



IB/TOPS/MACS

CLASS 13 HANDOUT



flight or followed them. They dreaded the dark hours, and kept watch in pairs by night, expecting at any time to see black shapes stalking in the grey night, dimly lit by the cloud-veiled moon; but they saw nothing, and heard no sound but the sigh of withered leaves and grass. Not once did they feel the sense of present evil that had assailed them before the attack in the dell. It seemed too much to hope that the Riders had already lost their trail again. Perhaps they were waiting to make some ambush in a narrow place?



At the end of the fifth day the ground began once more to rise slowly out of the wide shallow valley into which they had descended. Strider now turned their course again north-eastwards, and on the sixth day they reached the top of a long slow-climbing slope, and saw far ahead a huddle of wooded hills. Away below them they could see the Road sweeping round the feet of the hills; and to their right a grey river gleamed pale in the thin sunshine. In the distance they glimpsed yet another river in a stony valley half-veiled in mist.



'I am afraid we must go back to the Road here for a while,' said Strider. 'We have now come to the River Hoarwell, that the Elves call Mitheithel. It flows down out of the Ettenmoors, the troll-fells north of Rivendell, and joins the Loudwater away in the South. Some call it the Greyflood after that. It is a great water before it finds the Sea. There is no way over it below its sources in the Ettenmoors, except by the Last Bridge on which the Road crosses.'

'What is that other river we can see far away there?' asked Merry.

'That is Loudwater, the Bruinen of Rivendell,' answered Strider. 'The Road runs along the edge of the hills for many miles



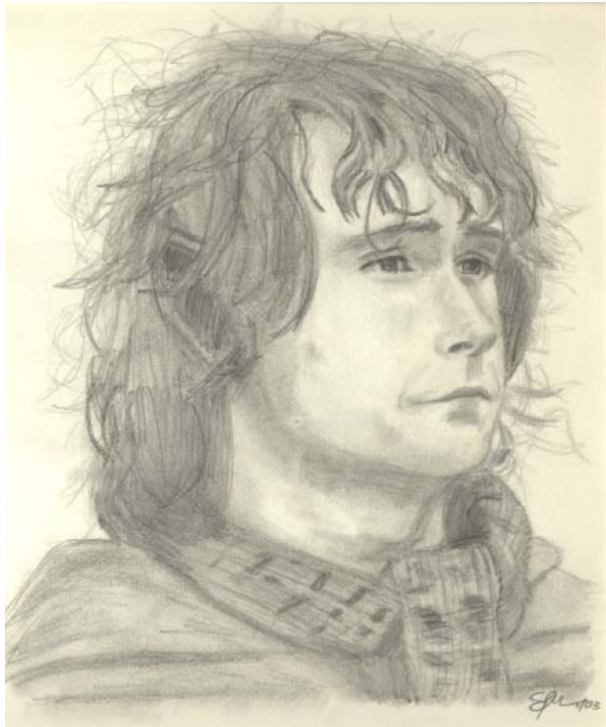
Here Strider turned aside, and soon they were lost in a sombre country of dark trees winding among the feet of sullen hills.

The hobbits were glad to leave the cheerless lands and the perilous Road behind them; but this new country seemed threatening and unfriendly. As they went forward the hills about them steadily rose. Here and there upon heights and ridges they caught glimpses of ancient walls of stone, and the ruins of towers: they had an ominous look. Frodo, who was not walking, had time to gaze ahead and to think. He recalled Bilbo's account of his journey and the threatening towers on the hills north of the Road, in the country near the Trolls' wood where his first serious adventure had happened. Frodo guessed that they were now in the same region, and wondered if by chance they would pass near the spot.



'Who lives in this land?' he asked. 'And who built these towers? Is this troll-country?'

'No!' said Strider. 'Trolls do not build. No one lives in this land. Men once dwelt here, ages ago; but none remain now. They became an evil people, as legends tell, for they fell under the shadow of Angmar. But all were destroyed in the war that brought the North Kingdom to its end. But that is now so long ago that the hills have forgotten them, though a shadow still lies on the land.'



‘Where did you learn such tales, if all the land is empty and forgetful?’ asked Peregrin. ‘The birds and beasts do not tell tales of that sort.’

‘The heirs of Elendil do not forget all things past,’ said Strider; ‘and many more things than I can tell are remembered in Rivendell.’

‘Have you often been to Rivendell?’ said Frodo.



In the morning he woke to find that the rain had stopped. The clouds were still thick, but they were breaking, and pale strips of blue appeared between them. The wind was shifting again. They did not start early. Immediately after their cold and comfortless breakfast Strider went off alone, telling the others to remain under the shelter of the cliff, until he came back. He was going to climb up, if he could, and get a look at the lie of the land.



When he returned he was not reassuring. 'We have come too far to the north,' he said, 'and we must find some way to turn back southwards again. If we keep on as we are going we shall get up into the Ettendales far north of Rivendell. That is troll-country, and little known to me. We could perhaps find our way through and come round to Rivendell from the north; but it would take too long, for I do not know the way, and our food would not last. So somehow or other we must find the Ford of Bruinen.'

The rest of that day they spent scrambling over rocky ground.

'Surely this is a troll-hole, if ever there was one!' said Pippin. 'Come out, you two, and let us get away. Now we know who made the path – and we had better get off it quick.'

'There is no need, I think,' said Strider, coming out. 'It is certainly a troll-hole, but it seems to have been long forsaken. I don't think we need be afraid. But let us go on down warily, and we shall see.'



The path went on again from the door, and turning to the right again across the level space plunged down a thick wooded slope. Pippin, not liking to show Strider that he was still afraid, went on ahead with Merry. Sam and Strider came behind, one on each side of Frodo's pony, for the path was now broad enough for four or five hobbits to walk abreast. But they had not gone very far before Pippin came running back, followed by Merry. They both looked terrified.



'There *are* trolls!' Pippin panted. 'Down in a clearing in the woods not far below. We got a sight of them through the tree-trunks. They are very large!'

'We will come and look at them,' said Strider, picking up a stick. Frodo said nothing, but Sam looked scared.





The sun was now high, and it shone down through the half-stripped branches of the trees, and lit the clearing with bright patches of light. They halted suddenly on the edge, and peered through the tree-trunks, holding their breath.