

Riddles in the Dark: “The Hobbit”

Past paper Qs

Q1. Bilbo’s transformation in The Riddles in the Dark

“**The Hobbit**” by J. R. R. Tolkien is as much a **coming-of-age story** of Bilbo Baggins as it is a tale of adventure. Some people say that people never change, while others believe that if given the chance, they will. In this case, J.R.R. Tolkien gives the character Bilbo Baggins the chance to change dramatically in his book “The Hobbit”. Bilbo undergoes many significant changes in his personality as a result of engaging in Gandalf's journey with the dwarves. The most important transformations include Bilbo going from **cowardly to brave**, from being **ridiculed to respected** and from being **helpless to resourceful**.

In the first chapter of the story we see Bilbo as a contented domestic figure, interested primarily in food and comfort. *“I should think so – in these parts! We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty, disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can’t think what anybody sees in them”*.

In the beginning, Bilbo seems very cowardly, but soon proves that he is indeed brave. Bilbo is very tied up in his very **boring, monotonous life** and he really does not want to go on the adventure that he is being hauled into: *“Sorry! I don’t want any adventures, thank you.”*

He is a small **peaceful Hobbit** who lives in Hobbiton. He loves to keep things in order, and hates things that are disorganized. **“Please be careful,”** and **“Please don’t trouble. I can manage”**. Bilbo does not really like the idea of an adventure and tries to rush Gandalf off in hope that he might forget that he even asked him to go. Hobbits are not considered to be very adventurous creatures, and bravery certainly does not come to mind when thinking about Bilbo Baggins sitting in his nice warm little Hobbit hole at the beginning of the story.

The wizard Gandalf and the discerning reader, though, spot something amiss in this picture of the home-loving hobbit. There is a **romantic streak** to Bilbo and a **curiosity** about the world outside the Shire as well as a **love for tales of adventure**. Although Bilbo appears conventional on the surface, one gets a sense that Bilbo is complicit with Gandalf's manipulations of him even if he approaches his new life as thief and adventurer with some trepidation.

At first, Bilbo remains his **luxury-loving self**, enjoying the adventure as spectacle, concerned about inadequacy of food, and somewhat fearful and unsure of his own abilities. As the adventure progresses, he gains **physical strength** and **endurance** and increasing confidence in his own skills and cleverness. He also begins to assert himself more. The key episode in his character development is **Chapter 5**, in which he ends up left on his own and encounters Gollum. He ends up using his own wits to escape a terrifying situation. Even more importantly, at the end of the chapter, he is called upon to decide what sort of adventurer he will become with his new found strength, and chooses a path of mercy and kindness, letting Gollum live despite knowing full well that Gollum had planned to eat him.

At one point of the novel, Bilbo, after accidentally being left behind by the group, meets another strange creature. It is a Gollum. Bilbo then exchanges riddles with it and there he shows up how smart

he is in answering and making riddles that he comes up as the winner. The last question he raises cannot be answered by the Gollum as he does not originally intend it as the riddle: “**What have I got in my pocket?**” he said aloud. He was talking to himself, but Gollum thought it was a riddle, and he was frightfully upset”.

Although that question is unintentional, this shows how Bilbo is very keen and smart in using the opportunity. Eventually, he is able to escape with the help of the magic ring he gets in the cave of Gollum, which enables him to be reunited with his group.

The transformation of Bilbo from home-loving hobbit to an equal of the dwarves in their life of adventure is seen in **Chapter 8** when Bilbo saves the dwarves from the spiders and realizes the degree to which he has changed and become braver and stronger.

Bilbo spends much of the first part of the quest **terrified, uncomfortable and unhappy**. He frequently voices the desire to be back at home and not on an adventure at all. Yet Tolkien presents Bilbo with a series of challenges that he begins rising to meet. By having Bilbo use his cleverness to escape Gollum, rescue the dwarves from both giant spiders and wood-elves and finally to lead the way into the lair of Smaug the dragon, Tolkien shows in a concrete way how his character is being altered by the events of the story. By the story’s end, Bilbo is a changed man. Not only has he been heroic, but he has fallen in love with travel and adventure. Life at home will never be the same.

Bilbo is many things, in the very beginning he is **flat, static, main**, and he is the **protagonist**. By the end of the story he is **round, dynamic, main**, and he is still the protagonist. By the end of the story, Bilbo is a changed Hobbit.

Q2. Gollum is so homebound that he never interacts with the world. Justify

Tolkien writes in the character of Gollum as a **poor, wretched creature** that nearly crawls around on his hands and feet. Though he is described as very fast in “The Hobbit” as Bilbo has to run to keep up with him in the caves of the Misty Mountains. His body is **pale**, and he has great **big yellow orbs for eyes**. His mannerisms are described as **frog-like**, resembling a tail-less squirrel, or even like Shelob the spider. He moves close to the ground, but can rise up when he wants to attack. He has sharp teeth that he uses to bite into raw fish. Tolkien created these **repulsive qualities** in Gollum to exemplify the power of the Ring over any being.

Gollum is a **slimy, skinny creature** living in the middle of an underground lake underneath the Misty Mountains. As Tolkien describes him, he is “**dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face**”. He has spent so much time underground that his eyes have grown giant and protruding on account of all of his peering through murky tunnels. Gollum spends a lot of time **alone**, something we can observe pretty easily by the frequency with which he talks to himself. He also punctuates his whispering with **noisy gulping swallows**, hence the name, “Gollum.”

Gollum is quite **dangerous** to Bilbo, since he's fond of eating other people and sometimes gets tired of fish. “**Bless us and splash us, my preciousssss! I guess it's a choice feast; at least a tasty morsel it'd make us, Gollum!**”

But he's obviously lonely and sad: he talks to himself using “**we**,” so he must want company. He's not just a threat; he is also incredibly **pitiful**.

Gollum has one treasure, a golden ring he calls his "**birthday-present**" because it came to him on his birthday. This ring makes the wearer invisible. Gollum uses it to sneak around the goblin tunnels and occasionally catch young goblins to eat. "***who knows how Gollum came by that present, ages ago in the old days when such rings were still at large in the world?***". All we can say for now is that Gollum has dropped it in the goblin tunnels, and Bilbo just happens to pick it up again.

When Gollum first encounters Bilbo, he isn't too hungry for hobbit-flesh, but he's rather afraid of Bilbo's knife. So, he tries to get on Bilbo's good side by challenging him to a friendly game of riddles (since "***the riddle-game was sacred and of immense antiquity***"). "***the only game he had ever played with other funny creatures sitting in their holes in the long, long ago, before he lost all his friends and was driven away, alone, and crept down, down, into the dark under the mountains.***"

Bilbo agrees, because he wants Gollum to show him the way out of the goblin kingdom under the Misty Mountains. But the game makes Gollum both hungry and angry.

Gollum tries to find his ring so he can become invisible and kill Bilbo. Bilbo, of course, being the luckiest person, just happens to put on Gollum's ring right as Gollum comes to attack him. So, he becomes invisible and follows Gollum out of the goblin tunnels. As Bilbo takes his final look at Gollum, he almost kills the wretched creature. But Bilbo is filled with a "***sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror.***" He sees Gollum's "***endless, unmarked days without light or hope of betterment***". And Bilbo lets Gollum live. In exchange for this kindness, Gollum screams, "***Thief, thief, thief! Baggins! We hates it, we hates it, we hates it forever!***" as Bilbo makes his escape.

"And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish, sneaking and whispering."

Gollum lives in utter solitude—he lives on the exaggerated edge of the spectrum of someone who is so homebound that he never interacts with the world he never leaves his home, exemplified in the fact that he talks only to himself. Bilbo, in contrast, has left his home and interacted with the world. Note Bilbo's improved use of language as he engages in a high-stakes game of riddling.

Q3. Language a powerful weapon for Gollum to trap Bilbo

In "The Hobbit", language is a weapon, capable of intimidating, confusing, and otherwise disarming one's enemies. But perhaps even more importantly, language is a tool for changing and understanding oneself.

Language is a powerful weapon—Gollum is literally using it to try to kill Bilbo, while Bilbo is using it to save his life. Language is also a reflection of a speaker's innermost thoughts and experiences: Bilbo's and Gollum's riddles reflect the kind of person each is and the experiences each has had. Language is also a sacred art, and both Bilbo and Gollum seem to abide by the rules of the riddle-telling game. It's worth bearing in mind, however, that Bilbo isn't yet a master of language—he quickly runs out of riddles to tell, and ends up asking Gollum such a casual question that it doesn't follow the sacred code of riddling, and thus puts Bilbo's life in danger.

"Both wrong," cried Bilbo very much relieved; and he jumped at once to his feet, put his back to the nearest wall, and held out his little sword. He knew, of course, that the riddle-game was sacred and

of immense antiquity, and even wicked creatures were afraid to cheat when they played at it. But he felt he could not trust this slimy thing to keep any promise at a pinch. Any excuse would do for him to slide out of it. And after all that last question had not been a genuine riddle according to the ancient laws."

Gollum is actually quite talkative and comfortable around people, but his behavior is so antisocial and violent. His attitude towards Bilbo is of contempt: he wishes to eat him only because he needs something and raw fish are merely his everyday meals. It would be a luxury to chow down on the meaty flesh of a Hobbit. His cannibalism is surprising, but is probably another side effect of the Ring's overwhelming power. That's why he engages Bilbo in the game of riddles as he thinks that he can do the same with him that he has done with his former preys. He is a very **mixed-up** and a **self-sufficient** character, often speaking to himself when he is alone and displaying an almost split personality during conversations with himself.

Q4. Difference between trolls and hobbit

According to Cambridge dictionary, a troll is "**an imaginary, either very large or very small creature in traditional Scandinavian stories, that has magical powers and lives in mountains or caves**".

"Three very large persons sitting round a very large fire of beech-logs. They were toasting mutton on long spits of wood, and licking the gravy off their fingers. There was a fine toothsome smell. And there was a barrel of good drink at hand, and they were drinking out of jugs. But they were trolls. Obviously, trolls. Even Bilbo, in spite of his sheltered life, could see that: from the great heavy faces of them, and their size, and the shape of their legs, not to mention their language, which was not drawing-room fashion at all, at all."

Trolls are **fictional** characters. The trolls in "The Hobbit" provide a little excitement and a lot of amusement. They are described as **ugly, dumb, and rude**--and they act that way, too! Their language is described as "**not drawing room fashion**," and when we first meet them, **Bert** and **Tom** are complaining about not having enough people to eat. They must be below ground before dawn or turn to stone. They had **vulgar table manners**, constantly argued and fought amongst themselves. spoke with **Cockney accents**, and had matching English working-class names: **Tom, Bert, and Bill**.

Jennifer Eastman Attebery, a scholar of English, states that the **trolls** in **The Hobbit** "signify the uncouth".

Hobbits or Halflings are a **fictional human-like race** in the novels of J. R. R. Tolkien, about **half the height of humans**. They live **barefooted**, and live in **underground houses** which have windows, as they are typically built into the sides of hills.

In his writings, Tolkien depicted hobbits as fond of an **unadventurous, bucolic** and **simple life** of farming, eating, and socializing, although capable of defending their homes courageously if the need arises. They would enjoy six meals a day, if they could get them. They claimed to have invented the art of smoking **pipe-weed**.

Most Hobbits lived longer life spans than Men, a race of which they might have been an off-shoot. The average lifespan of a Hobbit was about 100 years, though it was not unusual for a Hobbit to live as many as three decades beyond that. They were **smaller than Dwarves** and were usually between

two and four feet in height. With the gradual passing of time, Hobbits became even shorter. Hobbits were **skilled listeners** and had **good eyesight**. Although they were inclined to be fat and did not hurry unnecessarily, they were also **nimble** and **deft** in their movements.

Originally, there were three types of hobbits, with different physical characteristics and temperaments: **Harfoots**, **Stoors**, and **Fallohides**.

Themes

1. Coming of Age

Although Bilbo Baggins is “fully grown” at the beginning of “The Hobbit”, his adventures teach him to be brave, to take responsibility for himself and for others, and to develop skills he didn’t know he had: in effect, to grow up. When Gandalf and the dwarves approach Bilbo with an offer to be their burglar, Bilbo is so satisfied with his life and his home that the mere thought of adventure is enough to irritate and even frighten him. Yet Tolkien gives clues that Bilbo, deep down, wants to go on quests after all: he’s a descendant of the famously adventurous Took family, and seems to have inherited some of the Took’s love for maps and quests. While Bilbo never explicitly says that he wants to go with the dwarves to the Lonely Mountain (he merely rushes after them, prodded by Gandalf), it’s likely that he secretly, even subconsciously, wants to join them, realizing his inner potential for adventure.

“This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected.”

Along the way to the Lonely Mountains, Bilbo is placed in countless situations where he cannot rely on anyone else, and must learn to take care of himself. A particularly illuminating example of this phenomenon occurs when Bilbo falls off of Dori’s shoulders, and must out-riddle Gollum and out-maneuver the goblins to escape from the Misty Mountains. The contrast between the way Bilbo enters the mountains (on someone’s shoulders) and the way he leaves them (on his own, with a ring of invisibility to help him) couldn’t be clearer: his experiences force him to become stronger, more independent, more powerful—to grow up.

“Bilbo almost stopped breathing, and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrible darkness, --- He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo’s heart---.”

Yet, while Bilbo matures throughout “The Hobbit”, he doesn’t entirely reject the life he made for himself before he met Gandalf. Late in the novel, he’s still regretting leaving his hobbit-hole in the first place, and when the dwarves succeed in winning their treasure and defeating Smaug, he wants to return to hobbit-town. Bilbo grows up, but he doesn’t forget where he comes from—a fitting message coming from “The Hobbit”.

2. Power of language

In “The Hobbit”, language is a weapon, capable of intimidating, confusing, and otherwise disarming one’s enemies. But perhaps even more importantly, language is a tool for changing and understanding oneself.

In the early chapters of the book, Bilbo exhibits almost no sophisticated command of language, staying largely silent while the dwarves and Gandalf discuss their plans to journey to the Lonely Mountain and reclaim their treasure. When he gets lost under the Misty Mountains, he’s forced to use words to compete with Gollum, telling increasingly complicated riddles. While this episode is important in Bilbo’s growth as a manipulator of language, it’s important to recognize that he’s still a novice—he only defeats Gollum by asking a “**cheap**” question, “**What have I got in my pocket?**”, not by exhibiting any real creativity or skill with words. In “The Hobbit”, language is a weapon, capable of intimidating, confusing, and otherwise disarming one’s enemies. But perhaps even more importantly, language is a tool for changing and understanding oneself. It’s no coincidence that Bilbo renames himself as he becomes braver and more confident: with the power of naming, he makes his experiences a part of his personality—he doesn’t just describe himself; he changes himself.

Language is a powerful weapon—Gollum is literally using it to try to kill Bilbo, while Bilbo is using it to save his life. Language is also a reflection of a speaker’s innermost thoughts and experiences: Bilbo’s and Gollum’s riddles reflect the kind of person each is and the experiences each has had. Language is also a sacred art, and both Bilbo and Gollum seem to abide by the rules of the riddle-telling game. It’s worth bearing in mind, however, that Bilbo isn’t yet a master of language—he quickly runs out of riddles to tell, and ends up asking Gollum such a casual question that it doesn’t follow the sacred code of riddling, and thus puts Bilbo’s life in danger.

3. Heroism

“The Hobbit” is a fantasy novel, and it contains many of the genre’s traditional tropes: **a quest, treasure, a dark forest, and even a dragon**. With this in mind, it’s worth asking who the hero—arguably the most important fantasy trope — of “The Hobbit” is, and how Tolkien defines heroism. Bilbo Baggins is the protagonist of “The Hobbit”, meaning that he’s the **default hero**. In the early chapters of the book, Bilbo is cowardly and reluctant to participate in the dwarves’ quest. Ironically, this makes Bilbo seem more heroic than ever—the “**reluctant hero**” is an old literary archetype. Also, in these early chapters, Tolkien submits one possible definition of a hero: **a larger-than-life person who excels at combat**. Bilbo’s memories of his ancient ancestor, a hobbit who slew a goblin, suggest that this is how Bilbo, if not Tolkien, thinks of heroism.

Tolkien complicates this definition of heroism, however, as the story goes on. Heroism requires **skill in combat, but also bravery, cleverness, and a talent for words**. Characters who excel at only one of these things—Gollum, who excels at wordplay, the dwarves, who excel at combat, etc.—tend to fail in their aims; for instance, the dwarves are captured by spiders, their skill with swords useless. Although Bilbo is hardly a hero at the start of the book, he finds that he has many of the skills required for heroism as he and the dwarves travel to the Lonely Mountain. Ultimately, Bilbo develops a talent for both wordplay—he trades riddles with Gollum

4. Home and Birthright

The desire and love for a home motivates most of the main characters in “The Hobbit”. Sometimes, the characters’ desires for home contradict each other. For instance, Bilbo Baggins says at many points throughout his journey that he regrets ever leaving his home in hobbit-town, while the dwarves with whom he’s embarking on his adventure seek to return to (and reclaim from Smaug) their home under the Lonely Mountain. In many cases, **having home means having a claim to some position or material wealth**. Thus, Thorin, the descendant of many dwarf kings, has a claim to his ancestors’ treasure, which lies under the Lonely Mountain; similarly, Bard, the descendant of the lords of Dale, can claim lordship of Dale as his birthright.

But having a birthright isn’t only a privilege—it’s a duty. To have a home, one must also be a fair and generous **“host,”** treating one’s guests, subjects, and property with respect. Most of the antagonists in “The Hobbit” —the three trolls, the goblins, Gollum—are ungracious hosts who refuse to entertain Bilbo and the dwarves during their long quest.

In the end, Tolkien implies, **having a home means loving it**, but not too much. Bilbo is a good model for how to regard one’s home—he loves his hobbit-hole, but he’s willing to invite others into it and to travel far away from it, too.

5. The Quest

The quest theme is related to two important features of “The Hobbit” and other works in which it occurs. The first of these is the **journey plot structure**. The protagonist or main character who embarks on a quest must physically go somewhere; his search involves **travel**, usually in a circular route such that he **returns home** with the object of his quest. The journey allows the main character to encounter various characters and circumstances that are unfamiliar and even threatening to him. Thus, **novelty and suspense** are built into the journey plot. Bilbo, for example, encounters Goblins, Wargs, elves, Gollum, and Smaug the dragon on his journey and he travels well beyond the hobbit-lands through Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains to the Lonely Mountain. Along the way, he **escapes death** several times, undergoes the **privations of hunger** and **bad weather**.

The second important feature related to the quest theme is in the **character development** of the **protagonist**. In most quest stories, the physical journey serves as a metaphor for the personal growth of the questing character, for whom the quest is often the **fulfillment of a personal destiny**. As the protagonist travels physically farther from home, he **develops psychologically** and/or **spiritually** beyond the self he was when he started out. The episodes of the plot serve as trials and lessons to him, and when he finds the object of his quest, he also finds his authentic self. Bilbo, for example, begins his journey with the dwarves reluctantly, not at all sure that he is suited for it. Throughout much of the journey, he regrets his decision to join them and daydreams about the comforts of his own home that seem so attractive in comparison with the dramatic adventures he undergoes. In early episodes, when he is threatened with death, he must be rescued by Gandalf. As time goes on, however, Bilbo develops both ingenuity and courage, partly under the tutelage of Gandalf and partly through a combination of good luck and the exercise of his own will. It is apparently through luck that he finds the ring of invisibility in Gollum’s cave.

Bilbo is depicted as making sound ethical judgments and choosing to do good, as he does when he does not use the advantage of his sword and invisibility to kill Gollum. Like other quest heroes, Bilbo returns home at the end of his journey.

6. The Uses of Power

One of the major themes of “The Hobbit” concerns the use of power on several different levels. Gandalf has magical powers that you see him use almost immediately. As the story begins, he places a secret mark on Bilbo Baggins' door that causes the dwarves to congregate at the hobbit-hole. He seems to know much more about Bilbo than can be explained, and he has a certain gift for prophecy. He uses a magic wand at times, and he appears and disappears at will. The full extent of his sorcery is demonstrated in The Lord of the Rings, but even in The Hobbit, Gandalf clearly has powers that exceed those of the other travelers. His magical power is reflected in his age and his wisdom.

Although much younger than Gandalf, Bilbo's wisdom increases throughout the story and as a quest hero, he very much develops a kind of personal power. He grows from a reluctant, rather cowardly creature who complains when he is hungry or rained upon into a clever and courageous one who rescues the dwarves from the dungeon of the Elven king, defies both Gollum and Smaug, and survives the Battle of Five Armies. He gains the respect of his companions and develops a personal authority that defines him as a leader. When Gandalf temporarily leaves the group, Bilbo becomes the leader in essential ways: He devises plans and he volunteers to go first in risky situations. Although he is the beneficiary of a great deal of good luck, Bilbo also exercises his will to take on difficult tasks, like confronting Smaug, and he makes ethical choices, like when he spares Gollum's life. He declines heroism and chooses instead to live a relatively quiet life when he returns home, but it is a life enriched by the self-knowledge he achieves on his journey.

7. Riddles, Fate and Darkness

A riddle, unlike a common question, contains its own solution, and cleverly using word play and double meanings, it both exposes as well as obscures the answer. This type of mental puzzle requires creative thinking to solve. It is not surprising that riddles in literature are often associated with **magic and power** such as in the story of “The Hobbit”. Riddles bring to the surface what is hidden deep in the unconscious mind. They both invoke and provoke, summon and stimulate, calling forth the unseen: the psychological, the emotional, and the magical.

In the story “The Hobbit” by J.R.R Tolkien, the unlikely hero Bilbo goes on a quest and journeys far from his homeland, and, as is common in questing tales, his character develops both internally as well as externally by the challenges he meets, and defeats, along the way. Bilbo is hired as a burglar to steal Smaug's golden treasure but his first victory is that he wins the game of riddles with Gollum and takes a small gold ring as his prize. The ring itself represents magical power and the unknown as it both mysteriously, as well as literally, turns its wearer into the “**unseen**” by making him invisible. This ring has been placed directly in Bilbo's path, by luck, or by design, before the game of riddles begins. The *ring* comes to play the most important role in Bilbo defeating Gollum and escaping from the underworld. As Tolkien writes, the ring becomes the “**turning point in [Bilbo's] career... [even though he] does not know it [yet]**”.

When Bilbo falls down into this dark place, alone, he is entering into his own deep unconscious where he must face his fears. The game of riddles he plays with Gollum are for very high stakes: Bilbo's life hangs in the balance. During the contest Gollum starts to win but fortune is on Bilbo's side. It is the force of **fate**, his hand having met the ring on the dark tunnel floor, as well as Bilbo's altered state of

mind, caused by the riddling, which work in tandem and provide him the victory. Again, **pure luck**, or perhaps **Providence**, is on Bilbo's side.

This shift in power is not caused by Bilbo's superiority but by a force which is beyond himself. The game of riddles, a touch of magic, and the danger of loss of life, set the stage for the unseen forces to play out. The riddle opens the door to the other worlds and takes the seeker on a journey which spirals into a connected circle: there is a ring of Truth, the serpent bites his own tale, and the Divine makes itself felt. What had been associated with death is transformed into what will save: it is Gollum's own ring which saves Bilbo. Through the psychological process of delving deep into the underworld of magic and the unconscious, profound connections are made and the hero returns to the mortal world enlightened.

Symbols

1. The Misty mountain

There is an old rule in adventure stories, from "The Odyssey" to Star Wars, that the hero's personal growth must be accompanied by a journey underground. After Bilbo falls off Dori's shoulders while fleeing from the goblins, he's forced to fend for himself as he tries to find his way out of the **Misty Mountains**. In doing so, he has to confront Gollum and goblins, and discovers talents he didn't know he had — deception, path-finding, riddle-telling, etc. Thus, the Misty Mountains represent Bilbo's **maturity as a character and an adventurer**: when he enters them, he's still immature (literally being carried on someone else's back!), but when he leaves, he's confident enough to navigate his own way around.

2. The Ring

Without a doubt, the most famous symbol in Tolkien's "The Hobbit" is the ring itself which Bilbo finds under the Misty Mountains, just before he meets Gollum. In "The Hobbit", as in these earlier works, the ring symbolizes the **corruption of wealth and power**. Gollum lives a miserable existence under the mountains; though he once lived above ground in the sun, it seems as if he has journeyed underground to be alone with his "**precious**" ring. Bilbo, by contrast, seems relatively uninterested in treasure or power of any kind; perhaps because he is "**innocent**" in this sense, he can wear the ring without being consumed by jealousy or vanity.

It is described as, "**one very beautiful thing, very beautiful, very wonderful. He had a ring, a golden ring, a precious ring. "My birthday-present!" "It was a ring of power, and if you slipped that ring on your finger, you were invisible; only in the full sunlight could you be seen, and then only by your shadow, and that would be shaky and faint."**"

Hissing language of Gollum (repetition, use of [s] sound, use of es at the end of words)

Suddenly up came Gollum and whispered and hissed: "Bless us and splash us, my precioussss! I guess it's a choice feast; at least a tasty morsel it'd make us, gollum!" That is how he got his name, though he always called himself 'my precious.' "What iss he, my preciouss?" whispered Gollum (who always spoke to himself through never having anyone else to speak to). "What's he got in his handses?" "Sssss," said Gollum, and became quite polite. "Praps ye sits here and chats with it a bitsy, my preciouss. It like riddles, praps it does, does it?"

"Does it guess easy? It must have a competition with us, my preciouss! If precious asks, and it doesn't answer, we eats it, my preciousss. If it asks us, and we doesn't answer, then we does what it wants, eh? We shows it the way out, yes!"

"Teeth! teeth! my preciousss; but we has only six!"

"Sss, sss, my preciouss," "Give us a chance; let it give us a chance, my preciouss-ss-ss." "Eggses!"

"Is it nice, my preciousss? Is it juicy? Is it scrumptiously crunchable?"

"It's got to ask uss a quesstion, my preciouss, yes, yess, yesss. Jusst one more quesstion to guess, yes, yess,"

"That's what we wants now, yes; we wants it!"

"Losst it is, my precious, lost, lost! Curse us and crush us, my precious is lost!" "Not its business, no, gollum! It's losst, gollum, gollum, gollum."

"Curse it! curse it! curse it!" hissed Gollum. "Curse the Baggins! It's gone! What has it got in its pocketses? Oh we guess, we guess, my precious."

"Thief, thief, thief! Baggins! We hates it, we hates it, we hates it for ever!"

Riddles asked by Gollum:

1. "What has roots as nobody sees,
Is taller than trees,
Up, up it goes,
And yet never grows?" (Mountains)



2. "Voiceless it cries,
Wingless flutters,
Toothless bites,
Mouthless mutters." (wind)

3. "It cannot be seen, cannot be felt,
Cannot be heard, cannot be smelt.
It lies behind stars and under hills,
And empty holes it fills.

It comes first and follows after,
Ends life, kills laughter." (dark)

4. "A live without breath,
As cold as death;

Never thirsty, ever drinking,
All in mail never clinking." (fish)

5. "This thing all things devours:
Birds, beasts, trees, flowers;
Gnaws iron, bites steel;
Grinds hard stones to meal;
Slays king, ruins town,
And beats high mountain down." (time)

Bilbo's riddles:

1. "Thirty white horses on a red hill,

First they champ,

Then they stamp,

Then they stand still." (teeth)

2. "An eye in a blue face

Saw an eye in a green face.

"That eye is like to this eye"

Said the first eye,

"But in low place,

Not in high place.*** (sun in the daisies)

3. "A box without hinges, key, or lid,

Yet golden treasure inside is hid," (eggs)

4. "No-legs lay on one-leg, two-legs sat near on three-legs, four-legs got some." ("Fish on a little table, man at table sitting on a stool, the cat has the bones")

5. "What have I got in my pocket?"

