

Imagination For Better Not Worse:
***The Hobbit* in the Primary Classroom**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for the power of story and, in particular, the story of *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien to help build optimism and hope. *The Hobbit* is under-used in primary schools and this thesis demonstrates that it is eminently suitable for children. Without imagination children are vulnerable to sadness and despair. The positive development of imagination through heroic tales is likely to benefit children emotionally and psychologically. The story of *The Hobbit* can be utilised to develop the concept of the Hero's Journey, a persistent trope in oral and recorded literature and an archetype for virtually all human experience. In addition, the thesis shows that critical thinking skills and multiple intelligences can be developed through the use of *The Hobbit*.

Depression in young people is now recognised as a serious public health problem in Australia. Research supports the view that children need optimism. This thesis discusses statistics regarding the increased prevalence of childhood depression and aggression as well as alarming youth suicide reports. The inquiry by the Victorian Parliament into the effects of television violence on children is examined and the scholarly works of Neil Postman, inter alia, are discussed to establish the overall pattern of positive association between television violence and aggression in children. Furthermore, the contention that many contemporary realistic texts do little to promote hopefulness in the young is supported with the opinions of scholars who are respected in the field of children's literature.

Tolkien was a devout Catholic but, even more importantly, he was able to restate traditional values through his imaginative works of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. This has relevance for Catholic educators who strive to relate Gospel values to

popular culture. Christian education must extend imagination beyond morality to help young people to find meaning and purpose in their lives. Through the use of *The Hobbit* and other books of this kind, children can begin to learn not to fear change, failure or setbacks but to see them as important challenges and opportunities for personal growth. This thesis argues for the likely value of a continuum of this type of learning that begins in early childhood, in order to provide a "buffer" for adolescence, particularly for those children who do not recover easily from setbacks. The story of *The Hobbit* is a powerful tool for primary education.

DECLARATION

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

This thesis contains no material extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written except where due reference is made in the main text and Bibliography.

Signed:

Date:.....

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My brother John Patrick Lappin (Glasgow) challenged me in my direction throughout various stages of my work in progress and forced me to a higher level of critical analysis of my research. I am also grateful to my brother for assisting me with the process of formatting this document.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

IMAGINATION FOR BETTER NOT WORSE:

THE HOBBIT IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

This thesis will agree with the view of Joseph Campbell (1971) that it is not society that is to guide the creative hero, but precisely the reverse (p. 391). There is turbulence in modern society and forces that appear beyond the control of teachers, particularly the role of the media. At a time of economic uncertainty and the dominance of realism, these forces can impact negatively on the wellbeing of children leading to aggression and depression. The World Health Organisation (2001) claimed that “ by 2020 depression is expected to be the number one health problem and one of the major causes of death and suffering in the twenty first century. (*New Statesman* December 3). Clinical depression in the young is now acknowledged as a serious public health problem in Australia and evidence of this from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC 2001) will be discussed in Chapter One.

This thesis argues for the power of story to help avoid an archetype of decline and cultural pessimism in the young. Teachers are in a position to counteract some of the negative forces in society that impact on the wellbeing of children. This thesis contends that without imagination children are vulnerable to sadness and despair. The positive development of imagination through literature is likely to benefit children emotionally, intellectually and psychologically by nurturing goodness, optimism and hope. Children must be taught not to fear change, failure or setbacks but to see them as important challenges and opportunities for personal growth.

Christian education must extend imagination beyond morality by teaching children about the importance of a sense of purpose and direction in their lives. The thesis will show that the story of *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien utilises the Hero's Journey motif and is an ideal educational tool to help children understand their own points of passage through life. This thesis contends that there should be a continuum of this type of learning experience that begins in early childhood, in order to provide a "buffer" for adolescence. Education must support the development of well-rounded individuals who are able to feel deeply with compassion for others, to think penetratingly and clearly and act justly for humanity. The story of *The Hobbit* is under-used in primary schools and the strategy of the Hero's Journey motif is neglected. This work will show that *The Hobbit* has multi-functional educational value and is eminently suitable for primary-age children. References in this chapter to Tolkien, his biographer Carpenter, and his publisher Allen and Unwin have been transcribed from the BBC *Audio Portrait* (2001).

The Hobbit for Children

Many teachers avoid the use of *The Hobbit* with primary school children because they equate it with the more complex *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOR*) but Tolkien wrote the heroic journey of *The Hobbit* particularly with young children in mind. This chapter will show that there are some basic similarities between the two stories but they are quite different. Another possible reason for the under-use of *The Hobbit* in primary schools is that many teachers may dwell on the violence that they associate with Tolkien's literature and find difficulty reconciling this with suitable literature for children.

Much has been written about Tolkien's work and many interpretations may leave readers puzzled and unable to make any pragmatic sense out of opinions and definitions. For those who are not skilled in literary criticism, and many teachers are not, much that has been written about Tolkien may seem like a foreign language. The works of Tolkien may appear too complex to teach at a primary-school level. Therefore, for this thesis to have educational value, the challenge is to make convincing educational connections so that teachers will be encouraged to use *The Hobbit* for teaching purposes in the primary school classroom.

The Hobbit has not received the accolades it deserves and compared to the epic *LOR* little has been written of Tolkien's first hobbit story. Critics seem to assume that the book is unworthy of critical attention. In the BBC *Portrait of Tolkien* (2001) authorised biographer Humphrey Carpenter suggests that perhaps it is because Tolkien himself, in the face of criticism, repudiated the technique he used for *The Hobbit*. This is unfortunate. Carpenter also says that Tolkien removed some of his "asides" to juvenile readers but some still remain in the published text and "to Tolkien's regret for he came to dislike them".

This thesis will establish the ways in which Tolkien cleverly manipulated the language to hold the interest of young readers. *Inter alia* the book is about concern for the human situation. It is also about change, heroic transformation and increasing maturity. The tale is carefully constructed and uses the principle of progression and works towards a climax. *The Hobbit* is not complex in design. The plot is simple, the characters are good and bad and there is a clear battle and resolution. Therefore, it is not necessarily restricted to excellent readers. Most children can enjoy *The Hobbit* because it bears a strong resemblance to fairy tale and it stimulates the imaginative process.

The Hobbit is a story for children about the stealing of a dragon's hoard by some dwarves, with the reluctant aid of a little hobbit. *LOR* on the other hand, stretches adult imagination with its account of a world in peril. The title of J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Hobbit* tells you exactly who it is about, and the subtitle - *There and Back Again* – tells you, right from the beginning, that it is going to be the story of a journey. That journey turns out to be a long, thrilling and highly dangerous one, during which the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, encounters dwarves, elves, goblins, trolls, wild wolves, giant spiders and a fearsome fire-breathing dragon. Such an exploit requires to be undertaken with a map, which probably explains why long before Tolkien had finished writing an account of the journey; he was already drawing a map of it.

But *The Hobbit* is not merely the story of a journey. It is a quest, a voyage of discovery and many revelations. Carpenter (BBC 1998) says that the story was originally intended for the amusement of Tolkien's children. Tolkien said that he spun a yarn out of any elements in his head and didn't remember organising them at all. As Tolkien spun that yarn he jotted it down and read it episode by episode to his children. He said they "were so used to me scribbling and until I got something more worthwhile to read to them, they didn't take much interest. But I think they did, on the whole, like the hobbit story".

The Hobbit or *There And Back Again* eventually found its way to the publishers George Allen and Unwin in 1937. C.S. Lewis (BBC 1998) reviewed it in *The Times* saying all "who love that kind of children's book that can be read and reread by adults, should take note that a new star has appeared in this constellation". When asked if *The Hobbit* was a fairy story, Tolkien replied that anything that contains creatures that are called fairies or elves or "any of the kind of ingredients of the ordinary fairy stories of our northern world" would fit his definition. Therefore *The Hobbit* is a fairy story in that

sense because “it’s about times or places where you might meet things like fairies. But that is not the whole story of course”. No fairy story had ever been told before about a hobbit.

Brian Sibley (BBC *Portrait* 2001) reported that when *The Hobbit* was first published in 1937 it was warmly, though not ecstatically, reviewed. It has since sold over 36 million copies all over the world and has been published in many different languages. It is a classic children’s book but it was written much later than the true ‘Golden Age’ books with one war gone and another one looming and there is something quite different in it. *The Hobbit* was the earliest of Tolkien’s prose fictions, and was so popular that when he began writing *LOR* soon afterward, he called it a sequel. This too may have been unfortunate because they are not alike apart from some basic similarities. Paul Kocher (2002) in *Master of Middle Earth* insists that *The Hobbit* is a book that is misunderstood in its purpose and its execution. He says that *The Hobbit* has its own kind of logic quite different from that of *LOR*. To confuse them is to do a disservice to both tales. Kocher goes on to say that *The Hobbit* is essentially independent of the larger work though serving as a quarry of important themes for it (p. 19).

Basic Similarities with The Lord of the Rings

To illustrate this point further, we can notice how similar the two pieces are in their basic structure. Both stories begin at Bilbo’s home with a little hobbit hero who is introduced by the great wizard Gandalf and both heroes set out on a long journey into enemy country to accomplish what seems like an impossible quest. Both Bilbo and Frodo, with their companions, first find refuge at Rivendell, where King Elrond helps

them towards their mission. After overcoming hostile creatures en route, quite different in the two cases but having in common such antagonists as trolls, wargs, orcs, and even spiders (such as the spiders in the forest of Mirkwood that are descendants of Shelob), both groups cross desolate regions of terror. Bilbo's desolation of Smaug parallels the Dead Marshes outside Mordor's north gate.

Kocher argues that *The Hobbit* lacks the great supporting scenes of *LOR* in Fanghorn Forest, at Helm's Deep, Edoras, the Paths of the Dead, and so on, but despite their rich diversity that is all they are, structurally supporting scenes to the all-important struggle of Frodo and Sam toward Mount Doom (p. 30). Finally, both plots build to battles that align most of the people and races prominent in previous actions of the story against each other and subside in the end with a return of the hobbits to the homes from which they set out.

All this is not to minimise the polarities in tone and scope between *The Hobbit* and *LOR*. Kocher further argues that if *The Hobbit* is a quarry it is one in which the blocks of stone lie scattered about in a much looser and less imposing pattern than that in which the epic assembles those that it chooses to borrow. For example:

Bilbo's enemies are serial, not united under any paragon of evil, as is to happen in the epic. *The Hobbit's* trolls, goblins (orcs), spiders and dragon know nothing of one another and are all acting on their own. They are certainly not shown to be servants of the nameless and nebulous Necromancer, whose only function in the story is to cause Gandalf to leave Bilbo and company to confront exciting perils Unaided except for the Ring, which comes out of nowhere belonging to no one. Also, as there is no alliance on behalf of evil, so there is none against it. Dwarves, elves and men, act mainly for their selfish interests, often at cross-purposes, until a goblin army forces a coalition upon them hostile to all at the very end. Even then the issue is relatively localised and not world wide in its ramifications (pp. 30-31).

Some of the places later to be imaginatively visualised in *LOR*, appear for the first time in *The Hobbit*, but its geography tends to be quite basic and it is not given a continental context. Bilbo's home is simply the Hill with no Shire and no hobbit society surrounding it. Rivendell is a valley where the Last Homely House stands. It is hardly described at all and does not resemble the splendidly civilised palace it is to become in *LOR* (p. 31).

Bilbo's journey leads him north-eastward to Erebor and the reader has not the least notion that the broad cities of Gondor, capitals of the west, lie facing Mordor to the south. The existence of oceans and Undying Lands somewhere or other is mentioned but only in passing. Kocher claims that in fact, since Bilbo's world is never called Middle-earth until we run across a reference to the constellation of the Wain (stars in the Great Bear) in its northern sky, we may be forgiven for wondering if it is any place in particular, assuming, of course, that we have not read *LOR*. It would seem that, at this stage, Tolkien has not yet learned to take the pains he later takes to make his readers accept this world as our own planet earth and the events of his story as a portion of earth's distant pre-history (p. 31).

The Hobbit is often amusing. Tolkien obviously believed that children would enjoy laughing at the characters as well as shivering in sympathetic excitement with them at other times. At the start of the story he makes Bilbo the butt of Gandalf's joke in sending the dwarves unannounced on a home visit to the surprise and "confustication" of the little hobbit. The dwarves, whose manners leave much to be desired compared with the hobbit (albeit comically presented, this is a good learning point for teachers to linger on the subject of good manners with young children), proceed to take advantage of Bilbo's hospitality by teasing him and eating up all his food. Then Tolkien proceeds on to the lamentable humour of the troll scene, hangs his

dwarves up in the trees, rolls them in barrels, touches the riddle scene with wit and makes the talk between Bilbo and Smaug triumphantly ridiculous. Tolkien tops it all off with Bilbo's return home to find his goods being auctioned off and his reputation for respectable stupidity in ruins (p. 33). Kocher says *The Hobbit* was never meant to be a wholly serious tale and Tolkien did not intend his young audience to listen and read without laughing often. By contrast, *LOR* may occasionally evoke smiles, but most of the time it is quite dark and issues go too deep for laughter or for young children. In the interval between the two stories, children can be "sent off to bed and their places taken by grown ups, or young in heart, to hear of a graver sort of quest in which every human life is secretly engaged" (p. 33).

Kocher argues that the beginning of wisdom in understanding *The Hobbit* is to think of Tolkien as a storyteller in a chair by the fireside, telling the story to a semicircle of children sitting on the floor facing him. From the opening paragraphs the narrator addresses the children directly. Tolkien loses no time in telling his young listeners how hobbits look and behave "when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along" (p. 20). There is no doubt that Tolkien wrote *The Hobbit* for children.

It can be seen that sometimes Tolkien uses the direct address technique to create anticipation. An example of this is when he introduces Gandalf in the opening chapter of the book and says, "Gandalf! If you had heard only a quarter of what I have heard about him . . . you would be prepared for any sort of remarkable tale" (p. 5, *The Hobbit*). Kocher directs attention to Tolkien's remarks which take on a genial, joking tone, as in pointing out the flaw in Bilbo's plan for freeing the captive dwarves by putting them into barrels (his inability to put himself into one): "Most likely you saw it some time ago and have been laughing at him; but I don't suppose you would have done half as well yourselves in his place." Then, there are jocular interjections of no special

moment, but aimed at maintaining a playful intimacy: “If you want to know what *cram* is, I can only say that I don’t know the recipe; but it is biscuitish” (p. 20).

Tolkien makes the technique work for him expositoryly in making important shifts in the plot sequence clear to children. Kocher argues that every scene is described from Bilbo’s point of view and describes none in which Bilbo himself is not present. At one stage he diverges to report what happened at Lake-town while Bilbo and the dwarves were shut inside Erebor, when Smaug the dragon attacked the town and was killed by Bard the archer. So Tolkien opens the chapter with the sentence: “Now if you wish, like the dwarves, to hear news of Smaug, you must go back again to the evening when he smashed the door and flew off in a rage, two days before” (p. 21).

The careful score keeping of days elapsed at every stage of the tale helps child audiences to keep track of time. Having narrated the events at Lake-town, Tolkien steers children back to the hero with the words “we will return to Bilbo and the dwarves.” And, on occasion, in order to remind children of an important fact, already explained some time before, which they may have forgotten, Tolkien repeats it. Thus when the master in Lake-town judges Thorin’s claim to the treasure by inheritance to be a fraud, Tolkien reiterates what Gandalf and Elrond acknowledged earlier: “He was wrong. Thorin of course, was really the grandson of the king under the Mountain” (p. 21). This care in keeping the plot crystal clear gives consideration to possible squirming and short attention span of young children.

Throughout the book, and clearly for the benefit of children, Tolkien uses the method of prefacing the introduction into the story of each new race with a paragraph or so, setting out in plain words, whatever needs to be known about its looks, its habits, its traits and whether it is good or bad. Kocher explains that Tolkien started this practice off with the hobbits (p. 21). He extends it to trolls, dwarves, goblins, eagles, elves and

lakemen as each of these makes its entry. These little capsules of racial qualities are enlivened usually with personal interjections such as “Yes I am afraid trolls do behave like that, even those with only one head each” or “Eagles are not kindly birds, but they did come to the rescue of Bilbo’s party, and a very good thing too!” (p. 21). The goblins are wicked and bear a special grudge against dwarves “because of the war, which you have heard mentioned, but which does not come into this tale.” Elves are hunters by starlight at the edges of the wood and are “Good People.” After such set pieces no small auditor will be in any doubt as to which people to cheer for (p. 22).

Tolkien uses minor but persistent onomatopoeia in the telling of the story, which is a delight to childish ears. Teachers will note that the prose is full of sound effects, which the eye of the reader might miss but the hearing of the young listener will not. Kocher gives some examples of this: Bilbo’s doorbell rings ding-dong-a-ling- dang; Gandalf’s smoke rings go *pop!* the fire from his wand explodes with a *poof*; Bombur falls out of a tree *plop* onto the ground; Bilbo falls *splash!* into the water, and so on at every turn. Nor are these sound effects limited to the prose. Many of the poems are designed more for onomatopoeic purposes than for content. One prime example is the song of the goblins underground after their capture of Bilbo and the dwarves, with its *Clash, crash! Crush, smash!* and *Swish, smack! Whip crack and Ho, ho, my lad.* The *elves’ barrel-rolling* song has all the appropriate noises, from *roll-roll-rolling* to *splash plump! and down they bump!* Tolkien’s methods for the telling of this tale draw the principal parameters. The children listening to its recital must be young enough not to resent the genial fatherliness of the I-You technique, the encapsulated expositions, sound effects, and the rest (pp. 22-23).

Most importantly, *The Hobbit* provides plenty of scope for imagination. The tropes and techniques used by Tolkien allow the literature to be readily adapted for

performance both by teachers and children. This may happen during the read-aloud process or when younger children are engaged in hobbit puppet dialogues, or when older children present 'Hobbit Theatre' and creatively stage 'All the World's a Hobbit!' It is extraordinary to think that *The Hobbit* and *LOR*, which began life as the story of *The Hobbit*, a story that Tolkien told to his own children, have proved so full of meaning for so many different kinds of people. They will undoubtedly prove to be key books when we look back at the 20th century. With his passing, Tolkien left this world the richer by giving us the opportunity to be transported into those other worlds of his extraordinary imagination, thus encouraging the imagination of his readers.

The role of imagination will be discussed in this thesis because of its educational value in developing humanitarianism and optimism especially at a time when children are being confronted with adversity. Media reports regarding the increasing extent of violence in our schools and the growing incidence of depression in the young have led to this research. Depression is not a fleeting sadness but a pervasive and relentless sense of despair. Some of the more common symptoms found in children are a lack of interest in life sometimes accompanied by weight loss, loss of appetite, feelings of uselessness and sleep disturbance. (Retrieved 12 July 2003 <http://www.depressionet.com.au/sod.html>). A search for further information involved extensive reading that included information from government reports, from education departments and from relevant scholarly texts. Further support for the contention of this thesis will be provided in current evidence from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2001) confirming the increased incidence of playground violence in schools. This includes violence that is perpetrated both *against* children, and *by* children, offences and allegations against teachers and the alarming youth suicide numbers.

There is also evidence from the NHMRC (2001) of the increasing extent of clinical depression in the young. This is now recognised as a serious public health problem in Australia. It has been reported that problems are often manifested during adolescence with origins in the early years of childhood development. This has obvious implications for primary teaching. However, if some of these problems are not visible or recognised in the early years, many teachers may assume that such problems of early depression in children do not exist. Teachers regularly encounter sensitive children who may either have low self-esteem or have difficulty recovering from setbacks and disappointments. These children may not attract the full attention of teachers who are also required to deal with the problems that are immediately obvious such as physically and emotionally aggressive children.

About the Title

The title of this thesis *Imagination for Better Not Worse*, arose from today's paradox with the promise of technology to improve our lives on the one hand and worsening societal discord on the other. Imagination can be either constructive or destructive. It can be used for better – or for worse. If young people with vivid imaginations are presented with violent images, they will either be turned *off* or turned *on* depending on the humanitarian values they have acquired. This thesis contends that imagination is one of the keys to virtue. For whilst a child may *know* what is right, the child must also have the *desire* to do what is right and this is guided by imagination. Kilpatrick, Gregory and Wolfe (1994) in *Books That Build Character* claim, “in theory, reason should guide our moral choices, but in practice it is imagination much more than reason that calls the shots” and too often our reason obediently submits to what our

imagination has already decided” (p. 23). The Latin proverb *fortis imaginatio generat causam*, when translated says a “strong imagination generates the cause.” A strong imagination has the power to cause things to happen. Imagination has the power to propel us forward towards a destiny, for better or worse. The aim of education must be to propel society forward in the best possible ways that benefit humanity.

Aristotle (Quotation posted on the World Wide Web), retrieved December 28, 2003 www.art.neu.edu/about/mission_statement.pdf claimed, “the soul never thinks without an image”. For better or worse, the trans-rational is constantly in motion with the rational. People have a better chance of understanding events in their lives and taking appropriate actions to deal with them if their imagination is thriving (p. 1). Christian educators who accept Aristotle’s claim must ensure that images fed to the soul will be such that promote all that is *for better not worse* for humanity. Gospel connections are an essential link in the title of this thesis.

Gospel Connections

If Gospel values are to be relevant to popular culture, the role of imagination must be given deeper appreciation. Imagination is important to the Gospel because it is the basis of hope. Nowadays teaching is based on rational propositions, compared to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, which was primarily through stories and actions. It is possible that modern educators have been seduced by rationalism and have neglected the power of story and metaphor.

Education has little worth if it produces clever monsters and sad people. To use the well-known words of scripture: “What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Mark Ch: 8 -36). Educating the imagination of

children must always be *for better not worse* by bringing out “the best” of all that is good and courageous in children, so that their spirits will be hopeful, empowering them to strive to make the world better because they have lived in it. Children need faith in the knowledge that no person is too humble to be precious to God and every person has the potential to be a hero. Imagination is essential food for the soul to help nurture and sustain the magic and the wonders that lurk in the shadows of every ordinary day.

Definitions

Trope

The word trope is derived from the Greek *tropos* meaning ‘to turn’ (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*) and generally refers to the metaphorical use of language. In this thesis it is used in the way most usually used in discourse studies, to mean a repeated motif or pattern such as the heroism and the courage of the hero throughout the Hero’s Journey. The tropes examined in this thesis are heroism, courage/moral certitude, optimism and hope.

Literature for the Soul

As educators attempt to identify the best qualities of children’s literature, it can be a daunting responsibility because literature can affect our lives so deeply. Paterson (1981) claims that literature “takes readers beyond everyday experiences, broadening their background, developing their imagination and sense of humour, enabling them to grow in humanity” (p. 11). The best of imaginative literature is herein defined as the type of text that brings joy to the human heart, educating the hearts of children for humanity and fostering an optimistic outlook on life. It is the vast body of traditional

literature that includes myth, legend, folklore and fairy tales. The use of the term “text” refers to books, film, television and multimedia materials. The hero is male or female.

Optimism

The term ‘optimism’ means something that runs much deeper than merely being a “Pollyanna” who always sees the silver lining and expects a happy ending.

Fundamentally, optimism is about what children deeply believe about the causes of events in their lives. Seligman (1998) one of the world’s experts on motivation states:

Children who are most at risk for depression believe the causes of the bad events that happen to them are permanent. Since the cause will persist forever, they reason bad events are always going to recur. In contrast, children who bounce back well from setbacks and resist depression, believe that the causes of bad events are temporary (p. 52).

Optimism is different from hope for it is not the certainty that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, irrespective of how it turns out.

Hope

Children must have hopeful hearts if they are to imagine recovery, *ne cede malis* and resist depression. If we accept that imagination is the basis of hope, it becomes clear that this is an even more powerful role for imagination for without imagination we may tend to despair. The American Jesuit writer, William Lynch (1974) in *Images of Hope* claimed:

One of the permanent meanings of imagination has been that it is the gift that envisions what cannot yet be seen, the gift that constantly proposes to itself that the boundaries of the possible are wider than they seem. Imagination, if it is in prison and has tried every exit, does not panic or move into apathy but sits down to try and envision

another way out. It is always slow to admit that all the facts are in, that all the doors have been tried, and that it is defeated. It is not so much that it has vision, as that it is able to wait, to wait for a moment of vision which is not yet there, for a door that is not yet locked. It is not overcome by the absoluteness of the present moment (p. 35).

Violence and Realism in Texts

Children are surrounded by harsh realities that include violent images through television and multimedia together with an abundance of “new realism” in children’s literature. Much of this is violent and much is grim and gloomy with barely a hint of happiness, and altogether, likely to leave some young readers anxious, particularly children who find it difficult to bounce back well from setbacks and resist depression. Hunt (1995) says the “most common view of the history of children’s literature is that the books have progressed steadily from didacticism to freedom or from strictness to corruption” (p. ix).

Heather Scutter (1999) in her critical analysis of contemporary teenage fiction refers to a number of books that have attempted to deal with issues of societal discord. She refers to this trend by stating that it “would show more sensitivity to empower children not as ‘enlightened victims’ but rather as wiser and more resistant agents in their own lives” (p. 113). It is not good enough if exposure to “reality” makes children more “knowing” but also more insecure, frightened or sad. This thesis will demonstrate the multi-functional usefulness of *The Hobbit* to develop in children the essential qualities of courage and hope for the future, in addition to sequential skill development for critical literacy.

Examination of Texts

This research contains a bibliographic study rather than empirical data. Data from government departments has been examined, together with the works of many scholars both past and present, who are respected in the field of children's literature. Texts selected for direct reference will be reviewed in terms of their relevance to the subject matter of the different chapters in this thesis. The thesis is necessarily supported and enriched by the various texts read as part of this research. Nonetheless, the most valuable resource for this work is the author's life experience *both* as a teacher and as a parent. In order to understand the educational needs of children it has been essential to work with them in the educational/social arena. Being a parent has provided important additional insight into the emotional needs of children. All the observations of young children and all the research studied, have underpinned and strengthened this thesis to promote the power of story as the greatest gift *both* for teachers and for children.

Literature Review

Many texts have been read and consulted in preparation for this thesis. Information has been gathered from books, documents, newspapers, journal articles, academic papers, audio-visual materials, Internet resources, miscellaneous documents, historical evidence and empirical observations. The texts referred to in this thesis have been chosen for their contemporary relevance to issues such as the increasing incidence of violence and clinical depression in the young, the negative effects of violent images on children, particularly the relationship between television and negative behaviour and the crucial educational value of the role of imagination and literature to develop

optimism and hopeful hearts in the young. The main texts will be reviewed in terms of the content of each chapter of the thesis in the following order:

- Tolkien and *The Hobbit* for Children
- Statistics and Reports
- Violent and Sad Images
- Imagination and Hope
- The Hero and the Hobbit
- The Hobbit and Critical Literacy

Tolkien and *The Hobbit* for Children

Paul Kocher's *Master of Middle Earth* (2000) has been a valuable source of information for this thesis. His work supports the use of *The Hobbit* with children, demonstrated in the earlier part of this chapter. Although Kocher focuses primarily on Tolkien's *LOR* he includes one small chapter on *The Hobbit*. Whilst it is a brief chapter of some twelve pages only, it has particular relevance for this thesis because Kocher argues that the story of *The Hobbit* is misunderstood, both in its purpose and execution, and that despite its surface connections with *LOR* the two works are fundamentally unlike. *LOR* "stretches the adult imagination with its account of a world in peril" whereas *The Hobbit* is a story for children. Kocher refers to the "unilinear simplicities" of Bilbo's "adventure" (p. 19). This may explain why it is difficult to find scholarly research about *The Hobbit* compared to a vast amount of research and analysis of the epic *LOR*.

Kocher's work provided a valuable commentary since Tolkien's epic *LOR* has become one of the most widely read works of literature ever published and has recently

become the subject matter of a hugely successful film trilogy adaptation. Kocher considers Tolkien's work as a whole, showing the relationship of *The Hobbit* to the major work. In the light of the success of *LOR* it is possible that *The Hobbit* will eventually be considered a worthy subject of a film for children.

Essential background to this research was a study of the author behind *The Hobbit* and a major background source was the BBC Radio Collection *J.R.R. Tolkien: An Audio Portrait* (2001). Brian Sibley, one of the dramatists of the acclaimed BBC Radio 4 production of *LOR*, examined both Tolkien the man and the worlds he created. Interviews were drawn from a number of archive radio and television programmes. They featured Tolkien himself as well as his original publisher Rayner Unwin, his biographer Humphrey Carpenter and many others who knew and worked with him. Tolkien's story was related from his childhood in South Africa and Warwickshire and his experiences in the Great War, to his Oxford Years and later retirement. Also examined were the themes and landscapes that shaped the story of *The Hobbit*. This source was useful for the preparation of the *Portrait of Tolkien* included in Appendix A. Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories" in *Tree and Leaf* (2001) provided the writer of this thesis with valuable insights into the imaginative mind of Tolkien as he explored the nature of the genre of *faerie* and fantasy and offers his definition of imagination.

Statistics and Reports

Data from government departments supports the argument of this study that education needs to provide strategies to counteract depression and aggression in the young. ABS data showed that violence in school playgrounds is also one of the most critical issues of concern. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC

2001) confirming that depression in young people is a major concern for society provided a most useful report. This must be of crucial concern to educators. Data from the *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (ABS 2001) showed that in addition to the extremely high incidence of “successful” youth suicide, there are many thousands of young people who make “unsuccessful” attempts at suicide every year. As a consequence we are left wondering about the continuing journey of these individuals. Although they may be *surviving*, there has been no follow-up research so we do not know if they are *thriving*. Data supports the fact that damage control is a costly and difficult enterprise but there is certainly a need for intervention, which in turn supports the contention of this thesis that intervention in the early years of childhood development, is likely to be of value.

Violent and Sad Images

The *raison d'être* for this thesis has arisen from extensive reading of an abundance of reports and popular press perceptions and community concerns which support the contention of this thesis that aggression breeds depression and *vice versa*. Responsible adults cannot ignore reports when it seems that offences concerning children are on the rise. One example in the Melbourne *Age Vox Pop* (1999), reported an investigation of the sexual abuse of two five-year-old girls at a Melbourne primary school. The coordinator of the clinic reported that the trigger that damaged the sexual development of the children who perpetrated this crime was “exposure to sexually explicit material on T.V, in films and on the Internet” (p. 9). For educators, the incidence of playground violence and all other social issues, which impact negatively on the wellbeing of students raises questions relating to cause and effect and the role of the school and the teacher. There is much that is beyond the control of teachers,

particularly when very young children nowadays have daily access within their own homes, to television and multimedia materials that include varying levels of violence. Children are viewing material on television and film that relies for entertainment on shock tactics and titillation rather than inspired imagination. There are many examples of “realism” as well as the use of brilliant, bizarre and “anarchic” or “black” humour, often seeking to tear down “sacred cows” of society. For example, a program such as *South Park* (SBS, 2003), although producers may claim that it is not aimed at children, is nevertheless currently screened at 8.30pm and accessible to children both with and without the presence of parents. The Bracks-initiated inquiry by the Victorian Parliamentary Committee (2000) into *The Effects of Television and Multimedia on Children and Families in Victoria* found:

Children in families with low encouragement and low restriction were classified as Unrestricted and had the least beneficial viewing pattern of all groups . . . a lot of viewing was done in the absence of parents where there was the possibility of watching adult programming without the benefit of parental mediation (p. 22).

The results of the inquiry (2000) have been particularly useful given the vast amount of commentary that exists on a wide range of issues surrounding multimedia and television in particular. The report has been a major source of reference for this study. It supports the concerns outlined in this thesis regarding the effects of television violence on young children, although the report does not make any particular suggestions for educational strategies to counteract possible negative effects of television as this thesis does.

To investigate further the argument that television is a most influential and powerful medium for better - or worse, the works of Neil Postman were examined. This provided valuable underpinning for the thesis. Postman is recognised as one of

America's sharpest social critics and communications theorists. He seems to be able to cast a shrewd eye over contemporary American culture to reveal the worst and the best of society's habits of discourse, trends in education and obsessions with technological novelty. In *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994) Postman mobilises the insights of psychology, history, semantics, 'McLuhanology', and common sense on behalf of his original thesis. He argues the decline of childhood today – and the corresponding threat to the notion of adulthood. In *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century* (1999) Postman provided useful background knowledge for this thesis because he presents an overview of *Enlightenment* thinking and a critique of modern culture, which he feels, is in dire need of moral guidance. As Postman sees it, children are no longer viewed as adults in the making, but instead as consumers to be influenced and exploited for commercial gain.

Margot Hillel (2001) in *'Know You what it is to be a Child?' A Study of the Representation of Children in Australian Children's Literature*, says that for young adults, the "troubled adolescent" is a theme within late twentieth-century realist literature (pp. 2-3). This thesis contends that whilst it is important for children to cope with "troubles" as part of life's journey, too much realism can be depressing. Realism in young adult texts is discussed in this dissertation because often the language used is easily accessible by younger readers, even those who are not particularly skilled readers and in addition, young children can pick up these stories vicariously through older siblings and others. The "trickle down" effect has implications for all children since they may not be able to interpret these realities without feeling sadness or fear. Intent on, or obsessed with depicting reality, this trend in literature presents stories of dysfunctional homes, abuse, violence, incest, depression and suicide, and worst of all, often with no "happy ending" or hope for the future. It is one thing to present "real"

problems that can be solved, but it is another thing to present scenarios with no solutions. This does not cultivate young people with hope in their hearts.

Hillel's work provides valuable source material for this thesis regarding the history of childhood, images of childhood and particularly notions of the innocent child in literature. In addition, her study raised awareness of the pervasive nature of politics in children's literature (p. 15). Hillel draws on a wide range of approaches to the criticism of children's literature and examines the history of children's literature, cultural studies, film and visual art criticism and discourse theory. She concludes that some "apparently contradictory" notions of childhood are "indicative of societal anxieties about childhood itself" (p. iii). This work provides a valuable overview of 160 years of Australian children's literature.

Heather Scutter (1999) in *Displaced Fictions* presents a critical analysis of Australian fiction aimed at the teenage market over the last 20 years. Her aim was to challenge the notion that books are beyond criticism, particularly when award-winning novelists write them. Scutter's analytical approach in examining some of these books was helpful in terms of clarifying the construction of the child. In addition, Scutter stressed the pressing need for greater scrutiny of the politics of young adult fiction. In this way, her work holds some similar concerns to this thesis.

Scutter (1999) comments on "new realism" in fiction and finds much of it "manipulative and self-indulgent". In a close analysis of a number of much-praised texts, Scutter suggests that this move away from traditional literature may lead to something equally false because "it may leave readers wallowing in dread rather than joy" (p. vi). Teachers have a responsibility to scrutinise the texts they present to their students. Scutter believes that much of the enthusiasm for young adult fiction of the 1980s and 1990s is misplaced (p. 4).

Scutter (1999) argues that “We’ve moved a long way from an understandable desire to give teenagers and young adults knowledge and understanding of the world, to a peculiar, almost pathological stress on force feeding our young people knowledge represented as real, true, necessary (p. 113). Scutter (1999) writes:

Although no one wants to exclude or to censor, there’s an uneasy feeling that certain themes, ways of looking at experience, ways of talking, are not suitable for children: hence a new category, a new shelf in the children’s section of the library. And within that young adult category, it seems, there’s a duty to take on the grim and gloomy, to look for a taboo to break (p. 6).

If educators accept that young people today are in fact more aware of their legal rights and this knowledge has its place in education, they must also be concerned to ensure that students are likewise aware of the consequences of their actions, for better or worse.

Imagination and Hope

In further support of the contention of this thesis that early years prevention is better than adolescent intervention, Steiner Education (1996) claims that many current adolescent emotional problems are likely to be linked with problems from the past and have their origins in the primary years. Steiner states that usually, in school programs designed to inform the mind and develop career skills, there is very little time for teachers to deal with the “inner-life” problems of children (p. 5). Similarly, internationally renowned business consultant Paul Stoltz (1998) in his foreword to the *Adversity Quotient* writes: “For too many people, hopelessness is defined very early in life” (p. vii).

Maurice Saxby, renowned critical commentator on Australian children's literature, wrote *History of Australian Children's Literature (1841-1941) Volumes I and II*, a study of the development of children's literature in Australia. Later Saxby wrote *Proof of the Puddin'* to extend this study to 1990 and it covers a vast amount of material. In Volume II of the *History*, Saxby explains that his book is mainly a pedagogical attempt to provide guidelines for adults who believe that what children read is an important matter (1971 p. 8). *Proof of the Puddin'* (1993) provides a reference for those "who see reading as a vital element in the linguistic, social, emotional and spiritual development of children, and who see Australian books as an important means of developing a national as well as a personal identity" (p. 1). As a practical guide to using good literature in the classroom, Saxby (1991), in *Give Them Wings*, has been a valuable source of reference for this thesis.

A Crisis of Hope

Paul Stoltz (1998) provides valuable insights in *Adversity Quotient* and refers to our time as 'The Age of Adversity' and says that the world is facing "a crisis of hope". He writes that children, teachers, professionals, parents and teenagers alike, face a relentless barrage of adversity in their lives. Adversity is on the rise and it strikes earlier and more unremittingly than ever (p. 38). This does make life sound rather like a perilous journey. However, it depicts the growing reality that adversity is a real, pervasive and inevitable part of life but this thesis argues that it need not crush the imaginative spirits of the young or the spirits of their teachers. Young students need to be prepared for hard knocks in life and often a good story can provide a valuable jolt and save them from having to experience a real catastrophe. Imaginative literature has a

force that can inspire the reader's soul to *nil desperandum* and draw out all that is noble, thereby increasing human resistance to that which is cheap and demeaning. It is easier to teach a child the difference between right and wrong through imaginative stories because they speak to young people more eloquently than a teacher with a list of rules.

Stoltz contrasts the fact that some people succeed no matter what obstacles are thrown in their path, while others surrender and see their dreams crushed by adversity. Stoltz argues that this is because “some people place limitations on what they allow themselves to imagine. This limits the range of what's possible, before the vision is even formed” (p. 285). The Latin term *a posse ad esse* reminds us that it is possible to take action on a dream, thus turning it into a vision. It is at this moment that some of the possible realities and sacrifices start to sink in. If we refuse to act on our dream it will remain *only* a dream, never a vision. Those who have courage and hope in their hearts are unlikely to be dissuaded. Stoltz argues that on the journey of life we can be “so easily distracted by other, easier paths or disheartened by the relentless effort required to forge ahead” (p. 286). Stoltz recommends a process of skills for building up what he calls our “adversity quotient” allowing us to “break free of the cycle of despair and live a life filled with hope and purpose” (p. 287). The true purpose of his work is to provide a mechanism that fortifies us so that we can begin to reignite the essential element of hope, without which the future may look very bleak. Stoltz cites Joel Barker, noted futurist and author of *Paradigms* who presented a model to demonstrate the role of *vision* in the continuous cycle between hopefulness and helplessness. He defines a vision as “dreams in action”. Barker suggests that a compelling vision of the future can break us free of the cycle of despair (p. 284).

Rosemary Johnston is a recognised authority in the field of children's literature and literacy and has wide teaching experience. Her insights in *Literacy: Reading,*

Writing and Children's Literature (2001) provided theoretical background reading for this thesis. In addition, Johnston's contribution to the ChiLPA Project (2002) regarding an ethics of hope in children's literature provided valuable support for the contentions of this thesis.

Dr. Martin Seligman has become recognised for his research on *learned optimism* and the occurrences of depression in children. Valuable insights for this thesis have been gained from his research. Particularly useful amongst Seligman's numerous works were *The Optimistic Child* (1997), *The Science of Optimism and Hope: Research Essays in Honor of Martin E. P. Seligman* (2000) and *Authentic Happiness* (2002). Seligman (1997) detailed his *Penn Depression Prevention Program* that broke new ground in 1990 and has since been renamed the *Penn Resiliency Project*. The goal of the *Penn* study was to evaluate school-based interventions designed to improve student wellbeing by preventing depressive symptoms in adolescence. Depressive symptoms and episodes increase dramatically from late childhood through adolescence. Depression is a recurrent disorder for many and the incidence of adult depression is higher for those who suffer from depression as children or adolescents. An important goal for educators is to arm children with tools that protect them against this disorder (pp. 115-132).

Seligman refined a number of cognitive techniques and exercises to help relieve and heal depression and even prevent future recurrences of depression. Students learn techniques from cognitive therapy including identifying negative beliefs and interpretive styles, examining evidence for and against negative beliefs and generating alternative, realistic interpretations for problems. Students also learn techniques for assertiveness, negotiation, relaxation and decision-making and some of this was done through stories that present anti-depression skills (p. 118). Seligman (2000) in *The*

Science of Optimism and Hope claims that the concepts of optimism and hope are essential to positive psychology. This work was valuable because it included essays with insights by leading authorities in this area. Seligman (2002) applied the most recent science in psychology to the most basic human question – how can we be good and how can we be happy? This was an enriching source for this thesis because it summarised a huge amount of literature and spoke joyfully and optimistically about what it means to be fully alive to a meaningful life. Seligman’s work supports the contention of this thesis that negative experiences are a natural part of life’s journey but it is not these events *per se* but the thoughts we use to explain them to ourselves that make a difference – for better or worse. Seligman argues that people at risk of depression should be able to fend it off by identifying their “automatic thoughts” and by intellectually developing a reflex for “disputing” the severely negative thoughts they think. Seligman claims that these techniques can speed recovery from depression and actually prevent it (pp. 194-214).

Seligman’s techniques imply a cognitive “readiness” including questionnaires and screening for older children and self-questioning methods that require adult leadership. This thesis contends that in the early years automatic thought processes can be disputed through storytelling and discussion thereby giving children positive coping strategies they can use independently whenever necessary. There are similarities between the works of Stoltz and Martin Seligman who argue for the fundamental truth that life is hard – but how you handle it determines your destiny. There are elements of the Hero’s Journey trope throughout their arguments, particularly the notion that life is an adventure and this supports the contentions of this thesis that will be explored further in Chapter Three.

Imagination and Faith

The work of Fr. Anthony Kelly (2000) in his manuscript *Faith Seeking* was extremely enriching and affirming of the role of imagination in faith development. The work is relevant to this thesis because it is a commentary on Tolkien's theology of fairy stories, which examines the various features of artistic fantasy and reflects on the theological meaning of fantasy and its relationship to the Gospel. Kelly's work served to consolidate the belief that if we ignore the role of the imagination we may become mere "theory machines" (p. 29). Kelly reminds us that "Love for God with a whole heart, soul, mind and strength, loses nothing if it also includes the powers of imagination" (p. 29). It cannot be possible to love God without imagination. Imagination is the foundation of hope.

Tolkien was a devout Catholic but even more importantly, he was able to restate traditional values through his imaginative works of *The Hobbit* and *LOR*. We cannot ignore the role played by religion in the formation of culture because so much of art, painting, music, architecture, literature and science is intertwined with religion. The great religions are the stories of how different people of different times and places tried to achieve a sense of transcendence. This is particularly important for Catholic educators to note as we try to relate Gospel values to popular culture.

The Age (2002) discussed the works of Tolkien and popular culture:

We are supposed to be living in a post-modern world in which values are relative, the novel is dead and children prefer the wham and pow of video games to the printed word. But the hobbit and the wizard have prevailed despite the times, perhaps because of them (p. 8).

Tolkien's self-contained creation, imagined as a retreat from the modern world, has been embraced in a manner that would no doubt surprise the author himself. Kelly

(2000) explains that Tolkien views the Magical as the essential face of *Faerie* and “its connection with religious experience or moral responsibility is variable”. He suggests that Tolkien had a theology of fairy story realm, but with no theology or evidence of religious activity *in* the stories. Kelly wonders, on the one hand, if this kind of literature diminishes development of religious faith then answers this question by citing Randolph Helms (1974) Tolkien’s biographer, who remarked that “the poetry of mythic imagination will not, for Tolkien, replace religion so much as make it possible, putting imaginatively starved modern man back once again into the awed and reverent contact with the living universe” (p. 10). It seems logical to suppose then, that faith will be served for the better if it is more attuned through the powers of imagination, to the wonders of the universe.

The Imagination of Tolkien

There are many dissertations on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and one reason for this may be that he was a master of imaginative literature. An example, and stimulating reading for this thesis, was an introductory and scholarly appreciation of *Tolkien’s World* by Helms (1974) in which Helms was able to make many psychological connections, in particular, some of Tolkien’s Freudian analogies such as when Tolkien says that Bilbo Baggins dwells in a hobbit hole with a round door, a home aptly named Bag End - a bag with a round opening, the perfect womb symbol. Helms goes on to point out that the round door opened out onto a “tube-shaped” comfortable hallway with panelled walls and floors tiled and carpeted . . . pantries (lots of those), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens and dining rooms! Helms claims that the owner of such a house wants the moist comforts of the embryo and Hobbits prefer

dinner “twice a day when they can get it” (p. 45). Helms gives the impression that his own imagination is working as much overtime as Tolkien himself apparently put into his work, a veritable testimony to Tolkien’s ability to stimulate his readers’ imaginations in an almost infinite number of directions.

The Hero and The Hobbit

The main text of reference for the Hero’s Journey motif was Joseph Campbell (1993) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This text has been fundamental to this research. For anyone who wants to understand the ideas behind the Hero’s Journey, there appears no substitute for reading Campbell’s work. *Hero* is Campbell’s statement of a most persistent trope in oral tradition and recorded literature. The pattern of the Hero’s Journey is universal and can be applied to any human problem. Whilst the story of the Journey manifested itself in ancient myths and legends, it is still with us today and it is the basis for many books, films and plays. Every challenge we face in life is part of a journey and the journey is a process of self-discovery and self-integration and of maintaining harmony in our lives.

Campbell’s *Hero* provided a depth of knowledge in mythology for this thesis, including a wealth of examples, metaphors, ancient stories and myths that lead to a deeper understanding of human nature. He wove traditional wisdom with the modern struggle for identity and spiritualism. Campbell’s model of the Journey from the call to adventure, resisting the call, finding a mentor, encountering threshold guardians, facing the worst evil and triumphing, has featured in many books, no doubt because it is such a powerful notion for conceptualising the changes on the journey of life.

Christopher Vogler (1999), inspired by Campbell's work, wrote *The Writer's Journey* in which he points out that despite its infinite variety, the Hero's story is always a journey. This may be an inward journey of the mind, heart and spirit or it may be an outward journey to an actual place (p. 9). The most important essential is that in any good story, the Hero grows and changes, making a journey from weakness to strength or from depression to hope.

Critical Literacy and The Hobbit

The Victorian Curriculum Standards Framework (CSF) was an essential reference when developing units of study for *The Hobbit*. Teachers are more accountable nowadays for the sequential development of critical literacy skills. This thesis agrees with Scutter's views (1999) as she argues for teachers to use their own critical literacy skills to develop the same in young people. Scutter wants to empower young readers to discriminate and realise that readers can be seriously manipulated by texts. Margery Hourihan (1997) in *Deconstructing the Hero* also argues in favour of teaching children to read books critically to discourage aggression and promote more positive values.

This thesis will agree with both Scutter and Hourihan about the importance of teaching critical literacy skills and will show that *The Hobbit* is also an ideal tool for this purpose. But the thesis will disagree with Hourihan's view of hero tales because she seeks to analyse them from a different perspective that does not approve of them as depictions of human greatness and expressions of noble ideals but rather as glorifying patriarchy and "the traditional dualisms that have shaped our thinking" (p. 233). This will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

The theory of Bloom's Taxonomy has been included in this study to demonstrate the additional value of using *The Hobbit* to develop critical literacy skills in the primary classroom. A valuable text for this research was *Bloom's Multiple Intelligences* (1999) edited by Brown, Wearne, Knight and Bailey, because it also incorporates the ideas of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy including integrated units of work using a variety of themes. This was a helpful reference and basis for comparison when developing activities for *The Hobbit*. This thesis has combined the theories of Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences* because both contribute to the essential development of critical thinking skills and allow scope for a differentiated curriculum that caters for the uniqueness of individual needs.

The individual works of Howard Gardner, in particular *Frames of Mind* (1993), provided underpinning for this dissertation because Gardner stresses the uniqueness of each individual which teachers must keep in mind when preparing units of work. Gardner argues that culture plays a large role in the development of the *intelligences*. All societies value different types of *intelligences*. The cultural value placed upon the ability to perform certain tasks provides the motivation to become skilled in those areas (p. 27). Thus, the theory of *Multiple Intelligences* implies that educators should recognise and teach to a broader range of talents and skills. The activities of *The Hobbit* were chosen for this purpose. They have been prepared and tested in the primary classroom by this author incorporating the theories of Bloom and Gardner. However, there are many other suitable texts that can be used for this purpose (Appendix C). This thesis intends to show that there are important lessons for children in *The Hobbit* concerning 'the enemy within' and the capacity of the human heart to consider the good of others.

Conclusions

“Hope is a waking dream”
(Aristotle retrieved 5 December 2003) www.dreammeister.com/visioneers.htm).

Literature supports the development of imagination and imagination is essential to the development of hope. Literature illustrates the unlimited range of human imagination and extends readers’ personal visions of possibilities. The texts and documents examined in this thesis support the view that there is a need for teachers to be aware of the extent of school violence, clinical depression and youth suicide in Australia. This threatens teachers as well as students. This thesis advocates the need for teachers to nurture virtue, courage, optimism and hope in the early years of childhood development.

Today’s children are bombarded with images of violence in cartoons, news reports, television shows, computer games, the new genre of interactive multimedia, movies and other media. Statistics show that children are also exposed to real-life violence in their own homes and communities - as witnesses, victims and increasingly, as perpetrators. It is possible that many children are becoming desensitised to violence as opposed to having respect for the intrinsic value and dignity of human life.

This thesis agrees with Postman’s view (1999) that “when people do not have a satisfactory narrative to generate a sense of purpose and continuity” this could lead to the breakdown of the human spirit. But we do not need to “re-invent the wheel” because there is rich source material in the Enlightenment not in the sense of regression but rather for cultural progress. The century of Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Kant and many other great minds gave the world ideas and principles that can illuminate the present. In order to move forward productively we need to look back at the good ideas available to us. Postman argues that the eighteenth century is the most useful

source of intellectual and social guidance because it offers a “humane direction to the future” (pp. 17-20).

As different authors construct texts, they may convey to young readers their own confusions, anxieties and perceptions of the world. There are variables that depend on individual teachers. Sensitive teachers are aware that both intellectual and emotional “readiness” or “intelligence” are crucial factors in the development of young children. Young children lack the understanding to deal with some harsh realities of life and to force such upon them can be a frightening, threatening and altogether negative experience. There are times when a measure of protection may go a long way in assisting the nurturing process.

In addition to nurturing emotional confidence and moral values in the young, children’s literature, in this case *The Hobbit*, can be used to develop critical literacy skills. These aspects will be explored in Chapter Three and Chapter Four of this thesis. Now, more than ever, there is a need for literature to be used to *optimum* advantage by teachers, for all that it can do to inspire imagination. Teachers today may feel helpless and “at risk” against some of the adverse forces in society, yet teachers are still crucial role models who are in a position to select the best in literature to help young people to develop strong character.

Texts read have affirmed the educational value of imagination as a precious gift that can help develop faith, hope, charity and love – all the tools necessary for the successful and heroic journey of life. Therefore as we “educate the imagination” we must also “discipline the heart” for the good of humanity. If to teach is to “learn twice” then in this way, teachers together with students can become philosophers.

This thesis will do what other texts have not done by, first of all, alerting teachers to the current statistics that highlight the need for imaginative, educational

strategies to inspire goodness and prevent depression in the young. In addition to showing *what* some of the problems are and *why* there is a need for action, this thesis will show *how* an imaginative text such as *The Hobbit* can be a crucial educational tool in the primary school classroom. This thesis goes still further by promoting the power and applicability of the Hero's Journey archetype as described by Joseph Campbell, as a foundation for studying literature in the early years. The Journey archetype and the story of *The Hobbit* are valuable additions to the primary school curriculum as a means of preparing and empowering young children for the journey of life. This is likely to be of particular benefit to those children who do not recover easily from setbacks and who are likely to become sad and depressed by life. Teachers hold the key to inspiring imagination and hope in the hearts of children that will guide them through the labyrinths of life, particularly through anxious times.

CHAPTER 2

ANXIOUS WORLD

The chapter will explore current data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and from The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and other sources, to illustrate the increasing incidence of depression in the young, which is now recognised as a serious public health problem in Australia. The question for educators is what special tools can we use to counteract this process? Young people need and deserve to feel secure and hopeful, more self-assured, creative and productive while navigating today's turbulent environment of change, threats and setbacks.

Nowadays children are confronting images of violence and sadness, which may have a negative impact on them. There is some evidence to suggest that problems manifested during adolescent years may have origins in early childhood. This chapter argues that without imagination children are vulnerable to sadness and despair. The use of story can provide a "buffer" in the early years of development. Children need nurturing strategies that promote an optimistic view of their experiences even in the midst of suffering. The power of story is an important form of communication that can help children to maintain a positive vision of a meaningful life. This thesis argues that Tolkien's *The Hobbit* has a valuable part to play in this process as part of a range of literature used with children in the primary school.

Richard Eckersley, strategic Analyst and author of several reports for Australia's Commission for the Future, reached the conclusion in *The Social Origins of Health and Well-being* (2001), that it appears as if modern western culture is increasingly failing to meet the basic requirement of any culture, which is, to provide young people with a sense of meaning, belonging and purpose, resulting in a sense of personal identity,

worth and security; a measure of confidence or certainty about what the future holds for them and a framework of moral values to guide their conduct (pp. 51-70).

To educate for good purposes we must teach the young to love what is noble and good. If we want to equip them for the ups and downs of life we must find the tools to teach them to be resilient and if we want children to find true meaning in their lives we must teach them to hope. Literature is one of the most nourishing resources a teacher can have particularly for the development of the early years of childhood. Saxby (1991) in *The Miraculous Pitcher* urged:

I would like to make a plea for the return to traditional literature, for the integrity of renewal. One question comes to my mind. Where does this leave the problem novel, the novel of social realism, which is so prevalent today? Much of it, I'm afraid, is the non-renewable kind. It comes not from the replenishing cruse or the miraculous pitcher but it is part of the cry of the heart in a time of famine and a time of need. There is famine in the land. Our children are starving. They're hungry. More than ever they need the nourishment of bread and oil and the wine of plenty and from that they will indeed be fulfilled (p. 9).

Furthermore, if children are to grow up with true self-esteem, a love of adventure and a sense of justice with courage enough to act on it, be resilient in the face of the setbacks and failures that growing up always brings, they need to have a proactive perspective and a sense of flow of their own experience. Children must learn that setbacks, "little failures" and challenges are a natural part of life's journey. In order to support this view, this chapter will also include some of the beliefs of Martin E.P. Seligman, Ph.D., one of the world's experts on motivation and author of *What You Can Change and What You Can't* (1994), *Learned Optimism* (1998) and *The Optimistic Child* (1998).

There is a vast amount of research and literature to demonstrate a wide range of forces in modern society that may impact adversely on the young. However, this chapter

will focus particularly on the effects of television violence on children and will include the scholarly comments of Neil Postman, critic, writer, educator and communications theorist and the author of many books attacking television and its effect on society. This chapter will include reference to some of his concerns in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1986), *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994) and most recently *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century* (1999). Postman's theme is the decline of the printed word and the ascendancy of the "tube" with its tendency to present everything and anything as entertainment. He expresses concern about how television has conditioned people to tolerate visually entertaining material measured out in spoonfuls of time, to the detriment of childhood, rational public discourse and reasoned public affairs. Postman believes that television degrades our conception of what constitutes news, art, political debate and even religious thoughts.

In addition, findings from the most current inquiry by the Victorian Parliament (2000) into the effects of television on families will be presented. The emergence of *interactive* multimedia is also a growing concern for children due to its violent content. However, due to the relative newness of this technology and the fact that there is limited research to date, this will not be discussed in this thesis. Included will be an exploration of the emergence of "realism" in young adult fiction that impacts on even younger children, because when texts are grim and gloomy with barely a hint of happiness that is enough to leave young readers depressed and confused. This study is but a small part of the whole picture but primary teachers need to be aware of these issues if they are to prepare children in the early years for the social and emotional challenges of life's journey.

Statistics indicate a marked increase in playground violence, offences perpetrated *by* children as well as *against* children, together with alarming youth suicide

statistics. The following figures have been compiled from the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Profile of Young Australians* ([1998] updated 2001).

Homeless Youth	20,000 – 50,000 in Australia
Youth Crime	Costs tax payers \$1.5 billion per year
Sexual Abuse	1 in 4 females and 1 in 8 males
Youth Suicide	1 adolescent suicides every 19 hours
Australia has one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the world.	
Alcohol Abuse	30% teenagers. 38% male and 24% female binge drink on a regular basis
Eating Disorders	48% teenage girls and 20% teenage boys have tried extreme weight loss methods associated with anorexia and bulimia.
Violence	Recent surveys rate violence as one of the most critical issues of concern in schoolyards.
Unemployment	19.5% (142, 800) Young unemployed.
Family Breakdowns	36% of marriages end in divorce.

Consistent with the above figures is the fact that depression in young people is now a serious public health problem with associated social and economic costs to the community. Primary educators need to be aware that depression now attacks its victims at a much younger age. In Melbourne there is evidence of a disturbing trend towards depression among infants. A report from psychoanalysts at The Royal Children's Hospital (retrieved 15 December 2000 <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/order.htm>) found that more than half the 100 infants referred to its mental health consultation liaison service each year were depressed or showed elements of depression (p. 23). The ABS (2000) report on *Promoting Mental Health for Families and Communities* commented on anxiety depression and early intervention in children and young people:

Mental health issues for young people, particularly anxiety and depression, are increasing in severity and frequency. Adolescence is a critical time in relation to mental health; with evidence suggesting mental disorders are increasing in both frequency and severity during these developmental years and appearing at earlier ages (pp. 16-18).

In 1999 the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) reported that young people are the “canaries of the community and they are dying. Starved for the oxygen of meaning, they are killing themselves in historically unprecedented numbers” (p. 15). Optimism does not give licence to a “head in the sand” attitude of denial. The fact that some problems are not visible at a primary level does not mean that they do not exist. NHMRC reported that underneath this “apex of misery is a mountain of depression and anxiety in the young” (p. 15). These deaths of young people are a tragedy in themselves and a warning to us all. Unless teachers grasp this reality, it is possible that education will continue to manage the symptoms of depression without tackling the cause or at least attempting to provide a “buffer” in the early years of childhood.

Seligman (1998) claims that depression has become the “common cold of mental illness and it takes its victims in junior school – if not before” (p. 37). He refers to a number of large-scale studies carried out in the USA since 1990, in particular the ongoing *Penn Depression Prevention Project* and sounds a warning to parents and educators (p. 39).

The *Penn* research broke new ground in 1990 and Seligman has drawn on this in his subsequent books particularly *The Optimistic Child* (1998) since the project has been clinically proven to halve the risk of depression in children. (p. 128). He presents the idea of “psychological immunisation” against depression, through teaching cognitive and behavioural techniques, including imaginative storytelling that instills a sense of realistic optimism and personal mastery. Children can be taught to see that there are

many contributing causes to any problem and to take responsibility for what they have contributed to the problem, without blaming themselves for things out of their control. Seligman emphasises that self-esteem develops through heroic qualities such as action - mastery, persistence against the odds, overcoming frustration and boredom and meeting challenges and avoiding the “killer pessimism” at all costs (p. 7). It will be shown in Chapter Three of this thesis that these qualities are superbly demonstrated in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*.

Seligman says that those who work with depression find that such a high percentage of children suffering severe depression at a young age is “astonishing” and “dismaying”. He points to the fact of sweeping social change in western society from an “achieving society” to a “feel-good” society and writes that this fundamental change “consists of two trends”. One is toward “more individual satisfaction and more individual freedom” in addition to “consumerism, recreational drugs, day-care, psychotherapy, sexual satisfaction, grade inflation”. The other is the “slide away from individual investment in endeavours larger than the self”. Seligman argues that some of the manifestations reflect what is most valuable about western culture but he says, “others may be at the heart of the epidemic of depression”. Seligman argues that God and family take a back seat to the self and that consumerism has become a way of life. Not that he is against these developments and he makes it clear that he is certainly not against individualism, divorce, day-care or single parents but the new perils that have come with these new opportunities (pp. 40-41). One peril for the young is pessimism. It is reasonable to suppose that if a young person has difficulty finding meaning in life, it is little wonder that such negative thoughts lead to sadness and despair.

Media Influences on Children

Many parents, teachers and others responsible for children's development have been concerned about the effect of television violence and inappropriate behaviour on children's behaviour. If “a picture can paint a thousand words” then television in the home has become a role model for many children. When Postman wrote *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1986), he sounded a warning based on his observations of American society. Although this book was written nearly twenty years ago, Postman’s observations, both from a historical perspective as well as his reasons why television can be a wasteful and harmful habit, are still very relevant. He refers to the vision of Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World* (1932), who saw hope in the form of education that can teach children to see beyond the easy slogans, efficient ends and anaesthetic influences of propaganda. Postman argues that what Huxley teaches us is that in the age of advanced technology, spiritual devastation is more likely to come from “an enemy with a smiling face” which may “appear benign when it is not invisible altogether” than from one whose countenance exudes suspicion and hate. In the Huxleyan prophecy Big Brother, does not watch us by his choice, we watch him by ours. There is no need for wardens or gates or Ministries of Truth. Postman claims that when a population becomes “distracted by trivia” and cultural life is re-defined as a “perpetual round of entertainments” and serious talk becomes a form of “baby talk” because people have become an audience and “their public business a vaudeville act”, then a nation finds itself at risk and “culture death is a clear possibility” (pp. 155-156). This notion makes children extremely vulnerable.

Postman (1986) expresses harsh views of those who claim that technology is necessarily a friend to culture. He warns that to be unaware that “a technology comes

equipped with a program for social change; to maintain that technology is neutral . . . is, at this late hour, stupidity plain and simple". He believes that society has seen enough by now to know that technological changes in our modes of communication are even more ideology-laden than changes in our modes of transportation (p. 157).

Postman (1994) presents evidence supporting the view that the modern romantic notion of childhood innocence is disappearing. Of all such evidence, none is more suggestive than the fact that the history of childhood has now become a major industry among scholars (p. 5). Since generally, the best histories of anything are compiled *after* the event, the amount of scholarly writing on this subject may be taken as a sign of the waning of childhood, as we know it.

Postman claims that the printing press created a society where adults could access information through reading whereas children, generally, could not, at least not to the same extent as adults. There was a separation between those who could read and those who could not. But now these divisions are eroding due to the ease of access and the barrage of television, which turns violence and the adult secrets of sex into popular entertainment and pitches both news and advertising at the intellectual level of children. Whereas young children require time to develop reading skills, children can quickly acquire the skill to switch on the television. The six-year-old is now similar to the sixty-year-old in terms of accessing information and Postman sees this as the disappearance of childhood (pp. 76-77). Due to its undifferentiated accessibility, television erodes the dividing line between childhood and adulthood because it requires no instruction, makes no demands on mind or behaviour and does not segregate its audience.

But the one thing upon which both the critics and defenders of television appear to agree is that television is a central and pervasive part of modern life. Van Evra (1990) in a Canadian study of *Television and Child Development* found that children could

spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleep. Television has often been criticised for portraying the world unrealistically in either overt ways or in excessively negative and stereotyped ways (p. 5). But, whether or not television reflects our social system accurately, it is an important contributor to that system and it is a major socialising force in children's lives.

This thesis contends that television, as a medium, is neither wholly good nor wholly bad for children. It can be stimulating, creative and of high quality or it can be dull and badly produced. It can display positive social interactions among people or it can portray violence and anti-social behaviour. Concerns arise because children are great behaviour imitators and their "copycat" nature is recognised. The Van Evra report (2000) states that "even infants as young as 14 months have demonstrated significant and deferred imitation of televised models" (p. 11). However, the concern of this thesis is not about the fact that television is an influence but the extent to which it can affect children adversely.

Dr. Patricia Edgar has been at the forefront of the debate on violence on television, completing a Ph.D. on children's perceptions of media violence in 1974. She was an associate member of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's inquiry into violence on television from 1988-89. Patricia Edgar has educated and entertained millions of young viewers. In her 1997 study of 13-year olds, *Children and Screen Violence*, Edgar found that children who had a low self-esteem were much heavier viewers of television than children who had a high self-esteem. Only 21.6% of children with a high self-esteem watched more than 30 hours of television a week, compared with 48.8% of children with low self-esteem. Edgar found that children with low self-esteem suffered from feelings of inadequacy that made it difficult to make and keep friends and to initiate other activities (p. 15).

Edgar's earlier research (1974) into violence in television, confirmed what she had long suspected, that "the news is the most disturbing show for children on the box because kids know it is real." She states "children know that cartoons are drawings, that if someone bops somebody else they're not really doing it. But if they have an image of someone on film being smashed up in a fight or an accident, or the police shooting somebody, then these things are really disturbing . . . and if they involve children, then they are much more disturbing." (p. 114). In a popular press article *Switched On* (2002) Edgar expressed concern for young children when they are confronted by real and sensational images and if these are repeated over and over again, such as the tragic scenes of September 11th 2000 it "becomes meaningless and – to children – frightening" (p. 14).

Current Research

In February 2000 the Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks announced a major inquiry about the effects of television and multimedia on children and families in Victoria and a parliamentary committee investigated the impact on children of a heavy diet of violent images in the home. Mr. Bracks said, "We need to pause, take a deep breath and have a look at the sort of material our children are looking at and have access to". The Premier said that when it comes to the videos that our teenagers, even 12-year olds, are collecting, it seems the more violent the better. He said there is "too much horror and violent stuff out there" (Johnston, D. *Herald Sun* February 2000).

The parliamentary inquiry examined:

- The impact of television on relationships within the family
- The influence of television on the social and physical development and learning patterns of children
- The relationship between violence on television and violent behaviour within families

The final report was presented to the Victorian Parliament in October 2000. One of the findings from the large body of research that exists relating to the subject of television violence and its effects on children is that the context of the violence is as important as the amount watched. Rewards, punishments, justifications and consequences of violent activities are critical to the way a child interprets what is viewed. The following are factors related to how violence is portrayed which may heighten the likelihood of negative television influence. Research on these factors is summarised:

- Reward or lack of punishment for the portrayed perpetrator of violence
- Portrayal of the violence as justified
- Cues in the portrayal of violence that resemble those likely to be encountered in real life. For example, a victim in the portrayal with the same name or characteristics as someone towards whom the viewer holds animosity
- Portrayal of the perpetrator of violence as similar to the viewer
- Violence portrayed so that its consequences do not stir distaste or arouse inhibitions
- Violence portrayed as real events rather than events concocted for a fictional film
- Portrayed violence that is not the subject of critical or disparaging commentary
- Portrayals of violent acts that please the viewer

- Portrayals in which violence is not interrupted by violence in a light or humorous vein
- Portrayed abuse that includes physical violence or aggression instead of, or in addition to verbal abuse
- Portrayals, violent or otherwise, that leaves the viewer in a state of unresolved excitement (p. 79).

Consequently it is argued that these contingencies represent four dimensions as follows:

- Efficacy (reward or lack of punishment)
- Corresponding with normal behaviour (justified without consequence, intentionally hurtful, physical violence)
- Pertinence - commonality of cues, similarly to the viewer, absence of humorous violence
- Susceptibility - pleasure, anger, frustration, absence of criticism (p. 80).

The report found that violence on television affects different children in different ways and certain children are more susceptible to influence by media violence. Strong predictors include factors such as identifying with one of the characters. A child's response can depend on which character he or she identifies with. Since aggressors in the media, in movies particularly, are commonly males and victims are often females, boys are more likely to respond with aggression and girls with fear (p. 80).

Some other characteristics have been shown to affect the influence of television violence on behaviour such as:

- Age: A relationship between television violence and aggression has been observed in children as young as three years old.
- Amount of television watched: Aggressive behaviour is related to the total amount of television watched; not only to the amount of violent television watched.
- Identification with television personalities: Especially for boys, identification with a character substantially increases the likelihood that the character's aggressive behaviour will be modelled.
- Belief that television violence is realistic: Significant relationships have been found between children's belief that television violence is realistic, their aggressive behaviour, and the amount of violence that they watch.
- Intellectual achievement: Children of lower intellectual achievement generally watch more television, watch more violent television, believe violent television reflects real life, and behave more aggressively (p. 81).

Children coming from violent families may accept the use of violence as normal. If they interpret what they watch as realistic and relevant to their own lives, television violence is more likely to have a strong impact on them. The media then serves as a reinforcement of the attitudes that lead to an acceptance and possible use of violence in their own lives. The report states:

Children who are frequent viewers of media violence learn that aggression is a successful and acceptable way to achieve goals and solve problems; they are less likely to benefit from creative, imaginative play as the natural means to express feelings, overcome anger, and gain self-control (p. 87).

Children caught in these circumstances need to have other moderating influences around them to teach them alternative ways of resolving conflict in their lives. This is where teachers can play a vital role even when some social and domestic forces in society are beyond their control.

The overall pattern of research findings from the inquiry indicates an association between television violence and aggressive behaviour. The preponderance of evidence from more than 3000 research studies over two decades shows that the violence portrayed on television influences the attitudes and behaviour of children who watch it. Furthermore, most of the scientific evidence reveals a relationship between television and aggressive behaviour. The report acknowledges that while few would say that there is absolute proof that watching television caused aggressive behaviour, the overall cumulative weight of all the studies gives credence to the position that they are related since “essentially, television violence is one of the things that may lead to aggressive, antisocial or criminal behaviour; it does, however, usually work in conjunction with other factors’ (p. 86).

Teachers know from their experience nowadays that children have access to a lot of contemporary and cartoon “fantasy” some of which has become a marketing bonanza and can appear to be somewhat “Godless” and “unromantic” with a sceptical, undisciplined outlook on life and a cynical and sarcastic sense of humour. There are many popular perceptions in the media but this study will confine itself to the following single example of the television comedy series *Southpark* (SBS 2003) which represents the portrayal of a type of violence in which characters bounce back free of injury, with a strong suggestion of “invincibility” and characters that show little guilt or suffer consequences for wrong actions. Good does not always triumph in modern realistic

texts and the “copycat nature” of children may lead them to act out these values and this sort of violence in the playground.

Carney (1999) writing for the *Melbourne Age* about ‘Southpark’ calls it “the end of culture” and wonders about the fact that having trawled through profanity and the range of bodily functions, where does comedy go next?” He refers to the South Park television series as a classic manifestation of the confusion that reigns in contemporary popular culture and just what that confusion allows through the gate. He suggests that ‘South Park’ is the frantic, barking dog that breaks free from the back yard and roams the street without actually biting anyone. This thesis disagrees with the idea that nobody is actually harmed simply because there is no evidence of physical harm and asks what is the antidote to a culture being drained by laughter when there are no cries of anguish to be heard?

Postman (1986) in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* says “we take arms against a sea of troubles, buttressed by the spirit of Milton, Bacon, Voltaire, Goethe and Jefferson. But who is prepared to take arms against a sea of amusements, to whom do we complain and when, and in what tone of voice, when serious discourse dissolves into giggles?”(pp. 156-157). Postman asserts that there are “insurmountable difficulties” for those who sound warnings about the negative cultural impact of technologies because not everyone believes that a cure is needed and there probably is no cure anyway (p. 159).

Postman believes that we must applaud the efforts of those who see relief in limiting certain kinds of content on television – for example excessive violence and advertising on children’s shows. But, he says, “I am not very optimistic about anyone taking this suggestion seriously. Neither do I put much stock in the proposals to improve the quality of television programs”. Furthermore, those who attempt to speak

out about such influences, invite the charge that they are “everything from wimps to public nuisances to Jeremiahs” (p159).

Another influence that can be for better or worse is the abundance of “new realism” in young adult literature that has emerged in the last decade. This thesis contends that texts for children that are grim and gloomy with barely a hint of happiness can have far-reaching negative effects and argues that young children are also particularly vulnerable to the realistic and troubled texts accessed by older siblings or friends. Primary teachers witness the impact of this when young children bring vicariously gleaned information to school, resulting in anxiety and distress amongst children, sometimes requiring the use of “de-briefing” strategies by the teacher. Hillel (2001) states that the “troubled adolescent” is a trope (repeated motif or pattern) within late twentieth-century literature for young adults. It has become “almost a cliché” (pp. 2-3).

Heather Scutter is a Monash University lecturer in children’s literature who has examined Australian books published for teenagers and young adults in the 1980’s and beyond. This period was seen as a “golden age” in publishing during which a new niche market opened up. Scutter believes that much of the enthusiasm for these texts is misplaced. Her scholarly research and reflections in *Displaced Fictions* (1999) point out that the boundaries are blurred at times, perhaps because children’s capabilities in reading have changed. These texts seem to be readily accessible and easy to read, not just for young adults but also for children nine and ten years old in primary schools. Much of this is sad literature for young people including stories of broken marriages, fighting, incest and abuse, often with no “happy ending” or hope for the future (p. 54). Scutter examines constructions of childhood, which she finds “widespread in contemporary young adult fiction”. She examines these in the modern context and

stresses the “need for a scholarly, rather than a populist approach”. Scutter does not accept ‘good’ books on the basis of their popularity (p. 10).

Nowadays, popular contemporary authors such as Zurbo (1997) and Clark (1995) and many others are producing an abundance of realistic fiction. Issues include violence, suicide, drugs, incest, sexual abuse and more. These texts are available to primary school children who are capable readers as well as those children who are not so capable. Often the linguistic style is highly accessible, easy to read “street talk” and the language used is simple and often crude. One such example by Zurbo (1997) tells us firstly in the blurb that “it’s about being what you are – knuckles, passion, bullshit and all – and about never forgetting you’re an idiot”. And in bold capitals in the original text we read language such as “FUCK YOU, FUCK THIS, FUCK ME, FUCK OFF, and GET FUCKED. I LOVE IT” (p. 58) and “Sometimes we talk shit...we’re doing nothing, going nowhere. But so what?” (p. 64). Many children who struggle with the skills of reading in primary schools can nevertheless manage to read such words.

Hunt (1995) in his foreword to *Children’s Literature: An Illustrated History* says:

The most common view of the history of children’s literature is that the books have progressed steadily from didacticism to freedom or from strictness to corruption (p. ix).

There is often no “happy ending” in the stories or hope for the future. Many of these ill-chosen texts are mentioned by Heather Scutter (1999) and include books such *So Much to Tell You* by John Marsden (1988), *Displaced Person* by Lee Harding, *Thunderwith* by Libby Hathorn (1990), to name but a few. Scutter refers to The Children’s Book Council judges’ report of 1992 which proclaimed:

The trend to deal with emotional and social problems including grief, incest, alcoholism, anorexia, peer pressure, mental illness and child abuse, and their impact on individuals, is a courageous move and has been accomplished this year with great sensitivity (p. 113).

Scutter responds to this by stating that it would show more sensitivity to empower children not as “enlightened victims” but rather as “wiser and more resistant agents in their own lives” (p.113). Scutter claims that some popular authors, with no doubt the best of intentions, have tried to deal with some of these social and emotional problems. But, whilst it is important to prepare young people for the world and to give them strategies for resilience, this can hardly be achieved by forcing vivid realities such as incest, child abuse, mental illness, sickness and death on impressionable young minds. Scutter (1999) writes that “we’ve moved a long way from an understandable desire to give teenagers and young adults knowledge and understanding of the world, to a peculiar, almost pathological stress on force feeding our young people knowledge represented as real, true, necessary” (p.113)

Looking at disturbing statistics on divorce, child abuse, and school violence *inter alia*, it is hard to understand the added insult to injury with the promotion of grim and gloomy “realistic” fiction for young readers. If we want young people to have hopeful hearts we must present hopeful images of the world so that they will not be afraid to face it.

Scott MacLeod (1975) in *A Moral Tale* says that the literature written for children in any period provides an interesting if “sometimes oblique” source for the study of cultural history.

Children’s stories are almost invariably prescriptive, to a greater or lesser degree; they present the approved values of society to children. At the same time, juvenile literature is one vehicle by which a society conveys to its young, a picture of the world outside childhood (p. 10).

Clearly, this view presents an awesome responsibility for writers. MacLeod also says that less directly and less consciously, in descriptions of reality, literature also reveals the authors' apprehensions about life in their times. She says that since adults tend to project upon children "both their hopes and their fears about the future", the value of children's fiction as a source of social history exists on "both the conscious and the unconscious levels". She sees that this is useful for what it says about the values the authors hoped to teach children and it is "equally interesting for what it suggests about the fears, the anxieties, and the doubts of its creators" (p.11). As authors construct their texts they may convey their own confusions, anxieties and perceptions of childhood. Therefore, much depends on a person's perception of childhood. This thesis contends that early childhood should be a time of innocence, of joyful childhood experiences, a time that is precious and worth protecting, whilst acknowledging sadly that for many children this notion does not apply.

Hillel (2001) says that adults seek to protect a perceived notion of childhood innocence, which is often seen to be threatened, and she refers to what Neil Postman calls 'the disappearance of childhood' and his argument that experience of the world and exposure to 'unsavoury' stories in newspapers and television makes children more 'knowing' and more adult" (p. 4). Hillel argues that literature for the young has remained largely didactic and conservative over time in presenting adult constructions of the young:

In addition, it is also clear that these adult notions are frequently seen to be contradictory, as puritan and romantic notions of childhood may well appear side by side. These apparently contradictory notions are indicative of societal anxieties about childhood itself (iii).

This thesis argues that it is both necessary and possible to protect the innocence of children without disempowering them. Children do not gain wisdom or solace from adult notions that favour exposure to reality before children are intellectually or emotionally “ready”. Emotional “readiness” or “intelligence” is a crucial factor in the development of young children and it is imperative that it is not a neglected one. There are times when a little bit of protection can go a long way in assisting the nurturing process. Bettelheim (1987) in *The Uses of Enchantment* expresses his opinion that many adults have become “estranged from the ways in which young people experience the world” and because of this they object to exposing children to fairy tale fiction and such “false” information (p. 47). Furthermore:

Realistic explanations are usually incomprehensible to children, because they lack the abstract understanding required to make sense of them. While giving a scientifically correct answer makes adults think they have clarified things for the child, such explanations leave the young child confused, overpowered, and intellectually defeated. A child can derive security only from the conviction that he understands now what baffled him before – never from being given facts, which create new uncertainties (pp. 47-48).

When selecting texts, teachers must be mindful of the potential for young readers to be manipulated, particularly those who may be naïve and inexperienced due to under- developed critical literacy skills. Teachers know that children tend towards passive acceptance of the text and the dominant culture if they are unable to analyse it. Scutter (1999) cites the work of Anne Kempe who argues that many students have:

Learned reading practices, which take for granted that reading is essentially a process of personal and private discovery. When combined with a view of literature as an unproblematic corpus of texts, which mirror reality, these kinds of assumptions, which are seldom challenged or made explicit, encourage students to ignore the social or ideological nature of their responses (p. 304).

When there is much adversity in our world, young children must be given access to powerful texts such as Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which not only help them to cope emotionally, but also assist the development of literacy skills so that as children mature, they will be able to critique the social order. Kempe says, "critical literacy demands that people will actively contribute to changing and re-making their culture with the aim of building a better world in which social justice is not merely an empty slogan" (p. 304). Teachers must be able to make informed judgements when selecting and recommending texts for children whichever medium of communication that may be. If children are to become wise and wary in this regard, it begins with teachers. It is essential for teachers to be aware of the complexities of ideology and narrative strategies and consider the overt values in the text as well as those that are hidden, trivialised or ignored. But most important to this thesis is the belief that if teachers are to empower children with the necessary skills for life's successful journey, it must be done in a way that avoids pessimism.

Conclusions

I am an optimist, unrepentant and militant. After all, in order not to be a fool, an optimist must know how sad a place the world can be.

It is only the pessimist who finds this out every day (p. 489).

(Ustinov, Sir Peter , 1921 - 2004)

The purpose of data presented in this chapter is to alert primary school teachers to the increasing incidence of depression in the young because the social and emotional ramifications may be greater for children than teachers realise. Evidence has been presented to suggest that problems, which often manifest themselves during adolescence, have their origins in the early years of childhood development. Primary schools are an ideal setting for primary prevention.

Seligman (1998) in *The Optimistic Child* took issue with the self-esteem movement that promotes “feeling better” rather than “acting and doing better”. He observed, “this movement would be justified if it worked and self-esteem was on the rise but it is a striking fact that children have never been more depressed” (p. 36). On Seligman’s last visit to Australia in 2001, Dr. Anthony Kidman, University of Technology, Sydney, and associate of the *SAD Kids Project* in Australia, had a long discussion with him about the prevalence of childhood depression and pessimism. Seligman predicted the day when children would be inoculated against depression, comparing this to inoculation against polio or any other crippling disease (np.)

Postman’s observations have led this author to wonder if the problem with the world today is that we have become so caught up in the speed of progress that we have lost our sense of purpose and continuity. Foresight is based on hindsight. If we are to move agreeably into this new millennium, we need to take into it some good ideas. In order to do that we need to look back and take stock of the good ideas already available to us in the legacies of past scholars.

Alongside Postman’s informative and alarming views about the effects of television, this chapter has also presented some of the results of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry (2000) into the effects of television on children. Reflecting on this report led to the conclusion and concern about the positive association between television violence and negative behaviour. Television has the potential either to educate for better or worse, to benefit or to be detrimental to children. Its effects and value depend on the types of programs broadcast and the ways in which viewers use them. The inquiry looked with particular interest at the effects of exposure to television in the early years of childhood development and accepts reports that this is a crucial time for the socialisation of television viewing habits.

The research of Dr. Patricia Edgar confirmed low self-esteem in children who watched more than 30 hours of television per week and she argued the benefits for children when television is used for the dual purpose of entertaining and educating. This thesis contends *The Hobbit* can be used for both of these purposes. The book's ability to entertain children is obvious and, in addition, it supports the development of critical literacy, discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis. Critical thinking skills are a key to helping children critique the best and worst of television. There are some positive benefits of television since it is one of the best and cheapest entertainment media available and as a means of entertainment and relaxation it serves a valuable function in both personal and social senses. Also for children nowadays, the relative safety of home-based entertainment is important. The days of children playing outdoors in streets or parks are slowly vanishing as the perceived danger factor increases. Another benefit of television is that in addition to being the provider of temporary respite from the tensions of everyday life, it can also be a positive stimulus for imagination and promotion of humanitarian values.

The Victorian Inquiry (2000) recommended that schools could also use television in positive ways to enhance development rather than either ignoring it altogether or using it primarily for entertainment. We must produce a generation of young adults who can see the potential of television for the good of society (p. 26). Teachers are not unaware of the negative effects of television on children. They discuss it a great deal and have become more "media conscious". But it is this author's observation that teachers' ideas tend to focus more on how we can use television and computers to educate children rather the opposite, which is, how can we use education to control television and multimedia?

It is an acknowledged task of schools to assist the young in learning how to interpret the symbols of their culture. This task should require that children learn how to distance themselves from these forms of information and we must hope for its successful inclusion in the curriculum. Already there has been a move in this direction in recent years as evidenced by prominent early years programs such as the “Children’s Literacy and Success Strategy (ClaSS) which attempts to raise literacy standards with the aim of empowering all students to critique the social order. However, this thesis argues modern attempts to achieve literacy standards have turned early years classrooms into highly structured, data-driven environments with little time for reflection. This will be explored further in Chapter Two.

This chapter included some of the research findings and scholarly views of Heather Scutter, Maurice Saxby and other commentators in the world of children’s literature. Scutter particularly looked at the “new realism” in young adult fiction and found much of it to self-indulgent and manipulative. In her close analysis of a number of popular texts, she suggests that the flight from sentimentality may lead to something equally false because it may leave young readers wallowing in dread rather than joy.

The common point of agreement amongst the scholarly commentators cited in this chapter is the need to provide children with meaning and purpose in their lives. It seems clear that childhood is not a time to present young adults with only doom and gloom entertainment. Reading stories of virtue and hope and creating the love of quality literature in children are seen as worthwhile endeavours. In the words of the well-known song *The Greatest Love*, “children are the future” and we must “treat them well and let them lead the way”. Above all teachers must help children to discover the power that is within them to achieve and make a difference in the world. There is a difference

between a *good* life and a *meaningful* life. Seligman (2002) in *Authentic Happiness* makes the following distinction:

The good life consists in deriving happiness by using your 'signature strengths' every day in the main realms of living. The meaningful life adds one more component: using these same strengths to forward knowledge, power or goodness. A life that does this is pregnant with meaning, and if God comes at the end, such a life is sacred (p. 260).

This thesis wishes to approve all attempts to re-establish childhood as a beneficial time for the next generation, a time in which to develop resilience, critical literacy, the ability to develop an understanding of oneself and compassion towards others. And in addition, whilst Postman and others have suggested *what* might be achieved through the medium of education and *why* this should be so, this thesis wishes to discuss *how* this might be achieved through the use of *The Hobbit* in the primary classroom.

Teachers can play a vital role in counteracting the negative forces in society that impact on the wellbeing of children. Teachers should not feel helpless. They are in a strong position to make a difference to learning outcomes. Through their educational quests assisted by the collective power and wisdom of mythology, teachers can inspire the hearts and souls of children with a sense of purpose and goodness, counteracting gloom and depression using the valuable educational tool at their fingertips in the imaginative power of story, explored in the following chapters of this thesis. Hope is in the hands of teachers.

CHAPTER 3

LES COEURS D'ESPOIR

“Imagination seizes power”
 (“L’imagination prend le pouvoir”, Graffito, Paris’68).

This chapter argues for the power of story combined with the dynamic relationship between imagination and hope; “les coeurs d’espoir prend l’imagination” (hopeful hearts imagine), and in today’s anxious world with depression in the young on the rise, educators need to seriously consider the implications of the texts presented to children.

Without imagination children are vulnerable to sadness and despair. This chapter will explore the educational value in the conscious development of imagination through imaginative, inspiring works of children’s literature. The story of *The Hobbit* is highly imaginative and it is an ideal tool to help develop hopeful and optimistic hearts in the young. The current phenomenal success of Tolkien’s books to films is worthy of educational appreciation and it is likely to trigger new interest in the book. Maurice Saxby (1997) in *Books in the Life of a Child*, claims that fantasy flourishes in troubled times and the success of books such as *The Hobbit* inspired the tremendous outpouring of fantasy after World War II. Saxby argues:

Fantasy flourishes in a war-weary world, at times of disillusionment and when reality becomes hard to face. In the past thirty years fantasy has partly provided a counterbalance to the plethora of ‘issues’ and problem books for children that reflect a growing hopelessness in society generally; a pessimism which is being absorbed by its young (p. 233).

This chapter will value the educational use of such rich products of literary imagination, which enlarge experience, promote optimism and bring joy to the human

spirit. This view will be supported with the opinions of scholars and philosophers, ancient and modern, such as Plato, Albert Einstein, Rudolf Steiner, Carl Jung, C.S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, Joseph Campbell, Bruno Bettelheim, Maurice Saxby, Rosemary Johnston *et al.*

Images of Hope

“Tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it”
(L. M. Montgomery 1908. *Anne of Green Gables*. p. 176).

Childhood is an unfinished state, a time of growth and change. Children need stories that can move them forward in the sense that they allow for the possibility of change and even if the road ahead looks difficult or less than ideal, the future always has potential. No living person can achieve full potential without imagination and children need to know that this slumbering power is a gift that dwells within every thinking human, no matter how humble, ordinary, small or insignificant that person may feel. Imagination is a gift that is mysterious and unique to each individual and this thesis contends that imagination is more likely to work for the good of humanity if it has been nurtured by images of hope.

Rosemary Johnston (2002) in *Children's Literature as Communication* argues that while children's books should be “realistic as well as fantastic, should be diverse as well as particular, should present different versions of what it is to be, was to be, and can be, they should also be characterised, immanently, by the idea of an ethics of hope” (p. 148). Johnston links the potential for this hope to Bakhtin's idea about *unfinalizability*, which accepts the world's general chaos, mess and incompleteness, but perceives this as an open potential for freedom and creativity:

Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the

world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 166).

Johnston acknowledges that the presentation of many different images and possibilities of being is something which many picture books are already doing very well but she argues further for the necessity of an ethics of hope in children's literature:

At a time when a globalized commerce is bombarding young people with images of similarity and conformity, urging them to admire just a certain narrow range of body shapes, clothing brands, food and toys, and to speak certain languages, to act out only certain behaviours, we do need to very seriously consider the implications of the texts children read. Do their images of childhood and adolescence have an appropriately hopeful orientation, and is it towards a future that is appropriately varied? (pp. 148-149).

Johnston (2002) argues that if children see themselves through the "aesthetic images that are created for them, then an ethics of hope is more than a philosophical nicety. It is surely a social imperative" (p. 148). The responsible carriage of an ethics of hope must be linked to the dynamic and enigmatic relationship between hope and imagination. Stoltz (1998) claims "vision is essential to hope at the personal, organisational and societal levels" (p. 284). Arguably, as individuals we cannot imagine a better world unless we already have hope in our hearts. Conversely, it could be said that hope *per se* is necessary both as a stimulus and a catalyst for imagination. But whatever the connection is, it appears that there is a clear symbiosis between hope and imagination.

Johnston (2001) says the word 'imagine' derives from the Old French *imaginer*, to make images, which in turn comes from the Latin term *imaginari* meaning to 'picture oneself'. Johnston claims that picturing to oneself not only "stretches the muscles of the mind, it is also the imaginative process through which we understand otherness" (p. 334). David Lazear (1999) discussing the paradigm of multiple intelligences in *Seven Ways of*

Knowing, states that the mind naturally thinks in images. It “programs” and reprograms” itself through images. He argues that inner images, both conscious and unconscious, control our behaviour. They are “comprised of every life experience one has had” and they form an “inner guidance system” related to one’s identity and understanding of the world. Lazear says images can change:

The bombardment of various “messages” on images brings about the possibility of someone deciding to change their images. No one can change another’s image for them. Since the capacity for imagination is inherent in the central nervous system, imaginistic abilities can be improved, strengthened and extended through regular, focused and intentional practice (p. 188).

These images have a way of sticking in our memory and making demands on our conscience, long after the explanations have been worn thin by the friction of daily life. Peter Dickinson (1986) in *Children’s Literature in Education* defines imagination as the “leap of the mind that places one perception alongside another and sees that somehow they fit . . . the sudden flash of thought . . . the imaginative leap” (p. 43-51). The writer of this thesis has always supposed that imagination is a kind of wild, uninhibited memory; it is God’s magical gift to the world given freely through each person; it is the breath of the Spirit without which we could never imagine the greatness of the almighty God; without which we could not have faith. Imagination is the source of all power.

The celebrated English writer, teacher and art critic, John Berger (1990) wrote:

The human imagination . . . has great difficulty in living strictly within the confines of a materialistic practice or philosophy. It dreams, like a dog in its basket, of hares in the open. (*Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, 1999, p. 444).

If we accept that the abstract concept of imagination is limitless, mere words can barely define something so mysterious. The following quotations are included to show

that for centuries, famous scholars have attempted to catch the power of imagination in words:

Shakespeare, W. (1564-1616)

Such tricks hath strong Imagination!
(*International Thesaurus of Quotations*, 1996, p. 319).

Joubert, J. (1754-1824)

Imagination is the eye of the soul
(*Collins Dictionary of Quotations* 2003, p. 219).

Blake, W. (1757-1827)

I have been very near the gates of death and have returned very weak and an old man feeble and tottering, but not in spirit and life not in the real man the Imagination which liveth forever.
(Letter 23 August 1799, published in *Complete Writing*, np. 1957).

Conrad, J. (1857-1924)

Only in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence. Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art, as of life
(*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* 1999, p. 234).

Coleridge, S. (1772-1834)

The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception.
(*Encarta Book of Quotations*, 2000, p. 221).

Einstein, A. (1879-1955)

Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution.
(*Pearls of Wisdom*, 1987, p. 12).

Miller, H. (1891-1980)

Imagination is the voice of daring. If there is anything God-like about God, it is that he dared to imagine everything.
(*Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, 1999, p. 444).

Bunuel, L. (1900-83)

Fortunately, somewhere between chance and mystery lies imagination, the only thing that protects our freedom, despite the fact that people keep trying to reduce or kill it off altogether. (Columbia Dictionary of Quotations, 1999, p. 445).

Kennedy, J. F. (1917 -1963)

The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were. (International Thesaurus of Quotations, 1996, p. 319).

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1892-1973)

The mental power of image making is one thing, or aspect; and it should appropriately be called Imagination. The perception of the image, the grasp of its implications, and the control, which are necessary to a successful expression, may vary in vividness and strength: but this is a difference of degree in Imagination, not a difference in kind. The achievement of the expression, which gives (or seems to give) 'the inner consistency of reality' is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result". (Tree And Leaf, p. 47).

Those who can sum up great mysteries of life *in nuce* are indeed gifted. Scholars past and present have said inspiring things about the power of imagination and many have praised the power of literature to transform the world. Johnston (2001) argues that literature nurtures and is nurtured by imagination (p. 335). This chapter encourages readers to *imagine* the "double blessing" when imagination joins power with worthwhile literature. For the purposes of this thesis, J.R.R. Tolkien defines worthwhile literature as the vast body of traditional literature that includes myths, legends, fairy tales, and modern children's literature that contains myth elements such as *The Hobbit* and *in toto*, literature that speaks to the human heart.

Saxby (1991) raised the question of what makes a good book for children and cites Paul Hazard (1947:48) for answering this frequent question with wisdom:

I like books that remain faithful to the very essence of art; namely, those that offer to children an intuitive and direct way of knowledge, a simple beauty capable of being perceived immediately, arousing in their souls a vibration which will endure all their lives (p. 10).

In addition, Hazard includes books that “bring release and joy” and books that awaken *sensibility* in children rather than mere *sentimentality* and books that allow children to “share the great human emotions; that give them respect for universal life”. Hazard refers especially to books when they “distil from all the different kinds of knowledge, the most difficult and the most necessary – that of the human heart” (p. 10). Saxby (1991) says he doubts that “any wiser or more encompassing statement on the subject has ever been made” but says it is for teachers to recognise the “essence of art”. Saxby argues, “recognition will only come when the reader himself can hear his own heartbeat, along with that of others” (p. 11).

Myth and Morality

The poet Shelley (1841) said, “The great instrument of moral good is the imagination” (Retrieved 5 December 2003 www.dreammeister.com/visioners.htm)

If we consider that the magical imagination is responsible for conjuring images in the mind, the images that children receive through texts (assuming life experience as well) become crucial to their moral development. Morality is herein defined as concern with fair play and harmony between individuals, harmonising what is inside each individual and concern for the general purpose of human life as a whole. Plato (c. 427-347 BC) in *The Republic* said a great deal about educating the imagination for moral good: he believed that children should be raised in such a way that they will fall in love with virtue and hate vice. To encourage a child to love virtue, Plato believed that

developing imagination through exposure to the right kind of noble stories, music and art was the answer. He argued that such an education encourages the right sort of likes and dislikes, without which he believed it would not matter how much formal training in ethics a young person later received (p. 50).

Plato sought to cure the ills of society. On the subject of educating “those who are young and tender and easily moulded” he believed that “any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark” (p. 77). He believed that those responsible for the education of children should take full control of what the children read. He argued:

Shall we therefore readily allow our children to listen to any stories made up by anyone, and to form opinions that are for the most part, the opposite of those we think they should have when they grow up? Then it seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest (p. 77).

Plato was unable to cure all the ills of his society and it is doubtful that we shall.

However, we must be wiser for the learned opinions of ancient *literati* and extract from them what we can in our search for the meaning of life. Saxby (1991) expressed concern about the “emotional turmoil and the spiritual chaos” that can affect children as a result of exposure to wrong influences in society. This study claims that Saxby’s words still hold relevance for education today:

From myth and legend, folk and fairy tale we discover the truth about ourselves; that is, we become alive to the God or the spirit within us and our relationship with the world and with others around us. Joseph Campbell and Bruno Bettelheim . . . in the tradition of Freud . . . and Jung, show how traditional literature works through symbols, which can illuminate the unconscious (p. 5).

As explored in Chapter One of this thesis, these words hold particular relevance for Christian educators today who are struggling to teach morality against a background of emotional turmoil.

Teaching Morality

Imagination is the core of our humanity. Dickinson (1986) argues for the link between morality and imagination:

All morality, all that is in us that we regard as good and worthwhile, from the highest religious impulse to the smile at a child skipping across a bit of wasteland, derives from the imagination (p. 45).

Johnston (2001) claims that concepts of right and wrong will always be socially constructed, but literature offers possibilities for involvement in “imaginative dialogues that test these notions and experiment with them”. Literature offers endless opportunities to take that “imaginative leap into a knowledge, however fleeting, of the validity of otherness” and in so doing, this knowledge “activates moral positioning – concepts of rightness and wrongness that represent an imminent response to shared humanity (p. 335).

At the heart of Christian humanity is the story of Christ, a true myth, which Christians embrace with their imaginations. But Christians believe it is also a fact, and by becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) Oxford professor, author and Christian intellectual, is quoted in *God in the Dock* (1971) as saying:

I suspect that men have sometimes derived more spiritual sustenance from myths that they did not believe than from the religion they professed. To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths. The one is hardly more necessary than the other (p. 36).

The central Christian message requires much imagination to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was saved against all odds. If we accept current statistics relating to the

prevalence of depression in the young (Chapter 1), figures may indicate that many young people have either not heard or have rejected the ideological message of the Church and are, therefore, unable to be hopeful of eternal life. C.S. Lewis (1952) in *Mere Christianity* states:

Hope . . . means . . . a continual looking forward to the Eternal world . . . it does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next . . . It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither (p. 111).

The Christian message is clear that humans are here on earth to make a difference to humanity. Gospel values must be simplified for young children and one example from scripture is the quote, "Love one another" because it is a nutshell statement of the only commandment necessary for a successful journey through life. From an early age children can understand the subtle distinction that when Jesus of Nazareth said, "love one another" it was a *command* and not a *request*. For Christians, acceptance of this commandment is the acknowledged road to happiness. To love each other is far reaching and must include forgiveness. If we are Christian it goes without saying but the words "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" were included in the Creed because humans need constant reminders of this. C. S. Lewis quoted in *Fern-Seed and the Elephants and other Essays on Christianity* (1975), stated:

We believe that God forgives us our sins; but also that He will not do so unless we forgive other people their sins against us. There is no doubt about the second part of this statement. It is in the Lord's Prayer . . . He doesn't say that we are to forgive other people's sins provided they are not too frightful, or provided there are no extenuating circumstances, or anything of that sort. We are to forgive them all, however spiteful, however mean, however often

they are repeated. If we don't we shall be forgiven none of our own
(pp. 26-27)

However, the well-known saying *to err is human; to forgive divine* does not mean excusing the offence as children might easily think it does. This is a difficult concept for the young who might imagine that if you ask them to forgive someone who has cheated or bullied you are suggesting that there was really no cheating or no bullying which logically would mean there was really nothing to forgive in the first place. Children learn this essential Christian message best through story, even if a teacher has to invent the story. Not only must young children hear this message of love and forgiveness but also they must live it through experiences both in real life and also vicariously through storytelling. Through Tolkien's story of *The Hobbit* children can be led to the understanding that life is a journey rather than a destination; a journey upon which every challenge and every person encountered along the way is important. Do not waste time bothering whether you *love* your neighbour but *imagine* that you do. These thoughts especially if they are images in the mind from experiences shared or remembered from a story about a little hobbit, who bestowed kindness on some unfriendly dwarves and showed great courage against the odds, can help children through anxious times in their lives.

We know that for centuries the stories of the Old Testament were central to the moral and psychological development of children to equip them for the moral choices and conflicts of life. But it is doubtful that young people today would answer yes if asked if the Bible was more entertaining than any other book. The old spiritual consolations that buffer against depression – Prayer, God, Community, Family, Nation may be unfashionable and losing their powers for many young people today. It may be

that the Gospel stories are not artistic or imaginative enough to compare with modern stories. C.S. Lewis is quoted in *God in the Dock* (1979):

I am perfectly convinced that whatever the gospels are they are not legends. I have read a great deal of legend and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing. . . from an imaginative point of view they are clumsy, they don't work up to things properly. Most of the life of Jesus is totally unknown to us, as is the life of anyone else who lived at that time, and no people building up a legend would allow that to be so. . . and the art of inventing little irrelevant details to make an imaginary scene more convincing is a purely modern art (pp. 75-76).

This was a response by Lewis to those who doubt the truth of the gospels. He believed the gospel stories were too simple to have been contrived by anyone. There are too many unanswered questions. We wonder and can only imagine the answers. But, have young people lost the ability to wonder or to imagine? Shall failure to imagine make them die due to lack of compassion, optimism or a lack of mystery? Our situation here on earth may appear strange to children who cannot imagine God. All we know for certain is that we appear here on earth for a short stay and we don't know the why and the wherefore. Albert Einstein (1954) in *The World As I See It*, stated:

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery, even when mixed with fear – that engendered religion (p. 134).

Einstein was convinced of his own religiousness because of his acute sense of the mysterious. He believed that to imagine was spiritual, like praying, and in his speech *My Credo* to the German League of Human Rights (1932) he spoke of the importance of imagination in the search for God and religion:

To sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is a something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly and as a feeble reflection, this is religiousness. In this sense I am religious. To me it suffices to wonder at these secrets and to attempt humbly to grasp with my mind a mere image of the lofty structure of all that there is (p. 262).

Einstein attributes great worth to the power of imagination but we hear little nowadays in education about this great and magical gift. God is the ultimate mystery for Christians yet it seems that young people nowadays may be either too logical or too unimaginative to believe in a mysterious God. Whilst it is important for children to develop critical literacy skills (discussed in Chapter Four), it is equally important to develop creative ideas for the good of humanity. Educators must make use of the teaching tools found in literature to strike a balance between logic and imagination. Dr. J. I Packer (2000) in *To Quote C.S. Lewis*, wrote:

At his best, Lewis is a teacher of great piercing powers. His secret lies in the blend of logic and imagination in his make-up, each power as strong as the other, and each enormously strong in its own right. The best teachers are always those in whom imagination and logical control combine, so that you receive wisdom from their flights of fancy as well as a human heartbeat from their logical analysis and arguments. This in fact is human communication at its profoundest, for in the sending-receiving process both lobes of the brain (left for logic, right for imagination) are engaged (p. xiii).

The conscious development of imagination through literature can be combined as a teaching formula to develop both hemispheres of the brain. But more important is the potential of imagination to educate for humanity. On this subject Fr. Anthony Kelly (2000) currently Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University, in his manuscript *Faith Seeking Fantasy* states:

J. K. Rowling's *The Adventures of Harry Potter* and J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* are now making their way from the books into films. Given the extraordinary influence of these rich

products of literary imagination, any theology concerned to relate the Gospel to popular culture might well consider the significance of this phenomenon. At the same time, a deeper appreciation of the role of imagination in this kind of literature will well serve both theology and biblical hermeneutics (p. 1).

Love for God with a whole heart, soul, mind and strength, may be increased if it includes the powers of imagination. J.R.R. Tolkien was a devout Catholic. There are many dissertations on his works and one reason for this may be that Tolkien was a master of imaginative literature. But even more important - Tolkien was able to restate traditional values through his imaginative works. Of particular interest for this study is *The Hobbit* (1937) because it was written with children in mind as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Kelly (2000) suggests that Tolkien had a theology of fairy story realm, but with no theology or evidence of religious activity *in* the stories. One may wonder if this kind of literature diminishes development of religious faith but Kelly answers this question by citing Helms who remarked the “poetry of mythic imagination will not, for Tolkien, *replace* religion so much as *make it possible*, putting imaginatively starved modern man back once again into the awed and reverent contact with the living universe” (p. 10).

Moral Choices

But what will become of young people who fail to imagine goodness? Are they in danger of becoming violent or cynical and depressed? If we believe that individuals have been gifted with “free will” we accept that some will turn away from all that is perceived as noble. Nevertheless, hopefulness lies in exposure to literature that embodies goodness. Such text has a force that inspires the reader’s soul and draws out all that is noble and serves to “discipline the heart” for humanity. Therefore, if we

accept that imagination is one of the keys to virtue, an important distinction must be made: it is one thing to *know* what is right and another thing to *choose* what is right. It seems reasonable to suppose that logic should guide our moral choices but it would not be possible to make moral decisions without first imagining them in our minds.

Educators must be concerned about the moral development of children. The value of good role models is taken for granted by this study and moving on from there, it is hard to imagine anyone who wants to encourage character development not starting with literature. Just as it is said that “we are what we eat”, it may also be said that we are, in part, shaped by stories from childhood that can become part of our identity, in a way that no other reading in our later lives can. When you read a book as a child it is helping you to grow. It is shaping the person you will become. It is important, therefore, to provide children with books such as *The Hobbit*, which are treasures for the soul. Furthermore, this thesis argues that *The Hobbit* allows teachers to cultivate both the development of the head and the heart since it has the potential to develop goodness and hope as well as critical literacy skills. This will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

Literacy Through Literature

Literacy standards are crucial in the quest for human development but not at the expense of character development. Despite the fact that there are many finely crafted books for children that make honesty, responsibility and compassion come alive, this thesis argues that the current data-driven quest to improve literacy standards in primary schools has led to the neglect of books that build character such as *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. This belief is based on experience as a literacy coordinator in the primary

school classroom. It is a fact that the practice during the “sacrosanct literacy block” in many Catholic primary schools today, sets a major emphasis on the development of skills. Teachers are under considerable pressure to ensure that children become competent readers and writers. Gone are the days of silent reading such as ‘drop everything and read’ (DEAR) and ‘uninterrupted sustained silent reading’ (USSR). There is no time for children or teachers to reflect. There is also little time for teachers to read aloud to children.

Nowadays, texts used in reading classrooms are designed for their readability, to develop reading skill, knowledge and comprehension. The reading books are not chosen to either relieve anxiety or build character. They do little to capture imagination or cultivate the conscience. It may be that incidentally some social and emotional values are discussed along the way during brief “guided reading” sessions but the major emphasis is on skill development. Children are deprived of images and myths that nurture emotional and spiritual wholeness.

Maurice Saxby, (1991) in his article ‘The Miraculous Pitcher’, expressed concern about literature- based reading programs in schools:

My concern is that in the present enthusiastic return to literature-based reading we might actually be diverting story and preventing it from achieving its true end. There seems to be a broad belief that literature is a teaching tool, a source for language units, social science projects, even a springboard for social studies or natural science (p. 5).

Just as educators have always been aware of the importance of character building, so the importance of reading is not new. The problems caused by illiteracy have been all too evident, so evident that our primary schools are now striving to produce data that shows a “narrowing of the gap” between those who can read and those who cannot read. We know that many people have been disadvantaged in the past due to

their poor literacy skills. But could we be facing a new kind of illiteracy in terms of moral emotional education? Saxby (1991) argues that by depriving children of traditional literature such as myth and fairy tales, they are seriously disadvantaged because this leaves the door open for “false and dangerous myths, for cults, sects and power structures built on brainwashing techniques.” Saxby refers to the “emotional turmoil and the spiritual chaos that can result from becoming embroiled with the fanatical lunatic fringe in society” (p. 5).

Imagination and Literature

Saxby is referring to traditional literature of myth and legend, folk and fairy tale and he stressed his view that story is not a means to an end but “an end in itself.” He argues that story “stirs the imagination, eases anxiety” and can help promote “inner harmony and psychological strength”. All modern stories are derived from the great body of traditional literature, which we “ignore at our peril.” Saxby refers to Plato in *The Republic*:

Plato . . . claims that the ultimate goal of education should be to create in children an active imagination, because an imagination, he says, is the means through which we re-create the world, and we each re-discover the meaning and significance of life, experience the joy of being alive. Plato would educate children through myth, through story and through folklore and Aristotle, that other great Greek, said, “The friend of wisdom is also the friend of myth” (p. 5).

The work of Robert Coles (1989) in *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*, is likely to be read for a long time to come because it is not necessarily concerned with *how* books ought to be read, but more importantly *why*. Coles points out those stories have universality, a quality, a value, which is archetypal, transcending race or culture. Through these stories “or connections to a collective unconscious” we are

better able to recognise ourselves and our place in a diverse, fast-paced and often chaotic world:

We recognize ourselves or loved ones in a most unusual way, by distance, by objectivity through imposition. Fiction or even non-fictional characters help us to see the invisible, feel the intangible, and reconcile our own lives through the lives of others. It is often difficult to read because it demands self-effacement (p. 55).

Coles writes of a young woman who found it difficult to finish a short piece by Tillie Olsen. The woman explained herself that she had been "hit" by "all the truth" and then she added that it was "too much truth for one evening". She had put down the book and tried to forget it (p. 56). But forgetting is not always easy. By struggling with all the uncertainties in life, we become more aware. We begin to "take stock" of our lives and collect the mental journal that makes up our "moral imagination". We question ourselves about past events and motives. We see ourselves as winners, and sometimes as failures. Coles, a doctor of psychiatry, talked to an older man suffering from a serious illness. This man's self-effacement was often harsh, bordering on anger. The man asked himself "why hadn't he been more religious? If he had been more interested in God, less in Mammon, he might have been spared this crippling illness" (p. 168). This self-scrutiny is the effect of the moral imagination, the imposing of moral imperatives on a life thus far free of active self-evaluation.

In many ways, books carry with them secrets that are revealed slowly and meticulously to the careful reader. Like the Bible, the source of Christian morality, books supply clues to often all too unanswerable questions. Reading with a "moral imagination" is to listen closely, listening for the clues, which unlock the door to living wisely and with open arms. Coles argues that when it comes to moral issues, young people need what is immediate help because the issues are right here and right now.

Coles believes that “a person’s moral conduct responds to the moral imagination of the writers and the moral imperative of fellow human beings in need” (p. 205). So it goes, this immediacy that a story such as *The Hobbit* can possess for children, as it communicates and connects so persuasively with their everyday life experiences exploring issues such as friendship, honesty, courage and problem-solving. Communication is inseparable from the process of human growth and individuation.

Literature and Communication

In *Children’s Literature as Communication* (2002) edited by Roger D. Sell, founder of the ‘ChiLPA Project’ (acronym for Children’s Literature Pure and Applied), the scholarly aim of the research is to explore the children’s literature of several different cultures, observing both its content and literary form and its potential social functions, especially within education. Literature can function as a significant and democratic channel of human inter-activity. Writers are educators for better or worse, and to produce a piece of writing for the attention of others is interactive. Sell (2002) argues for communication through literature as a semiotic process by which people inevitably open themselves up to the possibility of mental re-adjustments:

Genuine communication is a form of interpersonal activity, which may bring about a change to the status quo. Changes to the status quo begin as a change in the communicants’ perceptions and evaluations of the real, hypothetical or fictional entity under discussion (p. 4).

Literature and Experience

Literature provides a rich source for communication and a range of vicarious experience. Experience for personal growth can be through imagination. Saxby (1991) argues:

Experience – an element essential for personal growth – can be direct, indirect or imaginative. Literature provides a potent source of vicarious experience and so fires the imagination with sensory and emotive images to provoke imagined experience (p. 6).

Stories can provide a wealth of good examples – the kinds of examples that are often missing from a child's daily environment. Stories can familiarise children with the codes of behaviour they need to know. They also help children to make sense out of life. Unless this sense of meaning is acquired at an early age, and reinforced in the growing years, how can there be moral growth? It may be that our education system has “under used” such traditional texts to foster humanitarianism. As human beings we can live one life span only but through literature we can walk in the shoes of others and this nurtures understanding and compassion. Lukens (1976) says that literature makes it possible for us to “live in the time of the French revolution, in the period of the Vikings, or during the days of the American colonies. Through a good story, we can live in a small river town in the Mississippi, in the hold of a slave ship, in the hills of Appalachia, or even in a castle turret” (p. 8). Through stories it is possible for children to live lives other than their own. The possibilities are infinite and as numerous as the books on the library shelves.

But children are not little adults. They are different from adults in experience. Adults might seek the many discoveries that children can make through literature in other ways. Lukens says that adults may discover human motivation “through a study of

psychology, or the nature of society and its institutions through a study of sociology, or the impact of nature upon human behaviour through a study of anthropology”.

However, she says, “literature can do all of these things for children” (p. 9).

The Power of Story

In the past, stories, histories and myths played an essential role in character education. The Greeks, for example, learned from the examples of Ulysses and Penelope and others, the Romans learned about virtue and vice from Plutarch’s *Lives* and Jews and Christians learned from Bible stories. American psychologist and a professor at New York University, Paul Vitz (1990), provided an extensive survey of then-current psychological studies all stressing “the central importance of stories in developing the moral life.” Vitz says that narrative plots have a deep influence on us because we tend to interpret our own lives as stories or narratives. He writes, “indeed, it is almost impossible not to think this way” (p. 711).

But why not just *explain* to children the difference between right and wrong or give them a list of rules? It is because such explanation may fail to touch children at the level of imagination. Moral propositions and moral principles do not succeed because children need images that leave useful and humanitarian imprints on their minds. Irish/American short story writer Flannery O’Connor (1981) observed that a story “is a way to say something, that can’t be better said any other way . . . you tell a story because a statement would be inadequate (p. 86). The power of story triggers imagination and imagining can carry the mind beyond the self and show the goodness and greatness in the human character.

It is the contention of this thesis that when a moral principle has the power to generate action, it may be because it is backed up by a picture or image. There is just such an image in Lois Lowry's story *Number The Stars* (1989), a story about a young Christian girl during the Nazi occupation of Denmark. To protect her Jewish friend, she tears a gold chain bearing a Star of David from her friend's neck and clenches it in her fist moments before Nazi soldiers arrive. The girl clenches it so tightly that, once the soldiers have left, the impression of the Star of David is left in her palm (p. 104).

In a talk given by Lois Lowry (1993) at Boston College, she relates a story given to her by a teacher who had read the book with her fourth grade class. The teacher brought a chain and a Star of David into the classroom and as she read the chapter she passed the chain around the class. While she was reading the chapter she noticed that all the children pressed the star into their palms, making an imprint (np). It is likely that this story was reinforced by the actions of the children and it is likely that it made a lasting imprint on their minds. Anne Fine (1990) in *Goggle-Eyes* sums up the power of the storyteller through the eyes of the character Mrs. Lupey who insists, "living your life is a long and doggy business . . . and stories and books help. Some help you with the living itself. Some help you just take a break. The best do both at the same time" (p. 139).

Philip Pullman is a contemporary British author of children's books whose writings reflect his passionate appreciation for the power of a good story. Pullman (1996) summed up the power of story in his Carnegie Medal acceptance speech when he said that all stories teach, whether the storyteller intends them to or not. He said stories teach, "the world we create and the morality we live by". Pullman argued that stories teach it "more effectively than moral precepts and instructions" and delivered his now-famous quotation "Thou shalt not is soon forgotten, but Once upon a time lasts forever" (Retrieved 20 Feb 2004 <http://www.delanet.com/~ftise/pullman.html>). The gift of story

can bring much joy to the hearts of children. On the subject of joy, C.S. Lewis (1955) in his autobiography *Surprised By Joy*, says that he experienced a kind of “awakening” through books in early childhood. He describes his experience as “different from ordinary life and even from ordinary pleasure or happiness.” He calls this feeling Joy:

Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic and only one. . . the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a peculiar kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasure in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and Pleasure often is (p. 19).

Education for Humanity

Being able to see others from the inside, as we do in stories, living with them and hurting with them and above all hoping with them, helps children gain a new respect for others and the stories show children the ideals by which people in society hope to live. But one of the worst criticisms that can be aimed at a story is the accusation of didacticism. But, *good* stories do not need to give heavy-handed moral messages in a way that could discourage young readers. Stoodt, Amspaugh and Hunt (1996) in *Children's Literature Discovery For A Lifetime*, argue that the issue of didacticism centres on how well texts are written:

The issue here is not a concern for the specific values espoused, but the way in which they are presented. One of the differences between well-written and poorly written fiction is the way beliefs and values are expressed. In well-written fiction, the beliefs and values are implicit. They emerge from the characters' actions, conversations and decisions (p. 218).

Good stories provide codes of conduct and good role models. In addition, they give examples to children of people trying to live according to those standards. Good

example is important for children because of their need to identify and imitate. The question is not *whether* a child will identify with someone but rather with *whom*. For a child the question “Who do I want to be like?” is more important than “Do I want to be good?” We know there is no guarantee that children will want to emulate only good role models since undesirable types can be portrayed in appealing ways. Much depends, therefore, on the available models. As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, there is something drastically unbalanced in the mixed messages currently presented to the young. If we want children to rejoice in being alive we must understand the importance of nurturing the unconscious elements of the young child.

Like Plato, Rudolf Steiner (1864-1925) promoted a unique and distinctive approach to educating children based on his own belief in the conscious development of imagination. The extraordinary originality of the Steiner philosophy linked up the world of natural science with the world of Spirit. Steiner designed a curriculum that is responsive to the developmental phases of childhood and the nurturing of the child's imagination in a school environment. This is implemented by using art as a practice, and language to develop the feelings by nourishing the children with the rich heritage of heroic folk tales, histories, fairy stories, poems, music and games that are part of our world civilisation.

Steiner argued that schools should cater to the unique individual needs of the child rather than the demands of the government or economic forces, so he developed schools that encourage creativity and freethinking. His teaching sought to recognise the importance of imagination in developing the individuality of the child. Steiner claimed that this type of education allows children to go into the world with high self-esteem and confidence. The best overall statement of what is unique about Steiner education is to be found in the stated goals of the schooling:

Our highest endeavour as educators must be to develop individuals who are able out of their own initiative, to impart purpose and direction to their lives. Steiner schooling strives to support the development of well rounded human beings who are able to feel deeply and broadly with compassion for others, to think clearly, and then to act rightly for humanity (Retrieved August 2003 www.ozemail.com.au/~cromhale p. 1).

For as Scripture says, “What doth it profit a man” if he gains all the knowledge in the world and uses it to create monsters? President Theodore Roosevelt is quoted for saying “to educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society” (p. 100). History shows that Einstein’s theory on splitting the atom was used against humanity and against Einstein’s wishes, to create the atomic bomb. Einstein (1955) said, “if only I had known, I should have become a watchmaker” (p. 333).

If educators do not take steps to educate for humanity, it is probable that children will continue to be seduced by the worst aspects of popular culture. Storytelling is a tool that teachers have at their fingertips as a means of counteracting this force. Storytelling is a means with which to strengthen the intuitive imagination of children. Good books provide a base for judging and comparing and this helps children to develop an intuition that alerts them when something is morally questionable.

But it is clear that literature alone is not sufficient for the challenge of raising good children because children need to see good personal examples in their own lives and such is the responsibility of educators, including parents. There can be no single “magic bullet” approach when it comes to teaching children but this writer believes that the world of inspiring imaginative literature has been overlooked in our schools. This constitutes a neglected moral resource – like a treasure house of valuable, vicarious and safe life experience that is not used.

The Forgotten Power of the Imagination

One reason for this may be the forgotten power of imagination; another may be that the power of television as discussed in previous chapter “eats books.” Perhaps because we have underestimated the power of the imagination, it has slipped into the hands of those whose main interest in children is a commercial one. The famous English broadcaster, Malcolm Muggeridge (1966) stated:

The genius of man in our time has gone into jet propulsion, atom splitting, penicillin curing, etc. there is none over for works of the imagination; of spiritual insight or mystical enlightenment. I asked for bread and was given a tranquilizer [sic]. It is important to recognise that in our time, man has not written one word, thought one thought put two notes or two bricks together, splashed colour onto canvas or concrete into space, in a manner which will be of any conceivable imaginative interest to posterity (p. 11).

It may thus be said that imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art, as of life. In our imaginations, every truth finds an effective and undeniable existence. To relegate the imaginal faculties to a denigrated, back-seat position and exalt the status of the knowledge we receive through the intellect, so that only what is filtered through the channel of the intellect and the five senses is perceived as valid, could be at the risk of student welfare. Einstein is quoted as saying:

I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my Imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world. (Retrieved March 2003 www.dreammeister.com/visioneers.htm)

From this it could be said that without imagination, knowledge on its own is a pretty useless commodity because for knowledge to be of any real value, there has to be a catalyst around to direct its use and that catalyst is imagination. We may also apply

the term *materialism* to ineffectively applied knowledge. A store of facts in context has no more value than a store of wheat, grain or money. It is what you do with your material gain that really matters. Likewise it is what you do with the gift of imagination that can change your life and even change the world for the better.

If we consider Einstein's statement that imagination is more important than knowledge, it is logical to suppose that imagination must come first, last, and in between; one stimulating the other in an interactive upwards, open-ended and growing spiral. We may suppose that imagination is more important because knowledge is simply facts learned that the intellect can recall. At any time, the intellect contains a finite store of amassed facts and therefore has boundaries. Without imagination, a knowledgeable individual has a restricted view of his/her personal capabilities. Without imagination the further acquisition of knowledge is poorly motivated. In biblical terms, it could be said that in the beginning there was imagination, which stimulated knowledge, and thereafter, every piece of knowledge acquired was followed by a chunk of imagination. The bigger and better the latter, the bigger and better was the next piece of knowledge and so on.

This thesis contends that knowledge and imagination are complementary for without knowledge of the world, imagination could never be fully realised since we could not imagine anything without images first forming in our minds. With statistics of depression in the young on the rise, children's texts can be used as a valuable tool for mental health. Saxby (1969), in *A History of Australian Children's Literature*, discusses the value of children's books in bringing about understanding and release:

Literature, if read and appreciated by elementary and high school pupils, can make a contribution to their mental health by helping to supply basic needs. Good books can give one the feeling of adventure and new experiences. Some can help pupils to understand and improve their social relationships. Books can provide spiritual

adventure and guidance, can help to console one in a time of trouble, and can show the power and pervasiveness of ethical and moral principles (p. 5).

Children today have access to books about depression. These books are published for children and are recommended by the Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria. (<http://www.adavic.org/adbklist.htm>). *Shrink-Rap Press* (1994) was started by two Australian Psychiatrists, Dr. Chris Wever and Dr. Neil Phillips, to publish accurate, simple and easily-read books to help people understand troublesome and painful problems and in a Shrink-Rap book “every point is illustrated by a cartoon so that the emotional turmoil and confusion brought on by psychiatric difficulties can be easily understood”. The publishers claim that these books will provide excellent information while “easing fear and shame with paradox and laughter”. One example is the book *Too Blue*, by Neil Phillips, which is about depression and other mood disorders: “depression is common and produces a lot of misery and disability. At times it can be very dangerous”. The text of the book is simple but gives a comprehensive description of the symptoms that develop when mood becomes extreme. The experiences of severe mood changes are brought to light and various treatments are explained and discussed. In addition there is a special section on what is meant by the term “chemical imbalance”. The book gives hope by making it clear that even severe mood disorders can be successfully treated. Some other titles in Shrink-Rap press include *The Panic Room* (Panic Disorder) and *The Secret Problem* (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). (Retrieved January 2000 <http://www.shrinkrap.com.au/srphome.html>). This author contends that whilst books like these may be useful to make children more knowledgeable once symptoms have developed, it is preferable to look for the cause as well as treating the symptoms. Primary teachers are in a position to provide early intervention by choosing

inspiring and imaginative literature to prepare children with coping strategies for the challenges of life.

First-hand experience in the primary classroom has led to the belief expressed in this thesis that the use of stories in myth and legend, folk and fairy tale in the primary-school classroom, can ease the anxiety of children in a way so powerful that nothing else can compare. Saxby (1969) argues:

My belief is that story is not so much a means to an end but it's an end in itself: that it's so potent that it not only generates linguistic power but it stirs the imagination, eases anxiety and can help bring about inner harmony and emotional and spiritual wholeness that we all need so much (p. 5).

Coles (1989) says, "faced with moral dilemmas, I don't drink: I just go on *book binges*. Without those books, I'd be locked up some place, either a jail or a mental hospital. When questions get me into a panic, I escape to the library for a day or two to find 'moral refuge' from all the sleaze going on in Wall Street" (p. 135). Reading then can be helpful to our mental well being, to comfort our souls in times of trial. This is not to camouflage our deepest feelings but to help us develop presence of mind to deal with them. Young children wonder about what the world is really like and ask questions of themselves. How am I to live my life in the world? How can I truly be myself? Children must become philosophers in their own right, optimistic, but with a healthy degree of caution.

The fables of Aesop have been adapted to convey the most useful maxims in an agreeable manner. The main thrust of the teaching contained in Aesop is worldly wisdom, presence of mind, adapting to circumstances and above all, proceeding with caution. Children can gain much comfort from fables in the way they do from fairy tales. Bettelheim (1987) wrote the following of fairy tales and children:

A child can gain much better solace from a fairy tale than from an effort to comfort him based on adult reasoning and viewpoints. A child trusts what the fairy story tells, because its worldview accords with his own (p. 45).

Through the imaginative force of such story we know that we are not alone. An example of this can be found in the book by Jean Little (1987) *Little by Little*, which gives an account of the joys and pains of her own childhood. Nearly blind from birth and often subjected to ridicule, rejection and bullying, Jean frequently withdrew into a world of her own – the world of imagination. She recalls:

From that day on, when I was chased home from school, I went straight to my library book. The moment I opened it, I stopped being “cross-eyed” Jean Little and instead became Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm or Lord Fauntleroy. I wept over books, too, but those were healing tears. When I suffered with Emily Starr or Hans Brinker, I felt comforted. I and the book children I loved were all part of a great fellowship. I was not alone any longer (p. 89).

As children we may think our sufferings are unprecedented in the history of the world and then we read a story and discover that our pain and heartbreak are the things that connect us to others on the planet. This is a bonding experience. Children must learn that painful feelings that come through suffering are important “challenges” in life. Young children can sometimes be overwhelmed by their own emotions like the hobbit hero Bilbo Baggins, when he is “flustered” and “flummoxed” and “bewuthered”. Children need to know that their feelings are normal and important, but how they handle them and what they learn from them is even more important. Children can benefit from knowing that a little suffering along the road to learning can be productive. The diminutive Bilbo Baggins wins the hearts of children in *The Hobbit* because children can readily relate to the fears and anxieties of a small individual, faced with bossy dwarves, trolls, goblins, giant spiders and an enormous dragon. But Bilbo refuses to be

depressed for long due to his altruistic nature. His strong feelings of anger and fear propel him into action (Chapter 3, *The Hobbit*). Even very young children are able to walk in Bilbo's shoes and understand that if he hadn't felt afraid or annoyed, he would not have leapt into action. It is beneficial for children to realise that strong emotions, good or bad, can be very useful. Good things can happen as a consequence. Through the story of *The Hobbit*, teachers can help children to discover that much joy in life can come from selfless actions for the welfare of others.

Seligman (1998) takes issue with the "self-esteem movement" that promotes "feeling better" rather than "acting or doing better." He argues that in America, after 30 years of concerted effort to "bolster the self esteem of its kids" they have "never been more depressed." He says the one thing responsible for the epidemic is the cushioning of emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, and anxiety:

These feelings were deemed inconveniences to be banished altogether if possible, and certainly to be minimized. In attempting to cushion bad feeling, the self-esteem movement also minimizes the good uses of feeling bad. Strong emotions exist for a purpose . . . they galvanise you into action to change yourself or your world . . . it is natural to want to avoid feeling bad . . . but feeling bad has three crucial uses (p. 42).

Seligman explains these uses, which he says, are crucial for the development of optimistic hearts and to escape the hopelessness, which many young people feel. He uses the term "dysphoria" to describe these states as follows:

Anxiety warns you that danger is around. Sadness informs you that a loss threatens. Anger alerts you that someone is trespassing on your domain. All these messages, of necessity, carry pain, and it is this very pain that makes it impossible to ignore what is going wrong and goads you to act to remove the threat (p. 43).

All of these emotions can be experienced through the imaginative power of the story of *The Hobbit*. Through characters like Bilbo Baggins, children can learn to

recognise that bad feeling is an alarm system although many of its messages may be false alarms such as when we may misunderstand the intentions of another. However, teachers need to be alert to the fact that when bad feelings become chronic, a state of “emotional illness” can result. Too little challenge produces boredom, just as too much challenge or too little skill creates hopelessness and depression. Therefore as educators we must not try to make children “feel better” at the expense of “acting and doing better”. We need to teach children that consequences and times of pain and suffering, is part of the Hero’s Journey through life, a concept explored in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Through the story of *The Hobbit*, explored in the following chapter, children can be led to the realisation that the challenges of life can help us learn and grow into compassionate humans. Experiencing the challenges of others helps us to learn. Young children can benefit from and enjoy this discussion whilst sharing examples of challenges they have experienced, either real or vicariously through texts such as *The Hobbit*. Vicarious, safe-learning experiences through stories have a valuable part to play in the development of children. Rewards alone, high self-esteem, confidence and ebullience do not necessarily produce flow. The cushioning of frustration, the premature alleviation of anxiety, and learning to avoid the highest challenges all impede flow.

Stories can help us to avoid over-protecting children with the mistaken notion that if they *feel better* they will cope better with life. “Quick-fix” solutions, rewards and special treats for children who are feeling bad, do not go far enough if the cause of the sadness is not identified and acknowledged positively. Through stories such as *The Hobbit*, children can learn to accept “little failures” as very important steps to overcoming helplessness in the learning process. In order for children to experience mastery it is necessary for them to be heroic when they fail; to feel bad but try again

repeatedly until success occurs. None of these steps can be circumvented. Role models are important both in real life and in story. “Little sufferings” along the road of life are necessary building blocks for ultimate success and feeling good. This concept is a crucial one that educators can help children to grasp so that they come to realise that life’s *challenges* can be seen as adventures; that an easy life is not necessarily the good life. There is truism in the saying “life was not meant to be easy” and this can be a comforting thought in the mind of a child especially if the child recalls images of the heroic adventures of Bilbo Baggins in the story of *The Hobbit*.

The following educational point from Seligman’s research (1998) is worth emphasising because a key statement for children is that most of the time, “little worth doing is accomplished without persistence.”

Children need to fail. They need to feel sad, anxious and angry. When we impulsively protect our children from failure, we deprive them of learning. When they encounter obstacles, if we leap in to bolster self-esteem, to soften the blows and to distract them with congratulatory ebullience, we make it harder for them to achieve mastery. And if we deprive them of mastery, we weaken self-esteem just as certainly as if we had belittled, humiliated, and physically thwarted them at every turn (p. 45).

If teachers accept this, children must not be protected from their bad feelings. Instead, we must allow the tears to flow. Self-esteem results from positive actions rather than just positive feelings. Primary teachers can use the story of *The Hobbit* to awaken children to the power of self-discovery. This will help prepare them for the ups and downs of life, direct them to good deeds, right decisions and positive self-worth as well as bringing them the experience of lasting joy as distinct from mere pleasure, which can be of a transient nature. This can be another interesting and beneficial discussion topic with children. Young children can see that there is a difference between the temporary pleasure of a tasty treat to eat or a new toy compared to the lasting joy of making a new

friend. Just as Bilbo Baggins enjoys his bacon and eggs and toast and butter, this does not compare to the joy he feels when the dwarves thank him and praise him for his bravery in saving them from the spiders (Chapter Eight, *The Hobbit*).

Hopeful Conclusions

If we accept Einstein's view that imagination is more important than knowledge then reality begins with imagination, and without it, great things cannot happen. However, this thesis takes the view that imagination and knowledge are bound together. It seems logical to suppose then, that when imagination and knowledge come together through literature, fantastic things can happen and the more knowledge a person has through life and through literature, the greater the potential for imagination. As a powerful educational tool, this notion is extremely worthy. This study is built on the belief that it is important to inspire children to *allow* their imaginations and to *own* their imaginations without ever feeling that they have to apologise for any imaginative thing they conceive.

As educators, we have a responsibility to guide those who come after us. That is a divine and inspiring responsibility. For adults it can be a challenge to appreciate this and allow that free, childlike imagination to nourish itself and to survive in ourselves, because we are required to do so many other institutional-type things. We are required to be *adult* by the definition given to the word by our culture. This can lead us astray from imagination, magic and mystery. Adults can either stamp out imagination in children or nourish it and create wonderful adolescents and adults.

Reflecting on what scholars past and present have said, it is easy to agree that imagination and knowledge lead to ideas. Humankind must have ideas because ideas

can change the world for the better. The conscious development of imagination must always be for the improvement of life on earth. Books are important for a moral education. They inspire a love of goodness. Therefore, if we accept that adversity for the young is on the increase, it is time to welcome back books that build character and optimism and return safely, to goodness, magic, humour, entertainment, escapism and all round “cheering up”. This thesis argues for the use of *The Hobbit*, accepting J.R. R. Tolkien as a master of imaginative literature, and agrees with the opinions of Plato and other scholars mentioned in this chapter regarding the importance of the early years of childhood development. All of our efforts to teach values to children may be diminished if the desire to do right is not developed in the young.

It is important for everyone, children and teachers alike, to imagine the future with hopeful hearts. Childhood can become more hopeful with the future-oriented guidance of adults. Selecting stories that explore the human experience with integrity, offers children a chance to affirm their nature and do so with pleasure and purpose. Stories offer children a metaphor for life and a chance to stand back, to respond by thinking of their own lives and goals with altruism and optimism. Those who assemble the precious instrument of such literature for us to share have gifted us. Saxby (1991) argues for literature with integrity:

If literature has integrity – that is, if it explores, orders, or evaluates and illuminates the human experience, its heights and depths, its pain and pleasure aesthetically and according to the creator’s genuinely felt response – the end product becomes an image of life, and potentially a metaphor for living. The range of such images is as vast as human society and culture (p. 4).

Education must inspire children with hope for the future. The well-known saying that hope springs eternal reminds us that the human spirit needs to have a hopeful heart. J. R. R. Tolkien believed in the happy ending and even if real life doesn’t always feature

happy endings, this does not and should not prevent people from hoping. For without hope the future can hold little to sustain us on our journey. Children need to understand that life is the greatest adventure:

The greatest adventure is what lies ahead,
Today and tomorrow are yet to be said,
The chances, the changes are all yours to make,
The mould of your life is in your hands to break
(Lyrics by Jules Bass from 'The Ballad of the Hobbit' *Animated Hobbit* 1977).

Future Thinking requires us to imagine all sorts of possible scenarios so that we may be prepared for future problem solving. It is important for children to know that miracles can happen, and nowadays more than ever before, thanks to technology and ongoing research and progress, giving hope to millions. For example, disabled people find new hope daily thanks to micro-surgery (most recently Aug'98 hand transplant!). The deaf can hear thanks to cochlear implants and the lame can walk because of prostheses. We can witness the Paralympics and other sports, developed through research and imagination and the strong desire of the disabled to achieve more. Without the gift of imagination and knowledge we would not be seeing this heroic participation and refusal to accept incapacity.

Through this conscious development of imagination and literature, teachers have the opportunity to become "the heart's best guide" for children. The story of *The Hobbit* has been chosen to demonstrate this. Self-realisation is an essential theme in the heroic journey of Bilbo Baggins and this is the essence of the whole idea. The Hero's Journey motif in *The Hobbit* is presented in the next chapter as a universal archetype for virtually all human experience. Most importantly, through the use of books such as *The Hobbit*, children will be empowered with the knowledge that even the most unlikely,

small and insignificant being, like Bilbo Baggins, can become a hero and a critical person in the great tapestry of life. That is the great hope of the Resurrection.

CHAPTER 4

THE HERO AND THE HOBBIT

“It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse”
(Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 1971, p. 391).

This chapter will explore the educational benefits in teaching primary school children to understand and apply the pattern in the Hero’s Journey using the observations developed by Joseph Campbell, renowned author and expert on mythology and author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* is a valuable educational tool that teachers can use for the purpose of teaching the Hero’s Journey and, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, it is eminently suitable for primary-age children.

The earliest humans forged the first mythic stories from their fascination with the mysteries of life and, in an indirect, poetic and metaphoric way; the myths were attempts to explain the purpose and place of humans in the world. With the tools of myth, early people strove to answer timeless questions about the meaning of life. Questions about where we come from, who made the world and why, how people should behave and where people go when they die, are particularly relevant to children searching for many answers at the beginning of life’s journey. The journey of life is a process of ever-expanding awareness. Joseph Campbell (1971) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* affirmed the magic of myth in the following way:

Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished; and they have been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religious philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic

man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth (p. 3).

Throughout time, mythical archetypes have helped people to grow in awareness of who and what they are and what they should live up to. It is easy to see why the myths that endure are those that illuminate the human conditions that successive generations see recurring in their own time. The hero myths enjoy widespread popularity because they explain events when the secular world is being redefined beyond prior recognition. The hero myths can help us navigate through turbulent times.

Christopher Vogler (1999) in his book *The Writer's Journey* claims that “all stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams and movies”. Vogler writes about the expansion of the mythic chain of thought as humans enhanced the myths to reflect their distinct conditions of living and their unique experiences in the land. The chain stretched further as people explored mythic storytelling through dance, music, drama and all the other arts. Vogler claims that when text came to life through movies “a new and powerful link in the mythic storytelling chain was forged” since through the living text of movies, people found a medium that was ideal to represent the fantastic world of myth. Movies embraced myth, both for story lines and for a deeper influence in structure, motifs and style (p. 5).

Other links were made in our own times as scholars and philosophers looked back at the myths of the ancient world. Campbell's work has particular relevance because of his set of observations about the Hero's Journey. In *Hero* and other books such as *The Power of Myth* and *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, Campbell reported on a synthesis that he found while comparing the myths and legends of many cultures. *The Hero's Journey* was Campbell's all-embracing metaphor for the deep, inner journey

of transformation that heroes in every time and place seem to share, a path that leads them through great moments of separation, descent, ordeal and return.

George Lucas, inspired by Campbell's work, composed *The Star Wars Series* (1976) in which young heroes of a highly-technological civilisation, confront the same demons, trials and wonders as the heroes of old. Vogler attempted to add something to the chain. He saw how the work of Campbell was verified and validated by the unprecedented success of the Campbell-inspired *Star Wars* movies, and in response, Vogler, then a story analyst working for the Disney Studios, wrote *A Practical Guide to the Hero with a Thousand Faces* to serve as a guide for scriptwriters. This was published as part of the book *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* and became part of Hollywood lore and one of the cornerstones of modern screenwriting theory. This was an attempt to translate Campbell's ideas about the hero into movie language.

Stuart Voytilla (1999) Hollywood screenwriter and author of *Myth and the Movies* collaborated with Vogler to compile this book that illustrates many variations of the Hero's Journey. Together they analysed a large number of films through the lens of Campbell's set of observations, noting the stages and archetypes and making comparison, which may be the key to myth. Vogler says "the mythic impulse is driven by the very human tendency to learn about ourselves through comparison" (p. 5) People automatically read stories as metaphors and we measure our own performances and behaviours against the example of the heroes and villains. It is interesting to note that Vogler refers to how useful it is to have abundant examples of story solutions at your fingertips. He says one of Joseph Campbell's greatest strengths as a speaker was the "vast number of examples he had at his command". Campbell had read deeply into

thousands of heroic patterns from different cultures and was able to call up heroic illustrations and insight on any subject in a variety of genres (p. 6)

Why Choose the Hobbit Hero?

The Hobbit has been chosen to demonstrate the Hero's Journey particularly because the hero, Bilbo Baggins, is an unlikely and unusual hero. This carries meaning for children as they recognise that they do not have to possess extraordinary talents or be fearless in order to triumph against the odds. A humble person whether rich or poor, can be a hero. Children may admire heroes who are big, brave and strong like Ulysses or the giant who kills the dreaded dragon but it is more immediate and empowering when children can relate to childlike heroes. Bilbo is initially childlike and may even be described as timid but nevertheless he finds his courage in the most unexpected blundering adventure. Children need inspiring role models and in *The Hobbit* they will find this in Bilbo Baggins who is, after all, a very little person.

Margery Hourihan (1997) in *Deconstructing the Hero* analyses the meaning and impact of heroic adventure stories from her perspective that many hero stories assert the "natural" superiority of Western culture. The hero is "above all things a man of action". Furthermore, the hero is "good at fighting and he uses his club or sword to telling effect . . . thus the hero story glorifies violence and defines manhood within this context" (p. 3). Hourihan refers to the fact that women in traditional hero stories appear only in relation to the hero, some as "devoted assistants dedicated to his cause" and some as "trophy brides" or "dangerous opponents who must be destroyed" (p. 3).

But none of these elements is present in the story of *The Hobbit*. Tolkien's hero, Bilbo Baggins has no *fidus achates* to serve his needs and he is a small, humble creature

that does not fit the stereotypical image of the swaggering, sometimes aggressive freebooter. Bilbo is not seeking to dominate and does not use force or violence to achieve; yet he does take a journey and he faces a struggle against impossible odds in the name of good, succeeding with *facta, non verba*.

However, whilst agreeing with Hourihan that it is essential for teachers to be selective by deconstructing traditional hero stories to look for inherent meaning in both structure and content, this thesis recognises much educational merit in the use of hero tales. Stories are, generally, the products of various times in our history and the values and the language of that time can foster education for children today. This thesis argues that hero tales are part of a continuum through which children can learn that the world keeps changing. Teachers can use traditional heroic tales to teach children to read critically by promoting reflection and discussion of different times and significant cultural changes such as the changing role of women in society. *Non sequitur* traditional dualisms that have shaped our thinking must be reaffirmed through traditional hero tales. Hourihan's notion that the hero is almost always male and that women play a part in heroism as either the goddess or the temptress archetype, is a sign of past times and somewhat outdated since the archetype of a female hero has been firmly established by contemporary authors. This is a useful discussion, but is not part of the scope of this work.

Campbell claims that whether we follow the journey of Bilbo Baggins, the mythological expedition of Jason for the Golden Fleece or the quest of King Arthur for the Holy Grail, this heroic paradigm contains a familiar formula of departure, initiation and return. And "whether the hero be ridiculous or sublime . . . the journey varies little in essential plan" (p. 38). The Hero's Journey is a rite of passage in which the individual (male or female, human or hobbit) ventures forth from the ordinary, common world and

returns older and wiser. Thus, in a metaphorical sense, the Hero's Journey is a *nosce te ipsum* quest to enlightenment as the individual grows to self-discovery and a sense of personal contribution to the world.

In order to apply the educational value of the Hero's Journey pattern, it is essential for teachers to understand that the Hero's Journey is the universal archetype for virtually all human experience. The Journey metaphor is the "transformative crisis" that leads to growth and discovery, which is the basis of many great literary texts. When young people begin to understand the Journey archetype, they are more able to benefit from the literature they read. They have a basis for understanding and comparison. If children can understand the calls to adventure in their own lives, they can better understand the need to accept the calls and thus be more able to accept challenges and embrace change, transformation and growth. Teachers themselves can apply the journey's stages to their quests to enact heroic changes for improved learning in our schools. This will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

In many ways, J.R.R. Tolkien's story of a hobbit named Bilbo Baggins and his adventures fits the criteria of a mythical heroic journey, yet it also deviates from the typical pattern of such a journey in several significant ways which will be shown in this chapter. Tolkien's deviation at times from the journey pattern serves to give the story a deeper, richer metaphorical meaning for children.

Giddings and Holland (1988) in *The Shores of Middle Earth*, claim that there is a distinction that is frequently overlooked or misunderstood, which is that the "affinity of a particular literary work with mythology often goes quite a bit further than a discernible parallel with specific myths of the ancient world" (p. 18). The observation is particularly true when applied to *The Hobbit*. Yet to understand how Bilbo's adventure

differs from the prototypical hero story, it is necessary to examine the characteristics that are typical of this genre.

According to Campbell (1971) there is a standard form to heroic tales in all cultures. The typical scenario for a mythological adventure that centres on a hero follows the formula for a rite of passage, separation, initiation, and return as follows:

- The Call to Adventure
- The Resistance/Refusal of the Call
- The Quest
- Threshold Guardians
- The Road of Trials
- Transformation
- The Return

Campbell tells us that each stage of the journey must be completed successfully in order to be considered heroic. A hero ventures forth from “the world of common day” into a region of supernatural wonder where forces are there encountered. When a decisive victory is won, the hero returns from this mysterious adventure with the power to “bestow boons on his fellow man” (p. 30). Bilbo’s travels in *The Hobbit* lead to the expansion of mind and spirit, which often result from such journeys. It is important for teachers to remember that Campbell’s pattern fits for the non-mythic journey as well. The pattern will fit almost any story in which the protagonist makes a journey, even a psychological one, and returns transformed in some way. Thus, it fits the journey of life.

Initially the hero faces separation from his own, familiar world as in the story of *The Hobbit* when Bilbo, despite his reluctance to hear the call, is urged to adventure. Once separated, the hero undergoes initiation and transformation, where some old ways of thinking and acting are altered or destroyed, opening the way to a new level of

awareness, skill and freedom. Following Campbell's pattern, the next stage of the journey, after successfully meeting the challenges of the initiation, the initiate takes the journey's final step, the return to his world. When he does, he may discover find that he is as good as reborn, more confident, perceptive, and capable, and he will discover that his community now treats him as an adult, with all of the respect, rights and privileges which that status implies (p. 10).

In the story of *The Hobbit* Bilbo discovers, through his perilous adventures, the power to do good that is within himself. Whilst Campbell's classic pattern underlies Tolkien's narrative, this chapter will show that it is a template that Tolkien departs from at some points. References to episodes in *The Hobbit* are taken directly from the book with additional comments from *Portrait* (2001) unless otherwise indicated. It is recommended that when using *The Hobbit* in the classroom, teachers seize upon the points of passage throughout the story to encourage meaningful dialogue with the children.

Unusual Qualities of Bilbo the Hero

“May the hair on his toes never fall out!”
(A toast to Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit* p. 16).

To begin with, Bilbo, the hero, is not human. Heroic mythical figures generally look heroic, noble, muscular, and male. Examples, such as Jason and his search for the Golden Fleece, abound in history and literature. Bilbo looks neither human nor heroic. At the beginning of the story Tolkien tells the reader that hobbits are small, about half the size of a full-grown human and there is little or no magic about them. They are inclined to be “fat in the stomach”. They generally go without shoes because “their feet

grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair” (p. 4). In other words, hobbits look comical, not heroic.

Another way in which Bilbo is an unusual and unlikely hero is that he is averse to adventures. Hobbits are not that way inclined. Tolkien makes this clear in the opening chapter of the story that “the Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they *never* had any adventures or did anything unexpected” (p. 3). In the standard mythical hero adventure, the protagonist in the story seeks out his adventure. Aladdin follows the forty thieves; Prometheus sneaks into heaven to steal fire but Bilbo resists the call to adventure. He does not want to go and has to be persuaded. Tolkien also tells us that Bilbo’s family was respected because they were quite rich, which is another factor that deviates from the standard formula. Heroes in standard myths are frequently poor, or lacking in status, which is why their journey is required in the first place. They want to seek their fortune, or “make a name” for themselves. But Bilbo just wants to go home to his hobbit hole and sit “by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!” (p. 30).

Yet another way in which Bilbo’s story deviates from standard mythical heroes is that quite often in epic tales, there is a prophecy that predicts the achievements of the hero. The hero may even be acknowledged as the *facile princeps*. But in Bilbo’s case, he was bullied into his adventure when Gandalf the wizard shows up at Bilbo’s door one day and insists on it. To add insult to injury, so to speak, Tolkien makes it quite clear that Bilbo isn’t chosen to be a hero, only a burglar. Regarding his search for a hero, Gandalf says, “that would be no good...not without a mighty Warrior, even a Hero. I tried to find one; but warriors are busy fighting one another in distant lands, and in this neighbourhood heroes are scarce, or simply not to be found” (p. 21). Gandalf is thus

using a *traditional* definition of a hero, so that Bilbo as hero is a surprise to the characters as much as to the reader.

Despite his initial resistance, Bilbo agrees to join Thorin Oakinshield and the twelve other dwarves. He becomes “lucky number” fourteen in the quest to expel Smaug, the dragon, from Lonely Mountain and retrieve Thorin’s treasure and his title as the rightful “King under the Mountain”. Here again, Tolkien's tale differs from the standard heroic tale because Bilbo is not the leader of the group. The ways in which the story deviates from the standard heroic tale make the narrative more meaningful for children and allow opportunity for personal development. It is useful for children to tease out the notion that a hero does not necessarily have to be the leader or the “boss” of the group. At the same time there is a similarity with standard hero tales because heroes are often “burglars” such as Jack stealing things from the giant and Robin Hood stealing from the rich to help the poor. The idea of the “small” person standing up against a more powerful one is courageous and inspiring for children.

Generally, standard mythical heroes are not as adverse to adventure as Bilbo Baggins is. As the story unfolds, Bilbo is “born again” into a new life and in this new life he has to acquire new skills, concepts, and work to survive. As the journey continues Bilbo grows in heroic stature, while the dwarves become less heroic due to their avarice. Throughout the narrative, Bilbo grows in courage, becoming more daring. Metaphorically, Bilbo's journey is a heroic rite of passage, one that children can identify as happening through life.

A Humble Hero

Looking at the overall patterns that Tolkien established raises the question of *why* he presented such an unlikely hero in what is otherwise a mythical adventure story of heroism. This is an essential point. This thesis contends that the modern age needs heroes that are not larger than life. Bilbo enjoys his creature comforts. He does not possess physical stature and superhuman strength or animal cunning and he has no arcane knowledge or particular skill at fighting. Instead, he is a plain, ordinary, and humble creature. Because Bilbo is portrayed in this way, personal growth potential, particularly for children, can be most vividly demonstrated. Bilbo Baggins proves that heroes do not have to be larger than life. Every individual no matter how ordinary or seemingly insignificant, has the potential within to be a hero.

Many people never venture forth from the safety and security of their familiar environment and their regular routines. Many people never stretch themselves and discover what they can do and accomplish. Significant steps in human progress are attributable to those who have been prepared to move out of their “comfort zones”. Bilbo does this and returns home as someone more secure and more at ease with himself than the individual who left. In this way, Tolkien showed that Bilbo more effectively fulfilled the true heroic journey. Metaphorically speaking, we are all on a journey through life in search of dragon gold and searching for the hero within ourselves who like Bilbo Baggins may be waiting for a “chance to come out” (p. 5).

Tolkien (*Portrait* 2001) claimed that the wisest remark in his entire body of work is where Elrond says that the wheels of the world are turned with small hands while the great are looking elsewhere and they turn because they have to, because it's the daily job:

The road must be trod but it will be hard and neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak, with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is off the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world. Small hands do them because they must while the eyes of the great are elsewhere (BBC 2001).

Tolkien's fellow Oxford scholar and friend, Neville Coghill once said:

I asked Ronald how it was that he came to invent this whole complex this continent of languages and peoples and he said that he first got interested in the Shire and the hobbit as a picture of the kind of nice, simple, modest Englishman that he had been working with in the army. . . he said he had always been impressed that we are here, surviving, because of the indomitable courage of quite small people against impossible odds (BBC 2001).

Perhaps the crux of the point Tolkien wanted to make is about the intricate connections in nature, of the divine importance of even the smallest and most unassuming of creatures in God's plan. The fact that Bilbo doesn't have extraordinary powers, nor does he particularly desire or seek fame and glory, is perhaps the point of his selection by Tolkien to play the pivotal role in this epic. Bilbo is a steadfastly law-abiding, "respectable" citizen (p. 4) who does not even know the first thing about being a burglar, his assumed role in the drama. It is his very reluctance to undertake the journey, and his seemingly total lack of readiness, which makes him a character with whom child readers may readily empathise. Children have their personal "dragons" to slay, and their own issues with "invisibility". Yet, just as Bilbo overcame obstacles, children also have that choice.

To Thine Own Self Be True

When you try to understand everything, you will understand nothing.
It is best to understand yourself, and then you will understand everything
(Shunryu Suzuki
<http://www.cuke.com/lectures/verbatim%20lecture.html>)

Children are little people. Sometimes they can feel overwhelmed and vulnerable in the wide world. The story of *The Hobbit* is reassuring for children because it allows them to see in the character of Bilbo Baggins, that a person doesn't have to be big and/or strong to succeed against seemingly impossible odds; a person doesn't have to be aggressive. Through Bilbo, children learn that heroism is not necessarily or always about physical daring, aggression or even "bullying". Bilbo's brand of heroism is one of overcoming fear, self-doubt and temptation, of refusing to be dazzled by material goods, and of a willingness to sacrifice much to perform what he truly believes, in his heart, to be right.

In depicting Bilbo as an unlikely, non-conventional hero, Tolkien challenges the notion of heroism itself. If *The Hobbit* was merely concerned with celebrating traditional heroism, the story would probably have ended with Bilbo's heroic slaying of the dragon Smaug since killing dragons is part of the traditional hero's job description. Perhaps that is why it is Bard, not Bilbo, who dispatches the dragon. There are heroes *and* heroes: there are the doers and the endurers, the dragon slayers and the ring bearers. There are those for whom the trumpets sound and there are also the reluctant, ordinary persons who strive to find themselves sufficient for that which is required of them, and who sometimes succeed. Coghill (BBC 2001) said that Tolkien's vision of heroism is an ample and compassionate one, encompassing all of these points. It has a particular

kindness for the small and simple people who strive against impossible odds and do not yearn for adventures, let alone see themselves as heroes.

Through the story of *The Hobbit*, children develop an awareness of the Hero's Journey motif and realise that life holds many adventures that can begin with a blunder, a mistake, the merest chance that can lead them to an unsuspected world of challenge where courage can be realised in many forms. Through courageous problem solving comes true self-esteem.

It is interesting that Campbell notes the Freudian claim that blunders are not the merest chance. They are the result of suppressed desires and conflicts. They are ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspected springs. These may be very deep – as deep as the soul itself. The blunder may amount to the opening of a destiny. This is the first stage of the mythological journey (p. 51)

Campbell claims that a hero must pass over this threshold of insecurity when called to adventure. The threshold is the “jumping off point” for the adventure. It is the interface between the known and the unknown. In the known world, we feel secure because we know the landscape and the rules. Once past the threshold, however, we enter the unknown, a world filled with challenges and dangers. Often at the threshold, we encounter people, beings, or situations, which block our passage. These “threshold guardians” have two functions. They protect us by keeping us from taking journeys for which we are unready or unprepared. However, once we are ready to meet the challenge, they step aside and point the way (p. 77). Bilbo was very insecure and nervous at the threshold and experienced many attempts to block his passage, including the dwarves who doubted his potential and were reluctant to have him join their party. Bilbo afterwards encountered many other more frightening obstacles along the way but Gandalf believed in Bilbo right from the start.

Gandalf the wizard was pointing the way for Bilbo to undertake the adventure. To pass the guardian was to make a commitment, to say “I’m ready” and “I can do this”. (Although Bilbo never really said this at any point and Gandalf bullied him into it). This is an important point of passage in the story which teachers can use to advantage themselves as well as children. Early in our lives, our parents function as our threshold guardians. They try to keep us from doing things which would cause us harm. As we get older, our parents' job becomes more difficult. They must both protect and push (to children this may be seen as “nagging”), measuring our capabilities against the challenges we must face. This discussion helps children to understand that this is also what good teachers do.

At the threshold (and very often later in the journey), the hero will encounter a helper (or helpers). Campbell explains that helpers provide assistance or direction. Often they bring us a divine gift, such as a talisman, (in Bilbo’s case the ring is a talisman although he found it by an accident that perhaps signified that destiny had summoned our hero), to help the hero through the ordeal ahead. As adults, our threshold guardians can be much more insidious. They are our fears, our doubts, and our negative thoughts and behaviour patterns. In fact, they may be the “dragon in disguise”, our greatest fear and the catalyst for the journey, taunting and threatening, daring us to face him in the abyss (p. 79).

The most important of these guardians is the mentor or guide and for Bilbo it is Gandalf the wizard. He is a supernatural helper. Campbell explains that “the hero to whom such a helper appears is typically one who has responded to the call” and “what such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny” (pp. 69-71). Mentors keep the heroes focused on their goals and give them stability, a psychological foundation when *graviori manent* or for when the danger is greatest. The heroes need to

understand, too, that the journey is theirs. Mentors and helpers can assist and point the way, but they cannot take the journey for us.

This is yet another valuable discussion point between teacher and children. From experience, if you ask children if they would (honestly and seriously) wish their parents or teachers to do things for them that they (the children) are capable of doing by themselves; the children will reject such an idea. Even very young children can accept that when a student asks the teacher a question, the teacher might sometimes say “what do *you* think?” or “answer that question yourself” because the teacher knows that often we learn better through our own trial and error discoveries. Children need to become aware that the challenge is individual and must be so if they are to benefit from it and grow.

On the quest, the hero faces a series of challenges or temptations. Early challenges are relatively easy. By meeting them successfully, the hero builds maturity, skill and confidence. As the journey progresses, the challenges become more and more difficult, testing the hero to the utmost, forcing the hero to change and grow. One of the greatest tests on the journey is to differentiate real *helpers* from *tempters* and this is an extremely relevant discussion for children. Tempters try to pull the hero away from the path. They may use fear, doubt or distraction. Tempters may pretend to be a friend or counsellor in an effort to divert energy to their own needs, uses or beliefs. The hero must rely on a sense of purpose and judgment and the advice of mentors to help recognise true helpers.

Children love to identify “my precious” Gollum as the great tempter in *The Hobbit* and this can be drawn out further through role-play and discussion. Children will recognise that Gollum, at times, pretends to be nice to Bilbo for his own selfish purposes. To allow the children plenty of scope for shared experiences, this aspect of

the story can be presented to them within the context of discussing “false friends”. This topic instantly engages the children in meaningful interactive dialogue since it is a subject with which most children can empathise and tell their own stories.

Campbell (1995) claims that whatever the challenges faced, they always seem to strike at the hero’s Achilles’ heel such as the hero’s greatest weakness or poorest skill, shakiest knowledge, and most vulnerable emotions. Furthermore, the challenges always reflect needs and fears, for it is only by directly facing these weaknesses that the hero can acknowledge and incorporate them, turn them from demons to gods and if the hero cannot do this, the adventure must end. When the hero reaches the Abyss it is to face the greatest challenge of the journey. Campbell (1995) says the challenge is so great at this point that the hero must surrender completely to the adventure and become one with it. In the Abyss the hero must face alone his greatest fear (np). Here is where the hero, for example, must “slay the dragon”. This often takes the shape of something that the hero has dreaded, repressed or needs to resolve. There is always the possibility that, because the hero is unprepared or has a flaw in his character, the challenge will beat him. Or perhaps the hero cannot surrender to it and must retreat. In any case, unless the hero sets off to try again, his life becomes a bitter shadow of what it could have been.

Campbell (1995) refers to the atmosphere of irresistible fascination whereby the hero is compelled to summon courage and transfer his spiritual centre of gravity. As the Abyss is conquered and fears are overcome, transformation becomes complete. The final step in the process is a moment of death and rebirth: a part of the hero dies so that a new part can be born. Fear must die to make way for courage. Ignorance must die for the birth of enlightenment. Dependency and irresponsibility must die so that independence and power can grow. Campbell explains that the Transformation process

is a Revelation, a sudden, dramatic change in the way the hero thinks or views life (np). This change in thinking is crucial because it makes the hero a truly different person.

After being transformed, the hero goes on to achieve Atonement that is to become

“at one” with the new self. The hero has incorporated the changes caused by the Journey and is fully “reborn”. Campbell (1995) argues that in a spiritual sense, the Transformation has brought the hero into harmony with life and the world. The imbalance that sent the hero on the journey has been corrected until the next call (np). After Transformation and Atonement, the hero faces the final stage of the journey: the return to everyday life. Upon the return the hero discovers the gift that has been bestowed based on the hero’s new level of skill and awareness. The hero may become richer and stronger, may become a great leader, or may become spiritually enlightened (np).

The essence of the return is to begin contributing to society. In mythology, some heroes return to save or renew their community in some way. Other mythological heroes return to create a city, nation, or religion. In the story of *The Hobbit*, Bilbo returns a stronger, better hobbit. This is evident on the journey back home when Gandalf remarks to a pensive Bilbo “you are not the hobbit you were” (p. 270). Sometimes, however, things do not go smoothly. Shippey (BBC 2001) says, for example, the hero may return with a great spiritual message, but find that it is rejected. The hero may be ostracised or even killed for the ordeal. The hero also runs the risk of losing the new understanding, having it corrupted by going back into the same situation or environment as before. The hero may then become disillusioned or frustrated and leave society in order to be alone (np). In Bilbo’s case, he returns home to a great commotion outside his home and realises that “he had arrived back in the middle of an auction!” and his cousins, the

Sackville-Bagginses, were, in fact, “busy measuring his rooms to see if their own furniture would fit”. In short, Bilbo was “presumed dead” and “not everybody that said so was sorry to find the presumption wrong” (p. 270).

Tolkien tells the reader that “the return of Mr. Bilbo Baggins created quite a disturbance, both under the Hill and over the Hill and across the Water: it was a great deal more than a nine days’ wonder”. Indeed the “legal bother” lasted for years and it was quite a long time before Bilbo was in fact “admitted to be alive again”. Bilbo even had to buy back quite a lot of his own furniture and many of his silver spoons “mysteriously disappeared and were never accounted for”. The Sackville-Bagginses were never again on friendly terms with him (p. 270). But Bilbo discovered that he had lost more than spoons for he had lost his precious reputation and was no longer regarded as “respectable”. He was described by all the hobbits of the neighbourhood of The Hill as “queer”. But surprisingly, Bilbo did not mind and showed that he was a changed hobbit with self-assurance, courage and determination. He was quite content to be at home and “the sound of the kettle on his hearth was ever after more musical than it had ever been in the quiet days before the Unexpected Party”. Bilbo was inspired to “writing poetry and visiting the elves” and though many hobbits shook their heads and said “Poor Old Baggins!” and did not believe any of his tales, he “remained very happy to the end of his days, and those were extraordinarily long. Bilbo was also inspired to write his memoirs which he called ‘There and Back Again, A Hobbit’s Holiday’ (p. 271). The possibility that increased knowledge and self-awareness can lead to rejection is relevant for children in their lives. At the same time, just as it led Bilbo to write poetry it can lead children to inspiration. Many great heroes such as Jesus of Nazareth and Buddha have sacrificed the bliss of enlightenment or heaven to remain in the world and teach others.

Throughout the unfolding story of *The Hobbit*, the steady evolution and rising status of the hobbit hero continues. Bilbo relies upon his intelligence and stealth and, like Ulysses, becomes known for his considerable craft and trickery. To the central themes of heroism, wisdom and nobility, we can add the complexities and possible justifiable morality of a noble thief since Bilbo's craft and trickery is used for a noble purpose. This thesis stresses the importance of leading children to see that they must use their courage and imagination for the good of humanity. Although Bilbo possesses other heroic qualities, children can readily see in Bilbo's character that he has moral courage and a sense of compassion, duty and fair play towards others. Despite seeming contradictions when Bilbo uses craft and trickery at times, it is always done for a noble purpose and he manages to prove his sincerity and retain his integrity.

Bilbo's Moral Courage and Ethical Superiority

Bilbo shows that he has a kind of courage, which is comparable with, and superior to that of the dwarves. For example, when Bilbo feels that he must turn back to look for the dwarves, meaning he must go back into the horrible tunnels to look for his friends, even knowing that they may not have felt the same towards him if the situation was reversed. Bilbo decided it was his duty to do so and just then he hears the dwarves arguing about him. The dwarves were arguing about whether they should turn back and look for Bilbo and one of them at least says no: "If we have got to go back now into those abominable tunnels to look for him, then drat him I say!" (p. 85). Bilbo is actually shown here for the first time as *superior* to his companions. His courage is not aggressive or hot-blooded. It is internalised, solitary and dutiful. We can see that the dwarves started to respect Bilbo from this point.

In Chapter 6 of *The Hobbit*, Bilbo's reputation went up "a very great deal with the dwarves". In Chapter 8, some of the dwarves "even got up and bowed right to the ground before him"; while in Chapter 9 Thorin began to have a "very high opinion of him indeed". In Chapter 11 Bilbo has "more spirit left than the others do", and by Chapter 12, Bilbo had "become the real leader in their adventure". Bilbo's kind of courage is increasingly emphasised, always in scenes of solitude, always in the dark. This suggests a metaphor for transformation – from darkness to light. This thesis contends that children need to understand and value the quiet moments of essential reflection time in their lives. Children need to accept that there are some things in life that must be undertaken alone. In the story of *The Hobbit* when Bilbo kills the giant spider "all alone by himself in the dark", the experience transforms him (pp. 141-42).

Somehow the killing of the great spider, all alone by himself in the dark, without the help of the wizard or the dwarves or of anyone else made a great difference to Mr. Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder (pp.141-142)

Tolkien, through the character of Bilbo, addresses deeper questions. As Bilbo searches within himself for the courage and wisdom to perform the deeds expected of him, Tolkien suggests that the most courageous are those who can both overcome their fear and respond, understanding when force or violence is necessary. As Bilbo finds the strength to slay, in self-defence, a giant spider, through this courageous action he is galvanised into action with a new confidence in himself that empowers him with fresh determination to surmount the challenges ahead.

Bilbo learns, however, that "discretion is the better part of valour". When confronting the eerie Gollum, Bilbo refuses to give in to the impulses arising from his fear and horror: "He must stab this foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill

him”. But because of his sense of “fair play” and certain compassion, Bilbo refuses to use an imbalance of power against Gollum. He finds a means of escape without resorting to destruction, the mark of a truly great hero indeed. This is a pivotal and inspiring moment in the story. It is beneficial to allow children some reflection time leading on to further discussion in order to tease out and clarify understandings. Social justice issues such as fairness are of the utmost importance to children. Sometimes the temptation to cheat or take advantage of others is hard to resist. Children need to know that being fair requires absolute honesty and calls for careful thinking about the situation as Bilbo shows in his thoughts and actions:

No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked day without light or hope of betterment (p. 80).

Another great moment of personal growth for Bilbo is when he proceeds all by himself in the dark tunnel after he has heard the sound of Smaug the dragon snoring:

Going on from there was the bravest thing he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterward were as nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in that tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait (p. 193).

Chapter 15 of *The Hobbit* conveys the difficulty of negotiation once issues of honour and *pacta sunt servanda* are involved. Shippey (2001) says much of the chapter would fit quite easily into situations from the Icelandic “Sagas of the Kings” (np). But in chapter 16 Bilbo takes a hand and he does so with a return to the “business matter” with “really you know . . . things are impossible. I wish I was back in the West in my own home, where folk are more reasonable” and with this he produces – from a pocket in his jacket, which he is still wearing over his mail – his original letter from ‘Thorin &

Company'. His next proposal to them dwells on the exact meaning of 'profits', and uses words like 'claims' and 'deduct' (p. 243), all part of the vocabulary of the modern world. But by this stage Bilbo has reverted all the way to his origins, and it could be said that he is demonstrating ethical superiority. When he rejects the suggestion of the Elvenking that he should stay with them in honour and safety (p. 244), an important point to be made is that he does this out of a purely private scruple, his word to Bombur, who would get the blame if he did not return. Bilbo had earlier promised and he believed that "a promise is a promise" (p. 74).

Shippey (2001) says that in embarking on the quest Bilbo is challenged to a new understanding of himself. Bilbo changes as he finds himself in numerous tight corners and performs various deeds in the fantastic challenging world of Wilderland. He discovers, just as humans do, that he must live with his conscience. Sometimes the "two people inside" refuse to be reconciled (np). For example when Bilbo realises that the Took side had won and "many times afterward the Baggins part regretted what he did now" (p. 28). Whilst at the beginning, the Baggins side is presented negatively, later the positive aspects are shown; in the gentleness and kindness strongly linked to a sense of justice, balancing the daredevilry, pride and fierceness of the Took side. Children love the sense of justice when Bilbo puts the keys back on the Chief Guard's belt saying to himself that would "save some of the trouble he is in for" and "he wasn't a bad fellow and quite decent to the prisoners" (p. 163).

The fantasy character of *The Hobbit*, with Bilbo and the dwarves constantly battling evil and magical foes and struggling with hunger and discomfort means plenty of scope to explore the themes of teamwork, friendship, trust and loyalty, all of which demand courage at times. These are engaging themes for classroom discussions. There is an interesting parallel for young children between the character of Bilbo Baggins and

the character of Mole in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). For example, Mole is a humble, homely creature like Bilbo who enjoys his food. When adventure leads him "a distant weary way from home" he longs for "the sight of familiar things" and "his thoughts run a good deal on supper". When Mole receives a "fairy call" and smells his old home that he had hurriedly forsaken, he knew that "even under such a test as this, his loyalty to his friend (Rat) stood firm" (pp. 87-90).

Despite Bilbo's plaintive murmurings such as "why, oh why, did I ever leave my hobbit hole?" his strong sense of fair play leads him to give his group a loyalty that, initially at least, it refuses to reciprocate. The dwarves' initial reluctance to admit Bilbo to the group is strongly sketched; they see him as a burden, someone weaker and different to themselves. Instead of helping Bilbo to learn and belong, they display a very human tendency towards "outsiders" in their impatient treatment of the "wretched little hobbit" (p. 62). Bilbo decides that it is his duty to go back into the "horrible, horrible tunnels and look for his friends" (p. 84). It is a striking contrast to what happens earlier, when he himself goes missing and the dwarves grumble and nearly refuse to look for him. They do not feel a responsibility to him as one of their group. Tolkien explores the old theme, and one that continues to have contemporary relevance, of "am I my brother's keeper?" One episode sees a dwarf refusing to carry Bilbo as they make an escape saying, "What do you think I am? A porter?" (p. 92).

Perhaps the most powerful and courageous theme of *The Hobbit* is one which becomes fully apparent in the final chapters through the typical fantasy battles between forces of darkness and light; a timeless theme and important learning point for children, relating to ourselves and our own world. Having finally reached its destination, the group steals the gold from Smaug, the dragon, Bilbo taking the great Arkenstone that to Thorin, is "beyond price". The anger of the lake-men and elves towards the dwarves, over their

responsibility in stirring the dragon, leads to a demand for some of the plunder. The choice is made clear to Thorin: “We would see peace once more among dwarves and men and elves after the long desolation but it may cost you dear in gold” (p. 232).

Children can be led to realise that being a peacemaker is a form of heroism. It takes courage to stand up for what we believe even if it offends our friends. Bilbo makes a crucial decision to achieve peace and avoid conflict and bloodshed that may arise from Thorin’s single-minded and obsessive attitude towards the treasure. Bilbo yields the Arkenstone to the other side, for use in bargaining. Feeling supported by Gandalf’s approval of his actions when he said, “Well done, Mr. Baggins!” Bilbo courageously faces Thorin and finds himself blasted as a “traitor”. He is ostracised and exiled from the dwarves with whom he has grown in friendship and learning and has achieved so much. More than one of the dwarves, in their hearts “felt shame and pity at his going” (p. 244-248).

It is beneficial to allow children to discover through the childlike Bilbo that heroism is not always about physical daring or aggression. Bilbo's brand of heroism is one of overcoming fear, self-doubt and temptation, of refusing to be dazzled by material goods, and of a willingness to sacrifice much to perform what he believes, in his heart, to be right. Thorin voices his realisation of this, as he lies dying:

Since I leave now all gold and silver and go where it is of little worth, I wish to part in friendship from you, and I would take back my words and deeds at the gate (p. 258).

Bilbo responds with “I am glad that I have shared in your perils; that has been more than any Baggins deserves” but Thorin says “No! There is more in you of gold than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be

a merrier world” (pp. 258-259). This is another thought-provoking moment in the story which gives teachers an opportunity to lead children further in discussion and role play about the many things in life that are more valuable than gold, and more valuable than greed, selfishness and materialism. The children can share experiences and make a list of all the precious and joyful encounters they have known that money cannot buy. In the story of *The Hobbit* Tolkien illuminates the truth that achieving lasting peace and happiness to achieve good over evil, is worth sacrifice and struggle. In the happy resolution at the end this is superbly portrayed: “The dragons were dead and the goblins overthrown and their hearts looked forward after winter to a spring of joy” (p. 262).

The fantasy format of *The Hobbit* has, in a sense, been manipulated by Tolkien to communicate powerfully and convincingly the theme and the creation of character. Possibly his ultimate achievement in theme is showing the hobbit’s courageous achievements, in light of all his human-like frailty, particularly his frequent desire to succumb to apathy and run away and hide in his hole. Here lies a positive and enriching message for all readers particularly children, to realise that a humble and frightened little person can indeed summon up the courage to do brave things even when frightened.

Shippey (2001) says Bilbo’s actions in respect of the Arkenstone are quietly significant in the tale of his courageous heroism. He gives it to Bard so that Bard may bargain with Thorin for the share of the treasure, which he has earned, but which has been withheld. On being asked how the Arkenstone has come into his possession, Bilbo answers:

Oh well! It isn’t exactly; but well, I am willing to let it stand against all my claim, don’t you know. I may be a burglar – or so they say: personally I never really felt like one – but I am an honest one, I hope, more or less. Anyway I am going back now, and the dwarves can do what they like to me. I hope you will find it useful (p. 244).

There is a sense of some awkwardness present here. Bilbo does not use high and heroic rhetoric. His language is simple, unpretentious, and not particularly elegant, the vocabulary avoiding large abstract ideas like “honour” or “sacrifice”. Instead Bilbo uses small personal statements, such as “personally I never really felt like one - but I am an honest one – I hope, more or less”. Yet, it is in this very discomfort that Bilbo’s nobility emerges. In a strange way, it proves his sincerity because smoother speech might have sounded too glib. It shows a new courage that is quite different from the physical bravery that led Bilbo to attack and kill the spiders. The courage is moral and is shown in his attempt to do “the right thing”, even though he knows this will not necessarily be appreciated in all quarters. A sense of justice, courage and *unassumingness* are all characteristics in evidence at this point.

As well as charting Bilbo’s growing courage, *The Hobbit* is also a tale about journeys and expanded space. Some might argue against this, saying that if Bilbo’s journey begins with his venturing out of his hole, with all its connotations of smallness and narrowness, into the larger world, it does so only to take him towards another. This second “hole” is the door to the mountain, which Bilbo the burglar has to get through in order to get to the dragon’s lair. There is a Freudian suggestion of “re-birthing” in this. And it might further be argued that the journey in the end merely leads back to the place of its beginning, as the work’s subtitle, *There and Back Again*, in fact openly indicates. There is growth and expanded awareness, however, and from the stodgy and unimaginative hobbit who left Bag End, Bilbo returns a creator, a writer, and the author of *There and Back Again: A Hobbit’s Holiday*.

Conclusion

By recognising the journey's stages and how they function like a pattern, children can develop a sense of flow of their own experience and be better prepared to make decisions and solve problems. More importantly, they will begin to recognise their own points of passage and respect the significance they have for change to occur. Even if the characters about which the children read are not real, the journeys they take and challenges they face are reflections of the real journeys and challenges of life. Children learn as they watch the heroes move through their quests. The transformations are such that can be seen as relevant to the child.

The Hero's Journey is a metaphor for enlightenment, self-discovery and a sense of purpose. Young children can be taught to look for this in the texts presented to them. The notion that we are here in this world on a mission to "make a difference" has a certain appeal for young children. It helps them to see life as an adventure, perhaps the greatest one, not necessarily an easy road since there may be pitfalls and challenges along the way. It is worth repeating that it is comforting for children to realise that even the smallest and seemingly most ordinary individual can rise above problems and adverse circumstances. Teachers need to seize the many opportunities that arise within the story of *The Hobbit* and other similar texts to guide this type of discussion with children.

Young children are able to understand that life follows a pattern. They know that they must encounter challenges as they grow from child to teenager, from teenager to adult, from adult to old age, and from old age into death. Understanding the journey pattern can help young people to look optimistically at life and accept the ups and downs so that the adventures they face can become challenging and exciting. The heroic

pattern teaches children to face difficulties and use their experiences to become stronger and more capable individuals. Understanding the steps on the journey can help young people to achieve wisdom, growth, and independence, leading them to become the people they want to be. This approach opens the doors to knowledge and understanding through which children can navigate their lives through turbulent times.

As the heroes of myth depart from the safety of their homes to face frightening dragons and serpents in their quest for treasure and enlightenment, so do teachers as they confront new practices and face barriers to change in education. The school is the medium through which hope will be developed. The Latin term *docendo discimus* is a reminder that by teaching we learn, and in order to enact change, teachers can not only enlighten children about the *Hero* but they can also apply the stages of the Hero's Journey to their own educational quests. An example of the imagined stages on a heroic educational journey quest is included in Appendix D. Campbell's final quote in *Hero* gives inspiration for the Journey:

The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be atoned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice and sanctified misunderstanding. "Live", Nietzsche says, "as though the day were here". It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse. And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal – carries the cross of the redeemer – not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silence of his personal despair (p. 391).

The following chapter of the thesis will show that *The Hobbit* is a multi-functional educational resource. In addition to teaching the Hero's Journey, *The Hobbit* can be used to develop essential critical literacy skills in the primary school classroom. It is an important tool for teachers concerned with the pressures of accountability regarding the development of critical literacy skills and multiple intelligences. This will

be discussed using the models of Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences.

CHAPTER 5

CRITICAL LITERACY AND THE HOBBIT

It is the intention of this chapter to show that *The Hobbit* is a multi-functional educational tool for the primary classroom, not only as a means of supporting the emotional and moral growth of children and enhancing intrapersonal *nosce te ipsum* intelligence, but also as a means to developing critical literacy skills. Education has little value if it produces a vast population able to read but unable to engage actively with text, evaluate its messages and distinguish what is worth reading.

Johnston (2001) in *Literacy: Reading, Writing and Children's Literature* refers to “knowing readers” who “perceive the implicit and explicit ideas, values and attitudes that constitute the architecture of words and out of which texts are constructed” (p. 332). She argues for the educational value of imagination:

It is the *literacy of the imagination* that lies at the heart of the process and practice of literacy in all its forms . . . the essence of imagination is the ability to visualise, to make pictures in the mind (p. 334)

The practice of literacy is enhanced by the development of thinking skills. The classification of critical thinking skills finds its roots primarily in the works of Benjamin Bloom who described learning behaviours in the cognitive domain. In 1956, Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists to develop a schema indicating levels of intellectual behaviour. This became a taxonomy including three overlapping domains; the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective (pp. 1- 4). Bloom developed these learning objectives and he clarified and expounded upon these over the course of two decades. His ideas continue to be widely accepted and taught in teacher-education programs.

Postman (1999) suggests that modern educators are referring to *skepticism* when they speak of critical thinking and are “afraid that critical thinking works to undermine the idea of education as a national resource since a free-thinking population might reject the goals of its nation and disturb the smooth functioning of its institutions” (pp. 156-160). This thesis contends that the development of critical literacy leads to *enlightenment* rather than *suspicion*. Citizens of a critical mind must improve society.

Teachers are highly accountable for all their decisions regarding curriculum content and learning outcomes. It is an expectation that students will learn to critique the messages presented through literature. It has become essential to develop critical thinking skills so that young people will become problem solvers in their own lives. In order to enhance the development of multiple intelligences and increase students’ creative problem-solving capacities, the sequential development of higher-order thinking skills is of fundamental importance. The ability to think clearly in order to make positive choices and productive decisions is an essential lifelong skill. Bloom’s Taxonomy is a point-by-point, structured outline that describes the logical and emotional domains of the mind’s various processes and primary teachers are very familiar with this process. In addition, teachers nowadays understand that intelligence is a pluralistic phenomenon. Therefore, this study seeks to acknowledge new paradigms in education and will focus on integrating Bloom’s Taxonomy for the development of higher-order thinking skills with Howard Gardner’s Theory of *Multiple Intelligences*.

Bloom’s Taxonomy and The Hobbit

Bloom’s Taxonomy of the cognitive processes remains one of the most frequently used models for the development of higher-order thinking skills in primary

school classrooms. Based on the use of *The Hobbit*, the representative sample of activities and study plans contained in this thesis (Appendix B) have been developed for primary education and have been trialled in primary schools. Teachers will note that in addition to assisting the development of Bloom's skills, the variety of tasks allows for domain-specific development of multiple intelligences, particularly the development of intrapersonal intelligence. When planning lessons, it is desirable to incorporate both Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's theories and this can be done using *The Hobbit* (Appendix B).

Bloom's Taxonomy is an attempt to categorise knowledge into six different levels of complexity. It is a useful way of organising learning tasks to cater for the needs of children with mixed abilities. Children may be given questions or tasks appropriate to their present level of thinking. All children will be challenged by their particular set of tasks (either chosen by the teacher or by the child under teacher guidance), the idea being that children will thus be most likely be able to achieve success.

Bailey and Knight (1999) explain that the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy can be divided into two areas: the first three levels involving recall and application (Knowledge, Comprehension and Application) and the three upper levels involving the higher-order thinking skills (Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation, p. v). Obviously a child will need the necessary knowledge and comprehension to achieve the higher-order levels.

However, these are often better acquired through the more challenging tasks at the upper three levels. Bailey and Knight (1999) say, "all children will benefit from attempting tasks at higher levels of the taxonomy, and should be encouraged to do so, but it is very important that children known to be talented be given many opportunities

to work at the top three levels” (p. v). The major categories in the taxonomy of educational objectives are taken from Bloom (1956)

<http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/bloom.html>

- 6 – EVALUATION – judge, verify, recommend
- 5 – SYNTHESIS - plan, create, invent
- 4 – ANALYSIS – investigate, explain, compare
- 3 – APPLICATION - use, illustrate, classify
- 2 – COMPREHENSION – restate, translate, interpret
- 1 – KNOWLEDGE - read, absorb, specify

Applying Bloom’s Taxonomy in the Classroom

Bloom’s skills are transferable and applicable to any subject and to any level of formal education from pre-school to tertiary. They are important for all students in any classroom. But particularly for young children, they provide the basis for many cognitive activities in mainstream classrooms, based on sequential development of higher-order thinking skills. Bloom’s model provides a simple, easy-to-learn structure for differentiation so that *all* children can be engaged in varied teaching and learning activities.

Furthermore, it leads *all* students through a sequential process in the development of a concept or the learning of relationships. A teacher may spend more time with very able students at the higher levels, an equal time at all levels with average students whilst slower students may need more time and activities at the lower levels. Therefore it is possible to cater for individual needs within the same setting. The taxonomy provides teachers with suggestions for creating appropriate psychological

environments so that students can be encouraged to develop their *multiple intelligences* through becoming independent and enthusiastic learners. Traditionally, many questions and activities set by teachers emphasised knowledge and comprehension and children were asked to recall, recognise and/or interpret information to show understanding. But conscious effort should be made to explore the different approaches that will lead to the development of new thinking skills. The use of Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework for developing questions and activities involves this deliberate effort.

Many primary classrooms today use a Learning Centre approach to literacy development and Bloom's Taxonomy, together with *The Hobbit*, can be used to develop critical thinking skills offering activities to cater for a variety of abilities and specific talents. This approach is a useful way of differentiating learning experiences to match student needs, interests and abilities in a mixed-ability classroom. The way in which the children are encouraged to use the Learning Centre will determine how successfully it operates. For example, in the wording of the activity, the verb used is crucial in generating the required level of thinking. For example:

- Knowledge – the verb may be name, tell, state, list, describe etc.
- Comprehension – the verb may be explain, question, compare, outline, interpret etc.
- Application – the verb may be illustrate, solve, construct, use, examine etc.
- Analysis – the verb may be analyse, compare, contrast, identify, explain etc.
- Synthesis – the verb may be invent, compose, formulate, plan, devise etc.
- Evaluation – the verb may be decide, judge, assess, rat, choose, argue etc.

Children must learn to deal with information. At the knowledge and comprehension levels children must learn and understand the information. The next step

is learning to use the information then break it up into its component parts before re-assembling and judging the information.

It is also important that questioning frames correlate with thinking levels. The following table outlines Bloom's Taxonomy levels of thinking, key questioning words and appropriate questions that can be applied to activities based on *The Hobbit* (Appendix B).

Level of Thinking	Key Verbs			Questions
Knowledge/Facts Remembering previously learned material	Repeat List Record Observe Label Cluster Who? How many?	Memorise Match Recall Define Recount Sort Why?	Name State What When Where How Outline	What did the book say about . . . List the parts of . . . Define . . . Who wrote . . . Match the following . . . Sort the following . . . Repeat the steps . .

Comprehension Inferential Thinking Grasping the meaning of the material	Restate Recognise Express Paraphrase Describe How? In your own words . . .	Report Identify Review Document Summarise Who?	Explain Tell Locate Cite Which If/then Cause Effect	Explain the . . . What can you conclude . . . State in your own words . . . Which one would you choose . . . Describe the main character . . .
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Application Applicative Thinking Using learned material in new situations	Select Illustrate Sequence Organise Perform How do you	Imagine Dramatise Manipulate Imitate Apply Create	Use Solve Show Frame Could	Use A and B to solve for C Illustrate the process Create a map of Could solar energy Apply the principles of gravity . . . How do you think
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Analysis Applicative Thinking Breaking down of material into parts for easier understanding	Examine Outline Refute Analyse Infer Compare Contrast	Classify Characterise Question Debate Research	Map Relate to Conclude Does Interpret Predict	What was the author's purpose? Does heat influence . . Compare the two treatments . . . Map the relationship between Examine the role of . . Analyse the statements made by. . .
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Synthesis Transactive Thinking Putting the material together to form a new whole	Propose Create Design Compose	Construct Make up Develop Emulate	Imagine Plan Invent	Construct a model for Design a program Plan a route Using clay, develop
Evaluation Transactive Thinking Judging the value of material for a given purpose	Compare Convince Persuade Evaluate	Judge Justify Assess Criticise	Argue Decide Rank Predict	Judge the President's policy Predict the outcome of Persuade the voters to Justify the need for

The following is a brief example based on Bloom's levels of thinking using *The Hobbit*.

A detailed framework is included (Appendix B) to show the development of the full range of cognitive abilities that can be encouraged in the primary classroom.

1. Knowledge – This level requires that information be recalled to show what has been learned. Example: Recite one of the poems from the story of *The Hobbit*.

2. Comprehension – Understanding and interpreting the information presented. Often these first two levels (of knowledge and comprehension) are combined, as activities that relate to these levels require both sets of skills. Example: Make a cartoon strip showing how the dwarves escaped from the goblins and the wargs in the forest.
3. Application – This level involves applying information to solve problems by using knowledge gained. Example: Make a scale drawing of Smaug and Bilbo for comparison.
4. Analysis – This level requires students to recognise the relationships between the parts that make up a whole. Example: contrast the characters of Bard and the Master of Laketown.
5. Synthesis – This level involves students in integrating information into novel patterns or structures. Example: Create a new legend explaining what Gandalf did when he left the party at the edge of Mirkwood Forest.
6. Evaluation – At this level students are expected to critically judge the accuracy and reliability of information, or to make a value judgement. Example: Select a character to accompany you on an adventure and justify your choice.

This outline has been extended to include a representative sample of tasks that correlate specifically to the use of *The Hobbit* (Appendix B). The units of work will be presented in sequential level of difficulty regarding acquisition of skills, primarily critical thinking and semantics. In terms of *The Trivium* the prominent focus is logic and rhetoric with little focus on the development of grammar since this is the subject least able to help develop critical thinking. The activities have been planned to develop differentiation to meet individual student needs and “like-minded” group tasks. Teachers should encourage children to sustain many questions during these activities. This is particularly important to the development of critical thinking. Whilst children learn answers they should also learn about question-asking because questions lead to answers. Postman (1999) argues that questioning is “the most significant intellectual tool human beings have” and he claims that nowadays this skill is not taught in schools in a sustained and systematic way” (p161).

New Paradigms

There is a paradigm shift in education nowadays regarding the practice of literacy and it is possible that part of the catalyst for this shift is the notion and theories of multiple intelligences, presenting educators with new understandings of human intelligence and learning. Modern educators know that there are many forms of intelligences and many ways through which children can learn to know and understand themselves and the world. Howard Gardner (1988), a pioneer in the contemporary understanding of multiple intelligences and director of Harvard's cognitive research effort *Project Zero*, states:

An intelligence entails the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting. We call someone "intelligent" if they can solve problems that face them in their lives and if they are able to produce things that are of value to our culture (p. xi).

A more dominant intelligence can be used to improve or strengthen a weaker intelligence. Along with the discovery of intelligence as a multiple reality, whole ranges of potentials and capacities beyond anything we have previously imagined or dreamed have been opened to us. Gardner's research has identified a set of intelligences – distinct ways that we learn and know about reality – and he believes there may be more.

Gardner (1999), in *Multiple Intelligences and Education*, initially formulated a list of seven intelligences and his listing was provisional. The first two are ones that have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the arts and the final two are what Gardner called 'personal intelligences' (pp. 41-43).

Gardner argues two essential claims about *multiple intelligences*:

- The theory is an account of human cognition. The *intelligences* provided a new definition of human nature, cognitively speaking (p. 44).
- People have a unique blend of *intelligences*. Gardner argues that the big challenge facing the deployment of human resources is how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several *intelligences* (p. 45).

Gardner (1993) in *Frames of Mind*, stated:

It becomes necessary to say, once and for all, that there is not, and there can never be, a single irrefutable and universally accepted list of human intelligences. There will never be a master list of three, seven or three hundred *intelligences* which can be endorsed by all investigators . . . if we are striving for a decisive theory of the range of human intelligence, we can expect never to complete our search (p. 59).

A prerequisite for a theory of *multiple intelligences* is that it captures a reasonably complete gamut of the kinds of abilities valued by human cultures. Gardner said, “We must account for the skills of a shaman and a psychoanalyst as well as of a yogi and a saint” (p. 62). Arguing that reason, intelligence, logic, knowledge are not synonymous, Gardner proposed a new view of intelligence. In his Theory of *Multiple Intelligences*, he expanded the concept of intelligence to include areas such as spatial relations, music and interpersonal knowledge in addition to linguistic and mathematical ability.

Gardner (1989) in *Multiple Intelligences Go to School*, defines intelligence as “the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting” (pp. 4-9). He initially formulated a list of seven *intelligences* recognising that there may be more, which differs greatly from the traditional view that

usually recognised only two *intelligences*, verbal and computational. The seven *intelligences* Gardner initially defined are:

- Verbal/Linguistic – involves having mastery of language
- Logical/Mathematical – consists of the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically.
- Visual spatial – the ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems. This intelligence is not limited to visual domains. Gardner notes that visual spatial intelligence is also formed in blind children.
- Musical/ Rhythmic – encompasses the capability to recognise and compose musical pitches, tones and rhythms.
- Bodily/Kinesthetic – the ability to use one’s mental abilities to coordinate one’s own bodily movements.
- Interpersonal – the ability to understand and discern the feelings and intentions of others.
- Intrapersonal – emotional intelligence; the ability to understand one’s own feelings and motivations.

The story of *The Hobbit* can be used to assist the development of all of these skills. The book promotes verbal linguistic skills and the use of the Heroic pattern as discussed in the previous chapter, enhances logical intelligence. In particular, this chapter will emphasise the importance of the use *The Hobbit* to support *emotional intelligence* through the development of intrapersonal skills. Statistics have shown increasing levels of depression and violence in children but the good news is that through literature, teachers can help give children the basics for emotionally healthy

lives. The benefits of emotional *intelligence* impact on important areas of life including health and relationships with others.

Gardner claims that multiple intelligences very rarely operate independently. They are used concurrently and typically complement each other as individuals develop skills or solve problems (p. 18). Any topic can be presented more effectively if the theory of multiple intelligences is drawn on pedagogically. Teachers should be able to present these materials using several different *intelligences*. When learners become intrapersonally intelligent they can gain superior understanding in a way most appropriate to their own cognitive profile. It is possible that some people have *intelligences* that they have never discovered.

Gardner's research with Harvard's cognitive research effort, *Project Zero* (1990), has been popularised by the works of David Lazear which include a wealth of application ideas and suggestions for those concerned with the task of educating for multiple intelligences. In his book *Outsmart Yourself* (2002), Lazear includes 'Naturalist Intelligence'. The naturalist intelligence involves "the full range of knowing that occurs in and through our encounters with the natural world and its phenomena and the ability to recognise and classify various flora and fauna" (Retrieved November 15, 2003 from www.multi-intell.com/mi_background/nat.htm).

Lazear (1999) says that intelligence is "a multiple phenomenon that occurs in many different parts of the brain, mind and body system . . . much of one's full intelligence potential is in a state of latency due to disuse, but it can be awakened, strengthened and trained" (p. 185). Bailey and Knight (1999) writers on education for the gifted in *Bloom's Multiple Intelligences*, note that Gardner's intelligences can be domain specific. We may have high ability in any one or more intelligences, without necessarily being good in other areas (p. vi). Teachers know that a child may be good at

reading but not mathematics. The idea is that by providing a choice of activities from all areas of intelligence, teachers can give children greater opportunity to experience success by extending them in their area(s) of strength, while also developing their area(s) of relative weakness.

Lazear states that the old assessment paradigm was that “successful teaching is preparing students to achieve on various tests designed to assess their knowledge in different subjects”. The new paradigm is that “successful teaching is preparing students for effective living throughout their lives; it therefore focuses on *teaching for transfer* of learning beyond the classroom, into one’s daily living” (p. 7).

This thesis contends that the use of *The Hobbit* in the primary classroom is a tool for all of this in addition to much that cannot be measured. The units of study included in Appendix B have been developed using *The Hobbit*. They are based upon Bloom’s Taxonomy of sequential, logical processes and in addition, the units also assist the development of *multiple intelligences*, particularly visual/spatial and intrapersonal intelligences. The development of these particular intelligences is relevant to this thesis because of the visual spatial connection to imagination and the intrapersonal connection to the soul.

The key sensory base of visual spatial intelligence is the sense of sight but also, as noted earlier, the ability to form images and pictures in the mind. Lazear refers to the key concepts of visual intelligence in relation to images and claims that images determine and control our behaviour, but they can change through the impact of “messages” and “a changed image equals changed behaviour” (p. 188). Whatever else we may say about imagination, it has something to do with our remarkable ability to form and be formed by images. This interaction with images opens us to the trans-rational. Because we are able to engage reality through our imaginations such as

through stories and symbols, we are able to grasp the true and the real far more effectively than pure intellect ever could. This is especially true with fantasy. Children must learn to read ‘between the lines’ to understand the true message of allegory. The vivid imagery in *The Hobbit* allows ample scope for the imagination and the process of “self-discovery”.

Lazear explains that a multiple intelligence step-by-step approach is “focusing” to help us to self-discovery which “can bring about immediate and lasting changes” in our lives. Whatever is vividly and energetically imagined or visualised by the mind, the brain believes to be true and present reality. This is the key to the practice of affirmations (p. 188). This has relevance for teachers to note that the ability to use internal imagery processes can be improved even in so-called “non-imagisers” through working with “eidetic images” which are the pictures that remain in the brain immediately after looking at something (p. 57).

The ability to visualise is the most basic mental process since the mind naturally thinks in images. We all possess a wide variety of “inner guides” or “inner teachers” which can be accessed and called upon at any time. Visual intelligence deals with such things as the visual arts, including drawing, painting, map-making and activities which develop the ability to visualise objects from different perspectives and angles. This study will show that *The Hobbit* lends itself to all of these developmental activities. Lazear says of visual/spatial intelligence that “Our childhood daydreaming, when we pretended we could fly or that we were magical beings, or maybe that we were heroes/heroines in fabulous adventure stories, used this intelligence to the hilt” (p. xiii). Teachers must be responsible for the images they choose to present to children.

The use of *The Hobbit* supports the emotional development of children particularly by developing intrapersonal skills. Planned activities encourage children to

demonstrate their knowledge and learning through expression of what they feel about the material and how it may have informed or changed their self-understanding, personal philosophy, beliefs or values. Children may be led to show their knowledge of particular subjects in and through reflective writing and speaking, symbolic representations of meaning and understanding, or applications of ideas beyond the classroom. It is important for children to use the capacities of intrapersonal intelligence such as concentration, mindfulness, metacognitive processing, awareness of and expression of different feelings and transpersonal sense of the self.

The following plan provides opportunities for the development of the eight intelligences using *The Hobbit*, although not necessarily all of them always in the one lesson. One specific example from *The Hobbit* is shown for each domain of intelligence and the units of study included in Appendix B provide scope for the development of all the intelligences.

- Verbal Linguistic Intelligence – include reading, vocabulary, formal speech, journal and diary writing, creative writing, poetry and storytelling. (Create a Middle-earth Newspaper).
- Body/Kinaesthetic Intelligence – Role-playing, drama, body language, mime, inventing and sports games. (Hobbit Theatre).
- Visual/Spatial Intelligence – Active imagination, visualisation, colour schemes, patterns, designs, painting, drawing, mind-mapping, pretending and visual pictures. (Create a Hobbit House and Hobbit Puppets).
- Logical/Mathematical Intelligence – Problem-solving, pattern games, mapping skills, outlining, graphic organisers, forcing relationships. (Hobbits love maps – making maps of school and home environments).

- Musical /Rhythmic Intelligence – Rhythmic patterns, vocal sounds/tones, percussion vibrations, environmental sounds, humming and singing. (Hobbit Chants and Rhymes).
- Interpersonal Intelligence – Cooperative learning strategies, giving feedback, intuiting others’ feelings, person-to person communication, division of labour, collaboration skills, sensing others’ motives and group projects. (Discussing common proverbs, Chapter 5 *The Hobbit*, ‘Out of the Frying Pan’).
- Intrapersonal - Thinking strategies, emotional processing, “*know thyself*” procedures, focusing and concentration skills, higher-order reasoning and complex guided imagery. (Problems with Prejudice Chapters 8-11 *The Hobbit*).
- Naturalist Intelligence – Recognition, appreciation and understanding of the natural environment; species discernment, fascination/attraction to such things as the weather, the sound of the wind, the warm sun or lack thereof and affinity and respect for all living things. (Tolkien’s “thunder battle” springboard to weather activities).

To further demonstrate the educational value of *The Hobbit*, the following program of work, based on the use of the book in the primary school classroom, is included in Appendix B:

- About *The Hobbit*
- Summary of *The Hobbit*
- Before *The Hobbit*
- Lesson Plans
- Sample Worksheets
- Vocabulary Lists

- Word Activities
- Critical Thinking and *The Hobbit*
- After *The Hobbit*
- Reflection

Conclusion

The central element of teaching is the integration of curriculum with instruction and assessment. The activities chosen by teachers are of vital importance. Children must experience a degree of success with each sequence presented so that defined curriculum learning outcomes are achieved. The use of *The Hobbit* to integrate Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences is a means of providing an organised framework for sound educational practices.

Teachers must be evaluated and held accountable for their teaching. When we hire a plumber, a carpenter, a painter, a lawyer or a doctor we look at the end product. Therefore, if evaluation by teachers is to be as fair as possible we must look beyond standardised test scores to students' intellectual, emotional and social development. We must look at the capacity of students to process, transfer and apply classroom learning to real life in the world; particularly creative problem-solving abilities and intrapersonal skills. Educators need to spend as much time on the development of creative thinking and problem solving, how to teach students to accept challenges, how to adapt, transfer and integrate the knowledge acquired at school into the task of daily living and communicating with others, just as much as asking them to memorise various bits and pieces of information.

It is important for schools to educate *individuals* by catering for the uniqueness of individual differences. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences provides a

theoretical foundation for recognising the different abilities and talents of children. The theory acknowledges differences – that whilst all children may not be linguistically or mathematically gifted, they may have expertise in other areas such as interpersonal knowledge, intrapersonal skills, music or spatial relations. The use of the theory of *multiple intelligences* allows children a wider range of successful participation in classroom learning.

Children of the New Millennium face a future of inevitable change, which is likely to occur at an ever-increasing pace. Children must acquire critical thinking skills for humanity so that they will be empowered to perform at their optimum levels of ability, both emotionally and intellectually. Postman (1999) argued that “whatever else we bring into the new century, we will certainly feature the greatest array of propagandistic techniques in the history of humankind” (p164). This must be viewed not as a problem but as a major “challenge” for the young. The units of work based on *The Hobbit* (Appendix B) will assist the learning process in the primary school so that children will have the necessary skills to critique the social order as they journey through life. Thus, they will not be easy prey to sensations and cheap appeals. The use of *The Hobbit* in the primary classroom allows teachers to differentiate for the *intelligences* of *all* children.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: PRIMARY TEACHERS HOLD THE KEY

Teachers are in a position to make a positive difference to teach children to *thrive* in society not merely *survive*. This thesis has demonstrated that the use of *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien is a valuable educational tool when used in the primary school classroom for this purpose. It has been shown in the Introduction to this thesis that the story of *The Hobbit* is eminently suitable for children and in addition it utilises the Hero's Journey motif – a metaphor for enlightenment, self-discovery and a sense of purpose in life.

Many great scholars have written about the works of Tolkien, particularly the epic *The Lord of the Rings*, but the story of *The Hobbit* has been comparatively undervalued and neglected. This author has tried and tested the book in primary school classrooms and in this thesis, observations have been offered to assist teachers on educational quests for new millennium teaching in this era of rapid change, and the suitability of *The Hobbit* for children has been demonstrated.

This thesis has shown that Tolkien is worthy of study particularly in the primary school classroom. He was one of the most celebrated and widely-read authors of the twentieth century. Carpenter and Prichard (1984) in *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* claim that all historians of children's literature agree in placing *The Hobbit* among “the very highest achievements of children's authors during the twentieth century” (pp. 530-531). Tolkien's Hobbits are now as convincing a part of the English heritage as leprechauns are to the Irish, gnomes to the Germans and trolls to the Scandinavians. Many people do not realise that Tolkien invented Hobbits, and assume that like fairies and pixies they have always been with us. Tolkien's invented

mythology in the popular imagination has, to a certain degree, become the mythology of England.

Tolkien's works have been translated into every major language and many of his characters and creatures have come to inhabit the world of popular culture everywhere. More and more of Tolkien's Middle-earth is invading our world. Computers are called Gandalf, bookstores called Bilbo's, Hovercraft called Shadofax, restaurants called Frodo's, archery supplies called Legolas, jewelers called Gimli's, multi-national corporations called Aragorn and computer games called Gondor, Rohan, Imladris and Loth Lorien. No doubt Tolkien hoped for a specialised appeal to those fascinated by myth and folklore. He could not have anticipated the enormous popular, world-wide and commercial success of his works.

A study of a number of books in this thesis has shown that we are living in a time of change and sometimes educators cannot see which way to go, yet they have a crucial role to play in future thinking. Old paradigms are not large enough to accommodate a world made paradoxically small by our technologies, yet larger than we can grasp. We cannot turn the clock back to less complex times when nations could pursue their separate evolution. Postman (1999) concluded that "we cannot make the world accept one rule – and that one our own, by chanting it louder than the rest or silencing those who are singing a different song. We require a larger reading of the human past, of our relations with each other and the universe and god [sic], a re-telling of our older tales to encompass many truths and to let us grow with change" (p. 115).

Chapter One of this thesis raised awareness of research into current statistics highlighting the fact that society has changed rapidly in the past few decades and young people are not necessarily well equipped to deal with the turbulence. Many variables have had a part to play such as the dominance of realism, economic uncertainty, the role

of the media, playground violence and crimes by children. There is now access to many more negative images through new technology, alarming statistics for breakdown of families, youth suicide and depression in children. Data was presented to alert primary school educators to the “big picture” of the increasing incidence of clinical depression in the young. It is possible that the ramifications may be greater for children than teachers realise but teachers with this increased awareness can choose to make a difference.

Postman (1994) argues that the school would stand as the “last defence” against the disappearance of childhood. Assuming that there are still important differences between childhood and adulthood and that adults have things of value to teach children, the school is the only public institution left to us (p. 151). Postman claims:

Educators are confused about what they are expected to do with children. For example, as the teaching of literacy becomes more difficult to do, educators are even losing their enthusiasm for that time-honored task and wonder if it ought not to be abandoned altogether . . . children as young as eleven and twelve have inflicted upon them what is called “career-training,” a clear symptom of the re-emergence of the “miniature adult.” Schools powerfully reflect social trends and in times of rapid change they become almost “impotent” in opposing them (p. 152).

Postman (1994) argued that when teachers themselves have become products of the Television Age “resistance will not only lose whatever strength it may have had but its point will have been forgotten” (p. 152). Children must learn to grow with change and although we are living in a period of rapid change with some negative societal factors that may confuse and discourage us, teachers are not as helpless as some may think. The education of the young must extend beyond the development of knowledge, skill and moral values, to a sense of purpose and responsibility for humanity.

Alongside Postman's informative and alarming views about the negative effects of television, Chapter One also presented data from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry (2000) into the effects of television on children including the opinions of Dr. Patricia Edgar, the founder of the Australian Children's Television foundation. All agree in arguing for the benefits to children when television is used for the dual purpose of entertaining and educating whilst exploring social and moral issues. Postman's argument (1999) carried conviction when he said that schools must "teach students to use technology rather than be used by it" so that children understand how a technology's use can affect the society in which they live, as well as their own personal lives. Postman sounds a warning that "this is something we did not do with television, and, I fear, we are not now doing with computer technology" (p171). Teachers cannot change society by banishing television and multimedia from homes across the nation – but teachers can educate for new awareness in the young and seek to influence and use media texts to teach for goodness, courage and hope for the future. This is a heroic quest for educators.

Included also are some of the research findings and scholarly views of commentators in the world of children's literature regarding "new realism" in young adult fiction. The point of agreement between them is the need to develop sound reasoning skills and to help children to develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. Adolescence is not a time to present young adults with only doom and gloom entertainment. Scutter (1999) commenting on realism in contemporary young adult fiction said that the onus seems to be upon such stories to produce a desperately unhappy and irresolute conclusion as well as miserable emotions galore and "all things sour and bitter rather than all things sweet and saccharine, all things dark and ugly rather than all things bright and beautiful" (p. 111).

This is an area of fine judgement for teachers. It is possible that too much vivid realism can lead to depression and perhaps even compound sad feelings for children already depressed. Thus, it can create the very outcomes that educators wish to avoid. If children are to be prepared for the ups and downs of life teachers must find the tools to teach coping strategies and if children are to discover true meaning in their lives, they must be shown reasons to hope.

Chapter One argued that educators can prepare children for the journey of life without destroying their sense of wonder and without making them cynical or fearful and depressed. Whilst it is important to prepare young people for the world and to give them strategies for resilience, this can hardly be achieved by forcing vivid realities such as incest, child abuse, mental illness, sickness and death on impressionable, and sometimes already troubled young minds

When it comes to reality, educators must be concerned about the emotional as well as the intellectual education of children. After all, childhood is a biological reality. A child is a child in that sense, and the well-known saying, “you can’t put an old head on young shoulders” rings true. Whilst a child may be able to receive new information at an intellectual level, the same child with limited life experience, may misinterpret adult information, become confused, frightened and sad, even depressed.

Seligman in *The Optimistic Child* and Stoltz in *Adversity Quotient* illustrated the fact that some people successfully journey through life despite obstacles thrown in their path while others fall in a heap in the face of adversity. Both reached the conclusion that when people are under stress, they are better able to battle through their problems if they can visualise future achievements. Imagination developed through literature helps children *both* to cope and to hope. Children need to learn that there is a difference

between a *good* (easy) life and a *meaningful* life; a life can be *both* good and meaningful but a meaningful life may not necessarily be easy.

In Chapter Two the links between imagination, knowledge and hope were discussed. If we accept Einstein's view that imagination is more important than knowledge then reality begins with Imagination, and without it, great things cannot happen. However, this thesis takes the view that imagination and knowledge are bound together. Adults can either stamp out imagination in children or nourish it and create wonderful adolescents and adults. The conscious development of imagination must always be for the improvement of life on earth. All of our efforts to teach values to children may be diminished if the desire to do right is not developed in the young.

Chapter Two placed emphasis on the importance for everyone, children and teachers alike, to imagine the future with hopeful hearts. The ability to imagine is the basis of hope. Children can become hopeful with the future-oriented guidance of adults. When teachers select stories with heroic qualities, this offers children a chance to affirm their nature and do so with pleasure and purpose. If the young are to find meaning in their lives, they must have reason to hope.

The power of story was explored in Chapter Two as well as the way in which imagination draws on perceptions of the way things are, and invents images and dramas to match, often at a subconscious level. Stories admit children to a world much larger than that lived in by even the most travelled child. Stories extend the sense of time and place and that is an urgent need since most children live in small, intimate, very local worlds, and it is important that they be able to feel their way through stories, into the larger world. Whilst many other studies at school may be excellent, little can match the effect that stories have of giving children a bigger picture of the hugely-various character of the earth's surface and much can be learned by comparing.

Thus, it is important for children to have a basis for comparison. Through literature and stories the young are able to develop instincts as they *rehearse* the managing of human relationships and the assessing of human character. Children measure their own situations against those of the characters they meet in the stories they read. While the everyday dramas in which they themselves are involved are small-scale, they learn vicariously through fiction to make themselves at home in situations in which courage, cowardice, fear, love, jealousy, hate, loom large.

Whilst not all the stories children read will offer stunning insights into human nature, the general activity of fiction is what matters because of its concern with relationships, the way in which it offers the reader the opportunity of walking in someone else's shoes and its ability to nurture empathy and compassion for humanity. Chapter Two argued that inspiration and courage could be found in the collective wisdom of mythology to deal with the challenges inherent in preparing children for the journey of life. For this purpose teachers hold the key because they are in a position to empower children with a sense of "mission" in life and the belief that even the smallest, most ordinary individual, can rise to meet life's challenges with a sense of adventure.

Chapter Three explored heroism in the story of *The Hobbit* and discussed the Hero's Journey motif according to the observations of Joseph Campbell. His research – an examination of a host of myths and folk tales from every corner of the world whereby he developed a set of observations and “a vast and amazingly constant statement of the basic truths by which man has lived throughout the millenniums of his residence on the planet” (Preface *Hero* 1971, p. viii). Campbell's research is about the *similarities* rather than the *differences* between the numerous mythologies and religions of mankind.

This thesis has argued that teaching the Hero's Journey motif through the story of *The Hobbit* is particularly beneficial for young children. They can be taught to recognise the pattern in the texts presented to them. The text of *The Hobbit* readily encourages guided discussion and teachers need to seize opportunities that arise within the story to encourage questions from the children as well as a search for answers. This is important in order to help children to see that even if the characters about which they read are not real, the journeys they take and challenges they face are reflections of the real journeys and challenges of life. Even very young children are able to understand that life follows a pattern from birth to old age and death. Understanding the journey pattern can help children to look optimistically at life and accept the ups and downs so that the adventures they face can become challenging and exciting. The Journey motif demonstrated through the use of *The Hobbit* teaches children to anticipate, accept and face difficulties then use their experiences to become stronger and more capable individuals.

Children can gain comfort in the knowledge that every challenge or change they face in life is part of a special journey unique to each individual: as is every situation which confronts them with something new or which forces them to re-evaluate their thinking, behaviour or perspective. The journey of life is a process of self-discovery and self-integration. It is a means of maintaining balance and harmony in our lives. The journey motif can lead children to understand that life should not be measured by the number of breaths we take but by the moments that take our breath away – in good times and bad times, for better or worse. Chapter Four discussed the relevance of defined curriculum learning outcomes that must be achieved and the value of Bloom's Taxonomy of thinking skills and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences in providing a theoretical foundation for recognising the different abilities and talents of

children. This allows children a wider range of successful participation in classroom learning.

In addition, Chapter Four explored the use of *The Hobbit* for the purpose of enhancing the essential development of critical literacy skills to nurture emotional intelligence and gave particular relevance to intrapersonal and visual spatial skills. Furthermore, this chapter discussed the importance of reasoning to the healthy development of imagination. Teaching children to read and write has restricted value without the benefit of sound reasoning skills. Educators do not want children to live in a “dream world” unable to think and behave in a rational manner.

Proceeding on the assumption that children must acquire and practise skills for life so that they will be empowered to perform at their optimum level of ability, this chapter included an explanation of units of work specifically based on *The Hobbit* using Bloom’s and Gardner’s combined theories. These units have been provided to assist teachers with a variety of challenging, enriching material that will encourage lateral thinking and will allow teachers to differentiate for the *intelligences* of *all* children whilst extending knowledge and higher-order thinking skills.

Postman argues for specific new guidelines in the education of our children, with renewed emphasis on developing the *intellect* from the cultivation of a healthy skepticism [sic] towards over hyped technology, to sweeping educational reforms that include replacing grammar instruction with logic and rhetoric and introducing courses on comparative religion and the history of science, may be noted by our school education systems. Schools are the only mass medium of communication that, in theory, are capable of addressing the problem. Human emotions and behaviours are the result of what people think. Therefore, the development of logical thinking is a crucial factor in

the education of well-balanced persons. This thesis agrees with the development of the intellect so that imagination can soar in the best possible humanitarian directions.

Primary Teachers Hold the Key

Jesuits: “Show me the child and seven and I will show you the man”.
(The Catholic Church holds the view that seven years is the age of reason).

This thesis has argued that primary teachers hold the key to helping prevent depression in children by cultivating an optimistic outlook on life beginning in the early years of childhood development. A media release (2000) from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) School of Public Health stated that primary-school teachers could “hold a key to preventing children from developing mental health problems later in life”. Preliminary data from a three-year study by researchers at Queensland University of Technology shows teachers can successfully detect many factors that put children at risk of developing behavioural problems as teenagers or adults. Teachers can make a difference. QUT Research Fellow Dr. Ian Nicholson (2000) stated that children who “experience a combination of adverse factors have an increased chance of developing behavioural or emotional problems, such as depression and anxiety in the coming years” (np).

This thesis does not suggest that the burden of detection of such children “at risk” should be the responsibility of teachers alone. There are many variable factors that would require a separate study. However, it is the experience of this author that literature is a tool that can soothe the spirits of children who are experiencing such

things as possible exposure to problems at home, changes in family structure, poor parenting, peer problems, impoverished living conditions.

To reach young people in their senior years of school, 'Youth for Christ' has developed 'Auslife' mission, which has developed an excellent reputation in government and private schools. But it is the conclusion of this thesis that although no doubt worthwhile, to be most effective this kind of program should also target young people in their junior school years in order to provide a "buffer" for adolescence since emotional problems are likely to be linked with problems from the past.

Teachers as role models are vital in the early years and much responsibility for the selection of texts lies in their hands. British poet Walter de la Mare once said: "Only the rarest kind of best in anything is good enough for the young".

(www.postgazette.com/books/200210 retrieved 2/12/2003).

Young children are vulnerable to negative media influences and when some cannot find meaning in their lives and are at risk of becoming depressed and cynical, this is indeed a "loss of innocence" that presents a huge responsibility for educators. For Catholic educators the following quote from Scripture is an important reminder:

Who so shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me; but, who so shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, I tell you it were better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea (Matthew 18:5-6).

Teachers have a vital role to help children see calls to adventure in life as calls to transformation and opportunities to surrender to the flow and dynamics of the movement of human growth. With the help of teachers children can better understand the importance of accepting the calls, openly embracing change, transformation and growth. Children must learn that adults cannot take the Journey on their behalf and that

accepting the adventure on their own is the only way to true growth, change and self-discovery. Krishnamurti, J. (1997) in *Education and Significance of Life* claims that “success is a journey not a destination” (p. 9). This thesis concludes that it is important to teach children that life is not about success *per se*. The urge to be successful (meaning the pursuit of reward) whether in the material or in the so-called spiritual sense, the search for inward or outward security, the desire for comfort, this whole process breeds discontent, puts an end to spontaneity and breeds fear which in turn blocks the intelligent understanding of life. It is then likely that with increasing age dullness of mind and spirit may set in.

It makes sense to say that we must learn from past discoveries including past mistakes. Postman (1999) makes observations about how the past can improve our future. At a time when we are re-examining our values, reeling from the pace of change and dealing with the anxieties of our new millennium, Postman urges readers to revisit the age of Enlightenment, that great eighteenth-century flowing of philosophical ideas that provided a humanitarian direction for the future. He calls for a future directed to traditions that provide sane authority and meaningful purpose – as opposed to an over-reliance on technology and an increasing disregard for the lessons of history. It is the contention of this thesis that the gift of technology must be utilised *for better not worse* outcomes for humanity.

Conventional education makes independent thinking extremely difficult. Conformity can lead to mediocrity. To be a hero, to be different from the group or to resist environment is not easy and is often risky as long as we believe that the journey of life is about success. We need not expect to understand everything that happens in life. We need only embrace the marvellous process of understanding ourselves, and an understanding of life will follow naturally. To this end, this thesis has shown the

importance of the power of heroic stories particularly stories that teach the journey motif in order to give children a map to understanding both literature and their lives.

Campbell (1994) argues:

Whether we listen with aloof amusement to the dreamlike mumbo jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo, or read with cultivated rapture the translations from the sonnets of the mystic Lao-tse; now and again crack the hard nutshell of an argument of Aquinas, or catch suddenly the shining meaning of a bizarre Eskimofairy tale: it will be always the one, shape-shifting yet marvellously constant story that we find, together with a challengingly persistent suggestion of more remaining to be experienced than will ever be known or told (p. 3).

It is vital for children to learn that with any process of change, a journey can be confusing and painful at times but it brings opportunities to develop courage and confidence, perspective and understanding of the human condition. A happy life is not necessarily an easy life. By inspiring children to believe in their future, educators can triumph on this heroic journey. The use of *The Hobbit* in the primary school classroom serves this essential purpose because it empowers children to find heroes within themselves. It is not *ultra vires* of heroic educators to triumph in their journey to achieve excellence in student outcomes. Heroic educators face the same stages on the journey. (See Appendix D).

This thesis has shown that the positive development of imagination through literature is likely to benefit children emotionally, intellectually and psychologically and lead them to find meaning and a sense of purpose in their lives. We must teach children well so that they will not fear change, failure or setbacks but will see them as important challenges and opportunities for personal growth. This thesis has shown the likely value of a continuum of this type of learning experience beginning in the primary years of

school, in order to provide a “buffer” for adolescence. The use of *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien is a valuable tool for this purpose.

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APPENDIX A

Portrait of Tolkien

This portrait of J.R.R. Tolkien has been compiled mainly from interviews in a number of BBC radio and television recordings, in particular the BBC Radio *Interview with Tolkien* (1971), the BBC Radio *Portrait* (2001) and SBS Television *Masterpiece* (2001). Comments are drawn from Tolkien himself, his original publisher Rayner Unwin, his biographer Humphrey Carpenter and some of those who worked with him and knew him closely.

J.R.R. Tolkien was born in 1892 and died in 1973. He left a legacy of literature to the world. Timely, with the recent release of a new series of *The Lord of The Rings (LOR)* movies, this research portrait looks at Tolkien the man and the imaginative worlds he created. J.R.R. Tolkien appears to be a publishing phenomenon. His epic *LOR* (1957), initially intended as a sequel to *The Hobbit* (1937), has become a movie trilogy that could be described as the film experience of the 21st century. The late Rayner Unwin, Tolkien's publisher says:

Tolkien's storytelling is unparalleled in this century. It is that, that brings in the non-literary establishment. The literary establishment has never really been at all at ease with Tolkien. It only goes to show that the literary establishment is one thing, and the people who read books are another (BBC 1971)

Carpenter (BBC 2001) tells us that John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on the 3rd January 1892 in Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State in South Africa where his father worked for the Bank of South Africa. Tolkien's mother, Mabel, was uneasy in a town which she described in letters home as a "howling wilderness" and a

“horrid waste with snakes, monkeys and spiders”. In fact baby Ronald was bitten by a tarantula, an event that may have inspired the monstrous spiders featured in several of his stories.

The climate in South Africa seemed to be having a negative effect on young Ronald’s health and in 1895 shortly after Mabel had given birth to a second son, Hilary, she and her two boys returned to England and went to live with her parents in Birmingham. Ronald’s father remained with the bank in Bloemfontein planning to join his family within a few months. But sadly, before he could do so he died from rheumatic fever. Ronald’s only clear recollection of his father was of watching him paint the name Tolkien on the lid of the family trunk shortly before they set sail for England.

After a few months Mabel and the two boys moved out of Birmingham to the village of Sarehole and Ronald began to explore the rural English landscape of the West Midlands, an area that would later serve as an inspiration for the Shire, the hobbit lands described in his books. In a rare BBC interview, Tolkien himself said that the Shire was very like the kind of world in which he first became aware of things. This was perhaps more poignant to him because he wasn’t born in it. He was very young when he came to England from South Africa. Tolkien (1971) recalled:

It bites into your memory and imagination even if you don’t think it has, if your first Christmas tree is a wilting eucalyptus and then if you are normally troubled by heat and sand, then to have, just at the age when imagination is opening out, suddenly find yourself in a quiet, Warwickshire village, it engenders a particular love of central midland English countryside, based on good water stones and elm trees and small quiet rivers and rustic people (BBC *Interview*)

Eight years after their return to England, Mabel Tolkien died, Carpenter (2001), said:

The loss of his mother was an immense blow, not just because it took him away from the classic English rural landscape, the small villages, the shops, the mills and all the ingredients that went into what he eventually called the Shire in his own writings (BBC *Portrait*).

Carpenter relates that Tolkien was sent to King Edward's School in Birmingham where he developed a fascination for languages. He received a classical education, which included Middle English and Anglo-Saxon, further developing his interest in languages. Carpenter (2001) says:

Tolkien clearly had a genetic disposition to be interested in words. You could say that for a lonely child . . . not an only child because there was a younger brother; but essentially an isolated child; isolated by the death of his parents, brought up in lodging houses with an unmarried Catholic priest as a guardian; he was driven in on himself and words began to fascinate him. (BBC *Portrait*)

Carpenter further recalled that the young Tolkien developed interests that were to last all his life. Tolkien had a passion for history and said he loved it as a subject and always felt that when we walk into a room we ought to know the history, not only of the room but also of the people in it. Languages and mythology also fascinated him with a particular fascination for dragons. Tolkien said of this:

Dragons always attracted me as a mythological element. They seemed to be able to comprise human malice and bestiality together so extraordinarily well and a malicious wisdom and shrewdness (BBC *Portrait*).

Of his love of languages Tolkien said that he began to invent them "almost at once":

I hardly ever got through any fairy stories without wanting to write one myself. Of course it is not uncommon . . . it's mostly done by

boys. It's frowned on because they get a guilt complex about it . . . an enormous number of children have a greater creative element in them than is usually supposed and it isn't necessarily limited to certain things; they may not want to paint or draw and they may not have much music in them, but they nonetheless want to create something. And, if the main mass of education takes linguistic form, creation will also take linguistic form even if it isn't one of their talents (BBC *Portrait*)

Tolkien graduated from Oxford in 1915 with a First in English Language and Literature. In 1916 he married Edith Bratt and later that year took up his commission in the Army. He fought in the Battle of the Somme but was invalided out of the forces a few months later with trench fever. Tolkien returned to Oxford in 1925 as Professor of Anglo-Saxon and began to develop an international reputation as a gifted philologist. Five years later in 1930, he began writing down his stories about the adventures of a hobbit called Bilbo Baggins. He had already been telling this story to his children for quite some time. *The Hobbit* was published in 1937 and was immediately successful. The publishers then requested a new hobbit sequel.

The sequel became known and was highly acclaimed as *The Lord of the Rings* and was published in between 1954 and 1955 in three volumes. Another book, *The Silmarillion*, about the early history of Middle-earth was published in 1977 after Tolkien's death. Tolkien was created CBE in 1972 and, in the same year, was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters by London University.

It seems clear that Tolkien's academic work sprang from the language and so did the imaginative writings. Carpenter (2001) reports that Tolkien often said that he found it hard to convince people that his works had really grown from a wish to express certain aesthetic linguistic preferences. Clearly, he wanted to create a world in which it was possible for certain sounds to exist. Those sounds manifest themselves in his books as the various Elvish languages spoken in the stories. Carpenter says that the languages

developed so much and so fast that they needed a history and a habitation. There is no doubt that the imaginative writing was springing from the language.

Carpenter describes Tolkien as an “Oxford Don of his time” both in appearance and dress and in his immediate surroundings in his own house and his rooms. His tastes and his conversation were very much of his period yet he was surely unique:

Tolkien was quite unlike any of his colleagues. If they didn't regard him as a sage, they certainly regarded him as something a little fey, almost a little Elvish. When one first met him one was struck by his lack of size. Tolkien was quite a small man physically. On the other hand, his almost ancient mariner like ability to fix you with his eye and hold you with his extraordinary conversation, did mean that you came away from his company, very much struck by his remarkable personality rather than thinking him anyway ordinary (BBC 2001).

It was Tolkien's obsession with languages ancient and modern, real and imaginary, that would lead to the creation of the various languages used by the characters in his stories. In Tolkien's work we can find a sense of the magic that lies well beyond ordinary everyday life. This is the world that lies within us in our imaginations. Tolkien was the creator of Middle-earth, an imaginary land inhabited by hobbits, goblins, elves, dwarves and humans. When Tolkien, living in a suburban house in Oxford in 1930, wrote the opening sentence to *The Hobbit*, one of the most extraordinary stories in the history of modern publishing began and became the biggest-selling work of children's fiction ever written (SBS *Masterpiece*).

In Middle-earth Tolkien has combined the landscape of northern legend with the rural scenes of his youth, where he chose to make his home, and these could not have been more different. David Nicholson Lord, an environmentalist and close friend of Tolkien says:

Tolkien lived a suburban life and to many people that must have appeared a very uneventful, dull sort of existence. But in fact, from

the point of view of being a spectator at, and a party to, one of the great events of the 20th century which was suburbanization, the creeping spread of towns and cities out into the countryside, it was an ideal vantage point for Tolkien (SBS *Masterpiece*).

Tolkien's vision has inspired a very different generation of readers. Nicholson-Lord states:

What you find in Tolkien is this sense of nature and the wilderness being an area invested with mystery and magic, with landscapes that come alive. There's a sense of the whole landscape, forests and hills, having a personality of their own (SBS *Masterpiece*).

This appears to be very central to Tolkien and it explains some of the 20th century's attitudes to nature. If Tolkien's fictional writings sprang from his linguistic and literary studies there was also a corresponding influence in the opposite direction. Carpenter (2001) says it is equally interesting to look at the academic work and find "something of the air of his epic in that". In Tolkien's celebrated lecture on *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*, there is a marvellous passage containing an allegory in which he talks about the poem as a tower, which was built by a man out of old stones. When his friends remarked what an odd fellow he was, Tolkien says "but from the top of that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea" (SBS *Masterpiece*).

It is extraordinary to think that these books, which began life as the story of *The Hobbit*, a story that Tolkien told to his own children, have proved so full of meaning for so many different kinds of people. With his passing, J. R. R. Tolkien left this world the richer indeed by giving us the opportunity to be transported into those other worlds of his extraordinary imagination.

APPENDIX B

The Hobbit Study

- *About The Hobbit*
- *The Hobbit Summary*
- *Before The Hobbit*
- Lesson Plans
- Sample Activities
- Critical Thinking and *The Hobbit*
- Vocabulary Lists
- Word Activities
- *After The Hobbit*
- Reflection

Introduction

The activities in this section have been developed and collected by the author of this thesis over a period of fifteen years whilst teaching in primary schools. Many of these ideas are original, if indeed it is ever possible to make such a claim, and the activities are based on what teachers already know about best practice when using books in the classroom, incorporating the theories of Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*. As a primary school literacy coordinator, the author has been privileged to witness many teachers in action and has adapted many 'book ideas' to suit the content of *The Hobbit*.

A good book such as *The Hobbit* by J.R. R. Tolkien can inspire children to achieve and to realise their hopes and dreams. A good book can be like a ‘friend for life’ to children because it can touch their lives in many ways. Children can return again and again to words and characters for inspiration, companionship, relaxation, comfort and guidance. A good book like *The Hobbit* can give children precious memories and a story to be treasured forever in their hearts. It is recommended that teachers set up a discussion with children about Tolkien and *The Hobbit* before commencing units of study in order to excite their anticipation.

About The Hobbit

(Compiled from BBC *Portrait* 2001).

Many decades ago in England, a highly respected professor at Oxford was correcting exam papers and, having a few minutes to spare, idly scribbled on a blank page in an exam book, “in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit”. He didn't even know what a hobbit was, or why he wrote those words. But they were, nevertheless, the beginning of one of the most famous fantasy adventure tales ever written. The professor was J.R.R. Tolkien, and the book, of course, was *The Hobbit*.

Tolkien was a teacher *inter alia* of philology and a student of many languages, including such ancient ones as Old Icelandic, Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon (the basis of modern English), and others, long since dead. He would seem to be an unlikely author of a fantasy tale, but he had originated some languages for his own amusement and had written about an imaginary world in which to use them. The idea of *The Hobbit* fits in that imaginary world somehow, and Tolkien wrote over some years the story of the adventures of Bilbo the hobbit and Gandalf and the dwarves. He read it, with great applause, to his children as he was writing it, and finally it was submitted for

publication. Rayner Unwin, the ten-year-old son of Tolkien's English publisher, read it for his father and liked it.

The *Hobbit* was published to favorable reviews in 1937 and has been a favorite with millions of readers ever since. It has become a classic and has been read even more since the publication of its famous sequel, *The Lord of the Rings*. The story can be read as a straight fantasy adventure or as a journey (Tolkien's subtitle was *There and Back Again*) into responsibility and maturity. Funny, exciting, scary, and entertaining, it has something for every reader, young and old.

Summary of *The Hobbit*

Bilbo is a happy-go-lucky sort of hobbit, who lives a peaceful, predictable and very "respectable" life. He enjoys his home comforts and loves to eat and wear brightly coloured clothes. He does *not* like adventures and never does anything daring. Until one day the wizard Gandalf comes along. To Bilbo's great surprise, Gandalf sends the dwarves to visit him. Gandalf wants Bilbo to be a burglar on a grand and dangerous adventure. Bilbo's job would be to help the dwarves to recover the treasure that was stolen from them by the dragon Smaug. The dragon lives at Lonely Mountain where he fiercely guards the treasure. Bilbo is reluctant but he is curious and agrees to accept the adventure that changes his life dramatically.

In the long journey that follows, Bilbo and his travelling companions face many hazards and formidable foes. Bilbo often dreams of his cosy hobbit hole but the adventure brings out all his hidden courage and his newly- discovered strengths play an important part in the success of the mission and the recovery of the treasure.

Before *The Hobbit*

It is advisable to do some pre-reading activities with children before beginning to read *The Hobbit*. This will increase interest in the story and enhance the children's comprehension skills. Here are some examples:

- Look at the title and predict what the story might be about.
- Look at the cover illustrations and predict what the story might be about.

Questions

- Have you heard of any other books written by J.R.R. Tolkien?

Do you enjoy:

- stories set in a fantasy world?
- stories about people living quite a different life from you?
- stories where the main character survives by problem solving?
- stories about unlikely friendships that become really strong?

Would you want to:

- go off on an adventure?
- stay with very strange or even peculiar people?
- help other people to fight for what is rightfully theirs?
- feel brave enough to face up to a dragon or any other fierce creature?

Overview of Lessons

These lessons can be fairly brief and should be adapted to suit the age and needs of the children.

<p>LESSON 1</p> <p>Introduce pre-reading activities. Read about Tolkien. Read a summary of <i>The Hobbit</i> Discuss the meaning of words on the vocabulary list Older children may be asked to find definitions. Vocabulary list Chapters 1-3</p>	<p>LESSON 5</p> <p>Begin reading Chapters 12-14 Refer to word lists as before and choose an activity A Chain Story Probing Questions Family Backgrounds Hobbit Quiz Vocabulary List Chapters 15-19 Discuss word meanings with younger children and ask older children to find definitions.</p>
<p>LESSON 2</p> <p>Begin reading Chapters 1-3. Refer to the word lists as the story unwinds. Choose a word activity Begin Reading Journals Make a Character History in the Making Packing for Travel Hobbit Quiz Vocabulary List Chapters 4-7 Discuss word meanings with younger children. Ask older children to find definitions.</p>	<p>LESSON 6</p> <p>Begin reading Chapters 15-19 Refer to the word lists Choose a word activity Hobbit Quiz The Middle-Earth Mirror Research for the Birds! The Sound of Music The Getting of Wisdom</p> <p>Discuss word meanings with younger children and ask older children to find definitions.</p>
<p>LESSON 3</p> <p>Begin reading Chapters 4-7 Refer to the word lists Choose a word activity Riddles in the Dark Magic Happens! Watch the Weather Hobbit Quiz No Pain no Gain Vocabulary List Chapters 8-11 Discuss word meanings with younger children. Ask older children to find definitions.</p>	<p>LESSON 7</p> <p>Question Time – reflect on story</p> <p>Suggestions for Book Reports Suggestions for Projects A Holiday in Middle Earth</p> <p>Some final activities</p>
<p>LESSON 4</p> <p>Begin reading Chapters 8-11 Refer to the word lists Choose a word activity Caring for the Environment Discuss changes that arise from challenges Hobbit Book Quiz Prejudices Make a Map Vocabulary List Chapters 12-14. Discuss as before.</p>	<p>LESSON 8</p> <p>Assessment Time</p> <p>Discussing and evaluating results.</p>

Vocabulary for Each Chapter

PART 1 CHAPTERS 1-3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bewuthered • cleave • confusticate • conspirator • defrayed • depraadations • esteemed • fender • flummoxed • flustered • haughty • hospitality • immense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • morsel • mutton • obstinately • outlandish • palpitating • paraphernalia • parchment • plundering • requisite • respectable • scuttled • trifle • venerable
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PART 2 CHAPTERS 4-7

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antiquity • benighted • clamour • commotion • deceptions • descendants • droning • famished • gnarled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groping • ingenious • marjoram • overwhelming • plight • throttled • trestles • venture • yammering
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PART 3 CHAPTERS 8-11

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abominable • accursed • bulbous • cunning • dreary • inquisitive • flagon • frauds • gnawingly • loathsome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • matted • miles/yards • ominous • plight • portcullis • promontory • ransom • suffocated • suppressed
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PART 4 CHAPTERS 12- 14

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absolutely • absurd • aimlessly • benefactor • brooded • calculating • creditable • debated • desolate • dubious • enchanted • forges • hoards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inevitable • original • perilous • prophesying • radiance • resource • roused • trill • treacherous • valor • vast • waning • wily
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PART 5 CHAPTERS 15-19

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avenged • besiege • breed • caper • carrion • coveted • decrepit • dominion • hither • jauberk • literally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mattocks • mustering • parley • perils • precipice • presumption • prosperous • redeem • siege • wielded
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Interesting Word Activities

Children will increase their knowledge of words through reading *The Hobbit* and this can be developed through interesting vocabulary activities. The following are some suggestions but the possibilities are numerous, subject to the imagination of teachers.

- Word Bee. This will challenge older children who are familiar with the concept of a Spelling Bee, but as well as spelling the words correctly, the meaning must be explained.
- Word Search and Crosswords. Even younger children will enjoy making a Wordsearch or Crossword Puzzle using the list words.
- Charades. The children act out the list words.

- Picture Dictionary. Children work together in groups to create a picture dictionary using list words.
- Dictionary Race. Children “race” to find list words in the dictionary or “Race to Write” the words.
- Find the Word. This can be a twenty questions game. A list word is selected and students give clues to each other about the word until someone guesses correctly.
- Concentration. The children play a game by matching list words with their meanings. This can be organised with small groups. Provide the children with a set of cards to write the list words on and another set to write or illustrate the word meanings. The cards are then mixed together and placed face down. Each player chooses two cards and keeps them only if they match. Unmatched cards are shown to the others and returned face down. Children must concentrate to remember the locations of words and their meanings. The game finishes when all matches have been made.

Critical Thinking and *The Hobbit*

This section demonstrates the use of *The Hobbit* incorporating the theory of Bloom’s Taxonomy. It is recommended that teachers *differentiate* when selecting activities in order to cater for multiple intelligences.

<p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>At this level students are asked to recall basic facts and information about the story. Assessment can be measured by the student’s ability to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall - details about the setting by creating a picture of where part of the story took place e.g. Middle Earth • Retell– scenes from the story through role play for Hobbit Club • Match – names of characters with pictures of characters. • Match - statements with the characters who made them • Identify – the main characters for example in a crossword puzzle • List - the main characteristics of characters for example in a <i>Wanted</i> poster • Arrange – jumbled story pictures in sequential order • Arrange – jumbled story sentences in sequential order

HOBBIT ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

- Recite one of the poems/riddles from *The Hobbit* e.g. Attercop Spider Chant
- Recite Gandalf's response when Bilbo first wishes him a "good morning".
- Make a time line of important events in the story
- Make a list of the main characters
- Make a labelled portrait of Bilbo showing attributes peculiar to a hobbit.
- Name the dwarves in the story in alphabetical order
- Write an acrostic poem about some of the following:
Bilbo, Gandalf, Gollum, Thorin, Trolls, Smaug.
- Mark the path taken to Lonely Mountain on a map of Wilderland
- Describe what happened in the "Last Homely House".
- Identify some of the problems facing the dwarves on their journey "there and back again" to Lonely Mountain.

COMPREHENSION

At this level students are asked to demonstrate understanding of the story. Assessment can be measured by the students ability to achieve the following:

- Explain - parts of the story using own words
- Draw - a picture showing what happened before and after a scene in the story
- Interpret – pictures of scenes from the story
- Predict - what might happen next in the story
- Construct – a time line using pictures to summarise the story
- Explain – how main characters felt at different times in the story

HOBBIT ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP COMPREHENSION SKILLS

- Draw/paint a picture of the part of the story you liked most and say why.
- Write a report that tells how Bilbo met "My Precious", found the ring and discovered its magic power.
- Create a wanted poster for one of the evil characters.
- Construct a colouring book showing how the dwarves escaped from the goblins/trolls in the forest.
- Check dictionary then use your own words to explain some special words in the story such as respectable, flummoxed, hardy, stout, homely and others.
- Interpret the feelings of Bilbo and Gandalf when they first meet in the story.
- Construct a story map showing some of the important events in the story.
- Predict what might happen to Bilbo when he returns home with the ring.

APPLICATION

At this level the student is asked to use information from the story to develop and determine their ability to complete the following:

- Classify – the different characters as human, animal or thing
- Make – puppets and act out parts of the story
- Transfer - different characters to new settings
- Select – a special meal that one of the characters would enjoy
- Plan – a menu for a meal for the characters and a model for serving it
- Reflect – on an experience of one of the characters and speak/write about how the situation could have been handled differently.
- Discuss - real life people who have the same or similar problems to the characters in the story

HOBBIT ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP APPLICATION SKILLS

- Plan and construct a Hobbit Board Game
- Make a model of Bilbo’s home or Lonely Mountain or other selected places and scenes – ask children to choose
- Make clay models of Bilbo, Gandalf and Smaug
- Make a diorama of your favorite scene in the story
- Dress dolls as main characters for “Reader’s Theatre”
- Write messages using Elvish Runes
- Work out the Elvish Alphabet
- Write and perform an Elvish greeting
- Make scale drawings of Bilbo, Gandalf and Smaug for comparison
- Develop a set of instructions about how to kill a dragon.
- Discuss, compose and perform your favorite scenes from the story

ANALYSIS

At this level the student is encouraged to take parts of the story and examine them carefully to gain deeper understanding. Success will be demonstrated by the student’s ability to successfully complete the following:

- Identify – general characteristics of the characters - whether stated or implied
- Distinguish – events both possible and impossible in real life
- Select – funniest, happiest, saddest and most unbelievable parts of the story.
- Select – select an action that was exactly the same as the student might have done
- Distinguish – facts from opinions
- Compare/contrast – main characters

HOBBIT ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP ANALYSIS SKILLS

- What if Smaug had not died? Write a different ending.
- Identify the main theme of the story i.e. courage against all odds.
- How did Bilbo change during and after his adventure?
- How did Thorin change before his death?
- Could these events have a special message for us? Write report.
- Advertise a Hobbit Banquet. Distinguish between different forms of advertising.
- Contrast the characters of Bard and the Master of Laketown
- Arrange a class Hobbit Party for Hobbit Club. Keep a record of your plan and all the arrangements you will need to make.

SYNTHESIS

At this level the student is encouraged to combine parts of the story in a new way that leads to a new idea. Success will be demonstrated by the student's ability to achieve the following:

- Write – some new titles for the story that suggest what the story is about
- Create – an original character for the story and describe how the character fits in
- Create – a new product related to the story
- Imagine – oneself as a main character and write a diary of daily events and feelings
- Compose – and perform dialogues to communicate the thoughts of the main characters at selected times in the story
- Write – and perform lyrics and music for a song that one of the main characters might sing
- Restructure – main roles to create different outcomes in the story

HOBBIT ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP SYNTHESIS SKILLS

- Imagine and design another book cover for *The Hobbit*.
- Write another riddle for Gollum
- Design a Hobbit Treasure Map.
- Write a puppet play about the dwarves meeting the trolls.
- Create a new language using code and give directions to Mirkwood Forest and Lonely Mountain where the treasure can be found.
- Create a map of the Goblin's Kingdom
- Create a new legend explaining what Gandalf did when he left Bilbo and the dwarves at the edge of Mirkwood forest.
- Create a sociogram for Bilbo and other hobbit characters.

EVALUATION

At this level the student is encouraged to develop and present a “considered opinion” opinion justified by sound reasoning by completing the following:

- Decide – favourite, most interesting characters and say why.
 - Decide – if the story really could have happened and justify decision
 - Judge – particular actions of characters
 - Reflect – on how this story might help people in their own lives
 - Compare – with other stories read by student
 - Appraise – the value of the story
 - Write – a recommendation for/against the reading of the book
- Present – a “Book Ad” to “sell” the book to an audience

HOBBIT ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP EVALUATION SKILLS

- Justify your sociogram referring to the events in the story.
- Classify main characters into good or bad
- Present ‘Points of View’ on issues such as Thorin’s behaviour before his death.
- Suggest a better plan for retrieving the treasure. Explain/justify.
- Write a report on any of the main characters in the story.
- Select a character you would like to accompany you on an adventure. Justify your choice.

Sample Worksheets

The current *Curriculum Standards Framework* (CSF) provides the basis for curriculum planning in Victorian schools. The following representative sample worksheets include references to the CSF to show how the activities based on *The Hobbit* link to the CSF learning strands.

CH: 1-3 Hobbit Quiz

- 1) Write a short summary of each chapter telling about the main events.
- 2) Describe Bilbo Baggins?
- 3) What do hobbits usually like to do?

- 4) What do you know about Bilbo's family?
- 5) What is Gandalf famous for?
- 6) Where do the dwarves want to go and why?
- 7) How is Bilbo to help them on their adventure?
- 8) Why does Bilbo agree to go with them?
- 9) Would you have gone with them? Explain how you would have felt.
- 10) What is special about the map that Gandalf gives to Thorin?
- 11) What happens to Bilbo when he first tries to be a burglar?
- 12) How does Gandalf surprise the trolls?
- 13) What are runes?
- 14) What are moon letters? How are they special?
- 15) What does King Elrond tell the dwarves about the swords they have found?

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, Contextual Understanding and Strategies.

CH: 1-3 Create a Hobbit Character

You can create hobbits, dwarves, elves, wizards, dragons, goblins and trolls and of course “my precious” Gollum. Use the descriptions in the story of *The Hobbit* and your imagination to create a look-alike character made from papier-mâché!

INSTRUCTIONS

- Using your fingers, tear newspaper into 1cm strips. Tear all the strips you need before beginning.
- Make an outline of your character with wire or with balloons.
- You must dip the newspaper strips in the paste mixture until the paper is completely covered.

- Make layers on the model with the wet strips and build the shape of the character.
- Wait until each layer has dried thoroughly before applying the next one.
- Use small balls of paper soaked with paste to make ears, noses and extra bits. Cover each extra bit with wet strips so that it will stay put.
- Use coloured or white tissue paper for the final finishing layer.
- When your model is really dry, you can decorate it and paint it if you wish.

PASTE MIXTURE

Materials

Mixing Bowl
Spoon or whisk
1 cup flour
2 cups cold water
1 tablespoon salt

Directions

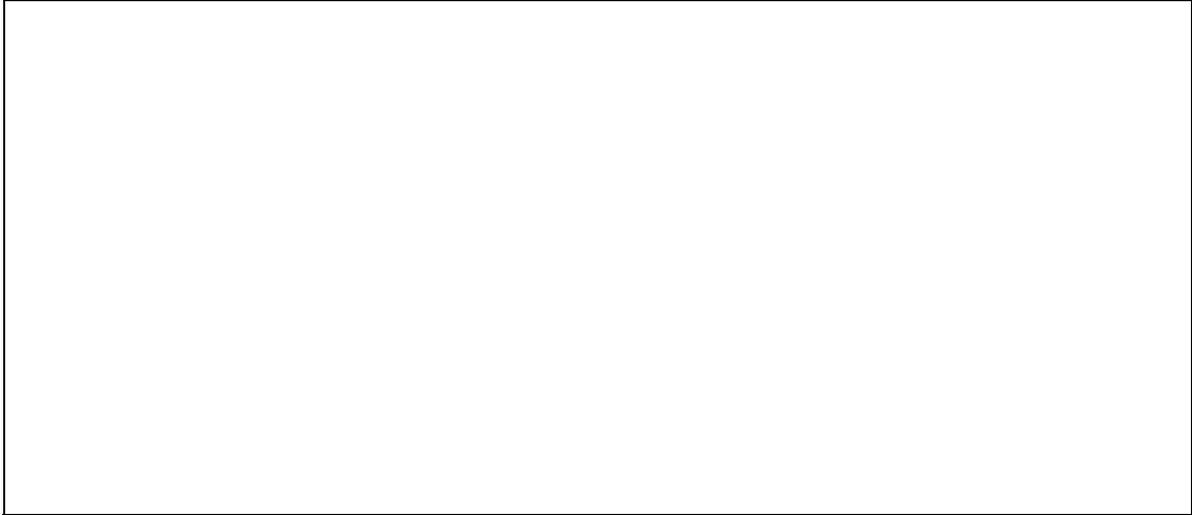
Mix water, salt, flour together.
Stir well. Mix can be heated until it becomes glossy. Store unused paste in refrigerator.

CSF English: Texts, Contextual Understanding, Visual Arts.

CH: 1-3 **Packing for Travel**

Bilbo thinks that the dwarves have left on their journey without him. When he finds the message they left he runs after them as fast as he can. He even forgets his pocket-handkerchief. He gets to the Green Dragon Inn and finds that the dwarves have a pony ready for him with all kinds of baggage and paraphernalia.

What if you were packing for the adventure with the dwarves – what would you need to take with you? Work with your group to make a list below of all the things you would need to take for the journey. Remember that you are in Middle-earth with no modern conveniences. You will be gone for several weeks and must be able to carry everything that you will need.



Would you like to make any changes or additions to your list? Compare your list with other groups. Discuss how planning a trip in our real world might be different from the world of *The Hobbit*.

CSF English: Texts, Contextual Understanding and Strategies

CH: 1-3 History in the Making

Bilbo had a great grand-uncle called Bullroarer who was famous for making history by inventing the game of Golf. Bullroarer was so huge that he could ride a horse. He won a battle with the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields and it was said that he knocked the head off the goblin kings with his wooden club. The club sailed about a hundred yards through the air and went into a rabbit hole. The battle was won and the game of Golf was invented!

Use your imagination to choose a sport and write a short paragraph below about how it might have been invented! Include an illustration and display your story for others to read.



CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures and Features, Contextual Understanding, Strategies.

CH: 1-3 **Reading Journals**

Encourage children to create a Hobbit Journal and allow them to write in it daily. Ask them to design a suitable cover page that may be completed gradually as they become familiar with the story.

The children are required to record their thoughts, feelings, ideas, observations and questions as the story unfolds.

Allow the children to choose aspects of the story that they feel inspired to write about. Children can draw their responses to particular events and write about something new that they have learnt at the end of each chapter or section of the book. Children may be encouraged to use their ideas to create little dramas, debates, art displays, songs and dances.

Evaluation

Teacher responses can be made as journals are read to make students aware that the journals are being read and enjoyed. The teacher, without making corrections, should read personal reflections.

Journal entries can be selected by the teacher for editing and publishing.

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures and Features, Contextual Understanding, Strategies.

CH: 4-7 **Hobbit Quiz**

- 1) Write a short summary of each chapter telling about the main events.
- 2) How does Bilbo get lost?
- 3) Where is he when he meets “my precious”?
- 4) Describe Gollum in one or two sentences.
- 5) What does Gollum do when he fails to guess the last riddle?
- 6) What happens to Bilbo and the dwarves in the forest with the Goblins and Wargs?
- 7) Eagles are not kindly birds. Why did they save Bilbo and the dwarves?
- 8) Where did the eagles safely deposit the party? Describe the spot.
- 9) Why did the dwarves arrive at Beorn’s house at different times and in pairs?
- 10) Write a short description of Beorn.
- 11) How did Beorn help them prepare for their journey through Mirkwood Forest to Lonely Mountain?
- 12) Where did Gandalf leave the party, what was his final warning and why?

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, Contextual Understanding and Strategies

CH: 4-7 Magic Happens

Bilbo's magic ring often saves the day in the story of *The Hobbit*. Some people believe that magic things can really happen. Sometimes things can seem magical but they are special magic tricks. Most magicians never tell their secrets but you can read books about magic and learn to do magical things.

Think of some modern inventions that would have seemed magical in Middle-earth. How could you explain a television or a computer to Bilbo and the dwarves?

Practise a magic trick to share with your group. Perhaps you could work with your group to present a magic show for the class!

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures and Features, Contextual Understanding, Strategies.

CH: 4-7 Riddles in the Dark

In the tunnels deep below Misty Mountain Bilbo and "My Precious" Gollum have a riddle contest. It's a bit like playing *What Am I?* as they give each other clues and try to guess the correct answers such as the wind, eggs and time. Would you have been able to outsmart Bilbo and Gollum?

Work with your partner or your group to plan a set of clues for a riddle. Then write a short riddle to suit your plan. Try to use rhyming words.

Share time – How many riddles did you guess? Cut out your riddle for the display board.

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures and Features, Contextual Understanding, Strategies.

CH: 4-7 Watch the Weather

When Bilbo and the dwarves get caught in a terrible storm, Tolkien describes the thunder and lightning as a "thunder-battle".

What causes storms? Sometimes the weather is hard to predict but much more is understood about weather nowadays.

Discuss what you already know about weather and share this with your group. Then do some research to find out more about what causes weather changes.

Read the list below before you begin.

- What causes weather?
- Why is it hot?
- Why is it cold?
- What is a rainbow?
- How are clouds formed?
- What causes thunder and lightning?
- What causes rain?
- What causes snow?
- What makes weather change?
- How well can the weather be predicted?

Extension Activities:

- Record the weather for several weeks. Make a graph of temperatures and other things that can be measured.
- Make a diagram of types of clouds
- Write a report about safety during lightning

CSF: Science: The Changing Earth

CH: 4-7 Hobbit Quiz

- 1) Write a short summary of each chapter telling about the main ideas and events.
- 2) What happens to Bombur in Mirkwood Forest? (Write or tell)
- 3) How did Bilbo save the dwarves from the giant spiders?
- 4) Why can't they light fires in Mirkwood?
- 5) Why did the Wood-elves capture the dwarves?

- 6) How did Bilbo help the dwarves to escape?
- 7) Write a short paragraph about the 'Boss Dwarf' Thorin.
- 8) How did Bilbo and the dwarves find the secret door?
- 9) Can you describe the area surrounding the secret door?
- 10) In what way has Bilbo changed since the start of the story?

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, Contextual Understanding and Strategies.

CH: 4-7 No Pain No Gain

Chapter 6 is called “Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire” and this is called a proverb.

This means that Bilbo has gone from one dangerous situation into a worse one!

Here are some other common proverbs.

Have a discussion with others about what they might mean?

- No pain, no gain.
- Let sleeping dogs lie
- A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
- Don't cry over spilt milk
- The teapot is calling the kettle black
- People who live in glass houses should not throw stones
- Let sleeping dogs lie
- Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.

Do you know any other proverbs? Make a list. Choose one and write about how it has been true in your life. You may like to share this with others.

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures and Features, Strategies**CH: 4-7 Saving the Environment**

Mirkwood is a dark and mysterious forest where Bilbo and the dwarves had adventures. Without the forest many animals would not survive. The Wood-elves also depend on the forest. Forests are becoming endangered. They are being cleared to make space for cities and for farming. Some people have never had a real life experience of a forest.

Work with your group to present a lesson to the class about forests. You may choose from the following list:

- What kinds of animals live in the forest?
- What kinds of animals are endangered?
- What kinds of things can create a danger to the forest?
- What different kinds of forests are there?
- How are they different?
- How does a forest grow? How can it be destroyed?
- Choose one type of forest and explain how animal survival depends on it.
- Do people in the world have a right to the wood and any other things that forests provide?
- Use a graph or a chart to show how the weather depends on forests.
- If you are able to visit a forest near where you live, collect information and write a report.
- Research the job of a forest ranger.

CSF: Biodiversity, Change-Continuity

CH: 8-11 Society and the Environment: Maps

Hobbits love maps! They know that learning about maps is a valuable skill.

Maps are fun to read and make! Tolkien makes a map at the beginning of the book to help us to discover Bilbo's world.

- Make a map of the school or your home environment or a favorite or important location in your life. It may even be an imaginary place.
- Include symbols and a key that shows distance. Share with others.
- Will they be able to read and understand your map?
- Here are some useful symbols that you may include in your own map.
(Teacher – insert a variety of symbols)

CSF: Place and Space**CH: 12-14 Hobbit Quiz**

- 1) Write a short summary of the main events in each of the chapters in this section.
- 2) How does Bilbo describe himself to the dragon Smaug?
- 3) When Bilbo steals the cup, what does Smaug do?
- 4) What do think are the weak points of the plans made by the dwarves?
- 5) Write a nutshell statement that describes Smaug.
- 6) What is meant by *cram*?
- 7) What does Thorin give to Bilbo? Explain why you think he did so?
- 8) Explain the importance of the *black arrow*?
- 9) Describe the Arkenstone. Does Bilbo have a right to keep it?

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, Contextual Understanding and Strategies.

CH:12-14 A Chain Story

- Work with a small group.
 - Write a new adventure for Bilbo that might have been part of the story of *The Hobbit*.
Create a situation where Bilbo escapes in an amazing way.
- A) Writes the first paragraph and passes it on to person B
- B) Read, ask questions, make changes if necessary then write the second paragraph and pass to the next person.
- C) Same procedure for each person in group
- D) Rotate story until complete then share with class.

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, Contextual Understanding and Strategies.

CH:12-14 Probing Questions TV Talk Show

If you were a talk-show host you would need to plan thoughtful, probing questions to ask the famous people who are interviewed so that the public can find out more about them.

- Work with a partner or small group to create a ten-minute talk show with your guests taken from characters in *The Hobbit*.
- Make a list in the space below of possible guests.
- Include music for effect.

Plan questions and answers for each character, prepare the order of your program and try to anticipate audience response. Present your talk show to the class.

CSF: Texts, Contextual Understanding, Strategies, Music and Drama.

CH:12-14 A Family Tree

Family backgrounds are stressed in *The Hobbit*.

(Refer to the book *The Hobbit Companion* (1997) by David Day for a useful heritage and history of Bilbo Baggins).

Research your own family tree.

Present your family history.

CSF: Time, Continuity & Change, Place and Space.

CH: 15-19 Hobbit Quiz

Write a paragraph for the main event in each of the chapters 15-19.

- 1) Roac brings good and bad news. Explain.
- 2) What was the battle plan made by Gandalf?
- 3) Why did Bilbo offer the Arkenstone to Bard?
- 4) Who is involved in the battle?
- 5) Why isn't Bilbo found until afterwards?
- 6) How has the treasure changed Thorin?
- 7) How does Thorin make peace with Bilbo?

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, Contextual Understanding, and Strategies.

CH: 15-19 Middle–Earth Mirror

- Create a Middle-earth newspaper. What types of things would be newsworthy?
- Look at the sample newspapers supplied as models.
- Think of a “catchy” name for the newspaper.
- Be creative – include some events that did not happen in the story – but could have!
- Include illustrations.
- Include artwork and advertisements that help to pay for the printing.
- Share with the class.

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures – Features, contextual Understanding, and Strategies

CH: 15-19 The Sound of Music

- Look at the stories told by the songs in the book.
- Create your own lyrics and melody for a song about Middle-earth.

- Create a “sound-scape” for a Hobbit story.
- If you are able to write music, record a simple score.

CSF: Texts, Linguistic Structures I Features, Contextual Understanding, Music and Drama

CH: 15-19 The Getting of Wisdom

Older people often have sensible and wise advice as Thorin discovered when he spoke with Roac who was 153 years old!

Interview your grandparents or some other older person.

Below are some ideas to start you thinking.

Add your own ideas to this list.

- Early school experiences/your family traditions
- Your heroes/Your hobbies
- Where you lived
- Teenage years
- Embarrassing moments
- Special friends
- Special interests
- Your first job
- Your fears/Your hopes and dreams
- Adulthood
- Your work/Your family life
- How the world has changed
- Special interests
- New responsibilities

CSF: Texts, Contextual Understanding, Strategies, Time, Continuity and Change

Question Time

After reading *The Hobbit* do you have any questions that were not answered?

List your questions below.

-
-
-
-
-
-

Work by yourself or with a partner or small group.

Prepare possible answers for your questions.

Share your ideas with the class.

After The Hobbit

Tolkien was deeply interested in words, their meanings, and the ways they could be used. He loved rhymes, riddles, proverbs, sayings, songs, folktales, and stories. The reader will notice Tolkien's use of verse in telling us about his characters. For example, in the verse from a goblin song such as Clap! Snap! The black crack! (Chapter 4 *The Hobbit*, pp. 56-58). It sounds lighthearted and merry, a song of friendship and feasting. Other songs and poems are humorous or descriptive. In Chapter 1 the dwarves sing a funny song about Bilbo's apprehension when they are washing the dishes at his house after the party following their unexpected arrival:

Dump the crocks in a boiling bowl;
Pound them up with a thumping pole;
And when you've finished, if any are whole,
Send them down the hall to roll! (pp. 12-13).

Teachers may discuss other rhymes throughout *The Hobbit*. The children could also make up their own rhymes in a style that echoes the character. A song by Bilbo about how much he misses his home and hearth, its coziness and comfort, would be both appealing and a truthful reflection of Bilbo's feelings.

Another excellent way in which words are used in *The Hobbit* is through riddles. There are some riddles that everyone knows, such as “What's black and white and red (read) all over?” A newspaper, of course. Some riddles are very ancient indeed, like one Bilbo used: “No-legs lay on one-leg, two-legs sat near on three-legs, four-legs got some”. The answer was - fish on a little table, man at table sitting on a stool, the cat has the bones. This was very similar to the riddle that the Sphinx asked Oedipus thousands of years

ago: What animal walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening? (Humans on all fours when babies, two legs when adults, and three, including a cane, in old age).

Gollum initiated a competition with Bilbo to win a riddle-game. Riddle-games were sacred; if an agreement was reached, the contestants had to abide by the terms. The terms of this one were that if Bilbo won, Gollum would show him the way out of the goblins' cave, but if Gollum won, he got to eat Bilbo. You will notice that some of the riddles asked by Bilbo and Gollum as part of the riddle-game were very old, such as the egg riddle in chapter 5:

A box without hinges, key, or lid,
Yet golden treasure inside is hid (p. 70).

Some were very difficult, such as the one about the dark. And one Bilbo made up. It was not, strictly speaking, a riddle at all, but a question. Gollum, however, accepted it and, as bound by the rules of the game, lost, although he certainly didn't intend to follow the rules. Asking riddles and reading riddle books are still popular. Children can create their own riddle-games, using either familiar riddles or their own.

The attention of children can be drawn to the fact that one whole book of the Bible is called Proverbs and gives lots of advice. Proverbs and sayings also say things in short and pithy ways such as “early to bed and early to rise make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise”. Several of Bilbo's sayings became proverbs. One was “escaping from goblins to be caught by wolves!” Teachers may help children to find others; for example, children could look for a proverb about dragons. Teachers may also help children to construct their own proverbs.

Magic in *The Hobbit*

The fact that *The Hobbit* is a fantasy adventure story means magic comes as no surprise. The first thing that comes to mind is the ring but there are other magic elements to consider. There is the wizard Gandalf who can do many things, although he never does magic unless he has to. He uses magic fire against the wargs and magic darkness in the goblins' cave. There are other beings with magical abilities - or disabilities. Dwarves can make weapons with magical properties, and elves can make magic light. Beorn can change his shape from a man to a bear and back, and what's more, can talk to his trained animals. Eagles can speak, and so can some of the birds on Lonely Mountain. Smaug is a magical beast, a dragon, which can also speak. The trolls turn to stone in the sunlight.

There are also some magical objects in the tale such as the swords Orcrist and Glamdring which belong to Thorin Oakenshield and Gandalf. They gleam when goblins are near. There is the trolls' magic purse, which cries out and reveals Bilbo to the trolls; the arrow fired by Bard that killed Smaug and which never seems to miss its target. However, the most famous of the magical objects is the ring that Bilbo found when he was in the tunnel with Gollum. The ring gives invisibility on the wearer and that is certainly useful in a pinch. Bilbo is generally careful in using it only when he needs to, which is fortunate, as it exerts a strong hold on its possessor. He uses it to escape the goblins' cave, to rescue the dwarves from the Elvenking's dungeon, and to get the Arkenstone to Bard and his allies for bargaining with Thorin, all noble purposes. Bilbo proves an excellent holder of the ring, as he has no ambition to be powerful. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is made clear that it is the most powerful and important of all the

magic rings. Teachers can talk with children about what they would do with such a ring of invisibility.

Magic Letters

Runes were different symbols, like letters, used for writing. Runes transmitted several messages in *The Hobbit*; in fact, the whole journey would have been fruitless unless Bilbo and others were able to translate the runic messages. The first message was on the map of the Lonely Mountain and was especially magical because it could be read only by moonlight on a certain day of the year.

What does each rune mean? Bear in mind that some runes represent two letters together, such as *th*. There are whole messages on the endpapers and title page of *The Hobbit*.

What do they say? Children can be encouraged to write their own runic messages and can even make up their own runes using their own set of characters. It can be a secret way of communicating with those who know what their runes mean.

Reflecting on *The Hobbit*

It is useful to follow up the story of *The Hobbit* with questions for reflection. For example:

- In the riddle-game between Gollum and Bilbo, were both Bilbo and Gollum fair in their questions?
- Was Bilbo right to spare him?
- Would Gollum have spared Bilbo if he had been able to catch him?
- Did Bilbo have any right to keep the ring?
- Should Bilbo have told the dwarves about the magic ring as soon as he found it?
- Was Bilbo right to keep the Arkenstone?

- What would have happened if he had given it to Thorin or kept it for himself?
- Did Bilbo change during his journey?
- Is Bilbo the only hero in the story?
- What are some of the heroic qualities, besides bravery, that some of the characters have? Are all heroes good, or can they have both good and bad qualities?
- Does Bilbo have any bad qualities?
- Is Gandalf always good?
- Why are there no women and children as important characters in this tale?

Multiple Intelligences and *The Hobbit*

The following is an outline of how *The Hobbit* can be applied for curriculum differentiation for multiple intelligences in the primary classroom. *Verbal/linguistic* and *visual/spatial* intelligences are not limited to specific domains of intelligence. The development of *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* intelligences should be integrated throughout all teaching and particularly when the children are working in pairs or with groups. Bloom's Taxonomy of sequential higher order thinking skills should also be applied.

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence

Check knowledge

Hobbit Quiz-Recall

Text Translation-use own words

Individual Interpretation

deas – what if?

Analysis – why and how?

Synthesis – other books with similar themes

Personal Evaluation

Applying ideas through writing genres

Journals, letters, opinions, narrative.

Hobbit writingApplying I – Runes

Hobbit Riddles and Proverbs

Poetry and Verse/Verbal Linguistic/Visual Spatial Intelligences

Chip the Glasses!

Roll, Roll, Roll!
Down the Swift Dark Stream You Go!
Attercop Spider Chant
Lazy Lob and Crazy Cob
The King Beneath the Mountains
The Dragon is Withered
Bilbo's Last Verse
Children's own inspired poetry

Art/Visual Spatial /Logical Mathematical Intelligences

Translation of text
Hobbit models
Hobbit Puppets
Mobiles
Painting / drawing
Hobbit Maps
Craft themes

Musical/Rhythmic/Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligences

Developing Rhythm and Beat
Clapping - Tapping - Marching
The Greatest Adventure Song
The Pale Enchanted Gold Refrain
Goblin's Come and Goblins Go (Dance)
Roads Go Ever On (Dance)
Pocket Handkerchief Dance
Elvish Music
Children's own inspired music
Hobbit Band – tuned and untuned percussion

Drama/Bodily Kinesthetic/Interpersonal/Intrapersonal Intelligences

Hobbit Theatre Skills
Read and Act
Spontaneous Improvisations
Staging the Story
Using Props
Music and Sound
Publicity

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Early learning – counting skills
How many hobbits, dwarves, etc?
How many *pairs* of e.g. dwarves?
Colours – hobbits love bright colours!
Hobbit scenes made from geometric shapes

Measurement – how far, how long?
Measuring /comparing size – e.g. giant to hobbit!
Maps and comparisons - Hobbits love maps!
(NB North is East on Hobbit Map!)
Finding coordinates on a grid
Design a Hobbit Board Game with instructions

History/Social Contexts/Verbal Linguistic/Intrapersonal Intelligences

Family history and relationships
The Tooks and the Bagginses
Middle-earth culture
Nordic/Celtic language influences

Outdoor Education/Naturalist /Interpersonal/Intrapersonal Intelligences

Middle-earth Nature Walk
Hobbit Treasure Hunt
Directions - Mapping Skills
Hobbit Camping Skills
Outdoor Living
Packing for Outdoors
A Hobbit Barbecue
Hobbit Hike
Hobbit First Aid

Author Study/Verbal Linguistic/Intrapersonal Intelligences

Tolkien, Catholic
C.S. Lewis Friendship
The Inklings Club
Associated Reading: *The Narnia Chronicles*

Food Science/Logical /Mathematical Intelligence

Seven pantries full of food!
Favorite Foods
Good Foods
The *Pyramid* has changed!

Extension/Verbal Linguistic/Interpersonal/Intrapersonal Intelligences

Hobbit Club – lunchtime
Reading ‘between the lines’
Debating the Issues

APPENDIX C

Selected list of Related Heroic Tales for Primary Children

These tales have been selected for use with primary-school children because like *The Hobbit*, these heroes do not fit the stereotypical image of the swaggering and willing hero. These heroes do not seek to dominate or use force or violence to achieve; yet they each undertake a journey and face struggles against the odds in the name of good.

Adams, R. (1974) *Watership Down*. London: Macmillan

Bemelmans, L. (1997) *Madeline* Series. London: Scholastic Children's Books.

Corder, Z. (2003) *Lion Boy*. London: Puffin.

Dahl, R. (Reprint 2001) *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. London: Puffin.

Dahl, R. (Reprint 2001) *Matilda*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Dahl, R. (Reprint 2000) *James and the Giant Peach*. London: Puffin

Di Camillo, K. (2003) *The Tale of Despereaux*. Candlewick Press.

Freeman, P. (1995). *WINDRIDER*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Hirsch, O. (1999). *Hazel Green* (and Series). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Hoffman, M. (2002) *Stravaganza: City of Masks*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Lawson, S. (2002). *Dragon's Tear*. Melbourne: Lothian Books.

Lowry, L. (1989) *Number the Stars* Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Morpurgo, M. (2002). *TORO! TORO!* London: Collins.

Prior, N.J. (2002). *Lily Quench & the Treasure of Mote Ely*. Sydney: Hodder

Rodda, E (1997) *Rowan of Rin* (and Series). Australia: Scholastic.

Magorian, M. (1981) *Goodnight Mr. Tom*. London: Puffin.

Montgomery, L. M. (1972) [1908] *Anne of Green Gables*. London: Peacock Books.

McKinley, R. (1987) *The Hero and the Crown*. Glasgow: Ace.

O'Brien, R. (1971). *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. N.York: Athenaeum.

Orr, W. (1999). *Nim's Island*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

White, E.B. (Reprint 2000) *Stuart Little*. London: Puffin.

Wilkinson, C. (2003) *Dragon Keeper*. Melbourne: Black Dog Books

Wynne Jones, D. (1989). *The Lives of Christopher Chant*. London: Mammoth

APPENDIX D

Teachers are Heroes

The Call to Adventure

This begins when teachers identify a problem or perceived “gap” arising from the sense that breakdown has occurred in terms of meeting the needs of students. This may be in response to external threats or negative influences in society. There may be a need for teacher development modules for schools and possible resource implications. The Call is to provide enlightened engagement for children.

Resistance to the Call

This may happen when opinions differ regarding cause and effect. Resistance variables might affect quality implementation. There may be a lack of sustained focus.

Nowadays teachers who are doing too much, too fast, in data-driven classrooms, may feel frustration that nothing is done well or connected to anything else. Teachers may need to confront these “shadow elements” and acknowledge limitations of knowledge and lack of will. The stated purpose of reality may be at odds with declared values and there may be contradictions between declared aims such as “to enable teachers and students to reach their potential” and there may be the reality of insufficient support.

The Quest

The quest for teachers is to translate all that they know into the daily experiences of the children in their care; to stand up for vision as a sacred commitment and realise that

collaboration by teachers is a prerequisite to the vision. The quest may lead to the “cutting edge” where teachers must strive to find balance between vision and opposition.

Threshold Guardians

It is important for teachers to accept that personal limitations require reaching out to the wisdom of scholarly figures both past and present, who embody expert knowledge and insight. This may result in experienced classroom teachers empowering each other. It may lead to improvement of the mind through research, books, articles and the Internet.

Trials

Teachers may face difficulties such as staying on task despite setbacks, recognising the difficulties involved. Some teachers will give up to the disheartenment of others.

Maximum growth and development often occur at the “cutting edge”. Teachers may find it difficult to say “no” when the educational vision is compromised.

Transformation

The transformation is the Hero’s outcome such as knowing and contributing in a new, more fully conscious way. This may lead to different forms of assessment in the classroom, responses from children and parents, valuable insights, and an improved quality of understanding. The transformation may be that teachers will become more critical and analytical of texts presented to children. This may lead to hopeful hearts. Only time will tell the full extent of the transformation.

This transformation is in accordance with the purpose of the Hero's Journey. The legacy of the transformed heroic educator includes being able to approach change fearlessly and to take responsibility for our actions; to know from experience the darker, "shadowy" side; to be inspired and reinvigorated regarding our own role in education and teaching; to know that teamwork is important; the need for others and the benefits in sharing with others; awareness of the need that children have for optimism and resiliency. Transformation is not possible without the inseparable components of imagination, knowledge and hope.

Return and a New Call

Teachers may be called to an enlightened vision of teaching beyond the quick fix solution and concrete applications for the classroom, that reflect the underlying needs of primary-age children.