

British Literature Summer Reading Assignment

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

“Adventures are not all pony rides and May sunshine.”

“In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit...” Little did famed author, J.R.R. Tolkien know that these words would launch not only a beloved novel, but a series of novels that would enchant readers for decades. Beyond his novels, many readers do not know that Tolkien was a professor of Anglo Saxon, and borrowed his ideas heavily from the writings of that time period, such as *Beowulf*- our first major reading of the school year. Your journey into British Literature will begin with the time period that Tolkien loved: Anglo Saxon. Then, we will work our way into the heroics of the Medieval era, the drama of the Renaissance, the intellectual questioning of the Age of Reason, and the revolution of Romanticism. We will end the year with the Gothic and Dystopian novels.

I have two challenges for you:

First, I challenge you to read this novel in hard copy. Tolkien's sweeping nature imagery is a perfect companion to a breezy summer day in the shade, not on a computer screen, cooped up inside. On top of this, science has concluded that benefits of reading on paper far outweigh screen reading. This book becomes a keepsake for many readers.

Second, I challenge you to actually read this novel. Sure, there are movies and Sparknotes, but neither of those mediums give you the experience that Tolkien intended: the challenge and joy of reading his work. I give a challenge to all of my students: will you be a person who earns your grades, or someone who “gets” grades through lies? Plain and simple. When you apply to college, can you say that you earned every percentage of your grade point? When you score your first big job with your college degree, can you truly say that you did all of the work necessary to get there? This is a decision that I made as a high schooler, and I lay this challenge out for my own students.

The assignment:

You are to become the character Bilbo Baggins. In first person perspective, keep a diary of Bilbo’s thoughts as he travels with his dwarf companions. You will make nine entries in Bilbo’s journal:

Entries:

Chapter 1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
11-12	13-15**	16-17	18-19	

** (Chapter 14 does not include Bilbo, but you may want to mention the important events that happen.)

How long are the entries? As an upperclassman, I do not put word limits on my students. Gone are the days of “four sentences make a paragraph.” I want you to write, write well, and write thoroughly. Your grade will be based on how well you do this.

Format? These diary entries may be handwritten or typed. Your finished product should look like a diary. You may purchase a diary for this purpose, or, you may fashion one and decorate it to look like a diary. In the past, I have had students tea-dye paper, burn edges, run their pages through mud, draw sketches and doodles, insert keepsakes from the journey- you can be as creative (or not) as you wish!

What skills am I assessing? I am looking to see if you can:

- Identify what first person narration is and write in first person.
- Show character development through creative writing.
- Recognize how the author creates a unique “voice” for his character, Bilbo, and recreate that voice in your own creative writing.
- Identify the most important plot points of a fiction text.
- Write about the plot of a book beyond a simple summary.
- Write with correct grammar and syntax.

Rubric:

<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there at least nine journal-style entries, as outlined above? ● Is each entry written from the perspective of the protagonist, Bilbo Baggins? Do the entries show comprehension of the text and accurately depict what happened in each set of chapters? ● I am not looking for a summary of the chapter. You may focus on one or two things that happened to Bilbo if you wish. <p>Writing and Grammar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This assignment is meant to be a diagnostic for student writing. Small errors will not be marked down. Major errors and lack of proofreading will result in a loss of points. 	<p style="text-align: right;">_____/90 (10 points each)</p>
<p>Is your diary creatively presented?</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These diary entries may be handwritten or typed. Your finished product should look like a diary. You may purchase a diary for this purpose, or, you may fashion one and decorate it to look like a diary. 	<p>_____ /10</p>
<p>Project total:</p>	<p>_____ /100</p>

COVID-19 Note: *Your assignment is due on our first day of class.* We will not begin the year going over *The Hobbit*, as we want to make the most of our time together in the face of COVID-19. However, you will be using *The Hobbit* in one of our first essays. It is vital that you not only read, but read to understand. I encourage you to annotate for this purpose, but you will not be graded for annotation.

Projects are to be submitted on the first day of class. This will be the first grade entered for the first quarter. All projects will receive 10% off for each day late. Please contact me at gloriann.curley@plymouthchristian.org before the due date if any issues arise. I am always willing to help my students, even during the summer!

I look forward to having you as a part of my classroom!
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