

Essay on the new *The Hobbit* – filmHow does the treasure influence the characters in the film *The Hobbit – The Desolation of Smaug*?

Only the two words “My precioussss” have become one of the most famous lines in cinema history – belonging to the creature Gollum which was brought to life by J. R. R. Tolkien and gained more popularity by the film adaptations directed by Peter Jackson. The known addressee of this line: the One Ring from *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy. But after the release of two new films from the Middle Earth universe it is very interesting to take a look at the most precious thing in the latest one: *The Hobbit – The Desolation of Smaug*. Therefore, the focus is not on the One Ring but on the great treasure in the Lonely Mountain (Erebor) and its emphasizing or turning effects on some of the characters.

Basically, the influence of the treasure has a good or a bad effect. As this can include a lot of different aspects, e.g. how could this effect on the characters influence the plot in different ways, I will only focus merely on changes of the characters’ minds and behaviour which can be noticed while watching the film.

Logically, I’ll start with the character that is the root of all evil and complications in *The Hobbit* films, the dragon Smaug. He embodies the abstractions ‘pride’ and especially ‘greed’ for riches – the basic motive for him to take over Erebor and to cast out all dwarves who lived inside the mountain in order to get into the possession of the dwarves’ treasure. Further effects of the treasure on the dragon are shown in the second adaptation. After succeeding in taking over Erebor, Smaug simply lies within the millions of coins and riches and actually does nothing and becomes lazy. As soon as the hobbit Bilbo Baggins enters the Lonely Mountain, the dragon feels disturbed in his happy tranquillity and tries to kill Bilbo for he knows that the hobbit is sent by the dwarf Thorin Oakenshield to steal the Arkenstone, the most precious part of his possessions. But the worst effect the influence of the treasure has on him is that his greed for the treasure itself is also his weakness. That can be seen in the scene where the dwarves try to kill Smaug with a flood of liquid gold which is formed into a huge golden statue. The moment the dragon sees that statue, he forgets his whole surroundings and is totally fascinated by that huge amount of gold and hence gets caught in the trap of the dwarves who simply used the dragon’s flaw of greed caused by the treasure.

Nevertheless, the enemy of Smaug and king under the mountain, Thorin Oakenshield, is badly influenced by the riches of Erebor as well. First of all, the treasure inside the Lonely Mountain affects two different motives of Thorin. On the one hand, he needs the Arkenstone – a sign for his kingship – to bring all dwarves and their armies together in order to fight against Smaug and to reclaim their homeland. On the other hand, the treasure is a symbol for the remainings of Thorin's origin and home and he wants to snatch that away from the claws of the dragon. Focussing that much on his motives, he ignores the prophecy which says that the town near the Lonely Mountain, Esgaroth, will burn with flames and rage of the dragon if Thorin enters Erebor. Thus, the dwarf is only interested in his own business. Furthermore, possessing the Arkenstone is more important for Thorin than Bilbo's life. After Bilbo comes back out of Smaug's desolation and tells Thorin in a rather non-credible way that he's in possession of the Arkenstone, the dwarf doubts the hobbit and seems to be willing to send Bilbo back into the great treasure and therefore into the flames of Smaug and Bilbo's certain death.

After dealing with the main characters in *The Hobbit – The Desolation of Smaug*, there's also a minor character who is influenced by the treasure in the Lonely Mountain in a bad way – the mayor of Esgaroth. In the second adaptation he is depicted as a very greedy and selfish character, e.g. the spectators of the film are told that food is a great need in Esgaroth while in one scene a huge monument in the town of the mayor himself is shown which possibly might be as valuable as food for the whole population of Esgaroth. Nevertheless, as a citizen of that town he should be familiar with the prophecy which was mentioned before but after Thorin reveals his true identity and promises the people of Esgaroth a part of Erebor's treasure, he ignores the part of the prophecy which tells about the destroying of his own town because of his greed. This effect of the treasure proves and emphasizes that the mayor places his own desire for riches above the life of his subordinates and the citizens of Esgaroth.

The only character who is influenced by the treasure in a good way is the hobbit and burglar Bilbo Baggins. For him the treasure and especially the Arkenstone is his legitimacy to be part of the whole adventure, or, as Thorin expresses it, "the reason, why you [Bilbo] are here", for the hobbit has to steal the Arkenstone from Smaug. Compared to the characters influenced in a bad way, the treasure doesn't emphasize Bilbo's greed but encourages him in

finally fulfilling the task: finding the Arkenstone and bringing it back to Thorin Oakenshield. Especially Bilbo's own little treasure, the One Ring, motivates him in this quest because it gives the hobbit the ability to get invisible and so protects him from the dragon's gaze. Thus, the effect of the treasure supports Bilbo's motive – which is the will to help the dwarves reclaim their homeland – instead of undermining the hobbit's motivation and distracting him with greed and desire.

Unfortunately, the second adaptation *The Hobbit – The Desolation of Smaug* doesn't really show the audience if all those effects on the characters will be resolved in the fulfilment of the prophecy or if the negatively affected characters will realize their own shift in mind. Hopefully, the next part of the adaptation will answer those assumptions and especially Bilbo Baggins's question at the end of the film: "What have we done...?"