

Lack of precious vitamin made Gollum a loser

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Credit: Wikipedia.

Think kindly of the dragon Smaug. Shed a tear for Gollum. And give an orc a hug.

If only they had tucked into the occasional quiche and salad or a touch of smoked salmon, or had a few sessions on a sunbed. How much kinder history would have been to them.

So suggests an offbeat study, released on Sunday, which concludes that the evil characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" lost their battle against men, elves and dwarves because they suffered from [vitamin deficiency](#).

Shunning sunlight, surviving on a sketchy or unbalanced diet based on rotten meat or (in Gollum's case) the occasional blind fish, they lacked vitamin D, a key component for healthy bones and muscle strength.

The idea is proposed by Nicholas Hopkinson, a doctor at Imperial College London and his son Joseph, in the Christmas edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

They scoured "The Hobbit" for references to characters' living conditions, habits and diet.

They used these clues to rate each character for levels of vitamin D, produced when the skin is exposed to ultraviolet light or derived from foods such as oily fish, egg yolks and cheese.

Bilbo Baggins, the hero of "The Hobbit," had a vitamin D-enriched life, they found.

True, Bilbo lived in a hole, but it had windows and he enjoyed sitting in the sun in his garden.

"The [hobbit](#) diet is clearly varied, as he is able to offer cake, tea, seed cake, ale, porter, red wine, raspberry jam, mince pies, cheese, pork pie, salad, cold chicken, pickles and apple tart to the dwarves who visit to engage him on the business of burglary," Imperial College said in a press release.

In contrast, the villains spend most of their time in darkness, and their

diet is poor or single-sourced.

"Systematic textual analysis of 'The Hobbit' supports our initial hypothesis that the triumph of good over evil may be assisted to some extent by the poor [diet](#) and lack of sunlight experienced by the evil characters," the researchers conclude.

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