

Although this article comments on watching the films, the same basic story and themes are present in the novel.



“Five Ways to Watch *The Hobbit* Like a Catholic” **By Kevin Cotter, Focus.org**

In the past few years, it has been very trendy to view secular movies from a Catholic perspective. While this is a great and worthy task, *The Hobbit* films give us the opportunity this week or month or year (whenever you decide to watch the movies) to view Catholic **works** from a **Catholic perspective!** I’m of course talking about Peter Jackson’s adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s masterpiece, *The Hobbit*. Tolkien was a devout Catholic who called *The Lord of the Rings*, to which *The Hobbit* serves as a prequel, “a fundamentally religious and Catholic work.” Woe to us if we allow this movie [and the books] to pass without seeing the deeper meaning held within!

Here are five ways to watch *The Hobbit* like a Catholic:

1. *Man Up: Get Out of Your Hobbit Hole*

Alright, alright, I know hobbits technically aren’t men in Tolkien’s world of Middle Earth. But, hear me out. Hobbits are by nature very prone to not going on any sort of adventures. They enjoy staying in their comfortable world, having company over for fun, and eating numerous meals throughout the day. Bilbo (the main character of *The Hobbit*) is led out of his world of comfort and into an adventure where he learns what it means to sacrifice himself for the good of others.

Joseph Pearce on EWTN explained it this way, “Bilbo Baggins shows us how to grow up...He begins as a self-centered person who doesn’t want to explore why the truth, why the possibilities. Doesn’t want to risk himself, doesn’t want to sacrifice. And through the course of the journey he grows up. And grows up doesn’t just mean growing in size but growing in stature.”

Don’t hobbits remind you of a certain race of men today? So many men in our world seek comfort and don’t ever put themselves in situations where they can discover truth, where they have to sacrifice themselves for the good of another. We need more men who are willing to go on this sort of journey and become true men.

2. *A Journey of Faith*

The journey that Bilbo sets out on is one of self-discovery. He is going somewhere for a specific mission and purpose. Through his travels he learns more about life, more about himself, and more about his world. He has a mentor and father figure, Gandalf, to help him set out on the right foot, but eventually he lets Bilbo go at it alone.

Our lives are moving somewhere, whether we realize it or not. For the Christian, our journey in this life is a journey towards Heaven. Just like Bilbo we need mentors to get us off on the right foot and also the freedom to eventually stand on our own two feet. The journey Bilbo takes is a reminder of

our own journey. Where are we headed? Have we lost our way? Who is there to help us? And, what trials are we facing?

3. Luck and Providence

The idea of luck is used throughout *The Hobbit*. While Tolkien meant *The Hobbit* to be a religious work, he also knows how to be subtle. As the story unfolds, luck is code for providence [God's guidance of all his creatures with wisdom and love to help them find their ultimate end]. We are given a view of God's providence in our lives, His ability to put us in the right moment and at the right time. And yet, we, like the characters in the book, are still given the freedom to rise to the occasion or refuse the opportunity. Do we view our lives like this? Are our lives mere chance or is God leading us through the thick and the thin?

4. Courage for the Journey

Courage plays a huge role in Tolkien's work. Here we have a hobbit – a creature who loves comfort – who has to face immeasurable risk, danger, and misfortune along the journey. He does not have to muster up his courage on just one occasion, but throughout the journey in various situations and ways. Through these trials, Bilbo develops virtue—the habit of choosing the good. He develops fortitude to carry on, to persevere, even when the situation is dire.

So many people run in the face of discouragement. What can Bilbo teach us about the need to not only stand up for what is right, but the ability to do this over and over again?

5. Dragon Sickness

One of my favorite lessons from Joseph Pearce on EWTN was his description of dragon sickness. In *The Hobbit* many of the characters are overwhelmed and succumb to the temptation of wealth. They wage war over spoils despite peaceful options that are available. *The Hobbit* is a story of the ability to defeat and overcome this sickness, whether it be when Bilbo is on a great adventure or with his family members who are seeking to steal his possessions.

Dragon sickness is a great disease today in the form of the materialism [greediness] our culture holds so dear. We, too, need to slay this dragon. How can we view our lives as giving ourselves in self-sacrifice rather than hoarding the most stuff?

In the end, *The Hobbit* allows us to see ourselves and our faith through an epic journey. As we watch the movies [or read the book], we should be asking questions like, "How am I like Bilbo?" and "What journey am I on?" as we compare and contrast our own adventures with his. The work is meant to be an opportunity for self-reflection and self-discovery through a Catholic perspective. Don't miss it!