

Part One: *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Lesson One

The Shared Peril

As the hobbits travel from the Eden-like Shire, they encounter the members who will comprise the Fellowship of the Ring. Because of their differences, they are wary at first and suspicious of each other's motives.

Watch scene 1: (Prologue, 00:01:00 – 00:05:13)

1. Name the races introduced and the attributes of each.
2. How is the Race of Men described, and do you agree?
3. In what ways can each of these races represent various aspects of human nature?

Watch scene 3: ("Very old friends," 00:20:15 – 00:23:45) In Bilbo's house at Bag End, we begin to learn more about the corrupting power of The Ring.

1. Why is it so hard for Bilbo to give up the Ring?
2. What does this scene tell you about the effect evil (sin?) can have on friendships and other relationships?

Watch scene 4: ("A long-expected party," 00:30:45 – 00:34:38)

1. Why must the Ring be removed from the Shire?
2. Why is Gandalf unwilling to do it?
3. Could you have made the same choice as Frodo?

- (A) Discussion:** The One Ring is profoundly desirable yet dangerous. Talk about the "ring" in each of your own lives – what kind of powerful compulsions have you faced? Have you ever had to deal with something that was painfully hard to give up, even though you knew you had to do it?

Watch scene 7: ("The account of Isildur," 00:26:45 – 00:31:59)

Gandalf researches the Ring's history and explains it to Frodo.

1. What is the nature of Sauron? What motivates him?
2. Why has the Ring been dormant for 60 years?
3. Why has the Ring now "awakened"?

Watch scene 9: ("Saruman the White," 00:38:40 – 00:43:04)

Gandalf goes to visit the wise leader of his wizards "order" (rather like a clergy order) seeking advice. In this scene, the conflict is even more clearly defined.

1. What has happened to Saruman, and is he still "white"?
2. How does the relationship between Saruman and Gandalf change?

- (B) Discussion:** Can you point to any examples of how power corrupts in real life? What possible defenses against corruption can you describe or have you experienced?

Watch scene 12: ("At the sign of the prancing pony," 00:53:15 – 00:55:07)

1. What is your first impression of Longshanks/Strider?
2. Why do you think he uses an alias; what does it tell you about his psychological or spiritual state?
3. What does he think of the hobbits? How can you tell?
4. What unites them all at this point in the story?

Watch scene 18: ("Rivendell," 01:19:58 – 01:22:44) Frodo awakes in the house of Elrond, and Gandalf re-joins the group.

1. What is Elrond's attitude toward the looming threat?
2. Is Elrond correct in believing the peril threatens everyone in Middle Earth?
3. What significance is there in Elrond's reference to the "free people" of Middle Earth, and in what sense were the Elves, Dwarves and Men free?

① **Discussion:** J.R.R. Tolkien wrote the Ring trilogy during World War II. Do you see some of the same issues of power and good and evil still present in today's world, particularly in the war on terrorism? Are the member nations of the coalition in Iraq working together as well as members of the Fellowship of the Ring? If not, why? Can people of different cultures and religions form effective alliances to work for freedom? Where does true freedom really lie?

Activity : If you were entrusted with the Ring of Power, who would you want to be in your Fellowship? Discuss the particular attributes of each of the main characters (Frodo, Samwise, Aragorn, Gandalf, Legolas, Gimli). Then, on your own, think of someone you know who might best fulfill the role of each of the Ring characters in your own hypothetical Fellowship.