

# **The Hobbit Chapter Summaries**

## **Chapter 1 Summary**

Hobbits, the narrator explains, are little people, roughly half the size of humans, with thick hair on their feet, round bellies, and a love of good food, comfort, and security. Though some hobbits live in houses, they traditionally live in holes in the ground. The holes are not dank and smelly but comfortable, cozy underground dwellings with all the amenities of their aboveground counterparts. The hole occupied by the hobbit known as Bilbo Baggins is called Bag End. It is quite a pleasant dwelling, with comfortable furniture and a well-stocked kitchen, nestled in a snug little village under a hill.

Bilbo's ancestry is somewhat noble by hobbit standards: his father was from the well-to-do, conventional Baggins family, but his mother was from the Tooks, a wealthy, eccentric family infamous for their unhobbitlike tendency to go on adventures. Despite his Took blood, however, Bilbo prefers to stay at home and live a quiet life.

On the day the story begins, Bilbo is enjoying a pipe outside his front door when an old man with a long cloak and a staff arrives. After the old man introduces himself, Bilbo recognizes him as the wizard Gandalf, who has created spectacular fireworks displays on holidays in Hobbiton, but Bilbo still looks on the old wizard with a suspicious eye. When Gandalf asks if Bilbo would be interested in going on an adventure, Bilbo declines and quickly excuses himself. He invites the wizard to come over for tea sometime but only so as not to seem rude—in reality, he wants nothing to do with Gandalf and his adventures.

When the doorbell rings the next afternoon, Bilbo assumes it is Gandalf. To his surprise, a dwarf named Dwalin pushes past him and promptly sits down to eat. Soon, other dwarves begin to arrive, and as Bilbo's neat little home becomes crowded with dwarves, Bilbo becomes increasingly confused and annoyed. At last, Gandalf arrives with the head dwarf, Thorin. The thirteen dwarves and the wizard nearly clean out Bilbo's pantry before finally settling down to discuss their business.

It soon becomes clear that Gandalf has volunteered Bilbo to be a "burglar" for the dwarves on their adventure. The hobbit protests, and the dwarves grumble that the soft little hobbit does not seem suited to their adventure. Gandalf, however, is certain that Bilbo is useful, and insists that there is more to the hobbit than meets the eye.

The wizard then brings out an old map of a great mountain and points to a mysterious secret entrance, a door to which Thorin holds the key. Bilbo demands some clarification about the point of the whole expedition. Thorin explains that his grandfather, Thrór, mined the mountain shown on the map and discovered a wealth of gold and jewels. Thrór then became King under the Mountain, but his fantastic treasure attracted unwanted attention. Before long, the dragon Smaug came and killed or scattered all of Thrór's people. The dragon has been guarding the treasure ever since. Thorin and the dwarves are out to reclaim their rightful inheritance, even though they are unsure of what to do with Smaug when they find him.

Bilbo suspects that the dwarves want him to play a part in slaying the dragon. Although his Baggins side would like nothing better than to sit at home with his pipe, the Took influence in him fuels his curiosity about the adventure, and he is reluctantly excited by the tales of dragons and treasure and great battles. After looking at the map and discussing the adventure with the company, the hobbit makes up beds for all his guests and then spends the night in troubled dreams.

## **Chapter 2-3 Summary**

### **Summary: Chapter 2**

Bilbo wakes up rather late the morning after Gandalf's visit. He is surprised—and a little relieved—to see that the dwarves have left without him. He is just sitting down to a quiet breakfast when Gandalf enters and rushes him off to the Green Dragon Inn, in Bywater, where Thorin and the rest of the dwarves have been waiting to begin their journey. As they head east on the main road, Bilbo sulks at having to leave without finishing his second breakfast or making proper preparations. It begins to rain. By the time dusk approaches, the whole company is tired, hungry, ready to camp, and annoyed at Gandalf's mysterious disappearance earlier in the day.

Suddenly they see what looks like the light of a fire in the distance. They move closer to investigate it, and Bilbo is sent ahead in his first official task as burglar. As he approaches a clearing in the woods, Bilbo sees three huge trolls sitting around a fire, eating mutton. Bilbo tries to make off with one of the trolls' money purses, but they hear the noise and grab him. Trolls will eat just about anything, but they are also short-tempered and dull-witted. They proceed to fight about how to interrogate Bilbo.

The commotion attracts the dwarves, who come to the clearing one at a time. The trolls stop fighting just long enough to hide in the trees and throw a sack over each approaching dwarf. Soon, they have everyone tied up except Bilbo, whom they've forgotten. The trolls decide to cook the dwarves immediately, but then a voice, which sounds like one of the trolls, starts an argument, and the three trolls start fighting again. This fighting goes on for quite some time until the trolls notice that it is almost dawn. The sun peeks over the horizon and the trolls all freeze—sunlight turns trolls to stone.

Gandalf then steps triumphantly into the clearing. He had been throwing his voice to mislead the dwarves and to keep the trolls arguing until morning. He and Bilbo release the dwarves, who are shaken but otherwise unharmed. Searching nearby, they find the trolls' cave and a number of well-wrought weapons, which they take as payment for their pains.

### **Summary: Chapter 3**

As the company sets off the next morning, Gandalf explains that he has checked the road ahead up to the last safe stop along their way. This stop is Rivendell, a city of elves located just beyond the Edge of the Wild, near the foothills of the Misty Mountains, which the company will have to pass. As the company approaches Rivendell, a number of elves approach them and invite them

back to eat and rest. During their stay, they meet Elrond, the great chief elf, who is “as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves, and as kind as summer.”

Elrond can interpret the ancient runes, or markings, found on the company’s new weapons and on Thorin’s map of the mountain. The swords taken from the trolls, he tells them, are renowned goblin-killers from the great wars between the elves and the goblins. Gandalf’s sword is called Glamdring, and Thorin’s is named Orcrist. On Thorin’s map, Elrond is able to read moon-letters—writing visible only in the light of the moon in the proper phase—that describe how to find the secret entrance on the Lonely Mountain. Though they are puzzled by the message, the group is in high spirits when they depart from Rivendell. Everyone is well rested and prepared for the road ahead.

#### **Summary: Chapter 4**

Bilbo and company advance upon the Misty Mountains. Thanks to Elrond’s and Gandalf’s advice, they are able to find a good pass over the mountain range among the many dead-end trails and drop-offs. Still, the climb is long and treacherous. A violent thunderstorm breaks suddenly, forcing them to find shelter. Luckily, two of the dwarves (Fili and Kili) find a cave in a side of the mountain. They bring in the ponies and make camp for the night.

In the middle of the night, Bilbo wakes with a start, just in time to see the ponies get dragged into an enormous crack that has opened in the cave wall. He yells, and out of the crack jump dozens of goblins, who tie up and carry off each member of the company except Gandalf, who was forewarned by Bilbo’s yell.

The goblins carry the dwarves and the hobbit down into the mountain to a huge chamber where the Great Goblin sits. He demands to know what the travelers are doing in his mountain. Thorin tries to explain about the storm, but one of the goblins brings forth the sword that Thorin took from the trolls, which he was carrying when captured. This sword, Orcrist, the goblin-cleaver, is well-known among the goblins.

The goblins go into a rage and the Great Goblin lunges at Thorin to eat him. Suddenly, the torches lighting the cavern go out and the great fire in the middle of the chamber throws its sparks onto the goblins. In the darkness and confusion, a great sword flashes and strikes down the Great Goblin. Then a voice guides the captives out of the cavern. It is Gandalf, who leads the dwarves through the passages and deeper into the mountain. The goblins follow quickly after them, and one of the goblins catches up to the dwarf Dori, who has been carrying Bilbo on his back. Bilbo falls off, strikes his head on the ground, and loses consciousness.

#### **Summary: Chapter 5**

When Bilbo regains consciousness, he can see nothing in the darkness. Feeling around on the floor, he happens to come across a ring, which he puts in his pocket. He has no idea where the rest of the company is, or in which direction the exit lies. Picking the path he feels he had been traveling with the dwarves, he soon comes across an underground lake. There, he discovers a strange creature named Gollum. When Gollum sees Bilbo prowling around, obviously lost, he is

interested and a bit hungry, so he approaches the hobbit. Bilbo brandishes his sword when he hears Gollum's hissing voice.

Gollum does not wish to contend with the sword, so he proposes a riddle game. If Gollum's riddle stumps Bilbo, he will eat Bilbo, but if Bilbo's stumps Gollum, Gollum will show Bilbo the way out of the mountain. Bilbo has no choice but to agree, and they begin asking each other riddles. In the end, Bilbo wins through a bit of trickery. Referring to the ring he had found, he asks, "What have I got in my pocket?" and Gollum cannot guess the right answer. Gollum, however, does not intend to let his meal get away so easily. He goes to his island in the middle of the lake to get his "precious," a golden ring that makes its wearer invisible—the very ring that Bilbo had found.

Unable to find the ring, Gollum suspects the hobbit of stealing it and runs at him in a rage. Through sheer luck, Bilbo happens to slip on the ring, and Gollum runs right past him. Realizing the ring's power, Bilbo follows Gollum, who heads toward the exit thinking that Bilbo is ahead of him. When Gollum gets near the exit, he stops because there are goblins crowded around it. Bilbo leaps over him, runs past the goblins unnoticed thanks to the ring, and just barely manages to squeeze through the door into freedom and fresh air.