The Hobbit, Or There And Back Again By J. R. R. Tolkien As A Book For Adults

Earth is in its third age and serving as a prologue for his Lord of the Rings series. The popular book is widely regarded as a book for children, possibly as a result of its fantasy-like setting and common fairytale storyline of an unlikely hero, or the fact it was originally written for Tolkien's own children. However, I believe that the book, particularly when compared to modern children's novels, is more appropriate for adults.

Firstly, the language used throughout the book is very longwinded and poetic. The descriptions of landscapes, in particular, are circuitous, using advanced vocabulary and complicated phrasing, often taking up several pages. In fact, the first introductory description of the titular Hobbit and his home in Hobbiton goes on for almost three pages. Subsequently, the book starts to seem very wordy, which can cause a loss of interest or a loss of momentum for children when reading it. On top of that, the detailed and witty description of Bilbo Baggins and his home could quite easily go completely over the heads of young children. The humorous lines embedded in the description are more mature and combined with the difficult and slightly old-fashioned language, the focus needed to get through different parts of the book becomes greater, making it a tough read for children and even some adults.

Secondly, the plot of the hobbit frequently becomes quite dark and scary. Bilbo and the party of dwarves are repeatedly faced with dangerous situations and terrifying foes. The dwarves and Bilbo are captured several times, whipped once, almost cooked once, and even strung upside down to be eaten. These situations put the characters' lives in danger and they often lack comedic or witty lines, leaving them as serious and frightening scenes for children to read. Particularly scary scenes include one that takes place in pitch-blackness, where Bilbo is threatened by bloodthirsty orcs and trolls, and a very creepy scene with the already sinister character Gollum, who keeps thinking aloud about how he'd like to eat Bilbo. The Trolls and Orcs that Tolkien depicts are big, ugly, horrifying creatures and he describes them as 'cruel, wicked, and bad-hearted.' This makes the scene all the more alarming and Gollum's persistent, ominous, inner monologue and the description of his appearance, are also more than enough to give any child nightmares.

Additionally, there is a fair amount of intense violence throughout the book. Bilbo and the dwarves are involved in a lot of violence, including fights with trolls, giant spiders, wood elves, orcs, evil wolves, and a very large dragon. There is also mention of how the dragon destroyed whole towns of men and dwarves around his hoard and the immense amount of people that lost their lives and while this is only mentioned briefly it could be considered a slightly heavier subject matter for children. Moreover, Tolkien includes several large violent scenes, probably the biggest and most important of these is "The Battle of the Five Armies," in which a final battle against good and evil takes place. While there is a limited description of the battle as Bilbo is unconscious, it does deal with a large number of deaths, including the deaths of several of the main dwarves. The deaths of these main characters are emotional as the reader has got to know them very well throughout the course of the book. The killing off of such important characters is almost unheard of in most children's books and could be very upsetting for them and the emotional depth of such important characters' deaths, hard for them to comprehend.

Lastly, while there are few truly gory details, there is a description of a decapitated orc head and a wolf skin propped up on a gate.

Finally, unlike a lot of children's literature, the hobbit has no young protagonist to which the young reader can relate to or root for. Instead, Tolkien gives the story a much older main character in Bilbo, who is accompanied throughout the story by a plethora of other characters with the same amount of importance to the events of the book, the entirety of which takes place in a complicated and vast imaginary world. This could easily lead to distraction and lack of focus from a younger audience and a large number of main characters and places could be confusing and hard to follow, let alone relate to. Consequently, the titular hobbit is not only unrelatable to a young reader in terms of age and similarity, but is a character put in positions no child could be expected to identify with. Furthermore, the book contains no single female character in its entirety. While this may not necessarily directly affect the suitability of the book for children, it lacks any kind of female role model even in the smallest form which could be a bad example to young girls and boys alike.

In conclusion, the hobbit may have originally been intended as a book for Tolkien's children and was definitely bold defiance of accepted children's-fiction at the then and now. Overall it comes across as a book more suited to teens and adults rather than children and, taking into account all the different parts of the book, would maybe be best described as a children's book for grown-ups.