

IN THE HOUSE
OF
TOM
BOMBADIL

GROUP DISCUSSION
STUDY GUIDE

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AN APOLOGY

Summary:

In this book, Wiley is not trying to take the mystery out of Bombadil or to decode an allegory ... although you will understand the mystery at the end. Instead, he is trying to understand what Tolkien is saying about the world through Bombadil.

Highlights:

“While allegories can artlessly shove meanings beneath our noses, there is no such thing as a story without some kind of morality running through it. And when it comes to fairy stories, the morality very often doesn’t hide at all.” (p. xii)

“The only person over whom the Ring cannot exercise a corrupting influence is the only person who would never, ever think of using it for any reason whatsoever. As you may already know, this book is about that person. And it is the bounce in his step that I admire and I’d like to talk about. I hope that I don’t cut him open, or even bend him in the process.” (p. xv).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the problem with expecting stories to just preach? How can dissecting a story miss the point?
2. What does Tolkien say he prefers to allegory? Why do all stories have a morality?
3. What is the story of the Ring of Gyges? What is the difference between this ring and the Ring of Power?