THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY REVIEW: IN A WORD – PERFECTION

THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY REVIEW

My father was the first person who told me of the genius created by J.R.R Tolkien. *The Lord the Rings* was a part of his childhood and when the popular books were adapted for the screen, he told me to, "see it immediately!" However, when the first film debuted in 2001, it was during my first year at University and somehow, while the hype reached me, the urge to actually *watch* the film passed. By the time the second film, *The Two Towers* was released a year later, I still hadn't seen the first and therefore the urgency to catch up was missing.
In 2003 however, with the near-manic frenzy around the release of the final installment in the trilogy, I realized that I couldn't be *that* person any longer. By *that* person of course I mean, the only person within my immediate and extended sphere who had not seen the first two films.
I rented *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers* and I remember quite vividly how I spent an entire Saturday lost in the world of Hobbits, Dwarves, Elves, and Men. Blurry eyed and steeped in wonder, I went to watch *The Return of the King* in the cinema the very next day. The discovery of this trilogy was the beginning of an intense and ongoing love affair with the world, its mythology, language and of course, its characters.

It all began with the forging of the Great Rings. Three were given to the Elves; immortal, wisest and fairest of all beings. Seven, to the Dwarf Lords, great miners and craftsmen of the mountain halls. And nine rings were gifted to the race of Men, who above all else desire power. In the land of Mordor, in the fires of Mount Doom, the Dark Lord Sauron forged in secret, a master ring, to control all others.

1. THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy begins with its first installment laying the foundation for the giant structure that's to come. *The Fellowship of the Ring* introduces us to the scale and scope of Middle-Earth, its creatures, heroes, and villains. Frodo Baggins (Elijah Wood) is a Hobbit, carefree and happy in The Shire. Frodo is asked by the wizard Gandalf (Sir Ian McKellan) to carry a golden ring to Rivendell, where all the creatures of Middle Earth would decide on how best to deal with the reawakened threat of Sauron, the Dark Lord.

For sixty years, the Ring lay quiet in Bilbo's keeping, prolonging his life, delaying old age. But no longer, Frodo. Evil is stirring in Mordor. The Ring has awoken. It's heard its Master's call.

Unaware of just *what* he has agreed to do, Frodo, his best friend's Sam (Sean Astin), Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd) set out from their home to deliver the ring to Rivendell, the home of the Elves. Unfortunately, Frodo and his companions soon learn that the ring has dark powers and even darker creatures searching for it. With their lives in danger, a mysterious Ranger Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) offers them aid and escorts them to Rivendell.

The Fellowship of the Ring expertly immerses you into the world of Tolkien. While the books are not easy to read, Peter Jackson makes the characters accessible, easy to relate to and identify, especially when the ensemble is quite large. As the party reaches Rivendell, we meet more characters – Elrond (Hugo Weaving), Arwen (Liv Tyler), Boromir (Sean Bean), Legolas (Orlando Bloom) and the Dwarf Gimli (John Rhys-Davies). And yet Jackson spends time with each character, giving us glimpses of their personalities and history.

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2. THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy continues with its second installment, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. This film is the glue that binds the trilogy together. While *The Fellowship of the Ring* elicits excitement about what is to come and *The Return of the King* is the crowning glory, *The Two Towers* does what it is supposed to. It furthers the story, deepens the bonds of fellowship and creates an endless amount of anticipation for how it will all end.

How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer.

The film picks up pretty much where the previous ends. Our Fellowship now broken, characters are moved onto separate paths, each playing a unique role to aid in the efforts to win the coming war. As Sauron grows stronger, amassing his Orc armies, new characters are introduced to the story. The Shieldmaiden Eowyn (Miranda Otto), the Horselord Eomer (Karl Urban) as well as an array of rebellious, walking, talking trees. Yes. Animated trees who stage a revolt. It's majestic.

Aragorn, once a wandering Ranger, moves closer to accepting a destiny he tries hard to avoid. Aragorn is the heir to the throne of Gondor, King of Men. He doesn't want the responsibility, but in order to save and unite all the people of Middle Earth, denying his destiny is futile. Complicating matters, he has fallen in love with Arwen, an Elven Princess. Peter Jackson manages to balance the urgency battle and impending doom with a carefully crafted romance that runs like a delightful tingle down the spine of the trilogy.

The Two Towers has character arcs on all fronts. But this middle chapter brings us closer to Frodo and his struggle to maintain his sanity as the ring tries to cloud his world in darkness. By his side, Sam too battles to keep Frodo tied to his humanity. Truly the relationship between these two hobbits is riveting, heartbreaking and inspiring. *"What are you holding onto Sam?"* Frodo asks him when their quest becomes overwhelming. *"That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo... and it's worth fighting for."* Pass the Kleenex – but the large rolls. A small tissue just won't do.
Watch out for the incredible battle set pieces at Helm's Deep and Isengard. *The Two Towers* quite possibly also covets the title of being the most humorous film in the trilogy. Despite impending doom, the Hobbits, Legolas, and Gimli in particular, know how to make you laugh. Sometimes just before you cry.
As Gandalf says, *"The battle of Helm's Deep is over; the battle for Middle-Earth is about to begin"*. And with these words, we jump into the final film.

3. THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

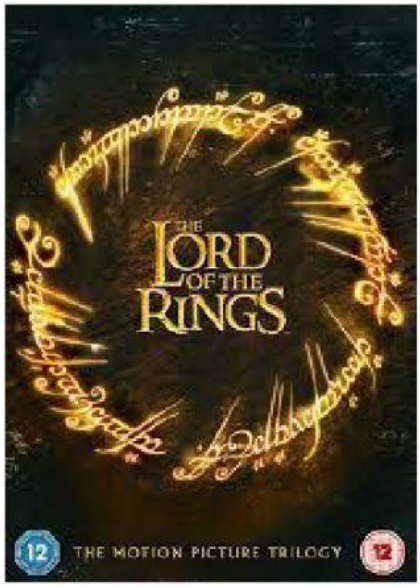
The Lord of the Rings Trilogy brilliantly culminates with *The Return of the King*. There are many films that have touched me, stayed with me and demanded a space on my "best of" list. None has been as incessant, or perhaps as well deserving as *The Return of the King*. It's hard to describe the weight and the emotion of this film. It's fantasy, however, and for the most part, one would assume that a tale steeped in a make-believe universe with Elves and Hobbits surely cannot be anything more than base entertainment. Emphatically, that estimation is wrong. *The Return of the King* is in my estimation, the perfect film, a cinematic masterpiece. It brings together our heroes in emotional, heartbreaking ways. Amidst battles – personal and literal – these characters fight for their fellowmen with such unselfish vigour. It's quite simply exhilarating and inspirational.

A day may come when the courage of men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship. But it is not this day. An hour of wolves and shattered shields, when the age of men comes crashing down! But it is not this day! This day we fight! By all that you hold dear on this good Earth, I bid you stand, Men of the West!

The Return of the King is three quarter epic battle. The literal kind of course. But also Aragorn's battle to rally his troops. Sam and Frodo's interpersonal battle with each other and the creature Gollum. Gandalf and Pippin battling the cruel Steward of Gondor. Eowyn and Merry battling the prejudice that brands them as weak and unworthy of taking up arms. *The Return of the King* is by definition epic, supported by the fact that in 2004, it won every Academy Award category (11 in total) it was nominated in, tying only with Titanic and Ben Hur for the most Academy Award wins. To date, it's still the only fantasy film to ever win the Best Picture Oscar.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Mark these sentences as T (True) or F (False)



1. The critic read Tolkien at school.
2. He watched the films as soon as they came out.
3. He was disappointed in the films.
4. There were twenty rings.
5. Frodo is assigned a special mission.
6. He goes on his venture alone.
7. The ring Frodo carries is evil.
8. There are too many characters to be depicted thoroughly.
9. *The Two Towers* functions as a bridge between the first and third parts of the trilogy.
10. Aragorn has no choice but taking on the throne.
11. The relationship between Frodo and Sam is controversial.
12. The critic thinks that, being a fantasy, you cannot expect more from the films other than mere entertainment.
13. There are several battles being fought.
14. Battle scenes take up most of the time in *The Return of the King.*
15. *The Return of the King* won as many Oscars as *Titanic* and *Ben Hur.*
16. No other fantasy film had won an Academy Award before.

Finish these sentences

1. The story is set in a land called _____
2. The ring-bearers are _____
3. The villain is _____
4. *The Two Towers* creates anticipation for _____
5. Aragorn falls in _____
6. *The Two Towers* is the most _____
7. In the critic's opinion *The Return of the King* is a _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS