

News from Bree

MEPBM Newsletter: Issue 30, December '05

*"Strange as News
from Bree..."*

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

Talk at the 'Prancing Pony...

Kin Strife

Flavour text and art ...

An A-Z of Tolkien

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Men-at-Arms

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A must for fans of Lego and Van Gogh!

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'Whispers' archives

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Fourth Age: New changes?

Tolkien & Welsh

'The Gates of Mordor'

plus ...

various seasonal ditties, a festive list for
geeks and walking directions from the
Shire to Mordor.

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Yuletide Examination Paper

Bree Online

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A Glimpse of the Future...

by John Davis

"It has been long since Mithrandir came to Rivendell," Elrond said, rising to greet the old wizard. "Yet whilst I welcome you, my heart tells me that you are not here to enjoy the music of the Hall of Fire."

Gandalf inclined his head. "Ever is the reputation of Elrond's insight well deserved," he observed. "Tell me; what do you know of the Kin Strife?"

Elrond raised an eyebrow. "The squabbling of the men of Gondor? I know but little, and pay such news as does reach me scant heed. Who rules in the south is but of passing interest to me."

"I fear you underestimate the importance of such events," Gandalf said. "In fact, I would risk the opinion that it should be of great interest to you."

Elrond frowned. "Why so? Since Isildur proved himself too weak to do what should have been done, few of their kind have shown any greater strength of will. For as long as they keep the watch on Mordor, they serve their purpose. Why should I care which of them holds the throne?"

Gandalf sighed. "Would that the Kin Strife were but the squabbling of men that you describe it to be. But I fear darker forces are involved than is readily apparent. And that Sauron himself seeks to twist the conflict to his own end."

At the mention of the Dark Lord, the air in Elrond's hall seemed suddenly chill, a flurry of wind sending autumn's leaves scurrying across the floor.

"Do not speak that name lightly," Elrond counselled. "I do not," Gandalf countered. "For consider what is known. The men of the south, who support Castamir, are governed by one I have reason to believe is a servant of Adunaphel. The one who calls himself Horselord and

who fires the men of the east to battle is surely none other than Uvatha. And can it be coincidence that the Witch-king of Angmar chooses this time to renew his assault on Arnor, so soon after he was driven back? No, I think not. Three Nazgul are clearly involved in this affair, and those are only the ones whose influence I have managed to ascertain. The times are darker than we thought, and I fear that before this is done, your squabbling of men will have plunged the entire land into conflict."

Elrond was long silent. Then, finally, he sighed. "I will think on your words, Mithrandir. Never before has your counsel proven false, and though I hope this occasion will see you proven wrong, I feel and fear in my heart that you have spoken true. I would invite you to rest here, yet I fancy you have others to visit?"

Gandalf nodded. "Then you will, I hope, bear to Galadriel my wishes."

Gandalf smiled grimly. "I will indeed. Though if my fears are shown to be

correct, I do not doubt but that you and she will meet again ere long."

He pulled his hat more firmly onto his head, and made as if to leave. "Think well, but do not think for too long, Half-Elven."

Elrond nodded. "As you say. Farewell, Grey Wanderer."



Tolkien A-Z: Isildur

Men-at-Arms

by Sam Roads

Isildur was the elder son of Elendil. His first notable act was during the time when Sauron had begun to influence the people of Numenor. Through the influence of Sauron, the king had decreed that it was forbidden to approach the Meneltarma, which was a place hallowed for Eru Ilúvatar. Sauron also persuaded the king to cut down the white tree Nimloth that grew in Armenelos from a sapling taken from a great tree in Valinor. Isildur went in disguise to Armenelos by night, which was forbidden, and took a fruit from the tree. He was wounded many times by guards as he escaped but he survived. This fruit was planted and the sapling was taken with Isildur as he escaped the destruction of Numenor.

When Elendil arrived in Middle Earth, he established the realm of Amorn in the north while his sons Isildur and Anarion established the realm of Gondor in the south. The main dwelling place of Isildur was Minas Ithil while the main dwelling place of Anarion was Minas Amorn. Their chief city was Osgiliath which bridged the Anduin river. They ruled from Osgiliath in thrones that sat side by side.

Isildur planted the sapling from Nimloth in Minas Ithil. Later when the city was attacked and taken by Sauron, the white tree there was destroyed, but Isildur was able to take a sapling and escape.

Isildur is mostly remembered for his deeds during the last alliance. During the great battle at the end of the Second Age, the human and elven armies of Elendil and Gil-Galad attacked the fortress of Sauron. During the battle, Sauron killed Elendil and Gil-Galad. Isildur took the broken hilt of his father's sword and cut Sauron's ring of power from his finger which ended his power for that time.

Rather than destroy the ring in the fires of Mount Doom, he decided to keep the ring for himself. He took it with him back to Minas Amorn. While there, he planted the sapling from the white tree in the court of the city in memory of his brother who had died in the battle. He left the kingdom of Gondor to his brother's son Meneldil and went north to rule his father's kingdom of Amorn.

As his group travelled north along the eastern shores of the Anduin river, his group was attacked by a group of orcs in the Gladden Fields. His three eldest sons Elendur, Aratan and Ciryon were all killed though he escaped by putting on the ring (which made him invisible). Orcs hunted him by scent until he came to the river. As he was swimming across, the ring betrayed him and slipped from his finger. As he became visible again the orcs killed him with arrows.

Only three of Isildur's group survived that attack. One of them was his esquire Ohtar who had the shards of Elendil's sword with him. He brought these to Isildur's youngest son, Valandil, who had stayed in Rivendell as he was too young to go to battle. Valandil then became the heir of Isildur and continued the line of the kings of Amorn. Elrond foretold that the shards of Elendil's sword would be reforged when the ruling ring was found and Sauron returned, though they hoped this would never happen.

Upon receiving their first turn in 1650 many players first move is to retire all their non essential troops - the Men at Arms for sure and the Light Infantry and Archers if the economy is looking tight.

This choice seems clear. Heavy Infantry cost 4 gold a turn and have a strength and constitution of 10. Men at Arms cost 1 gold a turn and have a similar value of 1. Heavy Infantry are two and a half times as cheap to maintain, so when you're looking for somewhere to save a few pennies, these troops are the ones to go.

Yet retiring them is often a waste of a precious resource - free blocks.

When you are trying to block an army, you are rarely doing it with a larger force. Your goal in battle should either be to crush the enemy with at least 2:1 odds in your favour, so that you take the minimal possible losses whilst killing the maximum number of troops. Or to delay the enemy until you can set up a crush situation.

If you're doing the second, you want to be able to block with as few troops as possible. But on the other hand, you need to be careful not to get overrun. This happens when an enemy force, which is considerably bigger than you are, tries to move through the province you are in. If it succeeds, you lose the whole army and all characters without a fight! I don't know the official figure for a successful

overrun though I suspect it may be as low as 5 times, I think it involves the command ranks of the characters, and I think that armies of size 1000 can never be overrun.

So - instead of sending your Men at Arms home for an early bath, why not split them off into an army of 1000 trashy units and charge them into the path of oncoming armies? Give them an expendable leader and once you have blocked your opponents, Issue Personal Challenge (#210) and Stand and Defend (#840).

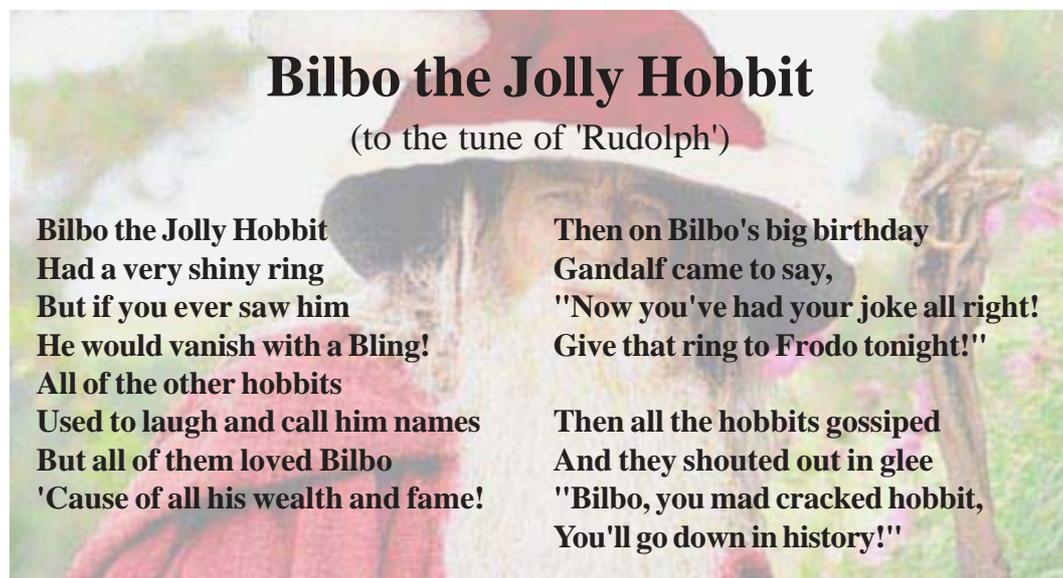
What's the worst that can happen? You lose 1000 trashy troops.

What's the best that can happen?

They lose a real army.

What's likely? They issue a Refuse Personal Challenge (#215) and Attack Nation (#230). This means that not only did you block them on the first turn, but they are pinned during the second turn. This is costing them money, and allowing you to recruit your own decent army to try and muster enough forces for a crushing defeat.

I wouldn't advise actually recruiting Men at Arms to do this, but its a good way to fully utilize all your starting resources, and it also works if you are the Dark Lieutenants and have nothing better to do than conjure a few Hordes with Feagwath and friends.



Bilbo the Jolly Hobbit

(to the tune of 'Rudolph')

Bilbo the Jolly Hobbit Had a very shiny ring But if you ever saw him He would vanish with a Bling! All of the other hobbits Used to laugh and call him names But all of them loved Bilbo 'Cause of all his wealth and fame!	Then on Bilbo's big birthday Gandalf came to say, "Now you've had your joke all right! Give that ring to Frodo tonight!"
	Then all the hobbits gossiped And they shouted out in glee "Bilbo, you mad cracked hobbit, You'll go down in history!"

Tolkien A-Z: Khazad-dum

The grandest and most famous of the mansions of the Dwarves. It lay in the central parts of the Misty Mountains, tunnelled and carved through the living rock of the mountains themselves, so that a traveller could pass through it from the west of the range to the east. It was founded in very ancient days by Durin the Deathless, who came upon a shimmering lake beneath the mountain Celebdil, with a crown of stars reflected in its waters. He named that lake in the Dwarvish tongue, Kheled-zâram, the Mirrormere, and there he started the building of Khazad-dûm.

As the millennia passed, the descendants of Durin sat upon the throne of Khazad-dûm, and their cavernous city became famous throughout the world. It even has a passing mention in Quenta Silmarillion, the tale of the Elf-lords and their wars far to the west, though to them it was no more than a distant rumour they heard from the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains on their borders. In the Second Age, Noldor out of Lindon founded a country of their own by the western gates of Khazad-dûm. A rare friendship sprang up between the Dwarves and the Elves of this new land, Eregion. Eregion's ruler, Celebrimbor, helped to construct the famous and magical gate that became known as the West-gate of Moria, and indeed went so far as to present King Durin III with a Ring of Power. The friendship of Khazad-dûm and Eregion came to a sudden end, though, in II 1697, when Sauron overran the country of the Elves, and the doors of Khazad-dûm were sealed against his forces.

Eventually, Sauron was driven back and Khazad-dûm continued to thrive. Much of its great wealth was based on the mithril that was found in its mines, and as the centuries passed, the Dwarves mined deeper and deeper for the precious metal. In the year III 1980, they dug too deep, and unleashed a nameless terror from the depths beneath the city. The creature wreaked dreadful destruction, and in slaying the then King, Durin VI, became known as Durin's Bane. In the following year, Durin's son, Náin I, was also lost, and the Dwarves fled their ancient home. After millennia as one of the richest cities in Middle-earth,

Calling All Artists!

MEPBM portrait competition

As you may know, we have recently launched a new-look website for Middle-earth, on the front page of which we will be featuring portraits of characters from various modules on a rotating basis. We have a number of portraits, but feel that it would be great to use portraits which reflect what you, the players, think of the characters you play.

And so, to this end, we are pleased to announce a portrait competition.

First prize: A plaque, and a free game in a module of your choice.

Runner-up: A plaque, and a free start-up (including two free turns) in a module of your choice.

All other entrants whose portraits we consider good enough to use: a free start-up (including two free turns) in a module of your choice.

Competition deadline: 31st January, 2006.

All portraits considered of good enough quality will appear on the website, and may appear as character portraits in the game itself! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch (me@middleearthgames.com)

Legal note: you will retain general copyright for any image used. We will retain specific copyright for use of the image in, or for promotion of, Middle-earth games.

Format note: images should be 12cm by 6cm, or any similar size of equivalent proportion, in any standard image format (.jpg, .gif, .psd, .bmp etc.). Paper submissions regretfully not accepted, but if you have a hand-drawn picture and would like advice on getting it scanned into a computer and transformed into a computer image, please get in touch.



The 12 Days of Tolkien

(to the applicable festive tune)

**On the twelfth day of Christmas,
Tolkien gave to me ...**

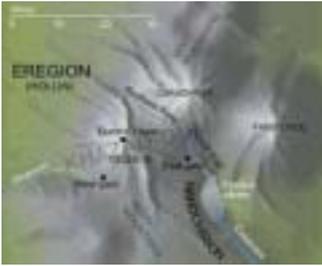
**Twelve Rohan Guards,
Elven braids on Gimli,
Ten orcs to fight,
Nine Ringwraiths riding,**

**Eight Elven cloaks,
Seven swords a swiping,
Six names for Strider,
Five Pippin blunders,
Four happy hobbits,
Three stone-cold trolls,
Two greying Wizards...**

... and One Ring to rule them all!



Khazad-dûm stood dark and empty, but for the brooding menace the Dwarves had released. In that time it was given a new name, Moria, the Black Pit.



The monster of Moria - a Balrog of Morgoth, as was later known - lurked alone in Moria for nearly five hundred years. After that time, the old city of Khazad-dûm began to be peopled again, but not by Dwarves. Sauron directed his creatures there, and it began to fill with orcs and trolls. Though the orcs' numbers were greatly reduced in the Battle of Nanduhirion, fought in the valley beneath Moria's East-gate in III 2799, the Balrog could not be bested, and Khazad-dûm remained a citadel of darkness.

There were two attempts by the Dwarves of Durin's line to reclaim their ancient home. The first of these was by Balin, who led a force of Dwarves there from Erebor in III 2989, but though he was successful at first, he was eventually defeated and slain. The story of the second attempt to recolonise the Dwarf-mansions is less clear, but it seems that after several centuries, Durin VII became King of Durin's Folk, and led a further return to the citadel. It seems he was successful, so that long after the War of the Ring, the Dwarves of Durin's line reclaimed their inheritance, and the hammers rang again in their great halls beneath the Misty Mountains.

Notes

1 Elements of this map are conjectural - we are never explicitly given, for example, the route of the Redhorn Pass, nor do we know for certain which of the Mountains of Moria was which. Given the text of *The Lord of the Rings*, though, the layout cannot have varied much from that shown here.

2 Tolkien gives us little information about the pronunciation of Dwarvish names. With the exception of the note regarding 'k-h', this pronunciation is conjectural.

3 In fact, the story of the eventual recolonisation of Moria does not appear outside the drafts for the appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*, so we cannot be completely certain that Tolkien intended it to stand.

Shelob's Web

A trawl through Tolkien-related websites

by Colin Forbes

The continuing popularity of Tolkien, boosted by the Peter Jackson films, is nowhere more obvious than on the internet. Everytime I have a trawl through the 'information superhighway' I'm amazed at what turns up. Sometimes erudite, frequently humorous, often plain rubbish ... and not uncommonly just downright weird.

As evidence that some people just have too much time on their hands, may I present www.ozbricks.com/bricktales/lotr/lotrmain.html. We are all no doubt familiar with the poster for the first film, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. But who in their right mind would then go about recreating the poster in *Lego*? (see below) But it doesn't stop there ... oh no! Pay a visit to the site and marvel at re-enactments of many famous scenes from the book and film: all done entirely in *Lego*.



In this issue of Bree, ME Games announce a portrait competition. Art and Tolkien have long been linked: indeed the great man himself illustrated many of his own works. In fact there's an excellent book '*JRR Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator*' which contains many fine examples of his illustrative talent. There are many and varied websites devoted to fan art, ranging from the superb and professional (Alan Lee, John Howe, Angus MacBride etc) to the scribblings of four year-olds. But in between these offerings, I was struck by <http://flyingmoose.org/tolksarc/gallery/gallery.htm>, some content from which follows ...

Gallerie l'Arte du'Tolkien

Good evening, and welcome to the Tolkien Art Gallery. Please, let me take your coat.

As one who appreciates the subtleties and fine nuance of the esteemed Professor and his works, you of all people will appreciate the inspiration his works have given to a distinguished variety of artisans throughout the years. Here for the first time, the works of these masters in their individual tributes to Tolkien have been collected together. Please feel free to examine these works at your leisure.

Please help yourself to the champagne. Do take your time; doubtless the downloading of all those image-files will also.



The simple beauty of the stars contrasts strikingly with the dark shape of Orthanc in Vincent Van Gogh's *Gandalf at Isengard*. The slashing brushstrokes of the Tower provide a harsh contrast with the serenity of the village below, painted in muted browns which echo Van Gogh's earlier paintings. In a letter to his brother Theo, Van Gogh wrote "I have just finished Council of Elrond and read of G's imprisonment by the evil Saruman. How like it is to my own imprisonment of loneliness here in Arles!"

So much for art, but what about the stories? The masses and masses of 'fan fiction' which seem to flood onto the internet every day? Be warned! Some of this is not for those of a nervous disposition, let alone for Tolkien Purists. But then, if you're a Tolkien Purist you probably won't be playing Middle Earth PBM anyway ...

A safe(ish) site for the fan fiction beginner is to be found at: www.tolkientrail.com/rivendell/fanfic.shtml. Here you will find stories, poems, songs and much more. One of my own favourites here is 'Peregrine Took Must Die'. Who cares about the story that follows? Those four words alone give me a warm glow inside.

A slightly higher quality of writing can be found at the home of The Mithril Awards for Tolkien Fanfiction: www.viragene.com/tolkien/. Moving on upwards, we pass beyond mere fiction and into the hallowed realms of TolkienAcademea - for instance one need look no further



than the home page of the Tolkien Society: www.tolkiensociety.org/links.html and it's various branches. If you want a list of theses, dissertations and other such articles, then this is the place to start.

I can also recommend the pages of The Mythopoeic Society: www.mythsoc.org. Amongst other benefits, members apparently receive a monthly newsletter entitled Mythprint. I can't help wondering if the humour of this title is intentional...

Top 10 Ways Geeks Celebrate Christmas

[The editor does not wish to imply that MEPBM players are often geeks ... oh, who am I kidding, I've been to FtF games!]

10. Printing out "One Year of Free Computer Service" certificates to give to the family.
9. Designing elf-killing levels for your favorite FPS.
8. Explaining to children how it would be physically impossible for Santa to deliver all the presents.
7. Wear mistletoe hat and keep fingers crossed.
6. Devise a computer-controlled system to detect and prevent household members from trying to peek into their presents before Christmas.
5. Put a santa hat on your avatar.
4. Change the blue neon lights in the case to flashing red and green.
3. Decorating the tree with SDRAM and CPUs burned out from your last overclocking experiment.
2. Rewriting Christmas carols in Tolkien's Elvish.
1. Programming the christmas lights to flash out "I hate this holiday of unbridled consumerism" in binary.

[I'll own up to perpetrating #2, but I was only 11 at the time. And anyway, wouldn't a true geek translate carols into Klingon anyway?]



Population Centre Development

by Brian D. Mason

One of the most important aspects of the early game is deciding where to create or post camps. While many nations lack the emissaries with the necessary skill level to create camps, despite it being an easy skill, almost all possess one or more commanders with the skill level necessary to post camps, an average difficulty order. One of the most difficult decisions in the early game is deciding where camps should be located. This article will discuss some of the reasons behind the placement of camps: which type of character should do it, resource production, financial considerations, and security. Then the strengths and weaknesses of various nations will be discussed, as well as some possible camp locations.

Who Should Place the Camps?

Many of the nations have commanders who, when travelling with an army, have the command skill which would allow order 552 (Post Camp) to be executed with a very good chance of success. Also, very few nations have emissaries with even the modest skill level needed to execute order 555 (Create Camp) with a good chance of success. Despite this, those nations without good (> 30) emissaries would be advised to create one using order 725 (Name New Character), and then subsequently have that emissary execute order 734 (Name New Character as Emissary) as many times as necessary. Having a character in an army posting camps is not advisable for several reasons: one, it does not improve the command skill of the commander, two, when posting camps rather

than training troops or training the army the commander does not improve his command rank and the training rank of the army or troops is not improved, and three it costs twice as much. For the additional cost of posting three camps you could name an additional character and have gold to spare. A stable of about three good emissaries can be used at all stages of the game, in creating camps when their skill levels are low, in improving population centers and bribing/recruiting characters or double agents when their skill levels are moderate or high. As it becomes more difficult to place camps at later stages of the game, it is important that you create emissaries fast and get your camps created quickly, especially if you start the game with few good emissaries.

Resource Production

The most important factor in camp placement is determining what types of which resources you need production, and where in nearby hexes these can be located. The spell reveal production is relatively easy to research (if you do not already have a character who can cast it) and this can determine locations which can supply the most needed commodity. Another option is having an agent Scout Hex (915), however, that has the detrimental effect of only determining production value of one hex (although with much greater precision). Another disadvantage of the Scout Hex option is that it takes an agent into a hex with no objectives where he may be unable to cast a skill order on the following turn. It is usually better in the early game to have agents

Table 1.
Statistical Treatment of Resource Development

Commodity / Terrain	Plains	Desert	Forest	Rough	Mountains
# Sites	138	8	62	108	87
Leather # With	138	8	5	31	0
avg. per	363	294	408	302	0
total avg.	363	294	33	87	0
Bronze # with	0	0	8	32	86
avg. per	0	0	366	295	304
total avg.	0	0	47	87	242
Steel # with	0	1	4	33	48
avg. per	0	290	144	189	219
total avg.	0	36	9	58	97
Mithril # with	0	0	0	0	45
avg. per	0	0	0	0	26
total avg.	0	0	0	0	11
Food # with	138	0	62	43	0
avg. per	1138	0	1223	956	0
total avg.	1138	0	1223	381	0
Timber # with	0	0	59	51	0
avg. per	0	0	426	365	0
total avg.	0	0	405	172	0
Mounts # with	135	8	4	61	0
avg. per	80	76	108	74	0
total avg.	78	76	7	42	0
Gold # with	0	0	3	82	82
avg. per	0	0	1733	1753	1857
total avg.	0	0	84	1331	1410

Tolkien A-Z: Lothlorien

"There lie the woods of Lothlórien! That is the fairest of all the dwellings of my people. There are no trees like the trees of that land." - Legolas in 'Lothlórien', LR II, 6.

Lothlórien is the woodland realm between the rivers Celebrant and Anduin. It has for ages been inhabited by the Galadhrim, the Silvan Elves, and in the Second Age Galadriel and Celeborn settled there with their retinue of Noldor and Sindar.

The name Lórien was picked by Galadriel as a reminiscence of the Gardens of Irmo in Valinor; the older name the silvan elves used was Lórinand; among the Noldor the wood was called Laurelindórenan, 'valley of the singing gold', later also Lothlórien, 'blossoming dream-garden'. All of these names are inspired by the golden-yellow blossoms of the Mallorn trees, which Galadriel is said to have planted there, and which always remained the joy of all who saw them.

The terrain slowly rose from the Anduin into the wood, and near the north-eastern border of the land lay the hill of Cerin Amroth, where Amroth and Nimrodel had dwelt, and where Aragorn and Arwen became engaged.

Near the area where the Celebrant joined the Anduin lay Caras Galadhon, the city of the Galadhrim, on a hill which was clad with tall Mallorn trees. The elves did not live on the ground, but rather on flets, talan, high among the tree-tops.

The city was guarded by a trench, and a green wall which had gates to the south-west. Placed in the top of the highest tree was the flet where Galadriel and Celeborn met their guests in hall with a high roof, richly adorned and as wide as a hall of Kings.

Lothlórien was guarded against all evil by Galadriel and the power of the elven ring Nenyá she possessed. However, Lórien was also cut off from the outside, and soon people in Gondor and Rohan saw it as a strange place, which the Rohirrim called the Golden Wood as well as Dwimordene, 'valley of ghosts'. They accused the Lady of the Golden Wood of witch-craft (not without reason, of course), and avoided to come near her land.

When the Fellowship came to Lothlórien, they could well feel the effects of the 'magic' of Galadriel. To strangers like the hobbits it seemed as a land of ancient times, which is still preserved into the present, and where time has a different meaning then on the outside. To the weary travellers the fair and unmarred land of Lórien provided much-needed rest, and the hearts were lifted after the shadows of Moria. No one of the Fellowship was able to restrain the tears in their eyes when they had to say farewell again.

Often in its history did Dol Guldur cast its shadow on Lothlórien. In the War of the Ring its forces assailed the forest again and again, but could not overcome the Silvan elves led by Celeborn, and were eventually driven back. After the War, Lórien was expanded to the north and north-east with reconquered territory, but nevertheless did the end of the war mark the slow and steady end of the elvish population of Lothlórien, starting with the departure of Galadriel into the west.

improving their ranks or out performing more specialized agents.

Table 2. Turns to Recoup Cost of Improvement

Pop Center Type	Cost	40 % Tax	60 % Tax	80 % Tax	100 % Tax
Village	4000	4.00	2.67	2.00	1.60
Town	6000	6.00	4.00	3.00	2.40
Major Town	8000	8.00	5.33	4.00	3.20
City	10000	10.00	6.67	5.00	4.00

Table 1 is a list of the mean production of each hex type taken from several games, and setups of many different nations, as well as additional contributions from other players. The production has been modified such that this is the production value of a camp in warm weather (that is, 100 percent production values). Keep in mind that the climate in your area will effect these mean production values and that mountainous terrain also will typically have one or two grades cooler climate than surrounding plains. The first column gives the resource type, the second column describes the rows, the first row being the terrain type, the second row the number of sites in the sample. Within each production type the first row is the number of sites in which that product is present, the next row the average of those sites and the final row the average of all sites. Some of these (especially desert terrain) may suffer from small number statistics, so the results may skewed. Also, note that no information is given for swamp hexes.

Clearly, from inspection of Table 1, the type terrain with the most varied production type is hills/rough, which can produce all types of materials except mithril. For nations which are relatively weak in metal production for armor (primarily the Free Peoples) the most profitable terrain type are mountain hexes. However, mountain hexes often contain dragons, which rarely have good effects on the loyalty of Free People population centers, or the health of the Emissary posting the camp. Sometimes a safer strategy is to place them in hill/rough hexes which have been already determined to produce the desired resource. Another advantage to the hill/rough option is that those hexes typically have better climate which has the effect of increasing production.

Looking over your production and estimating needs for your nation and then placing camps to produce what you need is often a good plan. If you start with few mounted troops and few sources of the supplies that are needed to build them (mounts, leather, bronze or steel if desired for armor and weapons) it is unlikely that you can get that all cavalry army you want on the field anytime soon. However, if you are fighting someone who is aware of your nation strengths and weaknesses then planning to build them in later turns might be an good plan.

Financial Considerations

Sometimes camps can be placed to make resources to sell. For many nations, selling supplies is a vital (and sometimes necessary) means to float your economy. Despite the initial outlay, almost all hexes can produce in just a couple of turns the supplies which could be sold to pay for themselves, even if they do not produce gold directly. Some nations can choose one or two resources which they can use to buy and sell on succeeding turns to drive up and down the price of that commodity. This "playing of the market" can be most effective when several nations cooperate to buy all of a commodity and then sell all the following turn when prices or high. Increasing production in this commodity will allow you to generate larger profits, or give you the production you need to develop on the one hand, and execute buy/sell orders with, one the other.

Gold production does not decrease with increasing population center size however other resources do. Each increase in the size of a population center will require a few turns to recoup the losses for development. Listed below are the turns needed to "break even" on population center improvement at several various tax rates. In considering a break even cost, it is necessary to not only consider how long it takes you to recover the cost of investment, but also how long to catch up to the amount that the population center would produce.



Tolkien & Welsh

by Clint Oldridge

I'm in the process of learning Welsh gyda fy wraig i (with my wife) so whilst searching the web for some tutorials in Welsh I came across (care of BBC Catchphrase webpage):

"Did you know that J.R.R. Tolkien based his Elvish languages on Welsh and Finnish? Neither did I until I found the item below in "The Spectator"...

Catchphrase went looking for more about Tolkien's Welsh connection, and found this: <http://www.elvish.org/resources.html>. Here's a quote from that page:

"In a fascinating and revealing essay titled "English and Welsh", Tolkien relates how he first encountered Welsh as a youth, in names seen on coal-trucks and station-signs, "a flash of strange spelling and a hint of a language old and yet alive; ... it pierced my linguistic heart". And he bemoans that as a youth he had found it "easier to find books to instruct one in any far alien tongue of Africa or India than in the language that still clung to the western mountains and the shores that look out to Iwerddon". Thus he was unable to learn Welsh until he matriculated at Oxford, where, upon winning the Skeat Prize for English at Exeter College, he shocked his college by spending it on Welsh. (John Morris-Jones, A Welsh Grammar: Historical and Comparative. Oxford, 1913) was the Welsh grammar that Tolkien bought with his prize money, in 1914. His heavily annotated copy is in the English Faculty Library of Oxford University."

Modern Welsh is not, of course, identical with the predilections of such people. It is not identical with mine. But it remains probably closer to them than any other living language. For many of us it rings a bell, or rather it stirs deep harp-strings in our linguistic nature. In other words: for satisfaction and therefore for delight - and not for imperial policy - we are still 'British' at heart. It is the native language to which in unexplored desire we would still go home".

And as a bonus, the link list: Gwaith i-Phethdain - a good site with a summary of Sindarin grammar and lots of texts in Sindarin www.elvish.org/gwaith Ardalambion - the most comprehensive site on Tolkien's languages: www.uib.no/people/hnohf A reliable online Sindarin dictionary: www.geocities.com/almacq.geo/sindar/index.html

Enjoy (mwynhauwch!)

In addition to the time needed to "break even" on the cost is the lost production over the interval. Depending on the commodity the production loss may or may not be trivial. It is generally a good idea to improve population centers whose production type you do not need.

Security

Another important consideration in improving population centers is the safety of the population center. Don't improve population centers you cannot hold. There is no need to improve population centers for your enemies to take. Also, in developing population centers try to put them in locations which are

hard to get to or not on the maps of other players (especially neutrals and enemies). If you have a surplus of secure areas then allowing your allies to develop in some of them is often a good idea for team play. Also, population centers without fortifications, characters, or armies present will begin to disintegrate if the loyalty drops too low.

Nation Strengths, Weaknesses, & Camp Placement

Now, a short rating for each nation is listed below. Ranked as good, average or poor are emissary strength and possible camp placement as well as a short listing for where might be good locations to place camps for that nation. Locations can be rated as good, average, or poor based on their relative security from enemy nations. If this region is not on your map (where you can keep an eye on it) the location rating is downgraded. Also, if you are competing with many other nations over a small area to develop (e.g. many of the Dark Servants in Mordor) the location rating is downgraded. [see table above]

An alternative strategy to selecting secure locations would be to select locations far from you and not appearing on any other nation map. These

Table 3. Rating Population Center Development

Nation	Emissary Strength	Center Development	Suggested Locations
Woodmen	Average	Poor	West of Anduin and South of Lothlorien
Northmen	Average	Good	North of River Running
Eothraim	Poor	Average	Same as Northmen
Arthedain	Average	Average	West Downs
Cardolan	Average	Average	Southwest of map and West Downs
Northern Gondor	Average	Good	Future Rohan, North of White Mountains
Southern Gondor	Good	Good	South of White Mountains
Dwarves	Poor	Average	Far West in and around Blue Mountains
Sinda Elves	Good	Poor	same as Woodmen
Noldo Elves	Good	Good	same as Dwarves
Witch-King	Good	Average	North of and in Northern Misty Mountains
Dragon Lord	Good	Poor	Somewhere in Mordor, or isolated part of map
Dog Lord	Average	Average	Somewhere in Mordor
Cloud Lord	Poor	Average	Somewhere in and slightly South of Mordor
Blind Sorcerer	Poor	Average	Somewhere in and slightly East of Mordor
Ice King	Poor	Poor	Somewhere in Mordor
Quiet Avenger	Good	Average	Far South
Fire King	Poor	Poor	Somewhere in Mordor
Long Rider	Average	Poor	East of Mordor
Dark Lieutenants	Good	Poor	Somewhere in Mordor
Corsairs	Good	Good	Southwest of Map
Haradwaith	Average	Poor	Near Current Locations
Dunlendings	Poor	Good	Southern two-thirds of Map
Rhudaur	Poor	Average	Between pop centers and Misty Mountains
Easterlings	Poor	Average	Far East

locations, if developed, could serve as jumping off points for campaigns.

Obviously, cooperation is needed among the Dark Servant players in deciding what parts of Mordor to develop. Care must also be taken that the very good emissaries of the Witch-King and the Dragon Lord have somewhere to develop. Also, the Free People pairs of the Woodmen and Sinda, Noldo and Dwarves, Arthedain and Cardolan, Eothraim and Northmen also need to cooperate in developing population centers. Most of the Neutrals can work independent of others with the possible exception of the Haradwaith and Corsairs.

Conclusion

Population centers can have noticeable effects on your nations place in the game and effective placement of these population centers can dramatically effect your outcome.

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions to Table 1 and the comments of Tom Walton, Glen Mayfield and Jeff Holzhauser.

[This article was first published in GSI's 'Whisper's from the Wood' newsletter.]



Walking Directions



Starting from: Bag End, Hobbiton, The Shire

Arriving at: The Cracks of Doom, Mordor

1. Start out going South from THE HILL. 0.6 miles
2. Cross THE WATER. 1.0 miles
3. Turn. LEFT onto ROAD TO BYWATER 9.3 miles
4. Turn LEFT onto EAST ROAD, toward FROGMORTON 47.8 miles
5. Cross BRANDYWINE BRIDGE 0.1 miles
6. EAST ROAD becomes EAST-WEST ROAD toward BREE 106.3 miles
7. Turn RIGHT onto GREENWAY toward DUNLAND 359.1 miles
8. Cross R. GWATHLÓ/GREYFLOOD 0.5 miles
9. GREENWAY becomes NORTH-SOUTH ROAD 415.0 miles
10. Ford R. ISEN at FORDS OF ISEN 90.5 miles
11. Cross R. SNOWBOURNE 219.0 miles
12. Cross MERRING STREAM 330.4 miles
13. At MINAS TIRITH, turn LEFT toward MINAS MORGUL 120.8 miles
14. Continue East toward CIRITH UNGOL. 37.3 miles
15. Bear East-North-East toward ORODRUIN 84.7 miles
16. Climb UP toward CRACKS OF DOOM 19.4 miles

When using any walking directions or map, it is a good idea to stop at an inn or hostelry and inquire about news from abroad. Find out whether any wars are brewing, and if so, whether agents of the enemy are pursuing you. This is only an aid in planning. Your eventual route and mileage may vary.

www.ooblick.com/text/tomordor/

Hoom! Maps

Fourth Age

New Suggested Changes

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Old Cost</u>	<u>Proposed new base costs</u>			
		<u>Command</u>	<u>Agent</u>	<u>Emissary</u>	<u>Mage</u>
10	200	200	400	300	100
20	300	300	500	400	200
30	400	400	600	500	300
40	600	600*	800	700	500
50	1000	1100	1400	1300	1000
60	1500	1700	Unavailable (2000)	1900	1600

* also cost for 10 stealth (note change).

Each race would get a 600 point discount on their 1st 60 (or 50 for evil non-humans) point racial-type character. Ie Dwarves can get one C60 for 1100, Elves can get one M60 for 1000, Non-humans can get one A50 for 900 and Men can get one E60 for 1300.

Step 2) Royalty:

Characters 1 and 2 are now designated as King and Prince character (Queen or Princess) respectively. You get an *additional* 1300 Gold to spend on your King character and 800 Gold to spend on your Prince character. This gold must be spent on a single or multiple skills that they don't presently have, maximum of 10 stealth is allowed as normal.

Step 3) Additional Racial Skill Modifiers:

After completing all of the above, you can SELECT a single character to receive an additional skill bonus.

Good: Dwarf – One character without Command rank gains 10 Command **or** one character without Agent rank gains 20 Agent. **Human** - One character without Command rank gains 10 Command, **Elven** - One character without Mage rank to gain 30 Mage and 3 spells as normal.

Evil: Human - One character without Emissary rank to gain 30 Emissary **or** 10 Command Rank bonus to any character. **Non-Humans** - One character without Agent rank to gain 20 Agent.

Neutral: Human

- One character without Emissary rank to gain 30 Emissary **or** 10 Command rank bonus to any character.

PC changes:

For Village (Road): change to Upgrade any village to a town. For Village (Non-mtn): change to Upgrade any village to a town. Note: the new town must obey the rules of being on the Road (if

you've got the road bonus) and not being in the Mountain if you've got that bonus. Also North Kingdom: Upgrade any Town to a Major Town/Fort. (South Kingdom remains unchanged).

Ports/Harbours:

If you have one or more Harbours, then gain 1,000 gold to spend on PC improvements to your set-up and gain 1,000 gold to spend on start-up for the purchase of Navy related SNAs and Ships. If you have one or more Ports you get 3,000 gold to spend on PC improvements and gain 2,000 gold to spend on start-up for the purchase of Navy related SNAs and Ships.

SNAs:

Name Mages reduced to 3k.

Set-up Rules

For Neutrals:

Two regular Neutrals can join the game the game without being Neutral Team (ie they are allowed to change allegiance).

Neutral Team – we just mention that X players (X = number of players who've joined as a Neutral Team, could be all 8/9 of them for example) have joined as a Neutral team.

Split of nations: 8/8/9 or 9/9/7 (FP, DS, Normal Neutrals). If there are Neutrals teams then we increase this to for example 7/7/7/4 (4 = Neutral Team) as an example (showing all the permutations seems to awkward as it depends on the number of Neutral Team players we have).



The Gates of Mordor

From the mailing list of game 85

by Manolis Perakis

The wind was howling like a wolf, bringing the chill inside. Set in the middle of the huge camp, under a starless midnight sky, the pavilion was ehanced with bear pelts, to ensure more warmth.

"Nothing will warm this dreaded place", Vinyaran was thinking, "not even hell itself".

He stood tall, towering the rest of the commanders, as they all gathered around the table with the map. The fire was crackling, the flames dancing in the rythme of the wind. Zarnia was the first to speak, eyes almost closed, grimacing with pain. Standing there cost her all her strength, you could easily say, after the wound in the battle for Minas Ithil. A free and painful gift from Skargnakh the wolf rider, before two knights come to her rescue.

"Three crows reached our camp last night, bearing good and ill news. It seems the Northmen and the Eothraim have overwhelmed the army of the Blind Nazgul at Rul". She pointed at the map. "The Eothraim gathered food and climbed the mountain. They are, as we speak, at the gates of Barad Wath".

Vinyaran's face remain unchanged, total contradiction to the other, smiling faces of his subordinates. Whether he was glad or troubled, only a god or a mind-reader could tell.

"I'll be damned", he murmured at last. "The Horselords will take the Fire King's second major holding? I knew Gisulf was a hard nut to crack, last time I met him at the court of King Mahrcared he unhorsed four knights, then he shouted for the jousts to hurry, before the beer gets cold. The mountains are not his preferred terrain, seems to me he will soon gallop north to join us. These are good news indeed, Zarnia."

Urthel moved a small, coloured, wooden box on the map, dragging it to the place where Barad Ungol was drawn. Before Zarnia could speak, he said loudly:

"Odagavia managed to hold almost two thousand servants of the Dark Lieutenants, before they reinforce the Fire King's capital. His Grace, King Tarondor was wise to win the alliance with the Northmen. The are fierce and fearsome warriors, General Caranthir's messages are full of compliments for their bravery in combat. Thanks to them, Urzahil's reinforcements will arrive too slow, too late, so we are facing only four hundred orcs, as our scouts report. Some of them are bound to flee, when the catapults begin to sing".

Urthel's last sentence was followed by a wide smile in his face, full of self-confidence, as if all this was his doing. He turned to face each one, waiting for a reaction to his report. Unfortunately for him, it was Deonar who replied. Deonar was the youngest of the commanders, son of Kingsguard's captain, chosen by Vinyaran to take part in the campaign for his valor and quick thinking. Despite his youth, he was always the first to spot the weak points of any plan and to announce the possible disastrous outcomes. "Deonar the Grim", the soldiers called him, not without reason.

"I wouldn't rely blindly on the reports of our scouts, Urthel. Though dexterous and hawk-eyed they may be, even they cannot fly over Barad Ungol and see our enemy's true state. The Fire Lord had a whole month to prepare his defenses, while we were fighting at Osgiliath and Minas Ithil. New recruits have been gathered, new entrenching works have been made. Our soldiers are still whispering about the Nazgul's sorcerers and agents, everyone's sure that Ren the Unclean himself will lead the garrison. The walls of Barad Ungol have stood for hundreds of years and it make take us much time to take them, camping in this desolate place, where there's no food and water, only beasts and cold. Benaldan's two thousand heavy



cavalry with the ten war machines couldn't cross Anduin and didn't reach us. We're on our own, and the most recent rumour is that the shrieks of a dragon can be heard at night".

Vinyaran seemed a bit distracted by something, his eyes moving around, searching, as if he could hear something they couldn't. Still, his voice was stable and confident, when he spoke.

"I am leading the greatest host that our kingdom has raised for years. I have leveled two of the greatest and most glorious cities of our ancestors. I have killed over five thousand orcs and lost two thousand Dunedain in the process. I stand now outside the Fire King's capital, having suffered from cold, magic and lack of food and water. I will not let rumours stop m -"

Everything happened too fast then, before the other commanders could even gasp. Vinyaran unsheathed his silver dagger, ornamented with jewels and carved with elven runes. A sound was heard near the entrance of the pavilion, like a "thoop", and a tiny, sharp dart passed right over his head while he dodged and was nailed on the pavilion's wooden pillar. Vinyaran kneeled and threw his dagger towards the source of the sound, where a cry of anguish was heard. A gust of wind invaded the pavilion, opening its leather entrance, revealing an orc in dark clothes and cape, with a dagger on his chest. The blood was flowing on the soil, mixing with the red sand of Mordor. The orc was on his knees for some seconds, then tried to stand, but Urthel was quicker. Unsheathing his longsword, he looked Nazog in the eyes... and with a swift move he cut his head.

After the two pavilion guards were found poisoned near the entrance, new guards were appopinted. Deonar gave Nazog's head to a catapult's officer. "Just find a use for it", he told him smiling with his melancholic smile. The meeting resumed with an uneasiness in the air. Zarnia was excused, the pain was becoming excruciating, the blood throbbing in the wound, and she needed rest. Vinyaran's anger was so thick in the air, you could cut it with a knife.

"Tomorrow we siege Barad Ungol, crash its walls and invade its streets. The day after we meet Gisulf's horseriders and move united to Barad Dur, the seat of the Dark Lord. We bring swift wrath and death upon our foul enemies, we bring the light of Eru in the shadow lands of Mordor, we raise the banner with the Tree so that it's the last sight our enemies see. After that, it's ashes and flame..."

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brEE 30 artwork

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'Hathor': p2
Adelle Crowe: p5
Perkan Upton Pickman: p6
David Wyatt: p7
Lea Sheler: main map p8
Peter Xavier Price: p9

brEE contact

Please send submissions for Bree
to ME Games and/or the editor.

Editor: Colin Forbes,
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Yuletide Homework

Think of this as an unofficial examination in all-things
Tolkien. Once you have completed this test, you may
submit it to the appropriate authority to have your
answers verified. We should note that Tolkien states
explicitly in Letters #181 that "the One retains all
ultimate authority", and therefore when you have
completed your test you should submit it directly to
Eru Iluvatar for grading. If you *really* insist, answers
may be submitted to ME Games or News from Bree.

Now students, pick up your number 2 pencils
and begin. You have as long as it takes.

**Paper A - for all students. Answer all questions
concisely.**

Q1. Just exactly what was the nature of the friendship
between Gimli and Legolas?

Q2. If Aragorn had the option, would he have ditched
the Fellowship for a date with Pamela Anderson?

Q3. Why didn't Gandalf just blow up the armies that
got in his way, if he was so powerful?

Q4. How many times is the word "passed" used in
LotR? (No peeking!)

Q5. What exactly was in lembas? (Hint: in Letters
#210, JRRRT says quite explicitly that lembas is not a
"food concentrate".)

Q6. Why didn't the hobbits in the Shire rise against
Sharkey and his men sooner? (Were Frodo, Sam and
the lads a cut above hobbitdom and thus
extraordinary?)

Q7. If Aragorn truly spent uncounted years as a lone
Ranger, then where the hell is Tonto? And why doesn't
he wear that mask?

Q8. If Frodo hung the Ring on a chain, why didn't the
chain turn invisible?

Q9. When Isildur had control of the One Ring, why
didn't he use it to command the Ringwraiths? Or the
Elven-rings? Or the Dwarven-rings? He could have
ruled the whole of Middle-earth with that Ring, yet
he decided instead to just write a couple of letters and
then go for an unfortunate swim. What's his problem,
anyway? Was he stupid?

Q10. When Legolas introduces Gimli to Treebeard,
Gimli bows low and his axe falls to the ground.
Treebeard notices this, but merely comments "Hoom!
A Dwarf and an axe-bearer!" rather than smash Gimli
to Play-Doh™. Doubtless you've heard of the poem,
"Woodsmen, Spare That Tree!"; did Tolkien have plans
to write another version, titled "Tree, Spare That
Woodsmen!"?

Q11. Why is the tale of Beren and Luthien subtitled
"Release from Bondage", when we never even once
get to see her tied up? (Marks will be deducted for
smutty answers)

Q12. If, as is likely, a bacterium had landed on the
inner surface of the Ring, would the Ring corrupt it
into an evil bacterium? Would it be invisible to other
bacteria? Would its' life stretch out and become an
unending weariness? Would it use its' increased strength
and stature to rule over other bacteria? Would it fight
to keep other bacteria from adhering to the Ring?
Would it still evolve genetically, or would it instead
become a Bacteria-wraith? [Answers to this question
will gain bonus marks for the Biology paper].

Paper B - for students on the Advanced Course only.
*Students should only attempt to answer two questions
from this paper.*

Q1. When the Dwarves of beautiful Khazad-Dum built
their Western door, why did they allow it to be inscribed
with the insulting name of "Moria" ("Black Pit"), a name
that would only be earned long years afterwards?

Q2. Reconcile Tom Bombadil's statement that he is
"Eldest" with Gandalf's statement that Fangorn is "the
oldest of all living things". Extra Credit: suggest a valid
date of birth for each of them. Document your answers.

Q3. Aragorn states (Two Towers, p. 18 hardback) that
Sauron never uses the name "Sauron", nor does he
"permit it to be spelt or spoken". Reconcile this text
with the text of Return of the King, p. 164 hardback,
where the Lieutenant of Barad-Dur clearly states, "I am
the Mouth of Sauron".

Q4. Though Moria is, by rightful ownership, Dain's,
Balin nonetheless referred to himself as "Lord of Moria".
Helm's Deep is clearly the property of the Rohirrim,
being part of lands granted to them by Gondor long
years ago, yet in Return of the King p. 360 hardback
Gimli declares himself "Lord of the Glittering Caves".
Explain the laws and history pertaining to Dwarven
property rights, and how those differed from the customs
of Elves and Men. For full credit your answer must also
reconcile Dwarven property laws with the generous
nature of Aule, the Dwarves' creator.

Paper C - for postgraduate students only

Question: How would the history of Middle-earth have
differed if Sauron had returned to Aman and received
the judgement of Manwe at the end of the First Age,
rather than remaining in Middle-Earth (Silmarillion p.
285 hardback)? Describe resultant cultural differences
which would have taken place in the Second, Third and
Fourth Ages. Special emphasis should be given to the
cultures of the Grey Havens, Numenor (including the
Dunedain and the Black Numenoreans), the Rohirrim,
the Dunlendings and others descending from the peoples
of the White Mountains, the Ents, the peoples of Khand,
the Orcs (particularly those tribes living in the Grey,
Misty and Ash Mountains and the Mountains of
Shadow), the Elven peoples of Gil-Galad (include Elrond
and the likelihood of Rivendell's being constructed), the
Hobbits (beginning from when they were living in the
Vales of Anduin), and the Haradrim (both Near and Far
Harad must be covered for full credit). Also speculate
on the differences in culture which would take place in
Aman as Sauron describes his experience with evil to
the Valar, Maiar, and Eldar living there. On Silmarillion
p. 65, it states that "Manwe was free from evil and
could not comprehend it"; would he gain an
understanding of evil from the experiences of Sauron?
Be prepared to defend your answer.

Middle
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