



# Teaching Fairy Stories

with Dr. Junius Johnson

## Lesson 4: Exemplum: The Hobbit

### Outline:

Exemplum: The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

- The beginning of the Misty Mountain song, page 14
  - Ask the students to tell you about the rhyme scheme.
  - What are the elements of the poem that come into play?
  - There is a bit of foreshadowing in the fourth stanza. There is a sense of overreach. There is a connection here to Beowulf.
  - Experiment with how fast dry pine leaves go up in fire. This makes a particular roaring sound.
  - Tolkien names what the dwarfish heart desire. As Bilbo hears the poetry he finds his own being singing along and resonating with it (“Something Tookish woke up inside him.”) **What this poem is doing to Bilbo is what you want this book to do to students.**
  - The texts are never just external because they are doing work on you, so it matters what you read.
  - Bilbo loves his comfort too much. Tolkien problematizes this about the Hobbit’s notion of home. This connects The Hobbit back to The Odyssey. The dwarves are going on a journey (as dangerous as Odysseus) for the sake of winning back their home.
- Roast Mutton, page 30
  - Bilbo doesn’t know the songs anymore.
  - What does music mean? What does song mean?
  - Everything they are singing reminds you that you are not at home.
  - We have transitioned through multiple geographies in one paragraph. Don’t rush through this.
- Gollum, Riddles in the Dark, page 81
  - Pity mixed with horror welled in Bilbo’s heart.
  - Compassion and understanding his enemy occurred in the flash of a second. This brings about pity and horror, no hope of betterment.
  - What does it look like to understand your enemy?
  - What does damnation look like (literal or metaphorical)?
  - What does it looked like to be trapped within the prison of one’s own mind?
- A Warm Welcome, page 176
  - The town used to be bigger than it was now.
  - There is a radical forgetfulness in Lake-town (that they live in the shadow of a dragon).



- The wood shall wave on mountains. The lakes shall shine and burn. They're singing very prophetically about their own destruction and fall. The dragon is back (which they all forgot about and disbelieved in).
- You have to remember where you are in the story.
- Inside Information, page 197
  - It was at this point that Bilbo stopped. Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did.
  - A lot of times the battle is fought before you face the foe. You can see the moment where the firm intention is made.
  - It is understated, it isn't a superhuman act of courage, but the simple act of putting one foot in front of the next.
  - Walking forward is an act of extreme faith.
  - Proctor the discussion about Bilbo fighting the dragon.
- A Thief in the Night, page 244
  - This is Bilbo.
  - The original reason Bilbo hangs on to the Arkenstone is because he wanted it for himself, but now he is starting to think that the value of the thing might give it a third value that is not expected.
  - Bilbo decides to offer the Arkenstone up to his enemies.
  - He is handing the heart of his friend to his friend's enemies as an act of friendship. Go back to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and the conversation of friendship. What are the duties of friendship?
  - Bilbo goes back to his friends to face the consequences. He has a responsibility to them. Who are your friends who are friend enough to betray you if need be?
  - What are the duties of friendship?