

## 12-15yrs Prose Reading

### **The Hobbit** by JRR Tolkien

“That’s right,” said Gandalf. “Let’s have no more argument. I have chosen Mr. Baggins and that ought to be enough for all of you. If I say he is a Burglar, a Burglar he is, or will be when the time comes. There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself. You may (possibly) all live to thank me yet. Now Bilbo, my boy, fetch the lamp, and let’s have a little light on this!”

On the table in the light of a big lamp with a red shade he spread a piece of parchment rather like a map. “This was made by Thor, your grandfather, Thorin,” he said in answer to the dwarves’ excited questions. “It is a plan of the Mountain.” “I don’t see that this will help us much,” said Thorin disappointedly after a glance. “I remember the Mountain well enough and the lands about it. And I know where Mirkwood is, and the Withered Heath where the great dragons bred.”

“There is a dragon marked in red on the Mountain,” said Balin, “but it will be easy enough to find him without that, if ever we arrive there.”

“There is one point that you haven’t noticed,” said the wizard, “and that is the secret entrance. You see that rune on the West side, and the hand pointing to it from the other runes? That marks a hidden passage to the Lower Halls.” (Look at the map at the beginning of this book, and you will see there the runes in red.)

“It may have been secret once,” said Thorin, “but how do we know that it is secret any longer? Old Smaug has lived there long enough now to find out anything there is to know about those caves.”

“He may—but he can’t have used it for years and years.”

“Why?”

“Because it is too small. ‘Five feet high the door and three may walk abreast’ say the runes, but Smaug could not creep into a hole that size, not even when he was a young dragon, certainly not after devouring so many of the dwarves and men of Dale.”

“It seems a great big hole to me,” squeaked Bilbo (who had no experience of dragons and only of hobbit-holes). He was getting excited and interested again, so that he forgot to keep his mouth shut. He loved maps, and in his hall there hung a large one of the Country Round with all his favourite walks marked on it in red ink. “How could such a large door be kept secret from everybody outside, apart from the dragon?” he asked. He was only a little hobbit you must remember.