

Tolkien Reading Day 2024



THE
TOLKIEN
SOCIETY

Paths of Destiny: Exploring Moral Choices in Middle-earth

Subject Areas: Drama, Interactive Storytelling

Skills: Decision-Making, Role-Playing, Critical Thinking, Collaboration

Learning Objectives

- Participants will delve into themes of service and sacrifice within Tolkien's narratives through immersive role-playing scenarios.
- Participants will analyse the moral dimensions of their decisions, assessing their impact on characters and the broader narrative in Middle-earth.
- Participants will reflect on the ethical quandaries presented in the scenarios, drawing parallels to real-world ethical dilemmas.

Materials

- Scenario prompts based on key events or moral dilemmas from Tolkien's stories e.g. Arwen's sacrifice of immortality for mortal love, Bilbo's journey with the dwarves, Samwise's unwavering loyalty to Frodo, Aragorn's burden of kingship and duty to Middle-earth, and Gandalf's sacrifices for the greater good
- Props or costume pieces to enhance immersion (optional)
- Writing materials (notebooks, pens, or digital devices) for reflection

Lesson Activities

1. Review and Preparation:

- Define service as the act of helping or doing work for someone else, often at personal cost, and sacrifice as the act of giving up something valuable for the sake of others. Discuss how these themes are prevalent throughout Tolkien's works and contribute to the depth of his storytelling.
- Organise participants into small groups, each tasked with navigating a scenario inspired by Tolkien's various works, specifically focusing on instances of service and sacrifice. Distribute scenario prompts that outline the setting, characters involved, and the pivotal decisions to be made.

2. Role-Playing and Decision-Making:

- Allocate time for participants to thoroughly discuss their scenario prompts within their groups, considering the motivations of the characters and contemplating the consequences of each potential decision.
- Once prepared, encourage each group to engage in role-playing their assigned scenario, with participants assuming the roles of the characters and making decisions rooted in the themes of service and sacrifice.
- Facilitate the role-playing process by offering guidance and prompts as necessary, encouraging participants to grapple with the moral complexities presented by their scenarios.

3. Debrief and Discussion:

- Following each scenario, lead a group discussion where participants reflect on the decisions made and their implications.
- Encourage participants to share their insights on the ethical dilemmas presented, considering how themes of service and sacrifice influenced their decision-making process.
- Pose questions such as:
 - How did the themes of service and sacrifice manifest in your group's decisions?
 - What were the potential risks and benefits of each option considered?
 - How did the decisions made by your group align with your personal values or beliefs?
 - What parallels can be drawn between the scenarios in Middle-earth and real-world ethical challenges?

4. Reflection and Self-Evaluation:

- Provide dedicated time for participants to individually reflect on their experiences during the workshop. Prompt them to jot down their thoughts and insights regarding the role-playing scenarios, focusing on lessons learned about service, sacrifice, and moral decision-making.
- Encourage participants to contemplate how they can apply these insights to their own lives and ethical decision-making processes.

Conclusion:

- Conclude the workshop by summarising the key themes and discussions.
- Encourage continued exploration of Tolkien's narratives and the enduring themes of service and sacrifice within them.

Extension

- Participants discuss real-world scenarios where themes of service and sacrifice are relevant.
- Explore examples from history, current events, or personal experiences.
- Encourage participants to draw parallels between these scenarios and the moral dilemmas faced by characters in Tolkien's narratives.