

The Hobbit



THE
TOLKIEN
SOCIETY

Lesson 4: Exploring Elvish Language and Culture

Subject Areas: English, Languages

Skills: Collaboration, Research, Creativity

Learning Objectives

- Students will gain an understanding of the Elvish language and culture as depicted in Middle-earth & The Hobbit
- Students will identify parallels between Tolkien's Elvish languages and real-world languages, fostering an appreciation for linguistic diversity.

Materials

- Copies of 'The Hobbit' by J.R.R. Tolkien
- Whiteboard and markers
- Handouts with Elvish phrases and their translations and/or use of - [Parf Edhellen](#) & [Getting Started with Elvish](#)
- Visual aids (images of Middle-earth and Elvish script)
- Storytelling props (optional)

Lesson Activities

1. Review and Preparation:

- Begin by discussing J.R.R. Tolkien and his background as a philologist and author, emphasising his fascination with languages.
- Provide an overview of the Elvish languages (Sindarin and Quenya) and their linguistic inspirations from real-world languages.

2. Exploration and Discussion:

- Show images of Elvish architecture, clothing, and art from artistic and film interpretations of The Hobbit or other Tolkien sources.
- Discuss key aspects of Elvish culture, such as their connection to nature, love for storytelling, and similarities with real-world cultures.

3. Learning Basic Elvish Phrases:

- Distribute handouts with common Elvish phrases and their English translations.
- Teach students to pronounce and write their names in Tengwar (Elvish script).
- Discuss how some Elvish words have similarities with words in real-world languages, such as Welsh, Finnish, or Latin.

4. Storytelling Activity:

- Provide each group with a part of the story from The Hobbit involving Elves.
- Ask each group to perform their part of the story, incorporating Elvish phrases and discussing linguistic connections to real-world languages.

5. Wrap-up and Discussion:

- Reconvene as a class and have each group share their storytelling performances and linguistic insights.
- Discuss the experience of using Elvish language and culture in storytelling and the parallels they observed between Elvish and real-world languages.
- Reflect on the importance of language preservation and the role of constructed languages in literature.

Possible Assessment Activities:

- Assess student participation in the storytelling activity, their grasp of basic Elvish phrases, and their ability to identify linguistic connections between Elvish and real-world languages.

Extension:

• Provide students with blank parchment-like paper, colorful inks, and fine-tipped brushes. Instruct them to select their favorite Elvish phrase or quote from The Hobbit or create one of their own. Encourage students to write the phrase in Elvish script (Tengwar) using artistic calligraphy techniques, paying attention to the elegance of Elvish writing. After completing the calligraphy, students can further embellish their work with illuminated illustrations inspired by Elvish culture, such as intricate nature motifs or Elvish symbols. This activity not only allows students to practice the Elvish script but also merges language and art, creating unique and visually appealing representations of Elvish phrases. Finally, students can share their illuminated Elvish calligraphy with the class, explaining the significance of their chosen phrases and artistic choices.

Useful Links & Further Reading:

[The Tolkien Society: The Author](#) - This section contains biographical and bibliographical information about J.R.R. Tolkien

[The Digital Tolkien Project](#) - A scholarly project focused on Tolkien from both a corpus linguistic and digital humanities perspective

[Teaching With Magic](#) - An Exploration of Pedagogy, Literacy, and Fantasy Literature