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Unlikely Heroes: Hobbits in J.R.R Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou diplomovou práci na téma Unlikely Heroes: Hobbits in J.R.R Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní veškerou literaturu a ostatní zdroje, které jsem použila.

V Olomouci dne 15.06.2024

Podpis ..... *Cieluda!* .....

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## Anotace

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<b>Zvolený typ práce:</b>	Bakalářská práce
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Tato bakalářská práce se věnuje analýze hobitů jako nepravděpodobných hrdinů v díle <i>Pán prstenů</i> od J.R.R. Tolkiena. Cílem práce je prozkoumat, jak Tolkien překonává tradiční pojetí hrdinství prostřednictvím postav hobitů, kteří se svou zdánlivou obyčejností a malým vzrůstem stávají klíčovými hrdiny příběhu. Práce se zaměřuje na literární analýzu textu, teoretické pozadí hrdinství a hodnotí význam hobitů v kontextu boje dobra proti zlu.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Hobiti, nepravděpodobní hrdinové, Pán prstenů, J.R.R Tolkien, literatura, hrdinství, odvaha, Frodo, Samwise, Pipin, Merry
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This bachelor's thesis examines hobbits as unlikely heroes in J.R.R. Tolkien's <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> . The thesis aims to explore how Tolkien challenges traditional notions of heroism through the characters of hobbits, who, despite their ordinary appearance and small stature, become central heroes of the epic saga. This thesis focuses on the literary analysis of the text and the theoretical background of heroism and evaluates the significance of hobbits in the battle between good and evil.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Hobbits, Unlikely Heroes, The Lord of the Rings, J.R.R Tolkien, Literature, Heroism, Courage, Frodo, Samwise, Pippin, Merry
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# 1 Introduction

The theme of unlikely heroes is a fascinating and often unexplored theme in literature, leading us to rethink what it means to be a hero. This thesis explores the theme of unlikely heroes in literature, focusing on Hobbits in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as a prime example. Despite their small size and simple lives, Hobbits become central heroes of Tolkien's epic tale, challenging our traditional views of heroism.

The first section of this thesis introduces the concept of heroism, its various definitions, and how it is presented in the literature. It analyses common types of heroes, characterised by their willingness to act or which archetype they fit into best. It provides a valuable framework for understanding how Hobbits defy traditional portrayals of heroes.

The following section of the thesis examines the concept of unlikely heroes in literature. These characters do not correspond to expected heroic ideals but play a crucial role in the development of the story. Chapter Concerning the Hobbits provides a detailed examination of their origins, historical development, and how these characters ultimately define a new form of heroism in the world of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

A significant part of this thesis is devoted to the four main Hobbit characters, in particular Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin. Their stories represent complex narratives that explore the nature of courage, friendship and resilience. The thesis attempts to explain how these minor characters become heroes in Middle-earth and what this says about heroism as a concept.

This thesis aims to answer questions regarding how Hobbits overcome their physical and social limitations to become the unexpected heroes of Middle-earth and what broader implications their journey has for understanding heroism. Through literary analysis and theoretical critique, this thesis seeks to explore the transformation of Hobbits from ordinary inhabitants of the Shire to key figures in the struggle against darkness, reflecting the more significant theme of heroism as presented by Tolkien.

Lastly, this thesis presents a comprehensive approach to examining the Hobbits as unlikely heroes, using textual evidence, critical perspectives, and cultural contexts. The aim is to enrich our understanding of Hobbits as crucial figures, although often overlooked, and contribute to the broader debate about the nature of heroism in literature and beyond.

## 2 Heroism

This chapter explores heroism, including its basic concepts and the many heroic archetypes throughout history. While heroism is often associated with incredible deeds and impressive personalities, this text aims to explore the more subtle aspects of heroism, such as the recognition of unlikely heroes. The concept of heroism has historically been used in many different perceptions. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a hero as someone who has demonstrated exceptional courage, strength or talent and is often favoured by the gods. Ancient mythologies often depicted heroes endowed with divine favour and extraordinary abilities. These legendary figures, such as Hercules and Achilles, were known for their courage and incredible triumphs. However, heroism goes beyond the realm of these legendary figures and can be seen in the ordinary actions of ordinary people who show courage, kindness, and selflessness. Although these unlikely heroes do not possess superhuman strength or divine gratitude, their acts of bravery and kindness can have a significant impact (Morgan, 2018).

J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, crafted a concept of heroism that was heavily influenced by his academic background in philology and his individual experiences, particularly those of the First World War (Kambury, 2019). His portrayal of heroes reflects the rich tradition of Anglo-Saxon literature as they confront physical challenges and complex moral dilemmas (The Medieval in Middle-earth: The Anglo-Saxon Habits of Hobbits, 2016). Aragorn is a prime illustration of Tolkien's hero. He blends physical strength and courage with profound moral integrity. Initially introduced as Strider, a mysterious rider with a mysterious past, Aragorn gradually reveals himself to be the rightful heir to the throne of Gondor (Tolkien, 2022a). His journey from a humble traveller to a respected king exemplifies a classic heroic tale that showcases physical prowess, moral fortitude, and leadership skills.

Tolkien's concept of heroism involves confronting evil and making difficult choices for the greater good, often at personal expense. Tolkien's characters embody the ideal of the royal hero who sacrifices personal happiness for the greater good. His portrayal of heroism emphasises moral values such as loyalty, honour, and courage. These virtues are exemplified in many of his characters, including Aragorn, Gandalf, and other members of the Fellowship of the Ring. In this way, Tolkien expands the traditional concept of heroism to include the importance of inner qualities and determination (Crowe, 1983, p. 5). Studying Tolkien's

perspective on heroism offers valuable insights into how literature reflects and shapes our understanding of heroes and heroism. His characters' stories depict them struggling against great odds with courage and moral strength, inspiring readers to seek heroism in their own lives. In Letter 246, Tolkien describes that true heroism is not limited to physical acts of courage but also includes moral decisions, sacrifices, and compassion that can have far-reaching effects on society and individuals (Carpenter, 1981; Letter 246). These stories remind us that true heroism lies in remarkable deeds and the everyday courage to face challenges with integrity and determination (Franco & Zimbardo, 2007).

Equally important in the context of Tolkien's conception of heroism is the mention of Hobbits, who are the ultimate example of unlikely heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*. Although an entire chapter of this thesis will be devoted to Hobbits in more detail, it is necessary to suggest how Hobbits spin the traditional concept of heroes and heroism. Tolkien shows through the story of the Hobbits that heroism is not limited to traditional attributes such as strength and courage in battle but also includes determination, loyalty, and the ability to face significant challenges despite personal fears and insecurities. Frodo and Sam's journey to Mordor, where they must face not only the external dangers but also the internal doubts and temptations of the Ring, represents the essence of Tolkien's understanding of heroism. Their courage to continue the journey against all odds demonstrates that true heroism comes from the strength of character to do the right thing, regardless of personal risk. This approach expands the concept of heroism to include the dimensions of moral courage and self-sacrifice, which are just as crucial as traditional heroic acts (Franco & Zimbardo, 2007).

The mention of Hobbits in this chapter foreshadows the more in-depth analysis in the following parts of the thesis. It demonstrates how Tolkien broadens our understanding of heroism through the stories of unlikely heroes. The characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, including the Hobbits, prove that heroism is not restricted to physically solid or powerful beings. It can emerge from unexpected individuals and places.



## 2.1 Common Heroes in Literature

Literary heroes are known for their admirable qualities and virtues, which make them the central figures in their stories. Their stories typically follow a logical structure, presenting their journey in a sequence that highlights their character development. These heroes are often defined by their bravery, resilience, and unwavering determination to face challenges and overcome obstacles. They often possess a sense of what is right or wrong and are selfless and dedicated to helping others. Typical heroes can embody various roles and archetypes, from epic champions to ordinary people who rise to extraordinary circumstances. Regardless of their traits or backgrounds, these heroes inspire readers with their bravery and embodiment of values that resonate with the human experience.

### 2.1.1 Heroes Defined by Willingness

Heroes are often characterised by their willingness to undertake selfless and virtuous actions that serve a greater purpose. Thanks to this unique quality, they differ from regular people, making them the protagonists of several stories and legends. As Joseph Campbell stated, “A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” (Joseph Campbell, Bill Moyers, 2011, p.156). Heroes, recognised for their willingness to push beyond personal limits and to make selfless sacrifices, demonstrate a universal theme that extends beyond cultures and eras. According to Joseph Campbell (2008), there are two primary categories of heroes: willing and unwilling. This distinction offers more insight into the motivations and circumstances which inspire these individuals to undertake heroic journeys.

Willing heroes are people who voluntarily set out on a heroic journey while being fully aware of the difficulties and sacrifices involved. Such people have a clear sense of purpose and are motivated by a desire to change the world. Their dedication drives them to a more significant cause rather than their desire for fame or personal gain. Frodo Baggins from Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* comes to mind when considering examples of willing heroes. Knowing the dangerous journey and the possible outcomes, he voluntarily accepts the enormous task of destroying the One Ring. He is motivated by a strong sense of duty to defend Middle Earth from the evil influence of Sauron rather than pursuing personal glory.

On the other hand, unwilling heroes are thrust into their roles without any choice or desire to be in the spotlight (Campbell, 2008). These people are frequently placed in extraordinary situations and are forced to act despite initially being reluctant to do so. Nevertheless, they rise to the occasion and become unlikely heroes. For example, in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Samwise Gamgee, Frodo's devoted companion, is an unwilling hero who eventually rises to the challenge. He encourages Frodo on his journey, helping him reach Mount Doom while fighting off the Ring's temptation. He went from being a humble gardener to becoming a hero, a perfect example of an unwilling hero in a heroic situation.

### **2.1.2 Heroes Defined by Archetypes**

Aside from the differences between willing and unwilling heroes, another intriguing aspect of heroism is the realm of archetypes. Archetypal heroes display classic traits and qualities found in stories from various cultures. These archetypes serve as universal symbols, representing fundamental aspects of the human experience. As Pearson (1998) states, anyone has the potential to be a hero. The author lists six hero archetypes: the Orphan, Wanderer, Warrior, Altruist, Innocent, and Magician. The following sections will explore these hero archetypes in more detail.

Pearson (1998) describes the Orphan archetype as a character who starts their journey feeling lost or disconnected, often lacking a clear identity. These individuals represent the universal human desire to find meaning and connection, especially in the face of difficulty. They experience a profound exploration of who they are as they struggle to overcome various obstacles. Their resiliency is tested on this journey, resulting in deep personal growth and transformation. Aragorn, a character from *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, is the ideal representation of the Orphan archetype. The fact that Aragorn is the legitimate heir to the throne of Gondor but is raised in exile gives him a sense of orphanhood as he grows up. He is living up to his ancestry, and reclaiming his identity as the future king presents challenges for him.

Villate's (2012, p. 3) examination of literary archetypes, particularly the Wanderer archetype, illuminates a character engaged in a journey of exploration, self-discovery, and the pursuit of independence. It encapsulates a profound dimension of both personal and existential significance. They seek new experiences, knowledge, and a deeper understanding

of themselves. They often face challenges and obstacles, but these experiences contribute to their personal growth. "...the hero may not only be frightened of the quest but disapprove of it, and these feelings and judgments are likely to be reinforced by those of others" (Pearson, 1998, p. 68). Frodo Baggins is a fitting example of the Wanderer archetype. He is on a perilous quest to destroy the One Ring, leaving everything behind. This decision aligns with Pearson's (1998, p. 69) statement, "Wanderers decide to leave the world of the known for the unknown." Another remarkable aspect of Wanderers embarking on their journeys, according to the author of *The Hero Within* (1998), is the ripple effect it creates, encouraging loved ones and colleagues to embark on their adventures. Some may feel threatened or even upset at first, but they will eventually face a decision to join the hero on their journey or take a different path. This dynamic is illustrated through the character of Frodo Baggins and his loyal hobbit friends.

Continuing the exploration of hero archetypes, the Warrior archetype represents bravery, strength, and unwavering dedication to a cause. Scholars and writers such as Villate (2012, p. 3) have examined the essence of the Warrior, revealing a character who embraces bravery, faces challenges with determination, and is motivated by a profound sense of duty or a noble purpose. The Warrior's journey includes physical battles and the pursuit of inner fortitude, personal growth, and justice. According to Pearson (1998), Warriors are set against external adversaries and must overcome their internal struggles and conflicts. An acceptable representation of the Warrior archetype is Legolas, the skilled elven archer from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* novel. He represents a Warrior through his unwavering commitment to the Fellowship's mission to destroy the One Ring. Legolas's battle talent, as shown by his fantastic agility and archery abilities, illustrates the Warrior's mastery in combat. He shows his dedication to their shared cause by being devoted to his friends, especially Frodo and Aragorn. Like Pearson's (1998) cautionary note about the importance of a Warrior's efforts contributing to a greater good, Legolas' actions consistently align with preserving Middle-earth and destroying the dark forces threatening it.

The next example of a hero archetype is the Altruist, who embodies generosity and compassion (Villate, 2012, p. 3). As Pearson's *The Hero Within* (1998) describes, altruists willingly make sacrifices to help others and work toward causes greater than themselves. Their main goal is to bring about positive change in the world. However, Altruists face a risk. They may become bitter and experience the negative side of this archetype if they give too much and stretch themselves too thin. As a result, Altruists must balance helping others

and paying attention to their needs and desires (Villate, 2012, p. 3). Samwise Gamgee, an authentic representation of the Altruist archetype, represents unwavering loyalty and endless compassion throughout his dangerous journey. He supports Frodo selflessly, consistently putting Frodo's needs ahead of his own. Sam's actions demonstrate the profound impact of altruism by illustrating the virtues of generosity and self-sacrifice.

According to the author of *The Hero Within* (1998), the Innocent archetype is characterised by a pure spirit, optimism, simplicity, and a firm belief in the inherent goodness of people and the world. Those who embody this archetype see life through the eyes of a child, maintaining a positive outlook, easily trusting others, and finding joy in life's simple pleasures (Villate, 2012, p. 3). They have strong moral values and a desire to improve the world, but they can be easily fooled. In stories and narratives, innocent characters face challenges threatening their innocence, symbolising the human longing for simplicity and a return to childlike wonder. The Innocent archetype, represented by characters like Merry and Pippin in *The Lord of the Rings* novel, is about having a childlike sense of wonder and purity. Despite their occasional curiosity and mischief, Merry and Pippin bring a positive and courageous outlook to their adventure, showing that even in tough times, they believe in the world's goodness.

In literature, the Magician archetype is about characters strongly associated with mysterious knowledge, transformations, and supernatural abilities (Pearson, 1998). These characters are known for their exceptional wisdom and power, and they frequently explore unknown realms to uncover hidden secrets and use forces beyond ordinary comprehension. Their journey is focused on achieving enlightenment and discovering hidden truths. However, as Villate (2012, p. 4) points out, magicians may face moral dilemmas because they must balance using their magical abilities for good or evil. A perfect example of the Magician archetype is Gandalf the Grey from J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth stories. He serves as the leader and mentor of the Fellowship of the Ring, guiding them with his magical ability and knowledge. The moral dilemmas faced by characters that fit the Magician archetype are highlighted by Gandalf's commitment to learning and his defence of Middle-earth from evil forces. His internal conflict over whether to use his abilities for the world's benefit gives him a more sympathetic quality.

## **2.2 Unlikely Heroes in Literature**

Heroes have been central figures in literature for a long time, embodying bravery, selflessness, and resilience. Particularly in modern works, authors have increasingly embraced the concept of unlikely heroes, who may not fit the conventional hero model but undergo significant transformations in their journeys, challenging and expanding our understanding of heroism (Morgan, 2018). One of the defining characteristics of these unlikely heroes is their initial reluctance to embrace the hero's role. Often thrust into challenging situations against their will, they initially display hesitation or self-doubt, which "...reduces predictability or makes success more magical" (Lieb, 2004). This unwillingness, rooted in fear, lack of confidence or a desire for an ordinary life, gradually gives way as the character discovers their inner strength and potential, embodying the idea that everyone has the potential to become a hero, regardless of initial reservations.

Unlikely heroes resonate with readers because these characters are relatable, unlike traditional heroes, whose unwavering courage can sometimes seem distant and too flawless. They reflect our imperfections and offer hope to those who may not see themselves as solid. Lieb (2004) points out that these characters face daily challenges just like ordinary people, which makes their eventual triumphs even more inspiring.

A prime example of this concept in literature is *Hobbits* in J.R.R. Tolkien's novels, particularly Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee. Portrayed as small and humble creatures living a peaceful life in the Shire, *Hobbits* embody the unlikely hero archetype in the face of great danger and adversity (Marillier, 2022). Their journey from humble beginnings to unexpected heroism challenges the belief that only those with extraordinary abilities can be true heroes. Instead, their story serves as a reminder that heroism can come from the most unexpected places, inspiring readers to recognise and celebrate the hero in all of us.

Integrating the study of *Hobbits* into the broader discussion of unlikely heroes increases our understanding of heroism. It emphasises how characters such as Frodo when thrust into an extraordinary mission, exhibit the traits of reluctance and self-doubt common to unlikely heroes and demonstrate significant personal growth.

As Marillier (2022) notes, this transformation journey underlines the idea that heroism is accessible to everyone, challenging stereotypes of being a hero and encouraging readers to find the extraordinary in their lives.

### **3 Hobbits**

Hobbits, those ordinary residents of Middle-earth, have an undeniable position in J.R.R. Tolkien's world. They first appear in *The Hobbit* and later play a significant role in *The Lord of the Rings*. Although they lack physical strength, they become a symbol of unexpected heroism, overcoming great odds with courage, creativity, and strong bonds of friendship. This section examines Hobbits, exploring their way of life, appearance, and division into subgroups. We delve into the world of Hobbits, as Tolkien masterfully depicts it in the chapter 'Concerning Hobbits' in *The Lord of the Rings*. In this chapter, Tolkien reveals the rich history, traditions, and origins of this extraordinary race, whose simple but complete lives provide historical context and how they make the story more relevant.

#### **3.1 The Origin and Historical Journey of Hobbits**

Hobbits are portrayed in Tolkien's works as a race closely related to humans, having linguistic and cultural similarities with Men. Tolkien (1996) describes Hobbits as distant relatives, much closer to humans than to elves or dwarfs, though the precise nature of their relationship with humans is unclear. Although the details of their creation or evolution are still unknown, this familial connection suggests that Hobbits may have descended from a common ancestral lineage with humans. The exact origins of Hobbits are unclear since, as Tolkien (2022a) noted, even Hobbits themselves possess limited knowledge about their early past. Their history is marked by a gradual migration from East to West Middle-earth, ending in the settlement of the Shire in the Third Age. This migration and the settling process are critical in understanding the evolution of hobbit society and its distinguishing features from other races in Middle-earth. Hobbits are categorised into three groups: Harfoots, Stoors, and Fallohides. This division highlights the differences in their preferences and characteristics that influenced their adaptation and social development in the Shire (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 4). This diversity within unity reflects Tolkien's general idea of social harmony and adaptability in the face of change.

Ultimately, Hobbits settled between the river Baranduin (later known as the Brandywine) and the Far Downs, where they founded numerous settlements and established the Shire (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 5). The founding of the Shire in 1601 of the Third Age marks

a turning point in hobbit history, embodying their values of autonomy and communal harmony. This event, granted by the King of Arnor, marks the Hobbits' transition to a settled life, with the Shire resembling an idyllic portrayal of rural England, complete with customs, governance, and a distinct calendar system (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 6). This period represents the peak of hobbit society, characterised by minimal governance, a focus on agriculture and craftsmanship, and an admiration of life's simple pleasures.

### **3.1.1 Breeds or Strains of Hobbits**

Before the migration to the West Middle-earth Hobbits were divided into three distinct breeds: Fallohides, Stoors, and Harfoots (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 4). Each group has distinct physical characteristics and socio-cultural preferences, reflecting their adaptation to different environments and lifestyles. Harfoots are the most numerous and typical hobbit population. They are characterised by more diminutive stature and darker skin, resulting from their adaptation to hilly areas (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 4). Harfoots are known for their craftsmanship and traditional way of life in burrows, indicating their close relationship with the land (Day, 2019, Chapter 4: Hobbit Heritage and History). Stoors differ from Harfoots in their more robust body build and larger limbs, which reflect their adaptation to life in flat and riverside areas (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 4). This hobbit tribe prefers areas near water, as evidenced by their agricultural and fishing skills. Stoors are also unique in their occasional ability to wear footwear and grow facial hair. Fallohides, the least numerous group, are distinguished by their lighter skin and hair and taller and slimmer build, making them the most distinct from the other Hobbits (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 4). Fallohides are known for their adventurous spirit, innovative approach, and deep connection with trees and woodland landscapes. According to Day (2019), they often hold leadership positions among Hobbits due to their courage. In the Shire, these three groups of Hobbits have gradually merged, making it difficult to distinguish them. Their lasting impact on hobbit society is evident in their adventurous nature and leadership abilities, particularly among prominent hobbit families like the Tooks or the Masters of Buckland (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 4).

## 3.2 Characteristics of Hobbits

Hobbits, these unique creatures of Middle-earth, are central to Tolkien's mythology. Although they are physically smaller than many other races in the world of Tolkien, their bravery and unwavering will show that their kindness and courage to overcome their limits are far more important than physical strength. This chapter will explore the daily lives of the Hobbits, their customs and traditions that shape their identity, and introduce readers to their physical characteristics and the social structure that divides them into different subgroups. A closer look at these aspects will help us understand how Hobbits enrich and influence Tolkien's narrative and why they are chosen to bear the burden of the world and become unlikely heroes in a story where the stakes are as high as the fate of all Middle-earth.

Hobbits are described as small, with an average height of around three and a half feet. In the words of Tolkien (1981): "For they are a little people, smaller than Dwarves: less stout and stocky, that is, even when they are not much shorter. Their height varies, ranging from two to four feet by our measurement. They seldom now reach three feet, but they have dwindled, they say, and in ancient days, they were taller." (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 1-2) This small size benefits living in landscapes rich in natural shelters and offers many opportunities for hidden living, such as hobbit burrows (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 6). The small stature also allows Hobbits to move more easily around the Shire, which has lush fields and forests suitable for them. One of the hobbits' most striking physical characteristics is their sturdy feet covered in thick hair, "...they wear no shoes because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly)" (Tolkien, 1978, p. 12). This unique adaptation allows them to walk barefoot across the varied terrain of the Shire, highlighting their connection to nature and expressing their practical and uncomplicated way of life. According to Tolkien (2022a), Hobbits are characterised by good-natured and broad faces that are more kind than beautiful. They have bright eyes and blushing cheeks, indicating their joy for life and constant readiness for laughter, food, and drink (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 2). This reflects the hobbit's approach to life, which is based on simple pleasures and enjoying everyday moments of happiness. Hobbits typically have thick, curly hair in shades of brown or black, with occasional blondes. They lack beards and only have slight fuzz on their chins, which enhances their youthful appearance and reflects their inner goodness and purity. As Tolkien (1996) points out, Hobbits have a unique cultural tradition of smoking pipe-weed using clay or wooden pipes. This practice is considered an art and



involves smoking the leaves of a plant believed to be a type of *Nicotiana* (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 8). The origins of this tradition are unknown, but it holds a special place in hobbit culture. Smoking pipe-weed is a social activity that brings Hobbits together and symbolises their leisurely lifestyle.

The social aspects of hobbit life are as important as their physical characteristics. Hobbits are recognised for their hospitality and sociable nature, a fundamental aspect of their culture. On their birthdays, Hobbits of the Shire started a tradition of giving gifts rather than receiving them. Their love of giving and receiving gifts is an expression of their generosity and friendly disposition (Hobbits, 2024). This feature of hobbit society is a crucial element that reflects their strong social bond and community.

Hobbits rely heavily on food and feasting to sustain their social and cultural lives. These examples of sharing and hospitality demonstrate the hobbits' strong sense of social cohesion. Hobbits value the quality and variety of their meals, which are prepared with fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Tolkien (2022a) states that their tables include traditional dishes such as baked potatoes, bacon, meat pies, and flavourful soups. Feasts usually celebrate significant life events, such as birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries, and serve as opportunities for joy while strengthening social bonds and fostering community spirit. Bilbo's birthday celebration demonstrates this. According to Chance (2001), social events among Hobbits reflect their values of community, hospitality, and appreciation for life's simple pleasures. These events are crucial in keeping the hobbit's identity and culture by passing on traditions and stories.

Hobbits have a distinct aversion to change and are deeply rooted in tradition, reflected in their fondness for old tales, legends, and riddles. The society of these individuals is based on natural conservatism, which places great importance on preserving traditional ways of life passed down from generation to generation. They possess a practical, common sense that allows them to find joy in the superficial aspects of existence, such as a comfortable home, plentiful food and drink, and beautifully cultivated gardens and fields (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 6). The hobbits' inclination towards simplicity demonstrates their disinterest in world events and kings' plans unless they are directly linked to their destinies.

Although Hobbits have no tradition of warfare and have never fought amongst themselves, their past was marked by a struggle for survival before settling in the Shire (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 5). The hobbit society deeply appreciates the peace and abundance they

enjoy in the Shire, rooted in their warlike history, and this historical awareness is preserved through the old weapons kept as mementoes of ancient battle times (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 5). The weapons also serve as a reminder that the peace and security enjoyed by Hobbits are not guaranteed and can be lost.

### **3.3 Hobbit Virtues and Their Role in Heroism**

Hobbits are often portrayed as unexpected heroes whose actions go beyond the boundaries of their small world and affect the fate of all Middle-earth. Their courage, loyalty, hospitality, modesty, and love of home are key to their heroism. These virtues enrich the hobbit's character and give them the means to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles.

Perhaps courage is the most apparent virtue frequently concealed by a hobbit's cunning. However, as Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee demonstrated, hobbit courage is not about extreme heroism but a quiet determination to face great evil despite personal fears (Parshall, 2014). This illustrates Tolkien's (2022a) statement about Hobbits, "soft as butter they can be, and yet sometimes as tough as old tree-roots" (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 48). Courage, born of unwavering faith and a strong sense of responsibility, allows Hobbits to make crucial decisions when Middle-earth relies on them the most.

Loyalty is a significant virtue among Hobbits, particularly in the context of friendship and devotion. The relationship between Frodo and Sam exemplifies hobbit loyalty, as their strong bond and mutual support form the foundation of their success. This loyalty demonstrated through endless support and dedication, is crucial to their ability to continue their journey (Tolkien, 1981, Letter 246).

Hospitality is another central virtue that reflects hobbits' openness and generosity towards others. This virtue manifests good manners and helps hobbits build and maintain relationships and community. Hobbits' hospitality, demonstrated by their willingness to share with others, contributes to their social cohesion and strengthens their social bonds.

Modesty is a virtue that reflects the hobbit's approach to life, where simple pleasures and peaceful existence are valued more than power or fame. According to Chance (2001), This modesty is also a source of strength, as it prevents them from being corrupted by power and allows them to focus on what is truly important.

The love of home is possibly the most essential hobbit virtue that motivates their actions to benefit all of Middle-earth. Their strong bond drives the determination of the Hobbits to protect the world from darkness to the Shire and its inhabitants. This demonstrates how even the smallest creatures can be deeply connected to the world they inhabit.

Through their unique qualities and strong bonds, the Hobbits become unexpected heroes who overcome challenges that would overwhelm even the strongest creatures of Middle-earth (Parshall, 2014). Their story demonstrates that heroism is not determined by physical size but by strength of character and the ability to remain committed in challenging times (Tolkien, 1981, Letter 131).

## 4 Significant Hobbit Heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*

In *The Lord of the Rings*, several characters, including Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin, play a crucial role in the fight against the darkness that threatens Middle-earth. Their unexpected heroism and individual journeys are central to Tolkien's epic tale and offer an insightful look into the nature of heroism. This chapter examines the heroism of Frodo Baggins, Samwise Gamgee, Meriadoc Brandybuck, and Peregrin Took, exploring their journeys. Each hobbit plays a distinct role in the story that goes beyond their modest origins in the Shire. Frodo as the Ring-bearer, Sam's unwavering loyalty, and Merry and Pippin's courage to become warriors in a world where Hobbits are frequently overlooked all demonstrate that heroism is not limited by size or strength. This analysis provides a better understanding of how the Hobbits, despite their seemingly ordinary characteristics, represent Tolkien's concept of heroism.

### 4.1 Frodo Baggins

There have been many various kinds of heroes portrayed throughout the history of literature. One would mostly come across fearless warriors or wise leaders who bring victory to their people. Many of these heroic characters, such as Achilles, Odysseus or even Aragorn (who is also from Tolkien's world of the Hobbits) often share traits common to heroes, for example physical strength, courage and strong moral compass. However, the protagonist of Tolkien's story in *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo Baggins, departs from this conventional archetype of a hero. This is evident in both his actions and thoughts, feelings and reactions to external pressures. Despite being a hobbit from the peaceful Shire, Frodo embarks on a dangerous journey to destroy the One Ring. The story reveals that Frodo's strength does not come from physical and magical abilities (as is common in other heroic stories) but rather from his courage to confront the darkness. Readers might also admire his inner strength, which allowed him to resist the temptation of the ring, and his determination to follow a seemingly impossible path. The story of Frodo illustrates that heroism can be seen in everyday acts of bravery. It demonstrates that anybody can become a hero. This concept has been further explored by Franco and Zimbardo (2007), who suggest that individuals can perform heroic acts in their everyday lives.

Frodo grew up in an idyllic part of Middle-earth called the Shire. His parents died in a tragic accident which took place on the Brandywine River. This left Frodo in the care of Bilbo Baggins, his distant relative and, afterwards, his adoptive uncle (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 29). He gave Frodo a new home full of love, care, and opportunities to learn. Bilbo became Frodo's mentor and friend. He taught Frodo about the world of Middle-earth and helped him master the Elvish language. He introduced him to stories and legends which went beyond common hobbit knowledge. What Frodo had learnt inspired his desire for adventure and also allowed him to keep his hobbit values of peace, friendship, and simple living.

However, Frodo's life changes dramatically when he inherits a mysterious ring from Bilbo, later revealed as the powerful One Ring. Gandalf, knowing that he cannot handle the Ring without consequences and also understanding that Hobbits has partial resistance against the spell, selects Frodo as a suitable keeper of the Ring. The presence of the Nazgûl, dark creatures searching for the Ring, indicates that staying in the Shire would result in disaster for Frodo. Therefore, Gandalf instructs him to take the Ring to Rivendell. This decision was a necessity, based on Gandalf's urgent advice and pressure rather than Frodo's choice. Facing this task, Frodo finds himself at a crossroads.

Of course, I have sometimes thought of going away, but I imagined that as a kind of holiday, a series of adventures like Bilbo's or better, ending in peace. But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me. And I suppose I must go alone, if I am to do that and save the Shire. But I feel very small, and very uprooted, and well-desperate. The Enemy is so strong and terrible. (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 82)

This quote reflects Frodo's inner conflict and sense of duty as he faces a difficult journey. Frodo was at first drawn to the idea of an adventure but quickly realised that his path would involve exile and likely be full of danger. His admission of feeling small and desperate against a mighty enemy underscores his vulnerability yet highlights his inner strength. This moment reveals Frodo's ability to confront unknown dangers and personal fears as he faces the inevitable decision to abandon all that he has ever known. Frodo's commitment, if necessary, to proceed alone is motivated by a moving sense of responsibility to save the Shire. It exemplifies his transition from an ordinary hobbit to a willing hero.

Campbell (2008) explores the concept of the hero's "refusal of the call", and this initial reluctance is a significant part of Frodo's story. As Morgan (2019) stated, he grapples

with the responsibility that he is given, questioning his ability to succeed. Therefore, Frodo's journey does not begin as an act of heroism in the traditional sense but rather as a response to circumstances beyond his control (Zimbardo & Isaacs, 2004, pp. 122-5).

At the Council of Elrond in Rivendell, Frodo volunteers to take the Ring to Mordor, performing a great act of heroism when he declares, "I will take the Ring," he said, "though I do not know the way" (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 352). These words demonstrate essential aspects of Frodo's character, including his acceptance of uncertainty, willingness to face the unpredictable, and ability to accept enormous responsibility. Frodo's decision is significant for multiple reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates his inner strength and ability to shoulder a heavy burden despite being aware of his limitations and the potential consequences.

Secondly, Frodo's offer expresses his profound sense of duty and commitment to the Middle-earth. Frodo's willingness to sacrifice his life to save the world from destruction sets him apart from the average hero, whose actions are often motivated by personal glory or revenge. His motivation stems from a deeper understanding of right and wrong and the need to do what is right regardless of personal cost. Additionally, Frodo's actions inspire other members of the Council, despite their fears and prejudices, to unite for a common cause. Therefore, Frodo bears the burden of the Ring and becomes the key figure, bringing together the various allies needed for its destruction.

Frodo's decision to continue alone after the Uruk-hai attack on the Anduin River is another major display of his unexpected heroism. This decision surprises many and shows that Frodo understands the gravity of the situation and is willing to take personal risks to protect the other members of the Fellowship from the danger posed by the Ring. This moment demonstrates Frodo's self-sacrifice and courage to face danger alone. His decision to continue the journey without the support and protection of the Fellowship confirms his acceptance of his fate as the Ringbearer with humility and determination.

This choice emphasises that a true hero is not someone who desires recognition or fame but rather someone who is willing to face challenges on their own, recognises their limitations, and believes in justice and the significance of sacrifice to achieve a greater good (Campbell, 2008). It demonstrates that even in the most challenging circumstances, an individual can make a decision that can potentially transform the world.

Another crucial moment in Frodo's journey is the redemption of Gollum, demonstrating his transformation from a reluctant participant to a compassionate and

understanding individual. Initially, Frodo greatly resents Gollum, but his perspective changes dramatically after hearing Gandalf's words of wisdom about the complexities of judging the fate of others.

I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 78)

Gandalf's insight highlights the potential for change, even in corrupted individuals. Frodo also becomes closer to Gollum because he knows the pain of being affected by the Ring (Tyler, 2019); this prompts Frodo to view Gollum not only as a threat but also as a being entangled with the Ring's fate. Frodo's newfound understanding is evident in his efforts to revive Gollum's resting Sméagol persona. Although Gollum ultimately betrays him, Frodo's efforts to redeem him underscore his heroic qualities of idealism and hope for redemption, even for those thought to be incurable.

Hobbit's values, especially the trust and friendship between Frodo and Sam, are essential to their ability to carry the burden of the Ring and face the challenges along the way. Frodo's willingness to accept the Ring and Sam's endless loyalty embody a relationship that overcomes even the most difficult obstacles, demonstrating that heroism lies not only in the actions of the individual but also in the strength of the community (Marillier, 2022). Tolkien's depiction of their mutual support is seen when Sam carries exhausted Frodo to Mount Doom and exclaims:

"Come, Mr. Frodo!" he cried. "I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you and it as well. So up you get! Come on, Mr. Frodo dear! Sam will give you a ride. Just tell him where to go, and he'll go." (Tolkien, 2022c, p. 1230)

This quotation gives an example of the strong connection between Frodo and Sam. Sam not only displays physical strength but also provides emotional support, emphasising their inseparable bond, which is essential for continuing their journey. This shows that heroism is not only based on individual actions but is also influenced and strengthened by collaboration.

Even though, in the end, Frodo failed to destroy the Ring by himself, his heroism remains undeniable. His true heroism is indicated by his journey to Mount Doom and also

his resistance to the spell casted by the Ring. As Tolkien (1981) points out in his letter, Frodo deserves all the glory because, in his quest to reach his destination, he has used all the will and physical strength he had. Nobody else would probably have gotten as far as him. (Tolkien, 1981, Letter 192). Frodo's story can teach us that heroism is more about having a strong will and being able to face complex challenges than just physical strength. In Tolkien's story, Frodo is an inspiring example of determination and courage. When one considers the fact that nobody expected Frodo to go as far as he did (due to his hobbit nature) his heroism becomes all that more impressive and exceptional.

Frodo's heroism is proven when he is granted special permission as a mortal to go to Valinor, an honour reserved only for elves and celestials. In this scene his sacrifice and the importance of his quest to save the Middle-earth was recognised. Therefore, when Frodo was accepted into Valinor, the land meant for final rest and healing, it was not only a reward for his heroic deeds but it was also used as an acknowledgement of the great physical and mental wounds he had suffered.

## **Summary of Frodo**

Frodo Baggins becomes an unexpected hero when he accepts a quest to destroy the One Ring. His journey underlines his strength of character, courage, ability to resist temptation, and unwavering loyalty to duty. Although Frodo is not a typical physically strong hero defeating villains with a sword, as one might know from many heroic tales, his determination and self-sacrifice inspire others to fight against the evil in their own lives. Frodo's actions of heroism throughout the story indicate the importance of inner strength and the willingness to confront seemingly impossible challenges. This makes Frodo an inspirational figure, reminding readers that anyone, regardless of size or background, can make a difference in the world.

## **4.2 Samwise Gamgee (Sam)**

An unexpectedly important role in the narrative is portrayed by Samwise Gamgee, also known as Sam. His transformation from a simple gardener to Frodo's loyal companion on the journey to Mordor reveals a remarkable transformation and depth of his character.



Although initially perceived as a supporting figure, Sam ultimately becomes the foundation for the quest's success. His loyalty, courage and firm belief in the good goes beyond conventional definitions of heroism. Sam demonstrates that true strength lies in optimistic faith in a better future and the ability to unconditionally support others, even in the darkest times.

At the story's beginning, Samwise Gamgee's life suddenly changes when Gandalf assigns him to accompany Frodo on his journey after catching him eavesdropping.

“Get up, Sam!” said Gandalf. “I have thought of something better than that. Something to shut your mouth, and punish you properly for listening. You shall go away with Mr. Frodo!” (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 84)

This marks the beginning of Sam's transformation from a humble hobbit to a crucial player in the fight against evil. Despite his lack of experience beyond the Shire, Sam embarks on a journey with unknown dangers and adventures. Throughout his journey, the character's natural loyalty and courage are tested repeatedly, yet his devotion to Frodo never falters.

The role of Sam in *The Lord of the Rings* saga is irreplaceable, as his endless support and guardianship are essential to Frodo's quest. Sam is portrayed as a companion and protector who puts Frodo's well-being before his own safety. This trait makes him exceptional, especially for a hobbit whose nature would not usually tend towards such bravery. Sam's loyalty to Frodo is evident in his actions rather than words. One notable example was his brave stance alongside Frodo when the Nazgul attacked them on Weathertop. Shanan (2021) suggests that Sam's character is elevated by his combination of loyalty, courage, and ability to act selflessly in moments of grave danger, making him an integral part of the story's development.

Several occasions in the story demonstrate Sam's devotion to Frodo. One of the most important takes place in Rivendell, where the Council of Elrond is held. After the decision is made that Frodo will carry the Ring to Mordor, Sam, who has already fulfilled his dream of meeting Elves and would be content to return home, does not hesitate and decides to continue to accompany Frodo on his dangerous journey (Shahan, 2021, p. 21).

“But you won't send him off alone surely, Master?” cried Sam, unable to contain himself any longer, and jumping up from the corner where he had been quietly sitting on the floor. “No indeed!” said Elrond, turning towards him with

a smile. “You at least shall go with him. It is hardly possible to separate you from him, even when he is summoned to a secret council and you are not.” (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 353)

This moment reveals Sam’s devotion and loyalty to Frodo. Sam’s impulsive reaction reveals his ever-present readiness to protect Frodo. Elrond’s response, confirming Sam’s crucial role in Frodo’s adventure, also acknowledges their profound bond. This moment highlights the importance of Sam to Frodo’s journey and emphasises that true heroism can arise from the most selfless of motivations. Moreover, Sam’s words, “A nice pickle we have landed ourselves in, Mr. Frodo” (Tolkien, 2022a, p.353) not only bring a light-hearted moment to a serious situation but also demonstrate Sam’s ability to stand firmly by Frodo’s side, no matter how significant or demanding the situation may be. Sam’s reaction, when he settles down after Elrond’s words, blushing and mumbling, reflects his humility and adaptability to the situation.

Sam’s determination to protect Frodo, regardless of personal risk, reached a critical point after the attack of Uruk-hai on the shore of the Anduin River. Despite being unable to swim, Sam jumped into the water to prevent Frodo from continuing his journey to Mordor alone. This act represents the ultimate embodiment of the themes of sacrifice and friendship that are the cornerstones of Tolkien’s entire story. This event serves as a reminder that true heroism is measured by a willingness to face one’s fears and overcome them for the greater good (Parshall, 2014). It also strengthens the bond between Sam and Frodo even more.

Samwise Gamgee demonstrates his courage through his absolute honesty with Frodo Baggins (Cimarusti, 2023). He confronts Frodo about the corrupting influence of the Ring, even when it risks their friendship. His loyalty even extends to offering to bear the Ring, a proof of his selflessness. Tolkien possibly demonstrates through this situation that true friends are unafraid to express challenging truths, even if they may lead to conflict, because they come from a concern for the other person’s wellbeing.

During his encounter with the giant spider Shelob, Sam displayed immense courage and determination to protect Frodo. This act of heroism is particularly notable in the context of the Hobbit world, which is characterised by its peaceful and tranquil nature. Sam fights bravely, even though he is armed only with a small sword and the Phial of Galadriel. His ability to wound Shelob while distracting her from Frodo demonstrates his fighting abilities and solid spirit. This act represents Sam overcoming his fears and risking everything to save

his friend. When Sam finds Frodo unconscious, believing him to be dead, Sam makes a choice that defines the very essence of his character. Sam makes the critical decision to take the Ring and attempt to complete the quest alone. This situation demonstrates Sam's profound loyalty to Frodo and his steadfast determination and ability to bear the burden of the Ring and continue Frodo's mission, even at his own expense. This moment exemplifies Sam's heroism and willingness to persevere on his treacherous journey even when success appears impossible.

Sam's perspective shifted dramatically after learning from the orcs that Frodo was not dead but only unconscious due to Shelob's venom. He gained renewed hope and resolved to rescue Frodo from their enemies, once again proving his loyalty to his friend. This event shows Sam's strong belief in friendship and commitment to their shared mission, motivating him to risk rescuing Frodo from the orc tower. Once he successfully revived Frodo, Sam selflessly returned the Ring to its rightful owner without wanting to keep it for himself. This shows Sam's good heart and that he does not want power for himself, making Sam's moral integrity and resilience against the corrupting power of the Ring obvious (Shahan, 2021, p. 22). He wants to help Frodo and make sure they finish their mission together.

As previously mentioned in the description of Frodo's character, the ultimate display of loyalty, friendship, and selflessness is the scene in which Samwise Gamgee carries Frodo Baggins on his back to Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring together. The statement where Sam declares that he cannot bear the Ring for Frodo but can bear Frodo himself (Tolkien, 2022c, p. 1230) embodies a critical element of Tolkien's concept of heroism. According to Shanan (2021), the significance of this scene is enhanced by the acknowledgement that Sam has metaphorically carried Frodo throughout their journey. He has been a constant source of hope, strength, and encouragement, helping Frodo bear the psychological torture caused by the Ring. Therefore, physically carrying Frodo up Mount Doom is, for Sam, a natural way to show his allegiance, setting his role as the emotional support which Frodo can rely on. Considering Sam's deeds during his journey, his character is the epitome of unexpected heroism. His commitment to Frodo, willingness to risk his own life, and decision to continue the quest when all hope seemed lost are all testaments to his exceptional character. His heroic nature is evident not only in moments of direct danger but also in his daily actions and devotion to his master. According to Shanan (2021), Sam's heroism is unique in that he is not motivated by inner need or fate but rather by his genuine service and loyalty.

Tolkien (1981) recalls Sam in his letter, “He did not think of himself as heroic or even brave, or in any way admirable – except in his service and loyalty to his master” (Tolkien, 1981, Letter 246). This line provides the key to understanding why Sam Gamgee is an extraordinary example of heroism in *The Lord of the Rings*. His humility and refusal to see himself as a hero underline that true heroism lies not in proud deeds or personal recognition but in steady dedication and willingness to sacrifice for the good of others.

Sam has returned to a simple life in the Shire after his heroic exploits, revealing his character and Hobbit nature. His rejection of fame and desire for an idyllic life and family and tending his garden emphasise that true heroism lies not in seeking recognition but in living by values such as love, loyalty, and sacrifice. His story symbolises hope and inspiration, demonstrating that happiness can be found in simplicity even after facing the darkest challenges.

## **Summary of Sam**

Although not a traditional hero, Sam is characterised by his exceptional ability to care for and protect Frodo, which is crucial to the success of their mission. His journey from a simple gardener in the Shire to a key figure in the war against Sauron highlights his incredible resilience, devotion, and bravery. The character’s development throughout the story reveals the power of loyalty and friendship over personal ambitions, making him an inspirational figure who reminds readers that true heroism can come from the most unexpected places.

### **4.3 Meriadoc Brandybuck (Merry)**

Meriadoc Brandybuck, who is commonly known as Merry, is introduced in the beginning as a cheerful hobbit from the Shire. During the dangerous journey with the Ring, Merry’s courage and intelligence became an essential part of the story. Merry is perceptive and loyal to his closest friends, which makes him one of the key figures in the narrative. Throughout his journey, Merry undergoes great growth and development. In the beginning of the story, Merry is depicted as a hobbit who fully enjoys his life and the good food in the Shire. Later on, though, he is facing life-changing decisions and participating in major

battles. Merry's interactions with Pippin often provide light-hearted moments in otherwise dark times. However, their relationship also serves as a source of strength for them both because Merry is consistently providing support for Pippin. This gives his character another, more mature and competent layer, which may not be apparent at first glance.

Merry joined the quest because he was genuinely concerned for his friend and cousin Frodo. This concern led Merry to form a group known as the 'Conspirators'. Their task was to make sure that Frodo would not leave the Shire alone and unprepared. This not only showed Merry's personal concern and care but also demonstrated his ability to think and plan strategically, which is not a common trait among hobbits. Merry prepared everything they needed for their dangerous journey, which revealed his helpful foresight. He also took on a leadership role during their passage through the Old Forest. This revealed his leadership skills, which proved to be critical to the mission's success.

As they made progress on their journey, Merry's devotion and loyalty to Frodo only grew stronger. His deep commitment to his friends is an important aspect of his character. He goes back to his promise, which he made back in the small house in Buckland, to stand by Frodo at all costs.

You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin-to the bitter end.  
And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours-closer than you keep it yourself.  
But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word.  
We are your friends, Frodo. [...] We are horribly afraid-but we are coming with you; or following you like hounds. (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 138)

These words reveal not only his bravery but also his ability to remain faithful to his words. According to Fontenot (2020b), he is committed to upholding his friendship with Frodo, even if it endangers his own life. He fulfils his role in the mission to the best of his ability. Merry's promise is more than just words to him; it becomes the basis of his actions throughout the story. Even when Merry and Pippin find themselves in unfamiliar and dangerous situations, such as being captured by the Uruk-hai or encountering Ent Treebeard in the Fangorn Forest, Merry never forgets his promise (Fontenot, 2020b).

The Uruk-hai attack represents a critical moment that brought several unexpected challenges to Merry's journey. This attack was a turning point for the Fellowship of the Ring as it divided them and led to the capture of Merry and Pippin. After their escape, which required not only luck but also courage and quick decision-making, they found themselves

in the unfamiliar Fangorn Forest. This series of events strengthened their courage and prepared them to encounter the Ent Treebeard. Merry informed the previously passive Ents about Saruman's betrayal, prompting them to attack Isengard. Merry played a vital role in changing the course of the war by influencing important events, as demonstrated by the Ents' decision to intervene against Isengard.

Merry's most heroic act appears during the Battle of Pelennor Fields, where he and Éowyn confront the Black King of Angmar. Despite King Théoden's orders to stay safe, Merry chose to engage in battle at the Pelennor Fields. Théoden formally dismissed Merry from service but not from friendship. Merry was confused by this and appealed to Théoden, declaring that he would be ashamed to stay behind: "It is a long way to run; but run I shall, if I cannot ride, even if I wear my feet off and arrive weeks too late." (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 1049) According to Fontenot (2020b), his words signify loyalty and determination. They show his desperation to be taken seriously and be allowed to fight just as the men surrounding him did. Although he is initially not expected to play any part in the fight against the Witch King, he eventually proves to be a very important figure. He stabbed the Witch King in the knee with a dagger from Westeros, which gave Éowyn a chance to finish the fight and kill him. Thanks to Merry's involvement, Éowyn was saved, and Merry's significant impact on the conflict, even though he was severely injured due to it, was revealed.

In the final part of Merry Brandybuck's story, readers learn that he was unable to take part in the battle at the Black Gate because he was still recovering from the serious injuries he sustained in the battle of Pelennor Fields. However, his bravery and sacrifice did not lose any importance. After he had made his recovery, he returned with the other hobbits to the Shire. There, they had to face another challenge – the Shire was occupied by ruffians under Saruman's command. Merry immediately accepted the role of a leader in the fight to defend his home. He managed to kill the leader of the ruffians, who seemed to be an orc. This act was crucial in liberating the Shire as well as its restoration, which followed. This critical moment confirms Merry's courage and determination to protect his friends and his home.

Later, Merry became known as Meriadoc the Magnificent, a name which reflected his contributions in the war and also the significant role he had played in it. His name became a synonym for bravery, wisdom and strong will.

The final significant part of Merry's story occurred when he was buried alongside Pippin in Gondor. This was a great honour for a hobbit like him. This shows the recognition and respect he had earned.

## **Summary of Merry**

Merry's journey is full of bravery and strategic thinking, which in itself contains the message of the story – heroism can appear in many forms. The list of Merry's contributions, which span from his crucial role in the Battle of Pelennor Fields to his leadership in the Scouring of the Shire, gives us an example of how individuals (even seemingly unimportant and small ones) can unexpectedly influence the course of history. Merry's story celebrates loyalty, intelligence, and support among friends.

## **4.4 Peregrin Took (Pippin)**

Another significant character is Peregrin Took, commonly known as Pippin. Pippin is a young hobbit also from the peaceful Shire. At the beginning of the book, he is described as someone full of youthful curiosity and a love for food and tobacco. Initially, Pippin's character and interests seem to contradict how heroes in literature are traditionally portrayed. Nevertheless, in the end, he proves that real heroism is not a privilege which is reserved only for physically strong people or other creatures. Pippin's journey, in which he started as an average hobbit in the Shire and later became a Gondorian knight, demonstrates that heroism can originate from unexpected places. It also shows that greatness and noble acts can be virtues of anyone, regardless of their background.

It is evident from the beginning of the story that Pippin is a very loyal friend. He is prepared to be brave and face the unknown. Even though Pippin is young and inexperienced, which can occasionally put him and his companions in danger, he is willing to learn and adapt. His interactions with the other members of the Fellowship play a significant role in the development of his character. Another crucial part of his growth was Gandalf's guidance and bond with Merry. Pippin has an irreplaceable role in the story thanks to his impulsivity, optimism and even his occasional missteps, which are all part of his unique charm.

Pippins' decision to accompany Frodo on his dangerous journey to Rivendell can be considered as his first significant display of heroism. This moment is necessary to understand Pippin's character and development properly.

“You do not understand!” said Pippin. “You must go – and therefore we must, too. Merry and I are coming with you. Sam is an excellent fellow, and would jump down a dragon's throat to save you, if he did not trip over his own feet; but you will need more than one companion in your dangerous adventure.” (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 136)

This statement reveals several essential aspects of Pippin's character and his approach to life. Above all, it shows his unwavering loyalty to his friends and his willingness to face the unknown and danger alongside them. Although he is often seen as young and sometimes impulsive, Pippin displays a deeper layer of maturity and self-sacrifice. His determination to accompany Frodo is not a brief momentary emotion but a commitment he intends to fulfil, even if it means putting himself at personal risk.

At the beginning of their journey out of the Shire, Pippin, along with Frodo, Sam and Merry, faces many challenges that reveal his courage and quick adaptation to new situations. One key moment occurs when the group encounters the Ringwraiths. Although they do not engage in direct combat with the Nazgûl, the tension and danger that these dark figures present require Pippin and his companions to remain constantly cautious and determined to continue their journey despite their fears. This period is significant in the development of Pippin and his friends as they learn to rely on each other and face the unknown with courage, indicating their future actions.

In Rivendell, despite Elrond's strong opposition, Pippin insists on continuing with Frodo. His devotion is further demonstrated when he fears he will be excluded from Frodo's next journey. Pippin humorously but seriously declares, “We hobbits ought to stick together, and we will. I shall go, unless they chain me up. There must be someone with intelligence in the party” (Tolkien, 2022a, p. 354). This statement shows his commitment to assisting his friends while conveying a sense of humour and loyalty. As Sackton (2021) suggested, Pippin remains faithful and determined to help his friends, even when he may not fully comprehend the danger.

The scene in which Pippin manages to leave a trail for his rescuers after he had been captured by the Uruk-hai is a notable example of his quick and clever thinking. It is an



important scene in which he fits perfectly into the characteristics of ‘unlikely heroes’, as Lieb (2004) discussed. He demonstrates his ability to think on his feet in a moment of crisis. His encounter with the Ents in Fangorn Forest is another significant moment in his character arc. He and Merry witness and partially initiate the Ents’ decision to fight Saruman, which is a turning point not only for them but also for the course of the War of the Ring. This event shows Pippin that seemingly minor characters can have a great impact.

Pippin’s curiosity and recklessness are character traits that are crucial to his upcoming development. The scene in which he accidentally awoken Palantír, which later leads to a critical strategic decision in the battle against Sauron, is a great example of this. This moment not only highlights Pippin’s impulsiveness and curiosity but also shows how even unintentional actions can significantly impact future events and how one mistake can lead to a good outcome.

There are more important moments in Pippin’s character growth. One is his pledge of allegiance to Denethor, who is the Steward of Gondor, and his participation in the defence of Minas Tirith.

This evolution highlights Pippin’s maturity, bravery, and readiness to face challenges, reflecting the journey of a hero as was described by Pearson (1998). It also corresponds with Franco’s and Zimbardo’s (2007) debate on the ‘banality of heroism’. The authors claim that individuals engage in acts of extraordinary courage, which confirms the potential to become a hero for every character.

The actual heroic act of Pippin is revealed when Denethor is driven to despair and decides to burn himself and his son Faramir. Pippin acts swiftly and decisively, despite his inexperience, and seeks Galdalf’s help. He intervened and thwarted Denethor’s plans, which saved Faramir from curtained death. This reveals Pippin’s understanding of the value of life and the importance of acting when necessary.

After saving Faramir, Pippin’s journey continued at the Black Gate, where he stood with the forces of Middle-earth. According to Megan N. Fontenot (2020a), Pippin’s determination never wavered, even though he had to face overwhelming darkness and seemingly impossible obstacles. During the climactic moment of the battle, his bravery truly shined through. He killed the Troll chieftain and saved Beregond’s life. This act nearly cost him his own life. Pippin not only saved the lives of others but also demonstrated his ability

to learn from his previous mistakes and grow. His willingness to fight for his friends without hesitation proves his continued determination to protect those he cares about.

The final chapter in Pippin's heroic story is when he returns to the Shire after the war. After Saruman's dark influence had been uncovered, Pippin along with his friends Merry, Sam and Frodo, accepts the challenge to free their home from its occupants. In this battle, Pippin's bravery and tactical thinking were apparent and illustrated how much his character had evolved since the beginning of the story.

Due to his heroic deeds, he was honoured and buried in Gondor alongside the great kings of Gondor, next to Aragorn, just like Merry.

## **Summary of Pippin**

Peregrin Took is revealed as an unlikely hero whose journey surprises readers with its depth of transformation. Starting as a reckless hobbit who initially made errors that put others in danger to a warrior who played an essential part in the downfall of Sauron. This highlights not only his unexpected development but also the importance of personal growth. Pippin's involvement exceeds the original expectations. His actions put importance on themes of friendship and bravery and demonstrate that a person's greatness is not determined by their origin but by their choices in critical moments.

## 5 Conclusion

This bachelor thesis dealt with the theme of unlikely heroes in the literary work of J.R.R Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, and it focused mainly on Hobbit characters. This thesis aimed to describe why Hobbits are considered to be unlikely heroes and what influence they had on the narrative.

The first part of this thesis covered the key concepts of heroism. It provided a literary analysis of various hero archetypes and allowed for a deeper understanding of the specific role of Hobbits as unlikely heroes. The next part examined the characteristics of the race of Hobbits, including their origin and social structure, revealing how it had influenced and formed their unique approach to heroism.

The second part of this thesis conducted a detailed literary analysis of the four main hobbit characters – Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin. This analysis showed how individual characters overcome external and internal challenges and how their actions and decisions contribute to overall plot development. Frodo Baggins, the Ring-bearer, had demonstrated incredible strength and determination to continue the journey despite the incredible amount of personal agony. He was among the few who could resist the temptation of the Ring, and the fact that he remained dedicated to continuing the journey makes him a real hero.

Frodo's closest companion, Sam Gamgee, stood out thanks to his loyalty and concern for Frodo. He was willing to risk his own safety in order to save his friend and complete the mission, thus exemplifying a deep sense of responsibility and altruism that goes beyond typical heroic acts.

In the early stages of the story, Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrin Took might seem less prominent, however, they ultimately display their heroic qualities during critical moments. Both Merry's decisive strike against the Witch King on the Pelennor Fields and Pippin's defence of Minas Tirith demonstrated that even the smallest characters can have a significant impact on the course of events.

In spite of the Hobbit's seemingly unheroic image at the beginning of the narrative, they play an important part in saving Middle-earth and, therefore, deserve their place among heroes. This thesis has proven that heroism is far more complex and diverse than it may first appear and that true heroes can emerge from the most unexpected places. Through Frodo's, Sam's, Merry's, and Pippin's stories, Tolkien broadens our knowledge of heroism. He also

reminds us that everyone has the potential to become a hero, regardless of their background or previous experiences. In conclusion, in the world of fantasy, Hobbit's can be considered as double symbols. They represent a specific type of fantasy creature as well as a symbol of courage and a strong-willed spirit, which can serve as a model for all humanity.

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