**Extended Essay Outline Exemplar Sample A: Language A1**

**Name: (include this on your outline)**

**Mentor: (include this on your outline)**

**Research Question:** To what extent is *The Lord of the Rings* an empowering work for the female?

**Thesis:** *The feminine is a powerful force in Tolkien’s work and* The Lord of the Rings *is, to a great extent, empowering for women.*

**Introduction:**

Since its publication in 1954, a plethora of feminist critique has settled upon the shoulders of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and upon its creator JRR Tolkien. Tolkien scholar Edith Crowe admitted her dissatisfaction with “the disappointingly low percentage of females that appear in *The Lord of the Rings*” (Donovan 81). Kenneth McLeish was more acerbic in his comment that Tolkien’s women “are nothing but cardboard figures from Welsh legend” (MacLeish 36) while in 2002 Germaine Greer – never one to be excluded where feminism is concerned – lamented Tolkien’s considerable literary influence as a “nightmare” (Mooney 17). In an attempt to ascertain the true nature of Tolkien’s work, this paper will answer the research question “to what extent is *The Lord of the Rings* an empowering work for the female?**”**

It is true that *The Lord of the Rings* presents no shining beacon of hope for modern feminism. The trilogy caters strongly to male readers, featuring an almost all-male cast and an array of swords, arrows and bloodshed. Moreover, there is no sex and little romance, with emphasis placed on male friendship. As female scholars were a rarity on post-war Britain, these ‘flaws’ were more likely a reflection of the patriarchal Oxford society to which Tolkien belonged than the product of latent misogyny suggested by hardcore feminists. Tolkien and his band of academics were all male and for the most part devout Catholics: consequently, Tolkien’s characters are chiefly male, and the females who do appear in the novel are somewhat black-and-white paragons of good or evil.

**However stereotypical though they may be, Tolkien’s women are formidable characters. For an author whose outlook on women was seemingly limited, the pulse of the empowered female throbs beneath the great web of Tolkienian myth**, strengthened by the spindles of Galadriel, Eowyn and Shelob. More subtly, analysis of language and characterization suggests the essential femininity of the Elvish race, whose elevation by Tolkien serves to emphasise the power and wisdom of the female. Finally, and most importantly, the power of the feminine manifests itself in the One Ring ‘to rule them all,’ the symbol of ultimate power and the catalyst of the events in the novel.

**Argument 1: Galadriel as an embodiment of the feminine**

**Paragraph 1: Galadriel’s Character:** By the standards of any Rings scholar, Galadriel ranks amongst the most powerful of Tolkien’s creations.

• Galadriel’s wisdom as keeper of the Mirror of Galadriel and one of the three rings of power

• Galadriel’s eyes as “keen as lances” (345) to imply intelligence

•  Galadriel’s dialogue as slow and lacking in exclamation marks, denotes a masculine self assurance

•  Galadriel’s voice as “clear and musical, but deeper than a woman’s wont” (346)

**Paragraph 2: Galadriel contrasted with Celeborn**: Tolkien renders the empowerment of Galadriel all the more conspicuous by contrasting her character with that of her husband Celeborn.

• Tolkien reverses gender roles

• Celeborn as greeter/Galadriel as onlooker assessing the visitors

• Celeborn’s advice dismissed by Galadriel “He would be rash indeed that said that thing” (347)

•  Galadriel, not Celeborn, wears Nenya, the ring

**Paragraph 3: Galadriel’s will**: To Tolkien’s credit, Galadriel’s character is defined by the immense force of her will, a characteristic often neglected in the women of legend in favour of humility and innocence.

• in spiritual, not physical, struggle with Sauron

•  her reaction to Sauron’s ring – she contemplates seizing the ring but rejects it

•  Galadriel’s physical transformation “tall beyond measurement” (556)

**Argument 2: Shelob as the power of feminine evil**

**Paragraph 4: Shelob’s power over men:** Galadriel’s empowerment is mirrored by the power of her antithesis, the giant spider Shelob.

•  Shelob as the most horrifying creature in novel, a manifestation of fear of the unknown

• diction “groping” “blind” and “lurch” (703) convey powerlessness of Sam and Frodo

•  tone in sentences such as “How much more of this could they endure” (702) suggest Shelob’s power

**Paragraph 5: Shelob’s origins:** Tolkien devotes a large part of the chapter ‘Shelob’s Lair’ to explaining in detail her ancient origins.

•  Shelob’s elevation as a goddess figure through syntax and tone

•  Gollum’s worship of her

•  narrator’s use of capitalised personal pronoun, “She”

•  the only monster with a fully-developed character

**Paragraph 6: Critic’s argument of defeat of Shelob:** However, critics have argued that Tolkien elevates the great spider to emphasize Sam’s defeat of her.

• pricked by Sam’s sword, a phallic symbol

•  “cowed at last, shrunken in defeat, jerking and quivering as she hastened from him” (713)

**Paragraph 7: Shelob as a symbol feminine evil, not sexuality:** However upon further scrutiny, one notes that Shelob is not just a large sexual machine – equally powerful are the images of gluttony, sloth, selfishness and spite.

•  bloated with “endless brooding on her feasts” (707)

• “swollen till the mountains could no longer hold her up” (708)

•  “she served none but herself” (708)

• “this time to slay and to rend” (712)

• Shelob comes closest to ending Frodo’s quest

• Sam’s sword merely slows Shelob; it is Galadriel’s vial that blinds her and causes her retreat.

**Argument 3: Eowyn as the most obvious empowered female**

**Paragraph 8: Eowyn as the empowered female**: Even as the feminine is elevated by Shelob and Galadriel, the most compelling evidence of the empowered female within *The Lord of the Rings* resides in the earthly character of Eowyn.

• she has the male role of guarding the hall of her king

• by presenting her armoured, Tolkien portrays her martial ability as a major facet of her character

• she rides to battle and slays the Witchking, whom no men can face

**Paragraph 9: Feminist stance on Eowyn’s marriage**: Yet to general feminist dismay, Eowyn renounces her shieldmaiden identity in favour of marriage.

•  this decision appears to reject feminist ideal for chauvinistic one

**Paragraph 10: Refutation of feminist stance**: Such an approach, however, grossly misjudges Eowyn’s state of mind.

• born female into house of warlords, she is denied adventure on account of her sex

•  anguish and depression of her state are obvious in her “clenched hands” (512) and “grey eyes” (823)

**Paragraph 11: Emulation of men does not equal female empowerment**: Eowyn embraces her power as a woman rather than rejecting it for unattainable masculinity

• Eowyn retains her aggressive character

•  she rules Ithilien as her husband’s equal

**Argument 4: The Elves as symbolic feminine power**

**Paragraph 12: female characterisation of the Elves**: The empowerment of the female, explored through characterization, is more subtly but no less importantly conveyed through Tolkien’s Elves.

• serene beauty

• associated with music, laughter, spirituality and wisdom

•  femininity most evident in their soft musical language

**Paragraph 13: Elves associated with nature**: Again the Elves’ innate femininity is highlighted by their affinity with nature.

•  Tolkien’s letters reveal his love of the natural environment and aversion to industrialization

• feminine races in the novel live close to nature

•  masculine races live in caves or cities

•  Tolkien uses setting here to emphasise femininity of the Elves

**Paragraph 14: Elves as powerful**: The fact that these sublime creatures, and their homes, are essentially feminine is a firm indication of female empowerment

• most spiritually powerful creatures in Middle Earth

•  Tolkien deifies them in his imagery

• as the novel concludes so too does the power of the Elves

**Argument 5: The One Ring as the ultimate feminine power**

**Paragraph 15: The ring as feminine in nature**: *The Lord of the Rings* is the tale of Frodo’s quest to destroy the One Ring, an object that, like the Elves, is in principle, feminine

• use of the word “precious” by four male characters connotes spouse

• imagery of “fair and pure” and “perfect roundness” suggest womanly qualities

**Paragraph 16: Ring’s seductive force**: Similarly, the Ring’s femininity is implied by its overwhelming seductive power.

• Frodo’s urge to “slip the Ring on” has sexual undertones

•  Ring’s power is evident in the relationships it forms with men

**Paragraph 17: Ring’s birth reveals its feminine origins:** Analysis of the Ring’s birth reveals that its femininity originates from its creator Sauron

• Sauron’s physical form is destroyed and his being split in two

• the feminine side of his being is the Ring

**Paragraph 18: Ring’s as antihero:** The Ring’s role as ‘antihero’ is the greatest indication of its empowered status

• Ring’s psychological manipulation of Frodo is a bigger threat than Sauron

• is the destruction of the Ring an indication of misogyny? No, Frodo is destroying the feminine principal of a masculine tyrant; this empowers the feminine as Sauron is utterly dependent on the survival of his feminine half

**Conclusion**

•  to suggest that LOTR is exclusively masculine, even sexist, is too broad a reading

• rather the novel is to a great extent empowering for the female in its exploration of character and use of symbolism and conveys the feminine as a force of equal importance and power as the masculine

• through Galadriel, Shelob and Eowyn, Tolkien highlights the feminine as a force

• with the female power that emanates from the Elves, Tolkien implies the importance of wisdom and insight

• the One Ring suggests the feminine power to destroy, both feared and coveted by men in the novel

• feminist movement can be forgiven for attacking Tolkien’s work

• women of 21st century are confident enough to notice the subtle power of the feminine that runs through the novel