



The Lord of the Rings: Book Three

TEA WITH TOLKIEN BOOK CLUB NOTES

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The Lord of the Rings: Book III Summary

Book Three of The Lord of the Rings brings about many changes for the members of the broken Fellowship. Boromir confesses that he tried to take the Ring from Frodo and defends the hobbits against the Orcs, costing him his life. Frodo and Sam escape but Pippin and Merry are captured by Orc soldiers. After being held captive for days, Pippin and Merry escape into Fangorn Forest and are brought to safety by Treebeard. In their search, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are met by an unexpected friend: Gandalf the White, risen from the dead. They journey to Rohan where Gandalf frees King Théoden from the influence of Saruman through Wormtongue, and they ride to battle at Helm's Deep.

After battle and unexpected victory, Théoden journeys with Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli to Isengard. There, the men are surprised to see Pippin and Merry sitting at the gate! They come to learn that Treebeard has 'taken over management of Isengard' and Saruman is being held prisoner in Orthanc. Gandalf offers counsel and mercy to Saruman. However, his efforts are fruitless and Gandalf is forced to assert his authority over Saruman — breaking his staff and leaving him safe but powerless in Orthanc. As they are speaking with Saruman, Wormtongue throws a mysterious stone down towards Gandalf. He quickly wraps it in his cloak, but not before Pippin takes notice of it.

Overwhelmed with curiosity, Pippin takes the stone (which is revealed to be one of the Palantíri) while Gandalf is sleeping. As Pippin looks into it, he suddenly finds himself in the presence of Sauron who now believes he is the bearer of the Ring. Soon, one of the Nazgûl is seen flying above them, and Gandalf quickly rides with Pippin towards Minas Tirith.

Book Three Resources

Book Three Resources:

- [Interactive Online Map: LOTR Project](#)
- [The Atlas of Middle-earth by Karen Wynn Fonstad](#)
- [Large File Size Map of Middle-earth](#)
- [The Complete Travels of Théoden, King of Rohan | \(Youtube\)](#)
- [Orcs, Goblins, & Uruk-hai - What's the Difference? \(Youtube\)](#)
- [Reddit Post: What was the significance of Saruman changing from white to "many colors?"](#)
- ["Everything We Know About Ents, 'The Lord of the Rings' Mysterious Tree Creatures" \(Article\)](#)



Chapter One: The Departure of Boromir

As the chapter opens, Aragorn is searching frantically for Frodo. Suddenly, the horn of Boromir is heard amongst shrieks of orcs; Aragorn scrambles towards the sound but when he finds Boromir, he has come too late: Boromir has been pierced by many orc arrows. Aragorn kneels beside him, and Boromir confesses that he had tried to take the Ring from Frodo.

To atone for this act of evil, he has given his life in valiant defense of the hobbits against the Orcs. Aragorn comforts him, assuring him of his victory and granting him peace, or we might say, absolution. Boromir smiles as he breathes his last, and Aragorn mourns bitterly for the loss of his friend.

"I tried to take the Ring from Frodo," he said. "I am sorry. I have paid." "No!" said Aragorn, taking his hand and kissing his brow. "You have conquered. Few have gained such a victory. Be at peace! Minas Tirith shall not fall!"

He also tells Aragorn that the halflings were taken captive though he doesn't think they are dead, but he doesn't specify which halflings. Boromir's final request was for Aragorn to go to Minas Tirith and save his people, but Aragorn is conflicted because he knows he cannot abandon the halflings. As he passes away, Aragorn mourns bitterly the loss of Boromir.

Legolas and Gimli find Aragorn and discuss what their next step should be. They find the knives of Merry and Pippin among the weapons of the fallen orcs and decide to carry them in hopes of returning them. Because they are unable to offer him a proper burial, they tend to Boromir's body and send him down the river Anduin with his helm, his horn, and the weapons of his vanquished enemies. Aragorn points out that some of the orcs are from the Misty Mountains and others are strange to him: they appear to be servants of Saruman.

Finally, Aragorn discerns that Frodo and Sam have gone off together towards Mount Doom; so then they have to decide whether to follow Frodo and Sam or Merry and Pippin. Aragorn ultimately decides that they should follow the orcs because he cannot abandon the halflings to torture and death. Now that they have finally made up their minds about which path to follow, they pursue the orcs swiftly.



Chapter Two: The Riders of Rohan

Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli pursue the company of Orcs and cross into the land of Rohan. They come across a group of slain orcs and guess that they were slain by other orcs; there was some kind of argument between two groups of them. Aragorn then finds a hobbit's footprints and the brooch of one of their elven-cloaks, which gives them hope. Despite doubt, they run swiftly and vigilantly, although struggling against weariness, loss of hope, and uncertainty.

After several days of pursuit, they are met by many riders: men of Rohan, the Rohirrim. Here we are introduced to Eomer, Son of Eomund, Third Marshal of the Riddermark. They have a tense introduction but once Aragorn reveals that he is the heir of Isildur etc., Eomer's demeanor changes. Eomer reveals that they destroyed the company of Orcs but did not see the halflings among them.

Eomer tells Aragorn that Gandalf had come to them and warned them about Saruman, but Theoden disregarded this warning and treated Gandalf with contempt. Eomer insists that they go with him to Edoras according to their law, but Aragorn eventually talks him into letting them be on their way; and then Eomer gives them horses for their journey.



Chapter Three: The Uruk-hai

This chapter is largely told from Pippin's point of view.

Pippin recalls being besieged by orcs and wondering why they did not try to fight him, but only seemed interested in taking him and Merry captive. He recalls seeing Boromir fighting the orcs valiantly, but then remembers no more of that day.

The next thing he knew he was lying, bound amongst a great company of orcs with Merry beside him. Over the next several days, Merry and Pippin are treated cruelly by the Orcs as they are brought towards Isengard. There are two groups of orcs who have converged - one sent from Isengard with the task of obtaining the halflings and returning them to Saruman, the other has come from the Mines with the intention of avenging their folk.

The two main orcs we see named in this chapter are Ugluk (commander of the Uruk-hai company from Isengard) and Grishnakh (an orc of Sauron). Ultimately, many of the Northern orcs defect from the greater group as a whole; the whole expedition is generally very chaotic as Orcs do not seem to have much loyalty or military organization.

Finally, the men of Rohan come upon the orc and they all await the beginning of the battle. Eventually Pippin realizes that the Orcs think either he or Merry have the Ring and then he basically begins to impersonate Gollum and tries to convince Grishnakh to untie their legs. This unfortunately angers him and he carries them away from the rest of the company. Grishnakh intends to kill the hobbits rather than allow them to be captured but he is slain by one of the Rohirrim before he is able to.

Finally, the hobbits are able to escape and flee into the forest, not without having a bit of the Lembas first. From a safe distance, the hobbits stop to watch the battle in which the Rohirrim overtake the entire company of orcs. After the battle was over, they burned the bodies of their enemies.



Chapter Four: Treebeard

Merry and Pippin escape from the Orcs, only to find themselves lost in Fangorn Forest. There, they are met by Treebeard, an Ent, and are taken into his care. He tells the hobbits a great deal about the forest, the Ents, and Saruman as they travel with him. And after much discernment, the Ents decide to march against Isengard and the hobbits are able to witness their great strength against Saruman. We are also introduced to the Entwives and the Entings, although they are all lost.

Chapter Five: The White Rider

Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are left in Fangorn, horseless and rather startled over the appearance and disappearance of the mysterious old man. In the morning, they resume their search for any trace of the Hobbits and ultimately find a bit of news: a mallorn-leaf with a few crumbs of Lembas remaining, as well as some cut cord laying nearby. From this, they discern that at least one of the hobbits had escaped the orcs!

At this point, Aragorn is beginning to put together a more complete picture of the motivations behind the orc attack and capture of the hobbits. As they continue through the forest, they find even more signs of the hobbits. At last, they are met again by the old man and finally learn his true nature: they are relieved to learn that he is not Saruman, but Gandalf - although he is changed! No longer Gandalf the Grey, he is Gandalf the White - resurrected, with greater purpose and power. Gandalf recounts his fight with the Balrog, his death, and his return to Middle-earth. Strengthened and encouraged, they journey together towards Rohan.

"They all gazed at him. His hair was white as snow in the sunshine; and gleaming white was his robe; the eyes under his deep brows were bright, piercing as the rays of the sun; power was in his hand. Between wonder, joy, and fear they stood and found no words to say."



Chapter Six: The King of the Golden Hall

After a difficult and long journey, the company comes to Rohan seeking to speak with King Théoden. Gandalf bids them to draw no weapon and speak no haughty word – to be wary in Rohan. As they approach the gates of Edoras, they are met by guards who speak rather harshly, saying that none should enter unless they are friends of the King or speak their tongue. Conveniently enough Gandalf speaks their tongue!

Eventually the company is allowed to pass through the gates but they are asked to leave their weapons at the doors of the hall, even Gandalf's staff. Aragorn is reluctant to relinquish his sword but Gandalf talks him into it. Though Aragorn tells Hama, the Doorward of Theoden, "Death shall come to any man that draws Elendil's sword save Elendil's heir." Hama allows Gandalf to bring his staff into the hall against his orders.

Gandalf, Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas step into the Golden Hall, where they feel uneasy and unwelcome. They soon understand that Theoden is being influenced by the advisement of Wormtongue, who has encouraged Theoden to turn against Gandalf's counsel. Gandalf casts aside his cloak and rebukes Wormtongue; he raises his staff and Wormtongue throws himself to the ground. Gandalf then calls Theoden to rise from his chair and breathe the fresh air outside of his Hall; Theoden, it seems, is coming back to life after a long and troubled sleep.

It is also at this moment that we are introduced to Eowyn for the first time. "Thus Aragorn for the first time in the full light of day beheld Eowyn, Lady of Rohan, and thought her fair, fair and cold, like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood."

Gandalf counsels Théoden, urging that all friends must gather together in the face of the storm. Theoden releases Eomer from prison (where he had been held at Grima's counsel), and commands Grima to bring back his sword.

Gandalf counsels Theoden to evacuate the women and children from Edoras and to prepare the men for battle. After returning to himself, Théoden recognizes how badly Grima had deceived him, however he still offers him mercy and bids him to prove himself trustworthy by coming along to battle with them.

Gandalf calls out Wormtongue for being a servant of Saruman, and then Wormtongue spits before the king's feet and flees. Theoden laments that he was so blind to Wormtongue's influence and thanks Gandalf for his help. At the end of the chapter, the men of Rohan prepare for battle.



Chapter Seven: Helm's Deep

The company rides towards Helm's Deep along with the men of Rohan. Along the way, Gandalf urges Théoden to continue on to Helm's Deep but that he must leave them for a while. Even as Gandalf leaves, the men of Rohan murmur amongst themselves saying that Grima would've had an explanation for it. Hama, however, seems to put a bit more of his trust in Gandalf than the others do.

The Riders came towards Helm's Gate and the Hornburg, which was a great stronghold at the mouth of Helm's Deep, where Erkenbrand (master of Westfold) dwelt. However, nobody has heard news of Erkenbrand. However, their scouts report that wolf-riders and Orcs are on their way to Helm's Deep as well; they hear a harsh singing and see the lands and homes behind them being burnt.

The Riders come to Helm's Dike where Gamling, an old man and leader of those who watched the Dike, tells Theoden that women and children have been gathered into the caves of the Deep. Finally, they come into Helm's Deep and prepare for battle along the Hornburg and the barrier wall. At last, the battle begins as hundreds upon hundreds of orcs pour over the Dike and through the breach. Orcs creep through the culvert and into Helm's deep, weakening their defense.

As the battle quickly grows out of control, there is a sense of futility in their fight. Theoden is becoming depressed and restless, feeling boxed in, so the King rides forth along with Aragorn. Nearly all hope is lost until Gandalf returns, along with Erkenbrand. With Gandalf's arrival, the battle is quickly won as the wild men fall on their faces before him and the orcs 'reeled and screamed and cast aside both sword and spear', fleeing.



Chapter Eight: The Road to Isengard

After the battle, the men are gazing in wonder at both Gandalf and the woods, which have changed. Gandalf says he'll explain the change to Theoden if he comes with him to Isengard. The men of Rohan rest and clear the battlefield of the dead and injured. Afterwards, many men journey with Gandalf, including King Théoden, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli. They travel through Fangorn, where the men of Rohan are surprised to witness the Ents for the first time!

They enter the land of Isengard to find it deeply industrialized. The grounds are tilled for miles, and many small homes have been built for workers or slaves. Yet despite this, the land is abandoned and damaged as if by some great storm. As they near the gates, the men of Rohan are again surprised to see something they've never witnessed before: hobbits!

They are greeted by Merry and Pippin as they lazily sit beside the gates enjoying a few 'well-earned comforts'. The hobbits explain that Treebeard has taken up management of Isengard, and at this, Gandalf and Théoden leave to find him.

Chapter Nine: Flotsam and Jetsam

This chapter happens on the 5th of March!

Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli stay behind with Merry and Pippin (who have been given the task of guarding the gate!) as the others leave to consult with Treebeard. These members of the Fellowship spend the bulk of this chapter recounting their stories of what's happened since they were last together and putting together the pieces to form a fuller account of what's been going on in regards to their quest.



Chapter Ten: The Voice of Saruman

The companions pass through the ruins of Isengard where they meet with Gandalf. Together with Theoden and the men of Rohan, they travel to the foot of Orthanc to speak with Saruman. As they approach him, Gandalf warns them to beware of his voice. Gandalf, Aragorn, Theoden, Legolas, and Gimli approach the door of Orthanc to speak with Saruman.

Saruman comes to the rail and speaks with them, his very voice an enchantment. Tolkien writes of Saruman's voice: it is "low and melodious, its very sound an enchantment... it seemed wise and reasonable..."; it flatters, enthralls, enchants, comforts— yet it always seeks to control.

Saruman first attempts to enchant and influence Théoden, trying to convince him that he was the only one who could aid him. When Theoden rejects Saruman's advances, he moves on to Gandalf. However, his efforts prove unsuccessful.

Gandalf overpowers him, breaking his staff but leaving him alive, and placing Isengard under the care of the Ents. Over and over and over again, Gandalf emphasizes mercy.

Chapter Eleven: The Palantir

After leaving Saruman and Isengard under the watch of the Ents, the company begins their return to Helm's Deep. As they travel, Pippin, being the curious Took he is, cannot stop thinking about the mysterious globe thrown from Orthanc.

His curiosity overwhelms him and, in the night, Pippin takes it from Gandalf as he sleeps. As he looks into the stone, Pippin cries out and falls to the ground, which awakens the entire camp. With difficulty, Pippin recounts his experience with the Palantír, as it were, revealing that Sauron now believes Pippin to be the Ring-bearing hobbit and will send for him at once.

Gandalf gathers that no harm has come from his foolishness, by good fortune. He forgives Pippin and places the Palantír in the care of Aragorn. However one of the Nazgûl is suddenly seen flying across the sky and, at this, Gandalf rides swiftly away with Pippin. As they ride, Gandalf explains the nature of the Palantíri to Pippin and reveals to him that they are traveling to Minas Tirith.

