**English 11/12 Honors: Tolkien Name:  
Mr. Fisher**

**W.H. Auden’s Six (6) Essential Elements of a Quest**

*W. H. Auden (1907-1973) was an American poet who was actually born in Birmingham, England. As an adult, he moved to America and became an American citizen. He is regarded by many critics (according to Wikipedia, at least) as one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. His work is noted for its stylistic and technical achievements. In other words, the guy was like a poetry machine. His form was as technically perfect as a Ted Williams swing. Oh, wait, this is my Tolkien class. That analogy is probably lost on most of you. Okay, try this one: He was the Legolas of poetry. Better? Anyway, he wrote a great deal about the technical side of writing, including essays on stories about quests. Below are his “Essential Elements of a Typical Quest Story.”*

According to W.H. Auden, a good story about a quest needs:

1) A precious object and/or person to be found and possessed or married.

2) A long journey to find it, for its whereabouts is not originally known to the seekers.

3) A hero. The precious object cannot be found by anybody, but only by the one person who possesses the right qualities of breeding or character.

4) A test or series of tests by which the unworthy are screened out, and the hero revealed.

5) The guardians of the object who must be overcome by the hero before the precious object can be won.

6) The helpers who with their knowledge and magical powers assist the hero and but for whom he would never succeed. They may appear in human or in animal form.