

Press Release



The Lord of the Rings

by J.R.R. Tolkien

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New Lord of the Rings Movie Tie-in Edition Now Available

Houghton Mifflin's latest movie tie-in one-volume edition of J.R.R. Tolkien's monumental THE LORD OF THE RINGS has landed on bookstore shelves! It has been called the greatest book of the twentieth century, an unforgettable adventure story that has inspired generations of readers since it arrived in 1954 "like lightning from a clear sky," according to C. S. Lewis. Now a new generation has embraced J.R.R. Tolkien's epic tale. New Line Cinema's Academy Award–winning movie trilogy has inspired readers to discover the novel behind the onscreen magic, and now readers have the most stunning movie tie-in edition ever.

In celebration of the final film, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, opening in theaters on December 17, Houghton Mifflin, Tolkien's official U.S. publisher for more than sixty years, has designed this especially handsome and collectible one-volume edition. The cover features the Dark Lord Sauron's gloved hand in glorious detail, with an embossed Ring and logo. The deluxe paperback edition boasts flaps, with a color gallery of seven film characters which folds out to reveal color versions of the original maps of Middle-earth on the inside. (The hardcover edition also contains these color maps.) In another added feature, the paperback version includes a color frontispiece with the full Ring Legend and Tolkien's distinctive monogram.

*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

With over 2 million copies sold and appearances on bestseller lists nationwide, THE LORD OF THE RINGS one-volume movie tie-in edition is the cornerstone of Houghton Mifflin's Tolkien publishing program. More than 25 million Tolkien books have been sold in the United States alone over the past three years. This new edition is sure to draw even more readers to the classic novel that has enchanted people for decades and finds new fans every day.

For further information on our Tolkien publishing program, visit www.lordoftheringstrilogy.com.

For additional information on this edition, see <http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/catalog/titledetail.cfm?titleNumber=688497>.

Praise for *The Lord of the Rings*

"Among the greatest works of imaginative fiction of the twentieth century."
— *Sunday Telegraph*

"An extraordinary work — pure excitement."
— *New York Times Book Review*

"One of the great fairy-tale quests in modern literature."
— *Time*

"A remarkable book."
— *Newsweek*

"One of the very few works of genius in recent literature."
— *New Republic*

"A work of immense narrative power that can sweep the reader up and hold him enthralled for days and weeks."
— *The Nation*

"The Lord of the Rings is a narrative of rare imagination, filled with wit, compassion, startling power and lyrical beauty."
— *Commentary*

"The most original and varied creation ever seen in the genre, and certainly the most self-consistent; yet it is tied up with and bridged to reality like no other fantasy . . . Tolkien has made his world a prodigious, and, so far as I can judge, unshakable construct of the imagination."
— Douglass Parker, *Hudson Review*

"Tolkien's stories take place against a background of measureless depth . . . That background is ever-present in the creator's mind and it gives Frodo and company a three-dimensional reality that is seldom found in this kind of writing."
— *Washington Post Book World*

"A masterful story — an epic in its own way—with elements of high adventure, suspense, mystery, poetry and fantasy."

— *Boston Sunday Herald*

"A grim, tragic, brooding and beautiful book, shot through with heroism and hope . . . its power is almost that of mysticism."

— *Toronto Globe & Mail*

"Here are beauties which pierce like swords or burn like cold iron."

— C. S. Lewis

"The first thing one asks of an adventure story is that the adventure should be various and exciting . . . Tolkien's invention is unflagging."

— W. H. Auden

Praise for *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Being the first part of *The Lord of the Rings*)

"No fiction I have read in the last five years has given me more joy."

— W. H. Auden

"Filled with marvel and strange terrors . . . an extraordinary and distinguished piece of work."

— *New York Herald Tribune*

"A unique, wholly realized other world, evoked from deep in the well of Time, massively detailed, absorbingly entertaining, profound in meaning."

— *New York Times*

Praise for *The Two Towers* (Being the second part of *The Lord of the Rings*)

"An extraordinary work — pure excitement, unencumbered narrative, moral warmth, bare-faced rejoicing in beauty, but excitement most of all."

— *New York Times Book Review*

"One of the best wonder tales ever written."

— *Boston Herald*

"Here is a wonderful story, set in a world which paralyzes the imagination, and told in magnificent prose. What more can an author give?"

— *Chicago Tribune*

"[Tolkien's] imagination can create regions that really are ghastly or really heavenly. He can create creatures that are incredibly credible. His is a never never land that seems real while you are in it."

— *Boston Globe*

"The author writes with wit, humor, imagination and a profound understanding of human nature—or just nature. . . *The Two Towers* is written by a person with a deep perception of the world of living things—what is, might be, or might have been."
— *Hartford Times*

Praise for *The Return of the King* (Being the third part of *The Lord of the Rings*)

"There are very few works of genius in recent literature. This is one."
— *The Nation*

"A triumphant close. . . a grand piece of work, grand both in conception and execution. An astonishing imaginative tour de force."
— *Daily Telegraph*

"In the highest and most complimentary sense, this is escapist fiction at its finest, yet at the same time it has profound relevance to our troubled age."
— *Arthur C. Clarke*

About J.R.R. Tolkien

The following is adapted from an essay written by Austin Olney, Tolkien's editor at Houghton Mifflin for many years, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of The Hobbit:

Those who know and love the works of J.R.R. Tolkien know also that they stand on their own and need no further explication or justification. Still, their vision is so powerful, their complexity so engaging, and their consistency and originality so unlike any other individual vision that one can't help speculating on how they came into being.

Tolkien's childhood was not a happy one. He was born in South Africa, where his father was a businessman, in a setting far from the Shire, but he moved to England with his mother while still an infant. As a schoolboy he discovered a love of language and was fortunate to have two young cousins who shared their made-up languages with him. One was "Animalic," which used many animal names for words (for example, "Dog nightingale woodpecker forty" meant "You are an ass").

Tolkien's mother died when he was twelve, and at sixteen he went to live with a couple who took in boarders — one of whom became his friend and eventually his wife. As a student at Oxford, he struck up a friendship with C. S. Lewis, who was later to be a fellow professor at Oxford, and with whom he shared his thoughts about myths, languages, and storytelling. Lewis said, "Myths are lies even though lies breathed through silver." "No," said Tolkien, "they are not." And they discussed such matters extensively over the years, for when Tolkien married and he and his wife, Edith, had children, he found that, like Lewis, he had a gift for storytelling.

John, their eldest son, often had difficulty falling asleep. When he was lying awake his father

would come and sit on his bed and tell him tales of Carrots, a boy with red hair who climbed into a cuckoo clock and went off on a series of strange adventures.

In this fashion Tolkien discovered that he could use his imagination, which at this time was creating the complexities of *The Silmarillion*, to invent simpler stories. He had an amiably childlike sense of humor, and as his sons grew older this manifested itself in the noisy games he played with them — and in the stories he told Michael, his younger son, who was troubled by nightmares. These tales were about the irrepressible villain Bill Stickers, a huge hulk of a man who always got away with everything. His name was taken from a notice on an Oxford gate that said "Bill Stickers Will Be Prosecuted," and a similar name provided the source of the righteous person who was always in pursuit of Stickers, "Major Road Ahead."

So it was that during the 1920s and 1930s Tolkien's imagination was running along two distinct courses that did not meet. On one side were the stories composed for the amusement of his children. On the other were the grander themes, sometimes Arthurian or Celtic, but usually associated with his own legends. Meanwhile, nothing was reaching print, beyond a few poems in an Oxford magazine, which indicated to his colleagues that Tolkien was amused by dragons' hoards and funny little men with names like Tom Bombadil. A harmless pastime, they felt, if a little childish.

Something was lacking, something that would bring the two sides of the imagination together and produce a story that was at once heroic and mythical and at the same time tuned to the popular imagination. He was not aware of this lack, of course; nor did it seem particularly significant to him when the missing piece fell into place.

It was on a summer's day in the 1930s, and he was sitting by the window in his study, laboriously marking School Certificate exam papers. Years later he recalled: "One of the candidates had mercifully left one of the pages with no writing on it (which is the best thing that can possibly happen to an examiner), and I wrote on it: 'In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.' Names always generate a story in my mind. Eventually I thought I'd better find out what hobbits were like. But that's only the beginning."

"One writes such a story," said Tolkien, "out of the leaf-mold of the mind," and while we can still detect the shape of a few of the leaves — his alpine trek of 1911, the goblins of the "Curdie" books of George Macdonald, an episode in *Beowulf* when a cup is stolen from a sleeping dragon — this is not the essential point of Tolkien's metaphor. One learns little by raking through the compost heap to see what dead plants originally went into it.

Far better to observe its effect on the new and growing plants that it is enriching. And in *The Hobbit* the leaf-mold of Tolkien's mind nurtured a rich growth with which only a few books in children's literature can compare.

J.R.R. Tolkien died in 1973 at the age of eighty-one. It is a long way from "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit," at the beginning of *The Hobbit*, to Sam's satisfied sigh at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*: "Well, I'm back!" And fortunately Sam and all the others — a whole world, Middle-earth, full of them — are still with us more than a half century after the beginning of it all, and indeed will be with us forever.

An Interview with Tom Shippey, author of J.R.R. TOLKIEN: AUTHOR OF THE CENTURY

(Houghton Mifflin Company, May 2001)

Q) Why do you call Tolkien "author of the century"?

A) Two reasons: First, he has consistently won what you might call the popular vote, in readers' polls for their favorite book or the one they've found most influential. Second, although he seems on the face of it to be an antiquarian author writing about an imaginary far past, I am convinced that the reason he consistently wins the polls is that his work articulates some of the deepest and most specific concerns of the twentieth century — concerns such as industrialized warfare, the temptations of power, the origins of evil, the failure of good intentions and righteous causes.

Q) Why do you think Tolkien has been so popular with readers?

A) He opened up a new imaginative space — he would have said it was an old imaginative space, which had been walled off, that of traditional legend and fairy tale, but I would say that he did something new with it, which was to provide the world of dwarves and trolls and elves and wizards (and so on) with a map, with a consistent history and geography, which feels as if it is infinitely extendable. That's why there have been so many successors to Tolkien, writing fantasy trilogies or sequences of the same type, maps included.

The other and deeper reason is that he answers questions that have deeply preoccupied ordinary people, but that have not been answered by the official (or self-elected) speakers for our culture — writers, politicians, philosophers. The most obvious one is, Why has the twentieth century been so unremittingly evil? The nineteenth century was looking forward to moral progress and freedom from want. Where (in Tolkien's lifetime, and mine) did it all go wrong? I think his images of evil, like the Ringwraiths, are at the same time completely original, highly contemporary, and mythically timeless. What they say is that anyone can turn into a wraith, and you can't be sure when it will start. Nor can you deal with evil just by being a nice guy yourself. It may force itself upon you. Tolkien's images of the good are similarly mixed, complicated, and satisfying. His work has great emotional depth.

Q) So why has Tolkien been so unpopular with the critics?

A) They sense a challenge to the dominant literary orthodoxy of the past century, which has been ironic and self-doubting. I see this as a legacy of World War I, the Great War, which destroyed traditional certainties and traditional authorities. Tolkien was himself a combat veteran of that war, and I would regard him as one of the rather large group of "traumatized authors" writing fantasy (Orwell, Golding, Vonnegut, etc.), but his experience made him want to restate traditional images rather than throw them away. In particular he wanted to find a new way to represent heroes and heroism. He knew the old ways very well, and he knew they wouldn't work anymore, but he did not want to abandon the effort. This essentially positive and optimistic view of humanity (and nonhumanity) has been dismissed as shallow and unthinking, but that is a bad mistake. Tolkien knew much more about irony than any of his critics, and about war.

Q) How do these affect one's view of Tolkien the man?

A) They bring out his inner anxieties. One should remember that Tolkien did not get his major work into print until he was sixty-two, and that for most of his working life the chances were that he was going to remain forever unpublished. He sometimes imagines his own work surviving into the future as a single manuscript, never read by anybody, with the name of the author lost — exactly like the poem *Beowulf*, in fact. Of course his work has now sold hundreds of millions of copies, and is set to do the same again in the next generation, and *Beowulf* in the end has had more books and articles written about it than Hamlet. That's ironic, but not all ironies have to be negative ones.

Q) What effect has Tolkien had on modern fantasy?

A) He created the genre — not quite single-handedly, but very nearly so. I discuss other fantasy traditions in my *Oxford Book of Fantasy Stories*, but the shelves in modern bookstores would look very different if Tolkien had not written, or if Stanley Unwin had decided not to publish him after all, back in the early 1950s. The eagerness with which he was followed suggests that there was a suppressed desire for the kind of thing he did, but nobody before him quite knew how to do it, or thought it was allowed. C. S. Lewis said Tolkien was as hard to influence as a bandersnatch, and only somebody like that could have broken with literary convention and established wisdom in the way that he did.

Q) What remains unique in Tolkien's work?

A) Two things I'd pick out are the poetry and the sense of shape. There are a lot of poems in *The Lord of the Rings*, in many different styles and formats, and not many other fantasy writers have the confidence or the literary background to go inventing whole new poetic traditions (or reinventing old ones). But this gives Tolkien's work a mythic and imaginative dimension, which has never been duplicated. As for the shape, *The Lord of the Rings* is very tightly controlled, with multiple plots integrated by a day-to-day chronology, which you really need to follow. What it does is make each of the characters feel lonely and isolated, while in the broader view you can see that everyone's story is a part of everyone else's: much more like reality than the plot of a conventional novel. It works laterally as well as linearly.

Tom Shippey taught at Oxford University at the same time as J.R.R. Tolkien and with the same syllabus, which gives him an intimate familiarity with the works that fueled Tolkien's imagination. He subsequently held the chair of English language and medieval literature at Leeds University which Tolkien had previously held. He is Walter J. Ong Chairman of Humanities at St. Louis University in Missouri.

Houghton Mifflin / J.R.R. Tolkien Timeline

1/3/1892 • John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is born.

1938 • Houghton Mifflin publishes the first U.S. edition of *The Hobbit*.

1954 • *The Fellowship of the Ring*

1955 • *The Two Towers*

1956 • *The Return of the King*

1965 • First American paperback editions of *The Lord of the Rings* spark college campus craze. FRODO LIVES and GANDALF FOR PRESIDENT buttons are seen everywhere.

9/2/73 • J.R.R. Tolkien dies at the age of eighty-one.

1977 • *The Silmarillion* sells more than one million copies in the United States in hardcover.

1983 • Christopher Tolkien's monumental twelve-part *History of Middle-earth* begins with *The Book of Lost Tales*.

1991 • *The Lord of the Rings* Centenary Edition, illustrated by Alan Lee

2000 • *The Lord of the Rings* is the number-one "Book of the Century" as voted by readers on Amazon.com.

5/16/01 • *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* by Tom Shippey is published by Houghton Mifflin.

9/22/01 • Celebrate the birthday of Bilbo Baggins and Frodo Baggins.

11/6/01 • National laydown date for *The Lord of the Rings Official Movie Guide* and *The Fellowship of the Ring Visual Companion*

12/19/01 • New Line Cinema releases the film *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

12/2002 • The film *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* is released.

12/2003 • The film *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* is released.

2004 • Houghton Mifflin celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.