

Sample Introductory Paragraph

An old Chinese proverb states that "without trials and tribulations, no one can become a Buddha." The proverb points to the idea that we can never become truly great unless we experience suffering. To those of us who have lived in a land of peace and prosperity, this may seem an odd claim. However, if we take an honest look at those things that have most helped us grow as individuals, we will notice a clear pattern: Our most painful, difficult experiences are the ones that have truly stretched us. Just as on the physical plane our muscles must be strained and stretched, exercised and worked in order to be strengthened, so must we must face straining and trying circumstances if our characters are to grow strong. In his children's tale *The Hobbit*, J. R. R. Tolkien deals with this issue. He demonstrates in his novel that it is only by facing the sometimes overwhelming obstacles and difficulties of life that an individual can truly grow and reach his or her full potential.