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Pebbles

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Abstract. This micro essay shows the perspective of a young girl's first reading of *The Hobbit* with her mother, revolving around her interpretation of J. R. R. Tolkien's illustration "Trolls."

The "smoke" was not what she pictured when she thought of "smoke." An octopus, the gripping things that pull in unprepared, unassuming prey. Tendrils? The little girl held the book closer to her face, staring at the impression titled "Trolls." She turned the book, looking at the picture this way and that, searching for explanations of what was spattered before her eyes. The markings could be leaves, there at the bottom. The trolls, their skin, it looked like leaves as well or maybe pebbles. The trees and their texture matched the trolls. Where did they come from? Did the trees and the trolls and the ground all emerge from the same spot? Did they suddenly rise out of the earth? What were their origins? Did something great and powerful speak them into being? Did the fire put them there? Did they all arrive one day and suddenly realize they were a family of pebble-skinned beings? Were they beings too, the trees? Did trees talk sometimes in this world? Did they feel? She pondered. So, if the trees had the same texture as the trolls and the ground, did the ground feel too? Was the dirt aware of the small, hatted man standing on it, staring at its troll companions? She noticed the swirls along certain tree trunks that matched the swirls of the "smoke." Were they connected to each other too? Were they also in some ways the same? Her mother stared at the child in her lap, holding her book.

Chelsea Rogers is an assistant professor of English literature with focuses in twentieth- and twenty-first-century American literature at Charleston Southern University. Her research centers children's and young adult literature, Black studies, and speculative fiction. Her scholarship is published or forthcoming in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* and *Science Fiction Research Association Review*, as well as from the University Press of Mississippi.

It's just the art style, bean.

It may be, she said, but that's a boring reason.

She stared into the eyes of the trolls before her, stared at the black and white markings that made their pebble-skinned family.

Note

This micro essay takes the perspective of a little girl reading *The Hobbit* for the first time with her mother. As she sits on her lap holding the novel, she looks at the “Trolls” illustration from chapter Two.

Work Cited

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit, or, There and Back Again*. 1937. HarperCollins, 2016.