

Chapter I

Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I will explain the reasons why I choose J.R.R Tolkien, his novel, and also the topics of the study. Besides, I will also mention the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology, and the organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

The Hobbit, a novel written by J.R.R Tolkien, introduces an unforgettable hero – the hobbit Bilbo Baggins – caught up in a war of mythic proportions in Middle-earth, a world full of magic and lore. Most of all, *The Hobbit* celebrates the power of loyal friendship and individual courage, “a power that may hold at bay even the most devastating forces of darkness” (<http://www.lordofthering.net>).

There are several reasons why I choose Tolkien. Firstly, it is because of his language capability. Tolkien was awarded an honorary doctorate in philology, the science of the development of language in 1972 (Shippey, 2000, p.20). The decision to honour him with the prestigious award was very appropriate. As a child, Tolkien had invented languages. Tolkien and his friends began with “Animalic”; a language based on English. Soon Tolkien concocted “Naffarin” that has its own system of sounds and grammar, thus serving as a precursor to the Elvish tongues that he would later devise (Carpenter, 1997, p.4).

Tolkien was able to speak Latin, Greek and French fluently. Mabel Suffield Tolkien, his mother, was a remarkable woman that was skilled in penmanship and languages, having command of Latin, Greek and French. Therefore, The King Edward’s School, a public school where Tolkien was educated once, could no longer challenge him. Greek and Latin were the backbone of the King Edward’s curriculum; yet Tolkien could read and speak both languages fluently. By the time Tolkien finished this public school, during a debate he spoke entirely in Greek. At

the end of Tolkien's final year at King Edward's, he and his classmates performed a Greek play in the original tongue and he sang the national anthem "God save the King" in Greek. Having already mastered Greek and Latin in the public school, Tolkien became bored with those languages at Oxford, and he preferred his independent labours in Germanic language. Later in life, Tolkien would break forth in fluent Gothic or Anglo-Saxon. Tolkien was passionate about Anglo-Saxon and gifted at bringing his subject alive (Carpenter, 1980, p.7).

Tolkien's high regard for ancient languages also gave him a high regard for ancient poetry. Tolkien much preferred Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poems like *Beowulf*, *The Pearl*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the last of which Tolkien translated into a much-admired Modern English version. Tolkien was also privileged to be chosen as the researcher for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the century long compilation of the history of every English word (Carpenter, 1997, p.12).

Secondly, I choose Tolkien because his works are considered to be "adult" children books. The young Tolkien did not enjoy the traditional children books such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Treasure Island*, or other stories by Hans Christian Andersen. Tolkien was moved by George MacDonald's *Crudie books*. These books were set in remote kingdoms where malevolent goblins lurked beneath mountains. Tolkien the boy also found his chief delight in *The Red Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang. The book contains the best story Tolkien had ever read, the tale of Sigurd, the warrior who slew the dragon Fafnir. *The Red Fairy* is also a story set in the far-off and nameless North—a region at once the richest and most beautiful but the most perilous Tolkien had ever encountered. The fierce and dark beauty of Northern, the violent world of Scandinavian myth and saga would always be more attractive to Tolkien (Carpenter, 1977, p.7). Therefore, in 1937, Tolkien wrote one of the most famous openings in children's literature: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole...it was a hobbit hole, and that means comfort" (Tolkien, 1999, p.3), on a blank sheet while making examination papers! *The Hobbit* is a simple children's story about a small person who takes part in a great adventure; "the novel's playful tone and imaginary made it a hit with both

children and adults” (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/hobbit/context.html>). All in one, *The Hobbit* is an example of the “adults” children’s book: male, rural, with a “circular narrative and a secure ending” (Shippey, 2000, p.45)

Thirdly, I choose Tolkien because he was also a respected person who had a deep knowledge of Middle Earth. Tolkien was so passionate with his subject of Middle Earth. W.H Auden said that Tolkien “could turn a lecture room into a mead hall in which he was the bard and the listeners were the feasting, listening guests” (Carpenter, 1977, p.10). In brief, Middle Earth, the world in which the events of *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* take place, is as real and complex as our own. Events, geography, and names were created with care and loving attention by Tolkien, who wanted every single detail of his books to fit into their total pattern.

Tolkien is best known for his books, *The Hobbit*, the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*. All of the books are enjoyable and a recent poll of British readers revealed Tolkien’s books to be their “overwhelming choice as the all time favourite of British books” (Shippey, 2000, p.6). In 1957, Tolkien was awarded International Fantasy Award for *The Lord of the Rings* (Hardy, 1977, p.29). In 1974 he was awarded Grandmaster of Fantasy Award. In 1978 he was awarded “Ditmar” for *The Silmarillion* and in 1981 he was awarded “Balrog” for his work *The Unfinished Tales*. Tolkien’s books became something of a cult work during the 1960’s, and it has continued until nearly forty years later. Some readers have confessed that making their way through all 1500 pages of *The Hobbit* and the trilogy of *The Lord of the Ring* is “their greatest intellectual achievement” (<http://www.tolkien.co.uk>).

The book written by Tolkien that I choose for my thesis is *The Hobbit*. The first reason why I choose *The Hobbit* is because of its popularity. *The Hobbit* has been translated into over 24 languages and it had won the New York Herald tribune prize for children’s literature (<http://www.tolkien.co.uk>). *The Hobbit* contains a larger world than the story of Bilbo and his quest for treasure. Written in 1937, *The Hobbit* is one of the stories Tolkien wrote for his children that grew into book length. An adventure began to unfold in Tolkien’s mind and was written

down as a serial to be read to his three sons on winter evenings after tea. This was the first telling of the story the readers know as *The Hobbit*.

The main character is Mr. Bilbo Baggins, a very well-to-do hobbit who resides at Bag End, a comfortable hobbit-hole on the Hill, in Hobbiton, in the Shire, and who, like most self-respecting hobbits, will not normally have got himself involved in anything as disturbing and uncomfortable as an adventure. However, an adventure—in the form of Gandalf the wizard and thirteen dwarves—turns up on his very doorstep. As a result, Bilbo sets out on a dangerous quest for some treasure, journeying through a land of wondrous places peopled with strange, fabulous and terrifying beings. On the way he finds a magic ring that gives the wearer the power of invisibility.

The Hobbit became a surprise best seller when it was published. *The Times* reviewed that the book is a “flawless masterpiece, and one of the most influential book of our generation”. The publisher, Stanley Unwin, demanded more fictions from Tolkien. Eagerly he gave the publisher his huge and still developing manuscript, *The Silmarillion*. However, readers demanded more hobbits! Within three months, Tolkien began writing a sequel. While the first book opens with a chapter called “An Unexpected party,” the new story began with the chapter entitled “A Long-Expected Party,” in which Bilbo uses his magic ring to disappear at the celebration of his “eleventy-first” birthday. Tolkien introduced a new hobbit, Frodo Baggins, as the centre of the story in the trilogy of *The Lord of the Ring* (Wood, 1997). It took Tolkien twelve years to write the story of Bilbo’s nephew Frodo and his perilous journey to the shadow-filled Land of Mordor, in order to destroy the One Ring and with it, the power of Sauron.

A major source of inspiration for *The Hobbit's* plot was the body of ancient epic literature that Tolkien studied, particularly Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon epics like *Beowulf*. Innumerable elements of the story originated from that literature, including the form of the heroic quest, the dragon's treasure hoard, the importance of named swords, the elves' mysterious magic, and the grim focus on birthright and family lineage. Since *The Hobbit* takes place in a world of the author's own creation—complete with its own history, language, geography, and

mythology—much of the narrative is devoted to incidental descriptions of the places, people, and things that Bilbo encounters. As a result, Middle-Earth emerges as a finely detailed reality with a convincing visual presence and its own unique atmosphere. Taking the reader through this world is one of the primary considerations of the novel, and a great part of Tolkien's literary ingenuity is devoted to making Middle-Earth seem as real as possible. For many readers, experiencing Middle-Earth is probably the most striking aspect of reading *The Hobbit*. (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/hobbit/themes.html/>)

The second reason why I choose *The Hobbit* is that it is a story about a thief. As far as I know, the word “thief” always has a negative connotation. The definition of a thief itself is a person who steals, especially secretly and without violence (Hornby, A.S, 1995, p.1239). Moreover, to “steal” based on *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1995), means to take something that belongs to another person without permission or legal right and usually secretly. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo is considered as a “kind” thief who helps to steal back the Dwarves' treasure. *The Hobbit* opens with the description of Bilbo Baggins. Bilbo has lived in his hobbit-hole for a long time and he enjoys his life very much. He never imagines leaving his hobbit-hole and going for an adventure. However, Gandalf, the wizards and the Dwarves with their tricks have made Bilbo go with them to the Lonely Mountain where the treasure of Thorin's ancestor, which is stolen by Smaug—an immense dragon, lies. According to their plan, they will go to the mountain, kill the dragon, and take their treasure back (<http://www.hobbitsite.com>). To retrieve the treasure, they need Bilbo's expertise as a thief.

The topic of my analysis is the roles of Bilbo Baggins. The reason why I choose this topic is because roles are very important in life. A person has many different roles in life. To achieve his goal, one has to realise the roles to do something. In *The Hobbit*, the goal of the journey is the treasure that has been stolen by Smaug. The treasure itself, which consists of gold and other precious stones, belongs to Thorin's grandfather, Thrain the Old. He is very rich and becomes the King under the Mountain. Smaug the Dragon, killing almost all of

the Dwarves, steals the gold and jewels. The Dwarves, who are lucky enough to escape, go away and have to earn their livings as blacksmiths or coalminers (Tolkien, p.24). However, the Dwarves never forget their stolen treasure, and now, when they have a good living, they want the treasure back. The Dwarves have a map that shows a private Sidedoor, known only by the Dwarves and they also have the secret key. Gandalf, the wise wizard who is asked to accompany the Dwarves during the journey, chooses Bilbo Baggins, the burglar. Although Bilbo never has any experience as a thief, Gandalf believes that Bilbo can turn up into one when the time comes (Tolkien, p.19). The ones closely related with the treasure are the Dwarves; Bilbo is just an outsider. However, without Bilbo, the goal will never be achieved. Bilbo does everything in order to help the Dwarves; he leaves his hobbit hole, his comfortable life and even endangers his soul. Bilbo even gives up his share of the treasure to Bard and the Elves to avoid the war between Men, Elves, and Dwarves. In the journey, Bilbo is also helpful and he never asks for rewards from the Dwarves. He returns to his home in the Shire with only a small chest of gold and one of silver as the Dwarves' thank-you gifts for the roles that Bilbo has done during the journey (Hardy, 1977,n.p).

I find out that in their journey Bilbo has many other roles besides as a thief. Bilbo's roles are so crucial in order to help the Dwarves that without Bilbo's companion the goal to win back the treasure will never be achieved. Bilbo's characters also develops while he is on the journey. Hence, I am interested to analyze Bilbo's roles in *The Hobbit*.

1.2 Statement of the problem

I am curious to know Bilbo's roles in the quest for the treasure and how by applying his roles he manages to help the Dwarves win back their treasure.

1.3 Purpose of the study

In this thesis I want to prove that Bilbo Baggins plays important roles that bring about great advantages in helping the Dwarves win back their stolen treasure.

1.4 Significance of the study

I hope this thesis will arouse the readers' interest to study other works by Tolkien besides *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. There are more works of Tolkien either concerning the fantastical stories of Middle-Earth or other legends apart from Middle-Earth, which are not yet discussed. I hope that the readers of this thesis may gain broader understanding of Tolkien, of his life and his works, and be encouraged to discuss about Tolkien's other works.

Furthermore, I would like to share with the readers the lesson I have obtained through analysing the roles of Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*. I hope the readers will understand that, in every role a person holds in life, there will always be conflicts that storm-in to test that person's quality and determination in carrying out his/her role. One's endurance, patience and determination will help him/her to solve the conflicts and lead him/her toward the refinement of his/her character.

1.5 Scope and limitation

The scope of my analysis is the roles of Bilbo Baggins in the Dwarves' quest for treasure. The limitation of the analysis is on Bilbo's outer and inner conflicts.

1.6 Methodology

In writing this thesis, I make some researches. I search the library and the Internet to find information, data, sources, and criticisms about Tolkien's books, his autobiographical and historical background, which can support my analysis. To help me analyse the topics, I use literary approach, in this case the theories of characterisation and conflict. By analysing Bilbo's characterisation and conflicts, I

get Bilbo's roles in the Dwarves' quest for treasure. Then, I can conclude that Bilbo is an important figure who plays significant roles in the journey.

1.7 Organization of the study

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first is the introduction, which contains the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the problem, the importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is the review of related literature that will be divided into characterization, conflict and the glossary of important characters and terms. The third is my analysis on Bilbo's roles in the Dwarves' quest for treasure. The last chapter is the conclusion of my thesis.