

In the beginning was the Word.

The story is well-known among followers of J. R. R. Tolkien that, as a young professor, he was grading an examination booklet when he wrote, “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” on a blank page. He later confessed that he had no idea where the inspiration came from or that he even knew what a “hobbit” was at the time. But that one line, written in obscurity, would lead to Tolkien’s literary career—one of the most brilliant of the twentieth century—and recreate the world of fantasy.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was a scholar, serving in the decades between World Wars I and II at Oxford University in England, the oldest institution of higher learning in the English-speaking world. His specialty was formally Anglo-Saxon and medieval English literature. Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, was the language used in England from the sixth to the eleventh centuries of our time, known through such literary remnants as *Beowulf* and the semi-historical *Battle of Maldon*. Tolkien’s studies in medieval literature included the centuries up through the fourteenth and such works in Middle English as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a British contribution to the King Arthur canon.

Tolkien’s scholarly interests were deeply rooted in a field known as “philology.” Literally, the term descends from Greek roots meaning “love of words,” making Tolkien as a philologist a “lover of words.” As a formal field, philology arose in the early nineteenth century due, interestingly enough, to the efforts of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the same Brothers Grimm who collected, revised, and published the 200-plus fairy tales that now bear their name. For them, inspired by a nationalistic desire to define German culture in their own time, the study of folklore belonged with the study of language. Growing up a century later, the young Tolkien fell in love not only with fairy tales and other wonder stories but also

with words themselves and the workings of language. He studied several as a youth, and even fashioned his own. By the time he entered Oxford as a student just before the start of World War I, he had set about creating a mythic world with exotic races that used his invented languages. Alongside that impulse was the desire to create for England a coherent mythology, one that could stand alongside those of the Norse and the Greeks.

While Tolkien could not pinpoint the inspiration for *The Hobbit*, it was undoubtedly rooted in both his love of mythic fantasy—what he would call “fairy-stories”—and his deep engagement with language. When pressed, he maintained that the only source for the word “hobbit” was “hole,” which suggests his background in Anglo-Saxon. “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” shares with Anglo-Saxon verse—in which *Beowulf*, for example, is written—by having four accented words in the line, two of which share an opening letter. From the seed planted in that hole in the ground sprouted a world-wide phenomenon. *The Hobbit* inspired a long-expected sequel, *The Lord of the Rings*, which in its turn produced a devoted cult following and an international fan network. Serious scholarly attention followed in the 1970s, along with the first cinematic treatments. Mounting interest led to the publication of Tolkien’s other writings, centrally his foundational mythology *The Silmarillion*, followed by Christopher Tolkien’s editions of his father’s other unpublished writings. The popularity in this century of Peter Jackson’s movie trilogies of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* demonstrates that Tolkien’s spell continues.

If you are familiar with *The Hobbit* only through the recent three-part movie version, expect some surprises in the novel. The onscreen Bilbo Baggins (portrayed by Martin Freeman) does come across as both droll and, in his small way, heroic, though his role is somewhat diminished by the director’s desire to give the dwarves, elves, and wizards a more prominent presence. The novel has no swashbuckling, sword-swinging, She-elf warriors like Tauriel—indeed, no female characters at all, a serious drawback for modern audiences. And although Gandalf does have business with the Necromancer in the novel, it takes him altogether out of the narrative

for several chapters. Tolkien did not know when he first wrote *The Hobbit* that the Necromancer would turn out to be Sauron, so we do not see the White Council fighting the Ringwraiths. Indeed, Peter Jackson came to *The Hobbit* sharing with his audience a full awareness of *The Lord of the Rings*, and like Tolkien himself (as laid out later in this volume), he took on the challenge of revising the earlier work to accord with the sequel.

Approaching Tolkien's seminal novel requires that one approach it with an open—even child-like—mind. To appreciate it fully, the new reader can also benefit from some background on its creation, some context in Tolkien's life and times, and some critical approaches to its meaning and value. This anthology provides such tools. For the most part, it deals with *The Hobbit* as a separate creation, though inevitably the author's other works make appearances, especially the epic sequel *The Lord of the Rings*. Demonstrating the international appeal of Tolkien, the essayists contributing to this volume come from North America, New Zealand, France, and Eastern Europe. In experience, the contributors span the entire history of Tolkien scholarship, from one who learned firsthand from J. R. R. Tolkien and his friend C. S. Lewis to young scholars just beginning their quests into the wild lands of literary critique.

The introductory essay approaches *The Hobbit* as children's story, fairy tale, and entry point for Tolkien's work as a whole. It considers the novel as Tolkien's version of the archetypal fairy-tale hero's journey, showing both what it shares with its fantasy predecessors and what makes it unique for its genre. The essays in the "Context" section offer background and a framework for approaching the novel. Kelly R. Orazi investigates "J. R. R. Tolkien's World: Literary, Cultural, and Historical Influences on Middle-earth's Subcreator," focusing on the elements that shaped Tolkien's career; his fantasy world, Middle-earth; and the narratives set therein. Orazi touches, for example, on Tolkien's own childhood reading of fairy tales and children's classics from the Victorian age, on his experience in World War I, and on his friendship with C. S. Lewis, Christian writer and creator of the Narnia series. In "An Unexpected Success: *The Hobbit* and the Critics," Alicia Fox-Lenz

surveys the critical reaction to the novel from first reviews in the late 1930s to the growth of formal Tolkien scholarship following the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. A single critical approach to the novel is showcased in Jason Fisher’s “The Riddles and the Cup: Medieval Germanic Motifs in *The Hobbit*.” Making use of “source criticism,” Fisher elaborates on the many medieval and Germanic elements in the novel; not surprisingly, for one as engaged in his scholarly field as Tolkien, *The Hobbit* borrows elements from Anglo-Saxon classics like *Beowulf* and from the Old Norse Eddas, as well as from a number of other medieval sources. Finally, John Rosegrant compares Tolkien with another popular fantasist, J. K. Rowling, in “Bilbo Baggins, Harry Potter, and the Fate of Enchantment.” Although one is a promising young wizard in training and the other a child-sized grown-up of no particular accomplishment when he is called to adventure, both have to deal with a magical world filled with magical creatures and also come to terms with the disenchantment that accompanies maturation.

The remainder of this volume encompasses a range of other topics and critical perspectives, beginning with a set of essays that look at Tolkien’s influences and borrowings in more detail. With her essay “‘Of Gold and an Alloy’: Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, and the Northern Heroic Spirit,” Hannah Parry returns to the mythic tradition that most captured Tolkien’s imagination as both scholar and author, that of Germanic northern Europe. Tolkien was particularly interested in the subject of heroism and elsewhere elucidated his opinions in scholarly commentaries on, for example, *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Maldon*. Parry discusses these and the ways his views on the nature of the hero found their way into *The Hobbit*. Veteran critic Jared Lobdell debates the nature of Tolkien’s version of the “fairy-story” in “‘Witness Those Rings and Roundelays’: *The Hobbit* as Fairy-Story.” His discussion carries him back to predecessors from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, up through Victorian and Edwardian versions of fantasy. Of particular interest is the dichotomy and ultimate synthesis between Tolkien’s Catholicism and “Faërie,” as he often characterized the realm of myth and fantasy. Kris Swank turns to “Fairy-Stories That Fueled *The Hobbit*,” tracing in greater

detail the children's stories and fantasies that Tolkien grew up on or shared with his children. Among these are classics from children's literature's golden age like Lewis Carroll's Alice stories, George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*.

Josh Brown brings a poet's sensibility to "The Poems of *The Hobbit*." He not only exemplifies Tolkien's use and adaptation of traditional poetic forms, but shows the deft manner in which the author used verse in the novel to reflect the traits of the various races and characters. In "A Turning Point in His Career: The Effect of *The Hobbit* on Middle-earth," Sara Waldorf places this novel in relationship to the larger works that followed: *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien's Middle-earth mythos, sometimes referred to by scholars as his *legendarium*, existed in seminal form twenty years before the publication of *The Hobbit*. Waldorf demonstrates how *The Hobbit*, which led in turn to *The Lord of the Rings*, brought about a dramatic evolution of that *legendarium* on its way to becoming *The Silmarillion*.

The next trio of essays considers the psychological and philosophical value of reading *The Hobbit*. In "*The Hobbit*: A Mythopoeic Need for Adventure," Jelena Borojević explores the elusive topic of "mythopoeia" or "mythopoeic thought." Tolkien used the term to describe the human impulse toward myth-making and the need to engage with "Faërie," a need that he considered undervalued in the modern world. Like his friend and colleague C. S. Lewis, Tolkien wished to restore a relationship with "Faërie" to literature and the modern world. Bringing the concept home, Kayla Shaw looks at the mythopoeic as a psychological tool and a medium for the self-realization of children and, by extension, all of us, in "Growing Up Tolkien: Finding Our Way through Mirkwood." The mythopoeic also comes into play as Aurélie Brémont analyzes the unique characteristics of "the hobbit" as character in "How to Slay a Dragon When You Are Only Three Feet Tall." Her analysis suggests why we identify with Bilbo Baggins, what we can learn from his quest and growth, and how Tolkien's view of the hero has lessons for all of us.

Finally, in “Tolkien and the Illustrators: Visual Representations of *The Hobbit*,” M. Lee Alexander traces the history of illustrations for the novel, beginning with Tolkien’s own paintings, which were intended for the first edition. She pays particularly attention to the work of Finnish illustrator Tove Jansson, best known for the Moomintroll series, before speculating on other visual modes of representing the story, such as graphic novels and video games.

In sum, this volume will provide an overview of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*—in fact, several overviews from several different perspectives. It is your guidebook not only to a classic children’s novel but to Tolkien’s first journey into his fantastic otherworld: Middle-earth. It is *The Hobbit*, after all, that first brought to life Tolkien’s elves and dwarves; the wizard Gandalf; the creature Gollum; and, above all, the hobbits themselves—especially those unlikely, surprisingly heroic Bagginses.

As all wizards know, to get anywhere in the world, you need the right words. This book will give you the words you need to open the door to Middle-earth.

## J. R. R. Tolkien: Poet

J. R. R. Tolkien is perhaps best known for his classic high-fantasy works of fiction, but he was also a very accomplished linguist and poet and often used poetry within his works of fiction as a means to support the plot and give depth to the characters. This is quite evident within Tolkien's seminal work, *The Hobbit*. Not a single chapter goes by in *The Hobbit* without a song or poem. This is almost certainly very much by Tolkien's design. Each poem in the book, each line, each word, each syllable is carefully crafted by Tolkien for a very specific purpose. The poetry within *The Hobbit* serves to show differences in characters and also highlights the differences of the regions and races of Middle-earth. Whether dwarvish, elvish, goblin, or hobbit, the poetry serves to offer a contrast between the races in verse, structure, and theme.

Gollum's and Bilbo's riddles featured in Chapter 5, "Riddles in the Dark," are deliberately not included in this essay. While all nine riddles can certainly be considered poems in their own right, they simply do not fit with the thesis of this paper. In fact, these riddles have been the subject of other critical studies, so there is far too much to discuss about them for the scope of this piece. Please note that henceforth the words "poem" and "song" are used synonymously. This is because while each piece has the structure and arrangement of a poem, and Tolkien almost certainly wrote them as such, the characters in the book tend to actually sing the lyrics. Additionally, the poems do not have titles within the book per se, so we simply assume the first line of the poem as its title.

J. R. R. Tolkien loved language. Attending King Edward's School on a scholarship in 1903, he studied different languages, including Greek. He also studied poetry and verse, including Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in its original Middle English form (Willett 23). He knew the works of William Shakespeare, which,

interestingly enough, he “disliked cordially” (Carpenter 213). In fact, in addition to Shakespeare, there were several prominent authors that Tolkien developed a distaste for. These included but were not limited to Spenser, George MacDonald, and Hans Christian Andersen (De Koster 154). His distaste for George MacDonald was not so severe, though he did confess that he was “not as warm an admirer of George MacDonald as C. S. Lewis was” (Carpenter 351) and, at one point, even acknowledged that his goblins were inspired by MacDonald’s (Carpenter 178).

Tolkien took classes and attended several lectures on *Beowulf* while an undergraduate at Oxford, then delivered a number of lectures himself when he returned as a professor. Outside of his own fiction, Tolkien is widely known for a number of famed essays, including “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,” originally delivered as a lecture in 1936 and published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* later that year. Tolkien’s own translation of the Anglo-Saxon text was published posthumously in 2014 by Houghton Mifflin. He gave talks and lectures on *Beowulf* in many other arenas, including a short segment on the BBC radio series “Poetry Will Out” in January 1938. In the following month, “in a reply to a query about his sources for *The Hobbit*, Tolkien wrote that *Beowulf* was among the most valued” (Scull 85). In addition, several poems in the *Poetic Edda* serve as the source of influence for many things within *The Hobbit*, including “the poem *Völuspá* for the names of the dwarves... the *Fáfnismál* for the conversation with Smaug, and the *Skirnismál* for the . . . Misty Mountains” (De Koster 154).

Tolkien penned a number of poems early in his career, many of which have the seeds of Middle-earth and its diverse races. “Goblin Feet” was written in April 1915 and first appeared in a little book titled *Oxford Poetry 1915*, published the following December. In the poem, we find different creatures (gnomes, leprechauns, etc.), and elements of magic. In what reads very much like a fairy tale, the poem “turns in an instant from rising joy to loss and sadness, capturing . . . a very Tolkienian yearning” (Garth 73):

O! the warmth! O! the hum! O! the colours in the dark!  
O! the gauzy wings of golden honey-flies!  
O! the music of their feet - of their dancing goblin feet!  
O! the magic! O! the sorrow when it dies. (Garth 74)

This “Tolkienian yearning” is no doubt a product of living in a time of war, and Tolkien himself was “like many other men faced with the challenge of war, who found a voice to express feelings of nostalgia for England left behind, so different from life in the trenches, or about war itself” (Scull 767). What set Tolkien apart as a poet, however, was his use of fairy tales and mythology.

Written a year earlier, but of similar theme, “Tinfang Warble” was published in a rewritten and altered form thirteen years later, in 1927. Again we see something very fairy-tale and fey-like. Reading the poem gives images of a satyr- or faun-like being, a creature from Greek and Roman mythology that is plainly a manifestation of the forest spirits. Neither “Goblin Feet” nor “Tinfang Warble” are especially revolutionary in terms of imaginative fantasy, but rather drew on the imagery and ideas of the fairy tradition in English literature (Garth 75). But it is plain to see the poems did provide some of the blocks for his later world-building in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The list of Tolkien’s pre-*Hobbit* poetry is vast, including but not limited to “Why the Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon” (*A Northern Venture*, 1923), “Errantry” (*Oxford Magazine*, 1933), “Firiell” (*The Chronicle of the Convents of the Sacred Heart*, Volume IV, 1934), and more. Interestingly, while “Why the Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon” was published in 1923—fourteen years prior to the publication of *The Hobbit*—it was reprinted in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (a collection of sixteen of Tolkien’s Middle-earth poems, published in 1962), where it is ascribed as a Hobbit poem of the Fourth Age said to derive from Gondorian lore. Similarly, “Errantry”—published in 1933, four years prior to the publication of *The Hobbit*—is also attributed to Bilbo Baggins. Furthermore, while the meter of the poem is of Tolkien’s own invention (using trisyllabic assonances or near-asonances), he never again wrote

another piece in this style, which he considered to be his “most attractive” (Carpenter 180).

A number of Tolkien’s poems were written prior to the publication of *The Hobbit*, yet appeared years after the first edition (1937), such as “The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun,” written in 1930 but published in *The Welsh Review* in 1945. In any case, it is clear that Tolkien considered himself a poet and worked hard toward that end. In fact, it is entirely possible that he regarded himself to be a poet and a linguist first and a novelist incidentally, especially early in his career. Perhaps a better, more accurate way to describe this now-legendary writer would be “storyteller.” And in fact, the verse that Tolkien spent so many years perfecting would eventually become an all-important element in his style of storytelling.

### **The Dwarves’ Songs**

The songs of the dwarves are the first that we encounter, beginning with “Chip the glasses and crack the plates” and “Far over the misty mountains cold,” both appearing in Chapter 1, “An Unexpected Party.” The very first thing that should be noted about the songs of the dwarves is the fact that they are all quatrains that end in couplets. “Chip the glasses,” for example, is made up of three quatrains with rhyme scheme ABAB, with a final couplet in iambic tetrameter. Form aside, the song gives exposition to the nature of the dwarves. They are hard-working, offering to clean up after they have made themselves at home in Bag End, yet at the same time, their verse is light-hearted, teasing Bilbo who is very much concerned for the welfare of his dishes and other belongings.

“Far over the misty mountains cold,” on the other hand, conveys a much more serious tone. This particular song contains twenty-six quatrains with rhyme scheme AABA and a final couplet in iambic tetrameter. The poem features internal rhyme in the third line of each of its stanzas. For example, stanza four, line three reads, “The dragon-fire, in twisted wire.” In a way, the poem is actually very simple, with eight-syllables per line and no real complicated metaphors or allusions.

Also noteworthy is that the poem appears to be written in the “rubaiyat” stanza, created by Edward FitzGerald in his famous 1859 translation, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, with its use further popularized by Robert Frost’s 1922 poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” It is safe to assume that J. R. R. Tolkien, ever the linguist and literary scholar, would have no doubt studied and been influenced by FitzGerald’s *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, a translation of a selection of poems, originally written in Persian and numbering about a thousand, attributed to Omar Khayyám (1048–1131), a Persian poet, mathematician, and astronomer.

Furthermore, “Far over the misty mountains cold” serves to give identity to the dwarves in that it provides information about their history, heritage, craftsmanship, and traditions. It in fact prefigures the basic plot of the book in showing their resolution to set forth and reclaim their lost inheritance. The first stanza appears in similar form twice more during their song and ultimately “serves as a statement of the purpose of the dwarves’ quest” (Olsen 30). Consider that first stanza:

*Far over the misty mountains cold  
To dungeons deep and caverns old  
We must away ere break of day  
To seek the pale enchanted gold.* (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 13-14)

One would imagine the halls of the former dwarven kingdom to be absolutely resplendent—adorned with gold and sparkling jewels. Thorin and company seem to almost make their former home seem rather dark and dreary. Their crafts, however, are compared to images of light:

*On silver necklaces they strung  
The flowering stars, on crowns they hung  
The dragon-fire, in twisted wire  
They meshed the light of moon and sun.* (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 14)

Even after this lengthy and descriptive discourse from the dwarves, Bilbo is still determined to get the whole story of the

dragon in the mountain and the gold before signing off on taking part in the adventure, to which a gruff Thorin replies: “Didn’t you hear our song?” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 21). It is interesting to note that the main antagonist of the book, Smaug, is only indirectly referenced in this song that so pointedly declares the dwarves’ purpose and motivations. Instead, we get images of burning trees, spreading flames, and a town scrambling while under attack. In the last line of the final stanza, we get one last declaration of the dwarves’ mission of vengeance: “*To win our harps and gold from him!*” (15)—with “him” being, of course, Smaug. “Far over the misty mountains cold” really sets the standard for the nature and motivations of the dwarves and both the form and themes of their successive songs.

We do not see another dwarvish poem until Chapter 7, “Queer Lodgings,” when we get “The wind was on the withered heath,” another eight-syllable-per-line, four-line-per-stanza poem, also with a rhyme scheme of AABA. Like “Far over the misty mountains cold,” this poem also features internal rhyme in the third line of each of its stanzas. “The wind was on the withered heath” and “Far over the misty mountains cold” sound so similar that one would assume they are both being sung to the same tune. While there are many similarities in both structure and theme, close examination of “The wind was on the withered heath” tells us “an even more consistent story than the first song did” (Olsen 143). Instead of offering mere imagery, this poem offers specifics. The wind is described in detail—the direction it blows, the way it bends the grass, and finally its path across the sea and into the moon and stars. The song does all this while describing the various regions it passes through, painting a detailed picture of Middle-earth’s landscape. So here we see Tolkien not only giving identity to a particular race of Middle-earth (the dwarves), but to Middle-earth itself.

“The King beneath the mountains” appears in Chapter 10, “A Warm Welcome.” It is a little bit different in that while it is a dwarvish song, it is sung by the people of Lake-town. However, a closer reading makes it somewhat ambiguous whether this is an ancient song of the dwarves of old or if it is an entirely new song, pieced together from older dwarvish songs by the men of Lake-

town in their “recent and rather foolish excitement” (Olsen 187). The narrator goes as far as to tell the reader that the song we are hearing starts with remembered “snatches” of old songs. The poem features a rhyming scheme of ABAB in iambic tetrameter, meaning each line has four metrical feet. An iambic foot is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The rhythm can be written as “da DUM da DUM da DUM,” as in “The KING beNEATH the MOUNTAINS/ The KING of CARVen STONE.” Again, we see echoes of “Far over the misty mountains cold” in structure and theme and images of jewels and gems. The final stanza offers something of hope and optimism, combined with a sort of “mindless enthusiasm” (Olsen 189):

*The streams shall run in gladness,  
The lakes shall shine and burn,  
All sorrow fail and sadness  
At the Mountain-king’s return!* (196-197)

One cannot help but pause and contemplate the ominous line, “The lakes shall shine and burn.” It perhaps means less if one is reading *The Hobbit* for the very first time, but to those who know the later outcome the words are most certainly an omen. While the men of Lake-town are presumably referring to flowing rivers of gold, the dwarven riches, we as the reader know that it in fact foretells an event that is actually about to happen.

In Chapter 15, “The Gathering of the Clouds,” we find the final dwarf poem: “Under the mountain dark and tall.” The poem is comprised of seven stanzas, eight syllables per line, with an AABA rhyming pattern. The poem could almost be considered a sequel to “Far over the misty mountains cold,” in that its composition, theme, and structure are so similar. However, its tone is polar opposite in that “Far over the misty mountains cold” is dark and brooding, while “Under the mountain dark and tall” is far more upbeat. One sounds melancholy, while the other is a celebration.

As we conclude the dwarves’ songs, it is also worth noting that they have the most in the book—five in total. One would wager that this is certainly an intentional design by Tolkien, as they are

featured prominently throughout the book. Suffice it to say they are a lyrical race whose distinctions come out more and more through song during the course of the book.

## Elves' Songs

In stark contrast to the dwarves' poems, the elves utilize a much looser and freer structure in their poems, with many metaphors, as opposed to the literal and often stoic verse of the dwarves. Their poetry tends to describe beauty, peace, and joy, rather than material objects. In *The Hobbit*, the elves are presented as wild and free-spirited, so it makes sense that at least some of their poetry would appear as free verse. In fact, the elves' songs have been described as "artless and fragmentary" (Olsen 55).

The first elvish poem we encounter is "O! What are you doing?" in Chapter 3, "A Short Rest," in which, following a burst of laughter, the elves come out singing to the dwarves and Bilbo. The poem is a wonderful introduction to the child-like and sometimes whimsical nature of the elves. While there is structure to the poem, it is much less compared to those of the dwarves. The song is made up of five stanzas, each a little different from the others. The first stanza is written as an ABABCC iambic pentameter quatrain and couplet (six total lines).

*O! What are you doing,  
And where are you going?  
Your ponies need shoeing!  
The river is flowing!  
O! tra-la-la-lally  
here down in the valley!* (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 48)

This is also commonly known as "Venus and Adonis stanza" named so for Shakespeare's famous poem (Ross). The next stanza takes on the same form, but technically tacks on a seventh line: "ha! ha!" This seemingly unnecessary addition to the stanza serves to further extrapolate the frivolous and nonsensical nature of the elves.

The third stanza sticks out as being most different with two near-rhymes on the second and fourth lines, an internal rhyme on

# Chronology of Tolkien's Life

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**1892** John Ronald Reuel Tolkien born on January 3 in Bloemfontein, South Africa, to Arthur and Mabel (Suffield) Tolkien.

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**1895** Mabel takes Ronald and younger brother Hilary back to England, leaving behind Arthur.

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**1896** Arthur dies in February. In summer, Mabel and the boys move to rural Sarehole Mill, outside Birmingham.

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**1900** Mabel formally becomes Catholic. She moves the family to the Birmingham suburb of Moseley so Ronald can attend King Edward's School.

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**1904** Mabel is diagnosed with diabetes and dies in November. Her priest, Father Francis Morgan, assumes responsibility for the boys.

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**1908** Ronald and Hilary settle at Mrs. Faulkner's boarding house, where they meet Edith Bratt. Ronald falls in love with her.

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**1909** He takes an examination for an Oxford scholarship, without success.

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**1910** Endeavoring to end the relationship between Ronald and Edith, Father Francis forbids their association and moves the boys to new lodgings.

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**1911** Tolkien begins studies at Oxford that fall.

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**1913** On his twenty-first birthday, he resumes communication with Edith.

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## Works by J. R. R. Tolkien

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*Farmer Giles of Ham*. Allen & Unwin, 1949.

*The Father Christmas Letters*. Ed. Baillie Tolkien. Allen & Unwin, 1976; Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

*The Fellowship of the Ring*. Allen & Unwin, 1954; Houghton Mifflin, 1954.

*The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*. Allen & Unwin, 1937; Houghton Mifflin, 1938.

*The Return of the King*. Allen & Unwin, 1955; Houghton Mifflin, 1956.

*Roverandom*. Ed. Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond. Harper Collins, 1998; Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

*The Silmarillion*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Allen & Unwin, 1977; Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

*Smith of Wootton Major*. Allen & Unwin, 1967; Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

*The Tolkien Reader* ["The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth, Beorhthelm's Son," *Leaf by Niggle*, "On Fairy-Stories," *Farmer Giles of Ham*, and "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil"]. Ballantine, 1966.

*Tree and Leaf* [*Leaf by Niggle* and "On Fairy-Stories"]. Allen & Unwin, 1964; Houghton Mifflin, 1965.

*The Two Towers*. Allen & Unwin, 1954; Houghton Mifflin, 1955.

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Other publications include books and articles on American authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Ken Kesey, as well as extensive work in science fiction and science studies. His monograph on Russian authors Arkady and Boris Strugatsky won the Eaton Award for Best Science Fiction Criticism. Alongside his academic writing, he has published some short fiction—mainly science fiction—parodic verse, editorials, and reviews. He has been the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and two teaching awards. Recent projects include coediting, with science fiction author David Brin, the anthology *Chasing Shadows*, comprising stories and essays about surveillance and interactivity in our transparent society.