

English 300: Merlin

First Papers / First Paragraphs

Please re-write three of these five “first paragraphs.” This exercise is due on Monday, 6 October; no rough drafts are necessary.

Light and dark are often used in literary texts as representatives of good and evil and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Rings* is no exception. In the passage depicting the attack of the Wargs, Tolkien employs light and dark to embody not only good and evil, but utilizes them in such a way so that they foreshadow events, set up the general mood and are representative of the different relationships within the text.

Although The Fellowship of the Ring is a lengthy fantasy about the adventures of a band of hobbits and elves, one need only look at the chapter entitled “A Journey in the Dark” to gain a solid understanding of the relationships that exist between the main characters in the story. By examining this chapter, we begin to see how each of the characters in the band of hobbits and elves serves a different purpose in the story. In particular, we learn that there is a special relationship shared by three characters: Gandalf, Frodo, and Gimli. These characters depend on one another not only for advice, but also for the strength that the group needs in order to complete their adventure.

“A Journey in the Dark” — a chapter from J.R.R. Tolkien's, Fellowship of the Ring, details the mental and physical trials faced by the members of Frodo's troupe. This is done primarily through examining the progression of hope. In order to see the full development of hope within the chapter it is necessary to examine not only where the word “hope” is mentioned, but also where feelings of hopelessness arise.

With the creations of his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, J.R.R. Tolkien sought to, among other goals, replicate the storytelling style employed in Old English myths and legends. Nowhere is his technique of “borrowing” the voice of the medieval bard more evident than in scenes of battle. With a setting thousands of years before the advent of technology, the action is quite intense and personalized. Distant attackers do not drop bombs on thousands of anonymous troops; rather, each strike is on an adversary with a distinct face and expressions of rage or pain.

One aspect of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* is its quest story. The characters have an objective, and throughout the novel they must face many trials in order to approach their final goal. Tolkien's quest plotline was well-used before he invented Middle Earth — in Arthurian legend, for example. Often accompanying such a quest theme is a typical cast of characters: Arthur had Merlin and his knights, and Frodo has his own band to help protect him and his Ring. A young hero, an older, powerful advisor, and skilled companions all seem to be standard figures, as can be seen in Tolkien's “A Journey in the Dark” excerpt.