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Prejudices

Thorin Oakenshield and the dwarves are captured by the Wood-elves of Mirkwood, and thrown into the dungeons of the Elven king. The elves have no love of dwarves because in the early days of Middle Earth, they warred over treasure. Both elves and dwarves have accused each other of wrongdoings since their ancient wars. Because they are old enemies, neither will trust the other.



Often in life, groups of people carry on old hatreds of other groups. They prejudge how they believe these other people will be. This type of feud is often carried on through generation after generation.

In groups of two to four, create a story that dramatizes an example of prejudging. Within your story, show how this type of judgment can be overcome. Here are some ideas to help you get started.

- Brainstorm a list of group stereotypes. Write down how people expect these groups to behave.
- List conflicts that two of these groups might face if they were to meet each other.
- Write this conflict into a script. Assign parts and act out how these two groups might first act with each other.
- Brainstorm possible solutions to overcoming “first-impression” stereotypes. Add one or more of these ideas to your script.
- Determine if these two different groups could become friendly.
- Rehearse with this new scene, showing how it is possible to overcome prejudice.
- Put it all together and perform your drama for the class.

Your class may want to choose some of the better dramas to perform for other classes, a school assembly, or a parent night.

Armor!

Tolkien makes references to armor several times in *The Hobbit*. He describes the importance of armor for the dwarves and has Thorin present Bilbo with a coat of armor that is fit for an Elf prince. Even Smaug is described as having “armour like ten-fold shields.”

Originally, armor was confining and heavy, used only as protection against spears and swords. However, if armor were made today, it would probably be lightweight and formfitting, just like Bilbo’s coat of armor.

Here are some armor-related activities for you to try.

- Research the use of armor throughout history. Draw or make models of the different types, including samples from the Greeks, Romans, Germans of the Middle Ages, the Europeans of the 1600’s, and the French of the 1800’s.
- During the Middle Ages, armor was used to protect horses as well as men. Draw and label examples of horse armor.
- Research the change from the type of armor used to protect from swords to the armor that had to protect from bullets.
- Design your own coat of armor using tinfoil, cardboard, and other material that is lightweight and pliable enough to fit around your body. Make sure it covers your arms and/or legs, yet leaves room for them to move freely. You may also want to design a helmet that is similar to your coat. Give your coat of armor a distinctive pattern that would signal you as a friend (or foe!) in the battlefield.

Here are several designs that were common in the days of Rome.

