**READING**

**Before reading…**

*What do you know about the trilogy* The Lord of the Rings?

*Have you read any of the books or watched the films?*

*Do you know any of the characters?*

**Book review – The Lord of the Rings**

*The Lord of the Rings* is the greatest trilogy, and it immortalized the name of its creator. It consists of three parts: *The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*. The plot is based on the struggle for the Ring of Power, which was forged by Sauron, the Dark Lord, long, long ago.

The trilogy is a logical sequence of a no less famous fairy tale by Tolkien *The Hobbit* as well as the second part of the Red Book of Westmarch - the main chronicle of the Third Age of Middle-earth. *The Lord of the Rings* belongs to the genre of epic, has many plots and a great number of main and secondary characters.

Tolkien had been writing *The Lord of the Rings* for more than ten years. He wrote the first chapters in 1939, after the success of *The Hobbit.* The trilogy was published first in 1954-55. In his letter to Carole Batten-Phelps the writer affirms that he wrote *The Lord of the Rings* for his own pleasure as an attempt to create a major work. Tolkien never thought that his fantasy adventure would become so famous worldwide. The writer’s friend, C.S. Lewis, who wrote a review for the first part of *The Lord of the Rings* did not believe the book would be a success either. However, his fears proved groundless.

The epic *The Lord of the Rings* became a real treasure of English literature of the 20th century. All the time critics find new ideas and draw analogies with reality. *The Lord of the Rings* formed the basis of such a literary genre as fantasy – a branch of fiction, which is based on mythological and historical traditions with a grain of magic. It became a so-called Bible for other writers working in this genre.

The plot of *The Lord of the Rings* is very dynamic. It seems that Tolkien wanted to introduce as many geographical areas and living-beings as possible. He does not stay too long in one place but leads the reader further and further away. A great aim sets him going – the destruction of the Ring of Power, the result of Evil which promises his owner riches and wealth, in the fire of Orodruin. It cannot be used for good intentions, for the artifact will try to find a soft spot in its owner’s character and bring him/her under its control. A person, strong-willed or completely indifferent to power, can overcome all the obstacles and destroy the Ring. Frodo and Sam turn out to be the ones.

The plots of the three books making up the trilogy are as follows:

[**The Fellowship of the Ring**](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/catalog/titledetail.cfm?titleNumber=681214) — Part One  
Frodo Baggins knows the Ringwraiths are searching for him and the Ring of Power he bears that would enable Sauron to destroy all that is good in Middle-earth. Now it is up to Frodo and his faithful servant Sam to carry the Ring to where it could be destroyed—in the very center of Sauron's dark kingdom.  
  
[**The Two Towers**](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/catalog/titledetail.cfm?titleNumber=681217) — Part Two  
The Fellowship is scattered. Some ware bracing hopelessly for war against the ancient evil of Sauron. Some are contending with the treachery of the wizard Saruman. Only Frodo and Sam are left to take the accursed Ring of Power to be destroyed in Mordor — the dark Kingdom where Sauron is supreme. Their guide is Gollum, slave to the corruption of the Ring.  
  
[**The Return of the King**](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/catalog/titledetail.cfm?titleNumber=681247) — Part Three  
Frodo and Sam struggle deep into Mordor, seat of Sauron's power. But the way is impossibly hard, and Frodo is weakening. Meanwhile, the people of Gondor and Rohan prepare to face the full assault of Sauron's forces.

Hard life in Middle-earth during the War of the Ring reflects hard life in reality. The war mixed all the cards and those who fought under Wight banners yesterday gave in to the generous promises of Evil. And vice versa. Vile and bitter enemies become allies, as it happens with Gollum. While battles take place in Gondor and Rohan, two little hobbits make their way to Orodruin. The reader has to believe that countless armies do not always decide the outcome of the battle, and that one can conquer alone.

Realism is very important in the trilogy. Up to the last minute is very difficult to believe in the traditional Happy End. Frodo and Sam can be compared with rope-walkers who balance over an abyss, full of sharp blades. The trilogy is also full of mythology.

*The Lord of the Rings* teaches us to be humane. Sympathy for enemies determines a lot in the epic. It is both sympathy and humanity that prevent Bilbo from killing Gollum, who played a crucial role in the destroying of the Ring. Good, according to Tolkien, is not revengeful. It strives to get justice and will never shoot an arrow into the back of the enemy.

*The Lord of the Rings* has become popular worldwide, and has had many editions and translations. There can’t be a person regarding the epic with utter indifference. Everyone has his/her own thoughts and feelings towards *The Lord of the Rings.* Which are yours?

(adapted from Houghton Mifflin Books and ESL printables)

*Answer the following questions using your own words:*

1. Who are the main characters in the trilogy?

2. What is the ending of the trilogy?

3. Write down five words you do not know and look up for their meaning on the Internet.

4. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following statement by Tolkien: “Good is not revengeful”.

5. In your opinion, which book would you enjoy the most?

6. Do you think you would like to read this trilogy? Why / why not?

*In groups of five people, look for some information on the following topics and terms:*

GROUP 1: Brief account of J.R.R Tolkien’s life

GROUP 2: *The Hobbit*: A brief summary

GROUP 3: Definition of the following terms: **oral tradition, fairy, myth, heroic epic, folk tale**

GROUP 4: Brief description of Tolkien’s Middle-earth

GROUP 5: Brief description of the Old English language. Is there any relation between Tolkien and Old English?

*Present your findings to the rest of the classroom.*