



Key Vocabulary: Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Context
Adversary	Opponent; enemy	"He was bruised and begrimed, and they all looked at him questioningly. His adversaries were gone, he said." (The Two Towers)
Avarice	Extreme greed for wealth or material gain	"Boromir was a man of high lineage , and this avarice for wealth and power troubled his true heart little." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Brevity	Shortness of time or duration	"With brevity and hobbit-like courtesy they were soon in conversation with one another." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Discord	Disagreement between people	"For some time the three of them continued to pace to and fro upon the hilltop, deep in thought and discord ." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Elucidate	To make clear or explain something	"The king, who had been elucidated in his sleep, sat up with wide eyes." (The Two Towers)
Enmity	Feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something	"There is little trust left between us. We have been deceived before, and we fear that you mean to deceive us again. You are not enemies but friends." (The Two Towers)
Exhilaration	Feeling of excitement and happiness	"He stood up to his full height, and exhilaration went through us all as we saw that the rising sun was at his back." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Formidable	Inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, or capable	"The wall to the west and north had been formidable indeed, and even high in the moonlight he could see it stretching away, a sheer climbable face." (The Two Towers)
Gregarious	Fond of company; sociable	"He was very gregarious , and was often seen laughing and talking to himself." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Impetuous	Acting or done quickly and without thought or care	"But the others laughed, for all except Boromir had been told of the tale of the imprudent , furious dwarves and the great stone dragon, and they knew that Thorin spoke of the dragon of Erebor." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Indomitable	Impossible to subdue or defeat	"We have passed through the indomitable barriers of the Watcher in the Water and the Gates of Moria." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Inscrutable	Impossible to understand or interpret	"He seemed inscrutable ; and yet they felt the sense of some imminent purpose, of a being intent upon some fixed course, however invisible." (The Fellowship of the Ring)



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Insidious	Proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects	"The evil things in the wood were closing in on him, and he could not see their insidious eyes." (The Fellowship of the Ring)
Malevolent	Having or showing a wish to do evil to others	"The dark power was bending all its will to malevolent purpose"
Malign	Evil in nature or effect	"There was malice in this barbed wire"
Mirth	Amusement, especially as expressed in laughter	"The mirth of the Merry-folk was a torrent"
Muster	Assemble troops, especially for inspection or preparation for battle	"All riders and walkers and other folk that could be found had been gathered together and brought to the muster "
Nimble	Quick and light in movement or action; agile	"The nimblest went first, and with the absence of shouts and cries the sound of their going was soon swallowed up"
Ominous	Giving the impression that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen; threatening; inauspicious	"There was an ominous grinding sound, and the barrow lurched suddenly"
Pernicious	Having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual or subtle way	"It had an evil, pernicious , and far-reaching influence"
Quell	Put an end to, typically by the use of force; suppress	"I shall have to go and quell the ranks, or they will be the death of us"
Quenched	Satisfy (one's thirst) by drinking	"I wish I could quench my thirst, and taste again, one drip of the draught that I gave to Frodo"
Rejoinder	A reply, especially a sharp or witty one	"He was awaiting a rejoinder , but none came"
Resilient	Able to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching, or being compressed; able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions	"They had a high and resilient spirit"
Respite	A short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant	"The company had a respite from fear and weariness and sorrow"
Rouse	Bring out of sleep; awaken	"We must now rouse ourselves and make ready for the next event"
Scruple	A feeling of doubt or hesitation with regard to the morality or propriety of a course of action	"There was no scruple now about handling his treasure: it had become so loathsome to him"
Shrewd	Having or showing sharp powers of judgment; astute	"He was shrewd , and eager for news and the ways of the world"
Sullen	Bad-tempered and sulky; gloomy	"A sullen smoke was drifting slowly up, and the valley was shrouded in mist"



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Sunder	Split apart	"The great rift valley, which in ages past had been sundered from the east to the west"
Surly	Bad-tempered and unfriendly	"The guards were surly and would not listen to questions"
Tarry	Delay or be tardy in acting or doing	"Do not tarry , Sam, or we shall be trapped and all be slain"

Historical and political context for the book

Tolkien began writing "The Lord of the Rings" in the 1930s, during a time of great political upheaval and global conflict. The world was still reeling from the devastation of World War I, and tensions were mounting in Europe as Nazi Germany began to rise to power. Tolkien himself served in World War I, and his experiences likely influenced his portrayal of war and conflict in Middle-earth.

In addition to the global political climate, there were also significant cultural and intellectual movements happening in the early 20th century that may have influenced Tolkien's writing. These included the rise of modernism and existentialism in literature, as well as the development of the field of philology, which Tolkien himself studied and taught. Philology is the study of language and its historical development, and Tolkien's expertise in this field is evident in his creation of the intricate Elvish languages used in "The Lord of the Rings."

At the same time, Tolkien was also drawing on older literary traditions, particularly medieval and Norse mythology. He was deeply influenced by the epic poem "Beowulf," as well as the legends of King Arthur and the Norse sagas. These influences are evident in the epic scope and heroic themes of "The Lord of the Rings," as well as the use of archaic language and poetic form.

Overall, "The Lord of the Rings" reflects the complex historical and cultural context in which it was written, drawing on both contemporary events and ancient traditions to create a rich and enduring work of fantasy literature.