master, who carried the ring. However, as he was alone now, he had to give the courage and strength to continue to himself. "Come on, Sam!" he said, 'or you'll be too late again" (*RotK*, p. 736). We also see the switch of roles with Frodo when the Ring takes over Sam's mind and we learn about the images that the Ring shows to him. We learn that the Ring tried to take over his mind by showing him visions of his deepest fantasies. This particular moment is essential, as it, later on, affects the behaviour of Sam toward Gollum and therefore he indirectly influences the future development of the story.

However, as we continue in the story, the role of Sam again changes after he successfully rescues Frodo from captivity. He again put all his worries aside and started focusing on Frodo which gives him courage on the way to the Mountain. Even though Frodo almost gives up and has a pessimistic attitude, Sam becomes the dominant member of the party and pushes Frodo to go further: "All right, Sam," said Frodo. 'Lead me! As long as you've got any hope left. Mine is gone" (*RotK*, p. 928). We also learn that Sam gave up all the food and water to Frodo as he put all his hope into him. Sam becomes the ultimate partner who allows the successful destruction of the Ring.

The final role of Sam is to have the honour of bringing closure to this epic story with the last words in the last chapter: He drew a deep breath. 'Well, I'm back,' he said (*RotK*, p. 1031). After the story focuses on the events that happened in the Shire, we find out that Sam was essential in restoring the beauty of the place. Even though Sam's service is no more needed after Frodo travels to Undying Lands, the focus remains on his character. Because the further development of Frodo's character was not possible for the reason of permanent effects the corruption had on him, Sam's story continues and is allowed to continue his legacy. We learn that he started a family, married, and became the Mayor of the Shire seven

times in a row. Additionally, he inherited Bag End, the home of Frodo. Therefore, he earns the role of Father, Master, Mayor, and thanks to his short period of being the ring-bearer, he also earns the right to travel to Undying Lands and meet with Frodo.

Sam's character in the third part of the story experiences the most stressful and challenging moments. There are moments where he has to evolve from the supportive character he always was to a leading character. The effects the Ring had on Frodo did not allow him to develop his character furthermore, therefore the character of Sam brought moments of surprise and development to the story during the final part of the journey. The external circumstances, like the situation where he carried the Ring, force him to make decisions he never intended to do. He would never abandon the body of Frodo if the need to complete the quest did not force him to. Additionally, Sam achieves the happy ending, that Frodo was never able to achieve.

It is clear, that Frodo would not be able to successfully destroy the Ring and therefore the character of Sam is vital for the story. However, the role of Sam throughout the story was to support Frodo and this is what he did best. Even though we can say that there would be no Frodo without Sam, the same implies the other way as there would be no Sam without Frodo. The combination of these characters is what allowed the story to continue and therefore led to the successful completion of the story.

### **4.3 Master Samwise Gamgee**

The title master was not used only with the official reasoning. Tolkien was creative in using the title in situations where it was not necessary. We can confirm such a statement when we look at the situation in *The Two Towers*, when Frodo, Sam, and Gollum happened to run into Faramir and his group of soldiers. It was in fact the first time, that Sam was addressed as "Master Samwise Gamgee." Both Faramir and one of the soldiers, Mablung, called Sam master even though Frodo said: "...when I and my servant left the Company" (*The Two Towers*, p.668). When we look at this part closely, we can discuss whether Faramir and Mablung called Sam master in the same meaning as it was common in the Shire. Because, as Erickson (2014, 39-40) describes in his article, there was a shift of words "master" and "mister" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain, when people started calling young boys master and the title mister was earned after they were adults. We have to take into consideration the emphasis on details in Tolkien's books. When we inspect the tone of

the whole chapter and how Faramir treated them at the beginning, when he learned they were part of the Company along with his already deceased brother Boromir, it hints to us that he had no reason to be so respectful towards Sam. Faramir says exactly four times Master Samwise and, in every case, it was said sarcastically. Therefore, Tolkien could alter the meaning of the word master to show us the tone in which they approached Sam.

The second occasion when somebody called Sam a master in a negative way was by Gollum. It was at the stairs of Cirith Ungol when Sam called Gollum “sneak” and Gollum repeated the phrase to Frodo continuing with: “He was given that name by kind Master Samwise, the hobbit that knows so much” (*RotK*, p. 715). This was the first and last time that Gollum ever called Sam master. The negative and sarcastic tone is clear when we put it into the context of the situation. Gollum was in a position where he only wanted Frodo and Sam to fall into the trap to get the Ring for himself and therefore had no reason to be respectful to Sam.

The last occasion is connected to the possession of the Ring. When Gollum calls Frodo his Master, it is because of his bond to the Ring (Hall, 1985). We learn in the story, that the one who carried the Ring was considered to be the “Master of the Ring.” This information clarifies one more thing that is connected to Sam. It can be confusing for readers who get to the chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* called “The Choices of Master Samwise.” We are trying to argue that Sam did not earn the title master until he was elected as the Mayor of Michel Delving and all other examples of calling him that way was in a negative context. Therefore, this title of the chapter can be viewed as a counter-argument to our theory; however, we can say that Tolkien chose this title for a particular reason other than to show Sam’s rise in society and earning the title for the reasons that were standard in the Shire. And the reason is, that Sam believed Frodo was killed and he had to be the one who carries the Ring to Mount Doom. For the reason that he carries the Ring for two days, Sam becomes the Master of the Ring, and the title is only connected to the possession of the ring and Sam does not undergo any class-rising moment.

We find out that Sam calls Frodo, Pippin, and Merry “Master” throughout the whole book. The difference is that both Pippin and Merry go according to the official customs of hobbits. The difference is that Frodo does not. Baggins family is considered to be upper-middle-class (Amison 2006, 129-130) and do not have any royal or official status which would give them the title Master. The explanation is, that Sam respects Frodo so much and accepts that Frodo’s social status is higher than his, that he calls him that way. It can be

strange to call your closest friend “Master” after all those years of travelling together, but it only shows how loyal Sam is to his role as a servant and how much respect he had for Frodo.

#### **4.4 Frodo’s Personal Batman**

After we discussed the role of Sam, his status in society, and his relationship with Frodo, we can spot several similarities with the role of batmen in WWI. This resemblance is not random and it was confirmed by Tolkien.

“My ‘Samwise’ is indeed (as you note) largely a reflection of the English soldier—grafted on the village-boys of early days, the memory of the privates and my batmen that I knew in the 1914 War, and recognized as so far superior to myself.” (Carpenter and Tolkien, 1981, letter n. 187)

It is not the first time Tolkien decided to include his experience or knowledge from real life in the world of *The Lord of the Rings*. We are referring to the already discussed similarities of English names and customs of English people with hobbits. However, this correlation is linked exclusively to Sam. We already discussed the information that Tolkien decided to involve Sam’s character in the journey after he had already written some chapters (Ch. Tolkien 1988, 174). We can therefore guess that this decision came after he was sure of the importance of his character, as it would not make sense to honour the brave men from WWI on a simple gardener.

In order to confirm such resemblance, we have to take a look at the unique roles and traits of Sam. First, we take a look at the relationship with Frodo. The significant similarity is the hierarchy that is between them and which remains unchanged until the end of the story. It is clear, that Sam works as a personal servant to Frodo and cares entirely about his needs. This relationship is based not only on the social status of Sam and the fact that Frodo was his master but also on the fact that Frodo was the ring bearer and therefore the vital member of the party. We can compare it to the fact that officers were of a higher rank and therefore they had the information and knowledge from generals, which helped with managing the whole army. The trustworthy relationship allowed Frodo to put his life in hands of Sam. Without trust in Sam’s abilities, he would not be able to rest anytime. Additionally, the trust had to be mutual in order to allow Sam to comply with the needs and requests of Frodo without raising any doubts. Sam was also always ready to risk rather his life than the life of his master. “Before Frodo could stop him, he sat down, swung his legs over the brink... It is doubtful if he ever did anything braver in cold blood, or more unwise.” (*The Two Towers*,

p. 606). We can see, that when there is a need to do something risky, Sam is willing to do it without any doubt. This relationship which was even stronger thanks to the factor of the close friendship between Frodo and Sam since the beginning, only helped both of them in completing the quest.

Additionally, the duties of batmen are more or less the same as the duties of Sam when we take into consideration the difference in settings. For instance, Sam is taking care of daily tasks such as cooking, finding shelter or helping with overcoming the obstacles. He cares about the tasks because he wants to ease Frodo as much as he can. We can see how Frodo's focus was on the Ring. Frodo was exhausted because of the effects of it: "He was now beginning to feel it as an actual weight dragging him earthwards" (*RotK*, p. 630). We can therefore say that he was simply not able to think about such things and the fact that Sam took care of those things significantly helped Frodo. We can argue that Sam could start feeling like an inferior helper, however, his pure selflessness did not allow him to ever think of that and the needs of his master were always the priority.

At the beginning of the story, there is also a presence of a pony called Bill. We learn that Sam becomes the one who takes care of him, just like the batmen took care of horses in WWI. Other members of the party only benefited from Sam's decision because the pony was able to carry their luggage and therefore allowed them to be less exhausted. Therefore, Sam again acted for the benefit of others and his decision had a minor effect on making the journey easier.

Even though Tolkien said that the plot of the story is in no way influenced by the wars in real life (Carpenter and Tolkien, 1981, letter n.226), we can guess the influence the war had on Tolkien's life was powerful enough to inspire him in creating the character of Sam. The reason behind it is, that Tolkien wanted to honour the batmen he met during his service, as they showed him the true meaning of heroism. He wanted to show readers the impact these characters or people can have. We can boldly say that the story would evolve in a different, not especially positive direction without Sam's presence.

## **4.5 Sam as the Counterpart of Aragorn**

According to R. I. Lakowski (2002, 22-35), we can find several types of heroism in *The Lord of the Rings*. After we managed to point out the development of Sam, there is no doubt that we can classify him as one of the heroes of the story. However, the elements of

heroism in Sam's character are not typical for this kind of story. We discussed the passion and inspiration Tolkien had in epic stories like Beowulf or Kalevala, which were full of heroes (Carpenter 1977, 75). We can find a representative of said heroes in the character of Aragorn, who represents the typical masculine character from the medieval ages. We aim to therefore point out the differences between Sam and Aragorn and discuss their type of heroism. A useful source for us is the article by Ivana Šarić (2015, 4-14), where she compares the characters of Frodo and Aragorn.

First, we point out the background information we have about their life. We already described Sam's lower-class position and his ordinary job as a gardener. He lived in the Shire, which is, as already discussed, similar to the English town during the Victorian era. On the other hand, Aragorn was raised in Rivendell, which was more alike to the medieval ages setting. He comes from the family of kings and was therefore the rightful heir to the throne (Šarić 2015, 4-14). J.J. Campbell (2008) states, that as society evolves throughout history, the heroes of the stories evolve as well. Therefore, the fact that they come from different societies helps us in defining the different perceptions of their heroism.

Heroes in the medieval and mythologic typically carried swords, which were famous and often named (Šarić 2015, 5). Aragorn is no exception, as he carries a legendary sword, Andúril. The sword of the hero is an item that allows him to do great things and it helps him with overcoming obstacles and fulfilling his prophecy (Whetter and McDonald 2006, 5-11). Without the hero who wields the sword, there would be no such thing and therefore the combination of two elements is needed. However, we can argue that even though Sam does not meet this requirement, he does carry something, that has similar symbolic element to his character. The talk is about Sam's cooking gear, which he carries since the beginning of the journey. Sam's character is known for its working skill thanks to his job. He successfully manages to care about the needs of Frodo throughout the challenging journey. Just like the sword for Aragorn, the cooking gear is for Sam the tool which makes his journey easier. It allows him to cook food for Frodo and it serves his purpose as supportive companion. Heroes usually create a bond to the sword and they never want to give it away, as it would make them feel vulnerable. Aragorn confirms this statement when he has a hard time giving away his Andúril when they wanted to visit Théoden and does so only after Gandalf commands him to: "It is not my will," he said, "to put aside my sword or to deliver Andúril to the hand of any other man." (*The Two Towers*, 511). In comparison to Sam and his cooking gear, he experiences a similar situation to Aragorn's, when he has to throw them away on

his way to Mount Doom: “The clatter of his precious pans as they fell down into the dark was like a death-knell to his heart.” (*RotK*, 938).

One more thing to compare is the importance of portraying the situations where these two characters eat or sleep. In the case of Aragorn, sleep and eating were not something that was emphasized. There are moments, when the company goes to sleep and yet Aragorn stays awake, smokes his pipe, and guards others. We can say that there was no reason to portray him eating or sleeping when Tolkien can emphasize his heroic behaviour. There was always time to do something better than sleep or eat. “(...) while the others were finishing their breakfast, Gandalf and Aragorn went aside together and stood looking at Caradhras” (*FotR*, p. 287). On the other hand, when we look at hobbits and Sam, the food, alcohol, and rest had its place in their life. Hobbits were known for their passion for partying and organizing banquets. Tolkien himself appraised Sam for his ordinariness and said that it is the foundation of Sam’s character (*Carpenter and Tolkien, 1981, letter n. 131*).

To summarize, the hero image of Sam is different from Aragorn’s. It is clear, that Sam is the hero that fits more into the modern world that the Shire is in comparison with Rivendell. Even though they are both considered a hero of the story, the differences are distinctive.

## Conclusion

After gathering information from all sorts of sources about the character of Samwise Gamgee in *The Lord of the Rings*, we managed to create a clear image of his character with the support of our own insights. The analysis aimed at proving the importance of his character, which was confirmed to be indisputable. On the other hand, we did not manage to confirm the subsequent objective, where we discussed whether we could say that Sam is the chief hero of the story. To continue with the idea that there would be no Sam without Frodo and no Frodo without Sam, we have to summarize things we learned in the thesis.

Firstly, we managed to classify Sam according to the terminology set in the first chapter. It is clear that his character is round and dynamic. Sam, therefore, fits to this definition for the reason of his development throughout the story, which is significant as he manages to be a crucial member of the company, a trustworthy friend, and he is elected as the Mayor of the Shire. After they successfully completed the quest, his life was changed beyond recognition and therefore applied to the definition of dynamic and round characters.

After we used the information about Tolkien collected by Humphrey Carpenter, we gathered the information we needed to understand his ambition and reasons to create the character of Sam. After some struggles with setting the tone of the story, Tolkien created a more serious story than *The Hobbit* with inspiration from Scandinavian mythologies and experiences in his life. WWI is crucial for our analysis since the cornerstone for Sam were the batmen he met during this war. The batmen allowed Tolkien to appreciate the unsung heroes of the war. He wanted to give them credit and show such qualities to other people. We can boldly say that he was successful since the unlikely heroism in Sam's character and his selflessness throughout the story raises the reputation of his character among readers and the author himself.

After finding out the inspiration behind Sam's character, it was time to advance on the analysis of the Shire and its society, where Sam and other hobbits from the company came from. We started the analysis with the family names of hobbits, which were helpful for our future understanding of the situation and relationship between hobbits in the company. Thanks to an academic paper by Hoffman (2016), we were able to see the resemblance with the area of Great Britain and especially the area of Birmingham, where Tolkien lived.

Thanks to this information, we could proceed to the analysis and compare the society and social classes in the Shire to the society in Great Britain. It helped us to understand

the clear similarity between the Shire and Victorian England. To make this information useful to Sam, we used the dialogues and texts in *The Lord of the Rings* to define the position of Gamgee's family and Sam himself in the Shire. We discovered that Sam belongs to the lower class and therefore his social status was lower than Frodo, Pippin, and Merry. We also pointed out the importance of Bilbo, who taught Sam literacy and raised his interest in poetry and Elves.

We continued to the most important part of the thesis, which is the analysis of Sam in the *LotR*, divided into three parts. The analysis was also the most challenging part, as it required the knowledge of the context as well as the information learnt during drafting the thesis and gathering sources. The author decided to do the analysis in a way, where he read the book and underlined every section that seemed to be important for future examination.

Regarding the aim of this bachelor's thesis, which was to the character of Samwise Gamgee, we can state that the aim was fulfilled. The analysis includes the trick yet the clever meaning of the title master throughout the story, together with a comparison of Sam to batmen in WWI and Aragorn.

The objective to find the inspiration behind creating Sam's character together was successful as the resemblance with English batmen during WWI is indisputable and even confirmed by Tolkien himself.

The subsequent objective regarding the statement that Sam's character is considered to be a chief hero of the story was fulfilled only partially. The author does agree that Sam's character is truly an important one and carries the elements of heroic acts. Even though the heroism of Sam differs from the heroism of typically born heroes like Aragorn, it is clear that Sam goes according to the definitions of a hero and therefore we can state that he is one of the heroes of the story. However, the author is convinced there are more heroes in the story and therefore choosing a chief one is not desirable. The qualities of Sam and Frodo combined allow the successful completion of the story and therefore the need for two heroic characters is necessary.

However, the view of the character of Sam is entirely based on the author's subjective opinion based on the information gained while writing this bachelor's thesis.

## Resumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou postavy Samvěda Křepelky v díle Pán Prstenů od J.R.R. Tolkiena. První část bakalářské práce definuje různé typy postav, se kterými se můžeme setkat v literatuře spolu s krátkým vstupem do života Tolkiena. V druhé části se získané informace využijí k pochopení a analýze postavy Samvěda. Analýza zahrnuje roli Samvěda v každé z částí Pána Prstenů a podrobně rozebírá další aspekty důležité k pochopení jeho postavy.

Cílem bakalářské práce bylo zjistit, co bylo Tolkienovou inspirací při psaní postavy Samvěda a zda se dá Samvěd považovat za hlavní postavu příběhu. Ze získaných informací o Tolkienově životě vyplývá, že inspirací pro postavu Sama byli tzv. "English Batman", které Tolkien poznal při svém působení na frontě v 1. Světové válce. Analýza přivedla autora k názoru, že i přesto, že se dá Sam považovat za hrdinu příběhu, není žádoucí označit Sama za hrdinu hlavního. K tomuto závěru přišel autor po zhodnocení role Sama v příběhu jakožto věrného společníka Froda, kdy kombinace právě těchto dvou hrdinů umožní zdárný úspěch a následné zničení Prstenu Moci. Tento pohled na postavu Samvěda je čistě subjektivní a vytvořen na základě informací získaných při psaní bakalářské práce.

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## Annotation

Jméno a příjmení	Jiří Adámek
Katedra nebo ústav	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce	doc. Mgr. Janka Kaščíková, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby	2022

Název v angličtině	The character of Samwise Gamgee in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings
Anotace práce	Bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou postavy Samvěda Křepelky v díle Pán Prstenů od J.R.R. Tolkiena. Jedním z cílů je zjistit, zda se Tolkien inspiroval při vytváření postavy Samvěda zkušenostmi v osobním životě. Práce se poté věnuje podrobné analýze Samvěda jako hrdiny příběhu a jeho důležitosti.
Klíčová slova	Samvěd Křepelka, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Pán Prstenů, hlavní hrdina, batman, Kraj, Středozem
Anotace v angličtině	This bachelor thesis deals with the analysis of the character of Samwise Gamgee in The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien. The aim is to find out whether Tolkien was inspired in creating the character of Samwise by experiences in his personal life. The thesis then undertakes a detailed analysis of Samwise as the hero of the story and his importance.
Klíčová slova v angličtině	Samwise Gamgee, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings, chief hero, batman, The Shire, Middle-earth
Přílohy vázané v práci	-
Rozsah práce	37 s.
Jazyk práce	Anglický jazyk