

'The Hobbit' Sequel Rings in Action, Suspense, but Don't Take Your Kids

The second installment in Peter Jackson's planned trilogy based on J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved creation, *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, picks up where *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* left off, after Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman), wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) and the band of 13 dwarfs barely escape from a band of bloodthirsty orcs (**goblins**).

After the first film became a billion-dollar box-office behemoth during Christmas 2012, the sequel takes moviegoers on an expected journey of more danger, battles, thrilling escapes and little-guy-with-big-heart courage, but the movie is not family-friendly.

The Desolation of Smaug continues the adventures of Bilbo, Gandalf and the dwarves, led by Thorin Oakenshield (Richard Armitage), a warrior and the grandson of the last king of Erebor.

The orcs are still in pursuit in the second film, so the travelers travel east, encountering a "skin-changer," a huge nest of giant spiders in the treacherous forest of Mirkwood, dangerous elves and the eponymous dragon, Smaug (voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch).

The dragon will test not only the depth of their courage but the limits of their friendship and the wisdom of the journey itself. In this epic set 60 years before *The Lord of the Rings*, the dwarf kingdom of Erebor has been under the control of the fearsome Smaug for many years.

If you're looking for spiritual content, there isn't much to go on in this film. Obviously, the plot deals with a hobbit and dwarves, with the underlying theme of "You can do great things, no matter how small you are." The movie highlights the

battle of light against darkness, but it's too intense for little eyes and ears.

Loaded with action and suspense, the 161-minute film does not feel long at all. Jackson and his merry team of writers are on a mission to turn Tolkien's 300-page book, *The Hobbit*, into an almost nine-hour spectacle, paralleling their success with the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

The third and final film in the trilogy, *The Hobbit: There and Back Again*, is slated for a December 2014 release.

Content Watch: Rated PG-13 for extended sequences of intense fantasy action violence and frightening images, *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* is not a family-friendly movie when thinking about young ones. The rating is there for a reason. Do not bring small children to this movie. Sure, there is no swearing, sex or nudity, but there are elements that should give you, as a parent, cause to ponder. For alums of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, the violence is more of the same. For neophytes, there are some seriously frightening and intense moments—battle scenes filled with slashing of swords, decapitations and dragon's fire.

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