Dear John Ronald Reuel Tolkien,

I am writing to you because I absolutely loved your book The Hobbit and I wanted to ask you some questions concerning its themes and my interpretation of your writing. I was very young when I first read The Hobbit, so young, that wasn’t even able to read it myself. But since then I’ve read it again and I wish to write to you and possibly further discuss your work via letter exchange.

My first thought is on the character development of the main protagonist, Bilbo. When the story starts out Bilbo is incompetent, lacks basic survival skills and has very little self-esteem. But in slow steps throughout the book Bilbo’s character faces several challenges and overcomes them. And at the same time that Bilbo’s character is developing you can see him climbing up the chain of command in the group he’s traveling in until he replaces Thorin as the leader. The biggest event for Bilbo in the book is probably when he’s rescuing the dwarves from the spiders and in saving them, earns their respect and trust. It is then, for the first time, that Bilbo was truly accepted as one of them. Later on, when Bilbo rescues the dwarves from the dungeons of the elves his status within the group becomes even higher and some of the dwarves even admire him.

I also find Gandalf’s role in the story highly interesting, he comes to Bilbo with a pack of dwarves like a bolt out of the blue and convinces him to go with the dwarves on an adventure. A very strange thing for a Hobbit to do, because Hobbits traditionally revel in the thought of a quiet life. To Bilbo, Gandalf is a parental figure evidenced by him offering up sage advice in times of need, yet leaving Bilbo and the dwarves to fend for themselves when he believes they are capable. In the Hobbit, Gandalf’s story isn’t explored nearly as deeply as it is in the Lord of the Rings or The Silmarillion and it seems that he purposefully gives up very little detail about his motives, for example, he never reveals why he is helping Thorin and the others get their land back. It seems that Gandalf is just an unstoppable force against evil.

The evils of greed and selfishness are very prevalent in the story and I consider the moral of it to be the overcoming of those very things. Greed especially is central to the story and is manifested in different ways throughout the book, but I believe it is most prevalent when seen as the dwarves and Smaugs desperate greed for gold and Thorins greed for the Arkenstone. That very greed being the main driver behind Thorin turning on Bilbo once they had gotten rid of Smaug. I consider the Master of Lake Town to be the very personification of greed, and when Lake-town fell, his greed caused him to go down with it.

The Hobbit was written as a children’s book and I consider it to be an absolute masterpiece. It has deep metaphors and the way it touches on greed I find especially charming. The main protagonist of the book is very relatable and during the reading of the book its fun to see him maturing, gaining a string sense of identity and seeing him break away from the identity of a Hobbit and striving towards something greater. The journey of Bilbo can also be applied to Britain in the World War. People living in rural Briton, expecting to live a boring countryside life are suddenly shipped off to war where they become brave soldiers, much like Bilbo.

Eagerly awaiting your reply,

Palli