

Task: Write an alternative ending to the story. Your characters, setting and plot should remain true to the storyline apart from the last couple of chapters. You may not introduce new characters. Year 9 student name withheld.

Tolkien J.R.R. 1997, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, Harper Collins Publishers, London.

The alternate ending continues from the chapter 'Mount Doom'. It begins with Gollum falling into the volcano with the ring...

Out of the depths came Gollum's last wail "Precious". Then he plunged into the lava, the ring still clasped tightly in his hand and glowing fiery hot. Sam turned to Frodo who was crumpled in a heap, blood streaming from his severed finger. "Master! Master! Wake up! Hurry! We must get out of here. Before Orodûin blows it's top!"

There was no answer. Sam looked around. The lava was rising rapidly and would soon consume both of them. Hastily Sam picked up Frodo and swung him onto his shoulder. Then he ran as fast as he could with Frodo on his back. Rivers of red, hot lava had begun to flow around them. Sam hurriedly crawled out of the entrance and ran aimlessly to a large rock formation on the side of the mountain. There he found a cave, just big enough to fit both of them. He trudged into it and fell down, weary and exhausted. As he fell he heard a ear piercing screech. He looked around and saw five Nazgul gathered over the top of Mount Doom. They were searching frantically for the one ruling ring.

The ring rested in the lava after Gollum was long gone. Still glowing fiery hot in the molten rock inside the volcano. The eleven words engraved on it shone white. It floated as if ready for its doom and unmaking. A crack began to appear on its unflawed surface. Ever so swiftly, the crack grew longer and wider. Finally, the last malice that had plagued Middle-Earth for the last thousand years broke into two and sank. A blinding flash surrounded it as it fell into the depths of the earth with all of Sauron's powers and magic, never to be seen again.

Meanwhile, the men of the west gathered outside the Black Gate, preparing for the hopeless battle. The cries of the eagles that had come to their aid could be heard above but they were still outnumbered. The vast armies of Mordor loomed in the darkness behind the gates, ready to pounce at any order. However, the Nazgul were not present. They had gone to Orodûin to protect their master's ring. Suddenly a loud rumble came from a distance. It came from the direction of the shadow of the mountain. Immediately after, the volcano blew its top. Lava and volcanic ash spewed from Orodûin's fissure. A mushroom cloud formed over the top of the mountain.

A sudden onset of fear overcame the enemy behind the gates. Ash began to rain down in Mordor. The place became a sweltering hot trap for everything behind the gates. The enemy's beasts, which minutes ago had been proud and fearless, now cowered in terror and scattered as the volcano fumed. Outside, the men watched in awe at the spectacular fire show. They could just make out a few

glimpses of petrified faces scuttling across the bleak plains of Mordor. A sudden inferno raged through the bewildered crowd. Horrible screams of death could be heard as the smell of burnt orc flesh filled the air. The men grimaced at the sight and turned away. They had decided they had had enough and went away in haste.

Just as they left, the earth shook. Turning back, the men saw the tower of Barad-dur with the Eye of Sauron. It fell and crumbled to the ground. Pieces fell into the cracks of the ground created by the earthquake. Men cheered and rejoiced while the enemy's beasts behind the gate were slowly but surely picked off by Death. Trapped inside Mordor, they could not pass the magical boundaries surrounding the gates.

The mountain stopped rumbling as soon as it started. A strange and awkward silence fell on everyone. The earth gave it's last great quake. It was massive and caused many to fall. Elsewhere in Middle-earth, the effects of the tremor could be felt. But what the tremor caused was more deadly. In an instant, a huge tidal wave came racing over the coast of Umbar, in South Gondor, toward the land of Mordor. It struck with immense ferocity and swept away any other creature of Sauron not already destroyed. The land of Mordor now lay under water except for a small part around Orodûin which had formed an island. Every creation of Sauron withered that day, along with all his power and magic. His armies of orcs, trolls and other fell creatures were decimated, the Nazgul had vanished into thin air after the ring that ruled them expired and all the rings that were made under the power of the ruling ring were unmade.

All the while Sam lazed next to an unconscious Frodo. By some sort of miracle they had been on the land that the water had not touched and the volcano had not harmed them. A very shocked Sam awoke to the cries of the eagles. He looked around to see an ocean of water surrounding the cave. Across the body of water he could see the remnants of Orodûin sticking out above it. Looking upward, he saw three eagles circling the sky carefully searching for Frodo and him.

"Here! Here!" he yelled, waving his hands in the air.

A sharp eyed eagle instantaneously swooped down to pick him up. He saw another eagle gently pick up an unconscious Frodo. With a great push, the eagles flew into the air and soared towards the land. While flying in the sky, Sam fell into sleep again, dreaming about his adventures.

It was the 5th day after the ruling ring had been destroyed that Sam woke up. Around him he noticed many smiling faces which were very familiar. Crowded around him were the eight fellowship members who had set out on the quest from Rivendell a few months earlier. There he spotted Gandalf who he thought had died in Moria fighting the Balrog. He also saw Aragorn, who now had a crown on his head after being crowned King of Gondor, Arnor and all the lands within them. Pippin and Merry were each sitting on one side of his bed telling of their adventures. Legolas and Gimli were also in the group, gleaming with joy at the return of their companions. However, Sam was still worried about Frodo and

how he was feeling. He looked to the bed next to him. It was empty but there had been someone on it not too long ago.

"Where's Frodo," Sam asked. A sudden sadness swept over the group.

"I'm sorry," said Pippin, "He never recovered from the huge burden laid on him. He needed healing but no such power can be found on Middle-earth, only in the Grey Havens. Frodo passed away last night in his sleep".

"We are all very sad and sorry, Sam," continued Merry, "He was a great friend of ours and we will never see him again."

After that no one said anything. They sat in silence remembering Frodo, the ring bearer who had saved Middle-Earth from the Dark Lord and whom they would never see again.

Days passed after Frodo's funeral and Sam grew homesick. He longed for the fresh, fragrant air of the Shire which he dearly missed. Gandalf, seeing his grief asked the king for leave to return to the Shire with Sam, Pippin and Merry. It was granted and soon they were off to go home where Sam had really missed his family. In a few weeks, they reached Isengard, There they saw that Orthanc was half submerged in water. The water now reached the edge of the Misty Mountains. They met and greeted Treebeard on the way and found out that Saruman and his spiteful apprentice Wormtongue had drowned in the other tidal waves caused by the earthquake. They said a short goodbye before heading towards Eriador.

They soon found that they were travelling along the mountains which were surrounded by the newly formed coastline. Finally, in a few months they reached Rivendell, House of Elrond Halfelven. It was now a dwelling in between the Misty Mountains and the coast. To their surprise, they found the place was populated by hobbits with not a single elf to be seen. As Sam, Pippin, Merry and Gandalf ambled through the crowds, they discovered a lot about what happened. They learned that Elrond, not wanting to lose his daughter Arwen, made an early departure to the Grey Havens with all the elves living in Rivendell, leaving it empty. The hobbits moved in after the Shire was swallowed up by the giant tide from the earthquake that consumed most of the western part of Middle-Earth. This news really saddened Sam on his otherwise joyful arrival. He had really longed to see his beloved Shire again and smell it's sweet fragrance but all that had now been decimated. The hobbits were now a wandering race who lived in fear of another tidal wave coming to swallow up Rivendell too.

Sam, Pippin and Merry quickly met up with their closest friends and relatives. Sam had a cheerful reunion with his Gaffer and his friends, the Cottons. They quickly offered a solution to the problem. Under the guidance of Sam, Pippin and Merry, who were now regarded as heroes, the hobbits moved to the island where Oroduin on the Plains of Mordor had once stood. With the special soil the Lady had given him, Sam planted seeds all around the island. That year was very prosperous and happiness was brought to the land. There Sam completed his book of all the adventures he had. However, the land was still cursed and occasionally it was rocked by minor earthquakes, one day something terrible would happen.

The terrible day came. It was the marriage day of Sam and Rosie Cotton. All the hobbits had gathered to give their blessing to their hero. Everything was going just as expected when disaster struck. A large earthquake off the coast sparked another tidal wave. No one knew until it was too late. In no time, the wave was upon the hobbits, their greatest fears had come true. Before anyone knew it the wave struck. All the hobbits were swept away into the ocean.

News came to Middle-Earth when Faramir, now Prince of Ithilien and married to Eowyn, found a small book washed up on the shore. It was a story and the author was titled Samwise Gamgee. He looked out to see the island but there was only water. He knew that finally the island had succumbed to a tidal wave.

He broke the news to the king and there was mourning all over the land. The remaining elves knew it was time to leave for the Grey Havens and let the time of the dominion of men come. Along with them went Legolas and Galadriel's consent, Gimli, Gandalf and all the other wizards went as well as Galadriel, Celeborn, the Greenelves and everyone from Lorien. The dwarves were left to dwindle in numbers and finally die out, as were the Ents and all other speaking peoples of Middle-Earth other than men.

So came the time of the dominion of men as it had been foreseen ages before. They were led by King Aragorn who was now a bitter and sad man after being cheated of Arwen. He dreamt of her walking in the beautiful gardens and slowly, ever so slowly withering like a flower. In his sadness and self pity, he faded into darkness in his sleep and was consumed by the doom of mortality that faced every man and would eventually come to all. And so, came the end of the fellowship and began the time of the fourth age, the Age of Men.

