

## Smaug and Medieval Dragon Mythology

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**Q1:** “I had no desire to have either dreams or adventures like Alice, and the amount of them merely amused me. I had very little desire to look for buried treasure or fight pirates, and Treasure Island left me cool. Red Indians were better: there were bows and arrows (I had and have a wholly unsatisfied desire to shoot well with a bow), and strange languages, and glimpses of an archaic mode of life, and, above all, forests in such stories. But the land of Merlin and Arthur was better than these, and best of all the nameless North of Sigurd of the Völsungs, and the prince of all dragons. Such lands were pre-eminently desirable. I never imagined that the dragon was of the same order as the horse. And that was not solely because I saw horses daily, but never even the footprint of a worm. The dragon had the trade-mark Of Faerie written plain upon him. In whatever world he had his being it was an Other-world. Fantasy, the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds, was the heart of the desire of Faërie. I desired dragons with a profound desire.” (from Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” Andrew Lang Lecture, University of St. Andrews, 1930; republished in *The Tolkien Reader*, 1966)

**Q2:** “Mutton yesterday, mutton today, and blimey, if it don’t look like mutton again tomorrer,” said one of the trolls.

“Never a blinking bit of manflesh have we had for long enough,” said a second. “What the ‘ell William was a-thinkin’ of to bring us into these parts at all, beats me -- and the drinkin’ runnin’ short, what’s more,” he said joggng the elbow of William, who was taking a pull at his jug.

William choked. “Shut yer mouth!” he said as soon as he could. “Yer can’t expect folk to stop here for ever just to be et by you and Bert.” (from Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)

**Q3:** “Wisps of vapour floated up and past him and he began to sweat. A sound, too, began to throb in his ears, a sort of bubbling like the noise of a large pot galloping on the fire, mixed with a rumble as of a gigantic tom-cat purring. This grew to the unmistakable gurgling noise of some vast animal snoring in its sleep down there in the red glow in front of him” (from Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)

**Q4:** “There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; a thrumming came from his jaws and nostrils, and wisps of smoke, but his fires were low in slumber. Beneath him, under all his limbs and his huge coiled tail, and about him on all sides stretching away across the unseen floors, lay countless piles of precious things, gold wrought and unwrought, gems and jewels, and silver red-stained in the ruddy light.

Smaug lay, with wings folded, like an immeasurable bat, turned partly on one side, so that the hobbit could see his underparts and his long pale belly crusted with gems and fragments of gold from his long lying on his costly bed. Behind him where the walls were nearest could dimly be seen coats of mail, helms and aces, swords and spears hanging; and there in rows stood great jars and vessels filled with a wealth that could not be guessed.

To say that Bilbo’s breath was taken away is no description at all. There are no words left to express his staggerment, since Men changed the language that they learned of elves in the days when all the world was wonderful. Bilbo had heard tell and sing of dragon-hoards before, but the splendour, the lust, the glory of such treasure had never yet come home to him. His heart was filled and pierced with enchantment and with the desire of dwarves; and he gazed motionless, almost forgetting the frightful guardian, at the gold beyond price and count.” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)

**Q5:** “He was just about to step out on to the floor when he caught a sudden thin and piercing ray of red from under the drooping lid of Smaug’s left eye.” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)

**Q6.** “[O]ne moment only it stared out...as from some great window immeasurably high there stabbed northward a flame of red, the flicker of a piercing Eye... The Eye was not turned on them, it was gazing north...but Frodo at that dreadful glimpse fell as one stricken mortally.” (Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 1955, (1987 edition))

**Q7.** “The Eye was rimmed with fire, but was itself glazed, yellow as a cat's, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing.” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1954, (1987 edition))