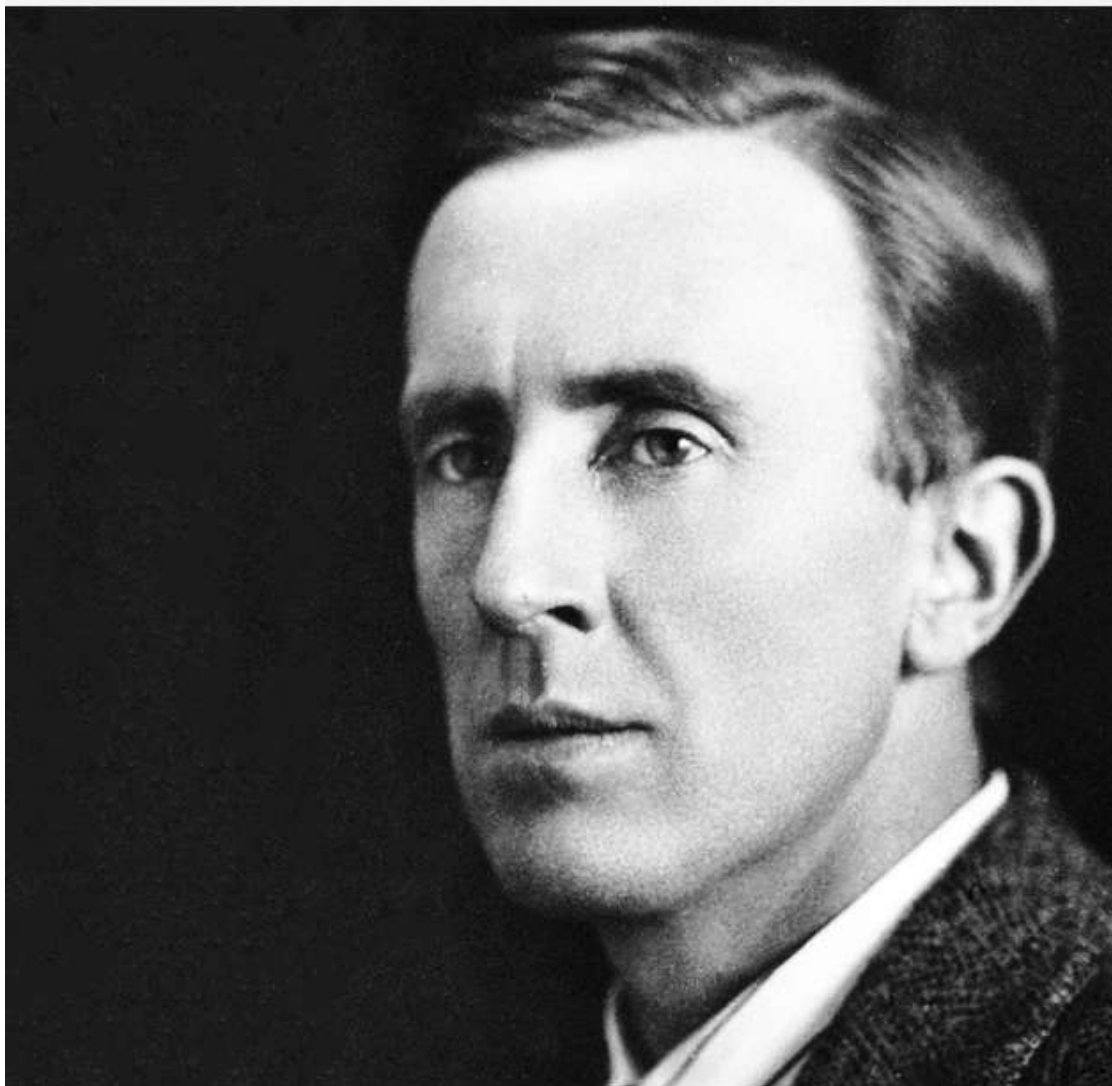




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(1892-1973)



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.R.R. Tolkien." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature, there are three small dots and a horizontal line.

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Version 1

The Complete Works of

J. R. R. TOLKIEN

With introductory material by Gill Rossini, MA



By Delphi Classics, 2024

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Complete Works of J. R. R. Tolkien



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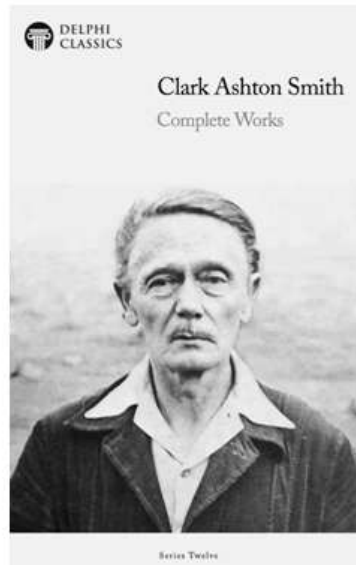
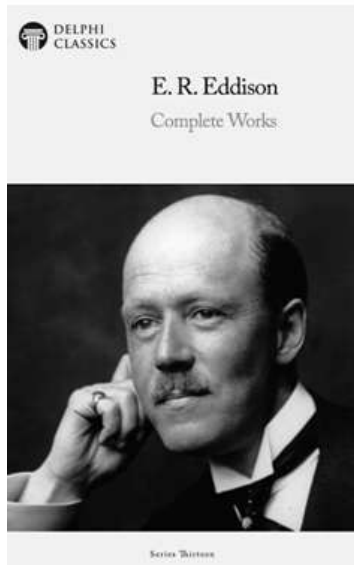
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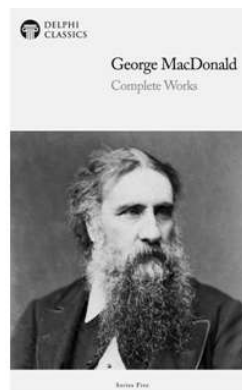
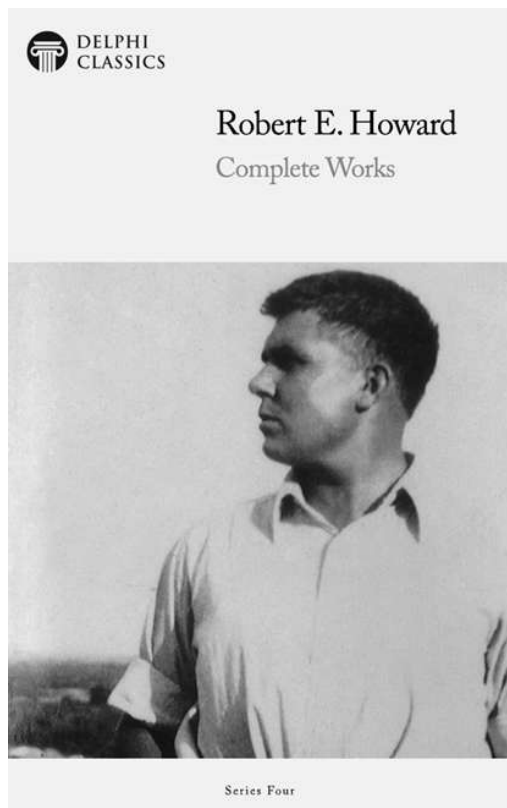
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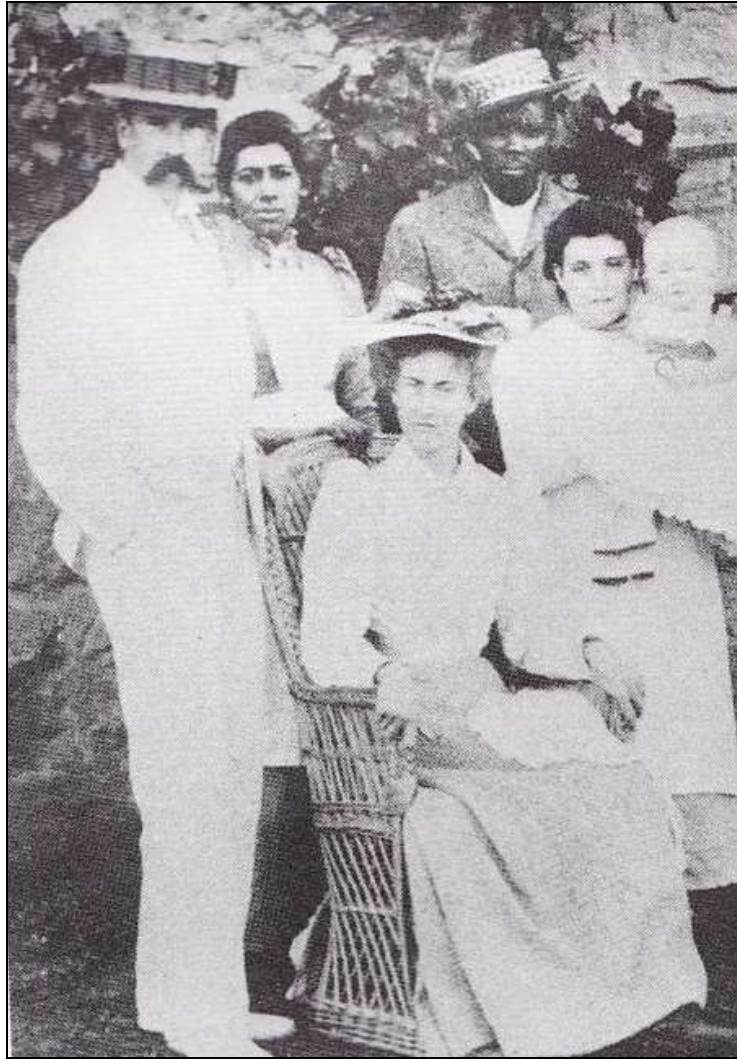
The Middle-earth Works



Bloemfontein, c. 1900, the largest city of the Free State province, South Africa. J. R. R. Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein in 1892.



Bloemfontein today



Tolkien as a baby with his parents and family attendants in Bloemfontein



Tolkien and his brother Hilary, 1905

The Hobbit (1937)



OR, THERE AND BACK AGAIN

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit...

The Hobbit was first published in September 1937. In a letter to his American publisher, Houghton Mifflin, early in 1938, Tolkien responded to a request for illustrations for future editions of the story. Having swiftly dispelled any idea that he could draw the pictures; he instead wrote a word picture of a hobbit:

'I picture a fairly human figure, not a kind of "fairy" rabbit...fattish in the stomach, shortish in the leg. A round, jovial face; ears only slightly pointed and "elvish"; hair short and curling (brown). The feet from the ankles down, covered with brown hairy fur. Clothing: green velvet breeches; red or yellow waistcoat; brown or yellow waistcoat; brown or green jacket; gold (or brass) buttons; a dark green hood and cloak (belonging to a dwarf). Actual size...about three feet or three feet six inches.'

(Carpenter, ed, *Letters*, rev. ed., 2023)

Hobbits came into being in Tolkien's imagination at some point in 1930, when the author, always a hard worker that took on extra paid tasks to support his wife and four children, was marking School Certificate papers. A School Certificate was a basic educational qualification taken by children that were able to stay in education past the usual leaving age of 14 (at this time) and one had to pass in five basic subjects, such as English, Mathematics, a science and a language. It was likely that children in grammar schools would all take this examination at about the age of 16. It was used from 1918 to 1951, and marking large numbers of these exam papers would have been a tedious chore, especially to a man used to the high flying undergraduate intellects at Oxford University. Little wonder, then, that his mind seems to have wandered now and then from that 'everlasting weariness' and in the midst of his marking he scribbled an opening line for a story on a spare piece of paper: 'In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit'. (Letter to W H Auden, 7 June 1955; Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, rev. ed., 2023)

At some point in the early 1930s, Tolkien started work on the expansion of the hobbit first line, because as he said, 'I thought I'd better find out what hobbits were like.' (Carpenter, 1977). He read aloud his work in progress to his literary friends at a group of like-minded men called The Inklings, who met on a Tuesday morning at a pub, usually the Eagle and Child, in Oxford. The group included C. S. Lewis, a great friend of Tolkien's and fellow of Magdalen College, and one whom the writer credited him for offering great encouragement. However, in years to come Lewis somewhat irritated Tolkien by writing his own fantastical stories, starting with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), when perhaps Tolkien should have been flattered by the inspiration he had given his friend.

What or who was the inspiration for this first line? Humphrey Carpenter's eminently readable biography of Tolkien (see bibliography) quotes Tolkien: 'I am in fact a hobbit...in all but size. I like gardens, trees, and unmechanised farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food...I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats.'

It is not just a partial self portrait, though: Carpenter also reports a comment made by Tolkien to an interviewer: ‘Hobbits are just rustic English people, made small in size.’

The first draft of *The Hobbit* was written by 1932, it appears, in bits and pieces, as his academic commitments allowed (see John Rateliff’s [article](#)), as Tolkien was by then showing it to friends such as Lewis. The hobbit protagonist, Bilbo Baggins, had been joined by a strong cast of characters, from dwarves and a wizard to Smaug the dragon. The story takes the reader from the rather complacent comforts of hobbit territory to the soaring mountains of adventure and danger, an epic and heroic quest that the sedentary Bilbo in his wildest dreams never envisaged he would undertake.

A second edition of the novel was published in 1951, with third and fourth editions appearing in 1966 and 1978. The 1951 edition includes a revised section of Chapter V, ‘*Riddles in the Dark*’, which aligns this narrative more closely to its sequel, *The Lord of the Rings* (the original text of Chapter V appears at the end our edition of ‘The Hobbit’). Ever striving for perfection, Tolkien made more changes to the 1966 American edition published by Ballantine Books, and to the British thirteenth impression published by Allen and Unwin also in 1966. In 1966, the paperback was the best selling soft cover book in America. By the time of the Harper Collins paperback edition, a number of corrective changes had been made to make sure that the text corresponds closely with the original as far as possible. The book was an immediate success on publication, being nominated for the Carnegie Medal, and to date it has sold over 100 million copies. It won the *New York Herald Tribune* award for the Best Fiction for Juveniles in 1938. It has been translated into 65 languages, some with more than one edition in their own right. These translations include Breton, Welsh and Cornish, which Tolkien would have thoroughly approved of. He had a lifelong love of the Welsh language, which influenced his philological world building for his stories. He also had an interest in Breton and he was so taken with the rugged scenery and coastline of Cornwall that he credited it with inspiring some of his topographical descriptions. A new record was achieved in 2001, when as a result of the excitement over the film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings*, 1.6 million copies of *The Hobbit* were sold, its greatest annual sales to date.

When first published, many reviews were glowing. *The New York Times* reviewer called the novel ‘freshly original and delightfully imaginative’.

In the *Times* newspaper, C. S. Lewis wrote:

‘The truth is that in this book a number of good things, never before united, have come together: a fund of humour, an understanding of children, and a happy fusion of the scholar’s with the poet’s grasp of mythology... The professor has the air of inventing nothing. He has studied trolls and dragons at first hand and describes them with that fidelity that is worth oceans of glib “originality.”’

Considering the huge success of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, there have not been many film adaptations of any of Tolkien’s work. An animated version of *The Hobbit* was released in 1977, directed by Jules Bass and Arthur Rankin, and with a voice cast that includes John Huston. A 1985 Russian language adaptation was directed by Vladimir Latyshev. A Finnish mini TV series, *Hobitit*, was released in 1993. In 2012, one of Peter Jackson’s acclaimed adaptations was released, called *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. It starred Martin Freeman as Bilbo, Ian McKellan as Gandalf and Andy Serkis as Gollum. *The Hobbit: Desolation of Smaug*, the next of Jackson’s Hobbit movies, was released the following year and in 2014 there came *The Hobbit: Battle of the Five Armies*, with Cate Blanchett joining the cast.

Bilbo Baggins is a respectable and somewhat complacent hobbit, a descendant of the Bagginses of the area that were esteemed not just because of their wealth, but because they never took any chances or ‘had any adventures or did anything unexpected’. He lives in a comfortable and well equipped hobbit hole, which is always well stocked with provisions. In this quiet life in the peaceful region of The Shire, he is taking the air and smoking his pipe when one Gandalf goes past. Gandalf is a remarkable character who has had many adventures — and he is a wizard. He wears ‘...a tall blue pointed hat, a long grey cloak, a silver scarf over which his long white beard hung down below his waist, and immense black boots.’ During a brief conversation, Gandalf reveals that he is looking for someone to share an adventure he is arranging, much to the horror of the hobbit. ‘We are quiet plain folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things!’

The wizard reveals his identity to Bilbo, and now it all makes sense to the hobbit. ‘Not the Gandalf who was responsible for so many quiet lads and lasses going off into the Blue for mad adventures?’

Bilbo regrets more than once the turn the conversation takes, as Gandalf somehow twists things so that it sounds as if Bilbo has asked to go on an adventure, and before he knows it, he has made arrangements to see the wizard for tea the next day. However, Gandalf is not the first person at his front door at tea time; there is a dwarf named Dwalin, an individual with a blue beard and ‘very bright eyes’. One dwarf after another appears, until there are thirteen of them altogether, all intent on eating and drinking every good thing he has in store. Finally, when Bilbo is thoroughly annoyed, confused and flummoxed, Gandalf arrives to join the party. Bilbo feels as though he has lost control of his own home, especially when the dwarves insist on clearing away the mess of their feasting despite his fears they would just make things worse, and then the dwarves make music and sing:

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.

As more verses unfold, something happens to Bilbo. His maternal grandfather was a Took, a rather unusual family of hobbits, who sometimes took themselves quietly off for adventures; and now, ‘...something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls...and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick’.

Still thoroughly overwhelmed, Bilbo learns what has prompted the influx of dwarves and a wizard into his life — they plan to reclaim their ancient home — the Lonely Mountain. The mountain and its treasure are in the control of a dragon named Smaug. Gandalf reveals a map showing a secret door into the Mountain and to Bilbo’s horror, suggests that the hobbit should be the one to infiltrate the dragon’s lair.

It seems to be settled — Bilbo is going on an adventure!

The next morning he arises only to find the dwarves have left without him, leaving a letter confirming terms for his services as ‘Burglar Bilbo’. He catches up with the dwarves and immediately starts grumbling about the inconveniences of the journey. Things turn worse as they pass beyond the ‘respectable’ hobbit country into ‘...lands where people spoke strangely, and sang songs Bilbo had never heard before.’ Ahead of them are lonely lands and dark tree-covered hills with ruined castles ‘...with an evil look, as if they had been built by wicked people.’ It is also raining and muddy and the whole party is glum and dripping. Gandalf is elsewhere and so the dwarves and Bilbo

make camp for the night without him. A light is spotted in the trees nearby, and Bilbo, who as a hobbit can move silently in woodland, is sent to check it out.

He finds an encampment of trolls! They are large, uncouth and quarrelsome, bemoaning the lack of human flesh to eat in the vicinity. Bilbo is over-clever, and in trying to steal a purse from them, is revealed to the trolls. Disaster happens when the dwarves, who have come to investigate the rumpus, are also captured by the trolls. Thankfully, Gandalf appears just at the right time and saves the travellers. He leads them to Rivendell, which is where the wizard had just been; Rivendell a 'fair valley' and their destination is the 'Last Homely House'. The terrain they now pass through is treacherous, a far cry from the rolling hills and prosperous homesteads of the hobbit lands; it is a relief that Gandalf knows the way extremely well, as it would be dangerous to stray from the only path that was also difficult to spot. Finally, they 'slithered and slipped' down the path into the Rivendell valley. They encounter elves, whom Bilbo rather likes (despite their amused teasing of him), but whom the dwarves don't really get along with.

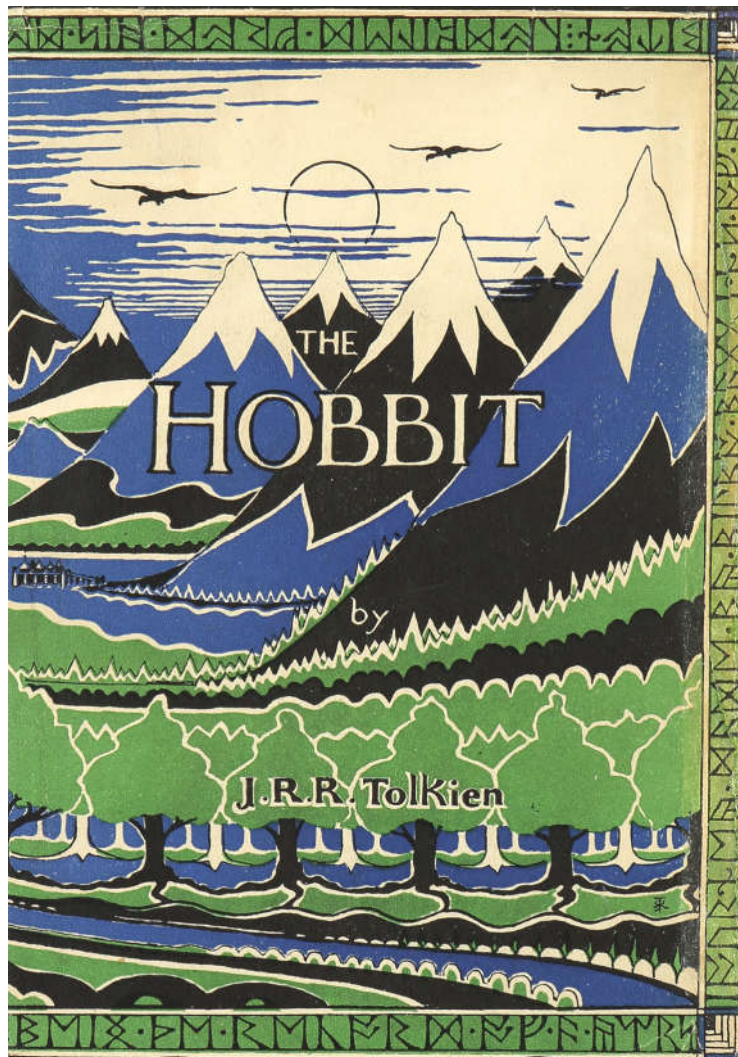
The master of the Last Homely House is Elrond, an exemplary man. He is 'as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves, and as kind as summer'. Elrond is able to read the runes on the swords the travellers plundered from the trolls and it appears that they are important weapons that can slay goblins. It is difficult for them to take themselves away from this place of comfort, but after a long stay, they travel onwards.

One day they encounter a terrible thunderstorm, the worst Bilbo had ever seen or imagined. Two of the dwarves with sharp eyesight — Fili and Kili — are sent to scout for decent shelter, which they find — a cave, big and dry enough to accommodate the travellers and their ponies. The trouble with caves is that they may well already be occupied, and perhaps not by friendly beings...

This story was written for children, but it rapidly becomes a tale that is universally enjoyed. Admittedly, the style is rather old fashioned — along the lines of 'And now, dear reader!...' — not unlike eighteenth century early novelists. It is also along the lines of the people from history and their language and stories that Tolkien had spent his academic life steeped in. The bards, poets and professional storytellers of the Anglo Saxon world would have relished this tale, and perhaps told it in a similar way, acting out the different parts subtly or with loudly declaimed gusto according to their audience. A private performance for a thegn (a lord) and his family and esteemed guests, in the quiet of private quarters, could be lyrical and low key, poetic, perhaps accompanied by the gentle background music from a musician playing a lyre (a hand held six stringed harp). In a packed eating hall, full of well-fed warriors and other followers, exuberant with drink, his delivery would be louder and more dramatic, just to be heard. In both cases he might elaborate aspects of the story and the personalities of the characters, in order to suit his audience. Such storytelling had been happening for millennia, but this world of wizardry, dragons, magical human-like people in their own contained world is still completely unique. It has the Germanic feel of Norse tales, but also the 'Celtic' feel of ancient tales such as those in the Welsh *Mabinogion* (a collection of stories first written down centuries after they first circulated, first recorded in the fourteenth century). In short, *The Hobbit* is charming, timeless, and sheer escapism.

The reader is encouraged to read the note at the beginning of the story, explaining texts and languages. Tolkien took the world he had created extremely seriously, as if it was and had been real; this is in line with his advice in the essay *On Fairy Stories* (see elsewhere in this collection). The tone also encourages the reader into this world,

hinting that it is a minutely researched ancient world that really happened. By the time one finishes reading Tolkien's fiction, that is exactly how it feels.



The first edition



The Hill: Hobbiton across the Water.

The Hobbit

or
There and Back
Again

by
J. R. R. Tolkien

London
George Allen & Unwin Ltd
Museum Street

The original frontispiece and title page

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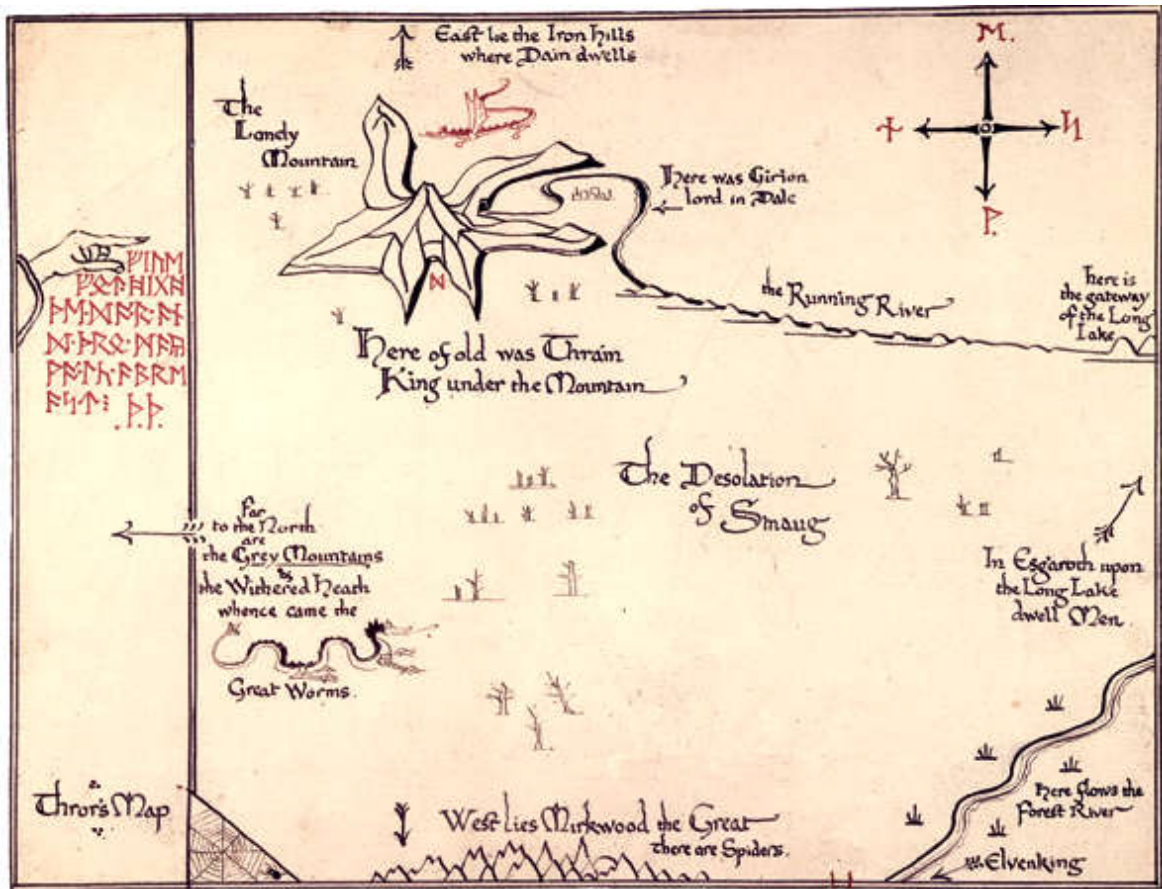
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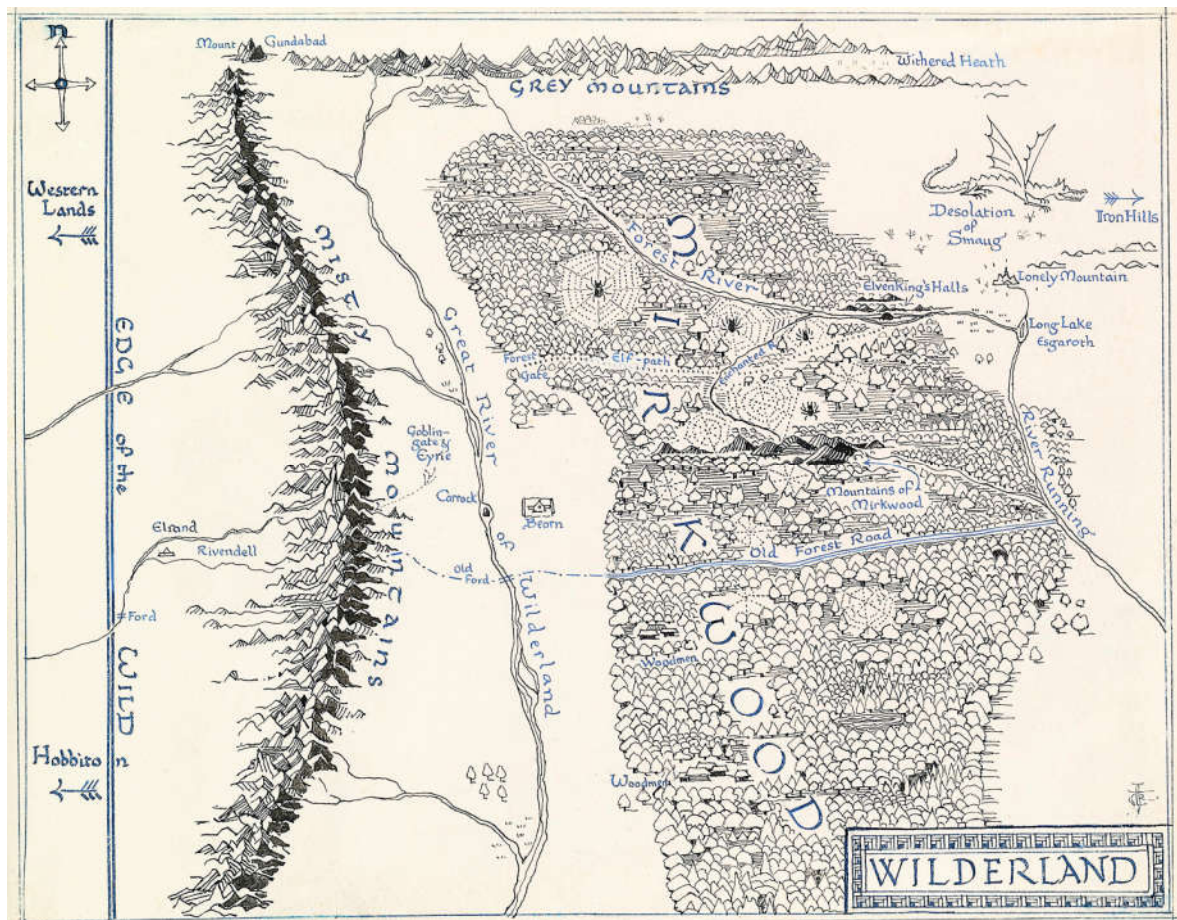
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Original version of 'Chapter V. Riddles in the Dark' (1937)



Tolkien's illustration of Thorin's map, which served as the left endpaper in the first edition



Tolkien's illustrated map of Wilderland, which served as the right endpaper in the first edition

NOTE.

ÞM·HMBBIT
FR
ÞMRM·F+D·BFKH·FXFIT

THIS IS A STORY of long ago. At that time the languages and letters were quite different from ours of today. English is used to represent the languages. But two points may be noted. (1) In English the only correct plural of *dwarf* is *dwarfs*, and the adjective is *dwarfish*. In this story *dwarves* and *dwarvish* are used, but only when speaking of the ancient people to whom Thorin Oakenshield and his companions belonged. (2) *Orc* is not an English word. It occurs in one or two places but is usually translated *goblin* (or *hobgoblin* for the larger kinds). *Orc* is the hobbits' form of the name given at that time to these creatures, and it is not connected at all with our *orc*, *ork*, applied to sea-animals of dolphin-kind.

Runes were old letters originally used for cutting or scratching on wood, stone, or metal, and so were thin and angular. At the time of this tale only the Dwarves made regular use of them, especially for private or secret records. Their runes are in this book represented by English runes, which are known now to few people. If the runes on Thor's Map are compared with the transcriptions into modern letters (on p and 59–60), the alphabet, adapted to modern English, can be discovered and the above runic title also read. On the Map all the normal runes are found, except for X. I and U are used for J and V. There was no rune for Q (use CW); nor for Z (the dwarf-rune may be used if required). It will be found, however, that some single runes stand for two modern letters: *th*, *ng*, *ee*; other runes of the same kind (*ea* and *st*) were also sometimes used. The secret door was marked D. From the side a hand pointed to this, and under it was written:

ÞINDM·FR+HIXH·ÞM·DFR·F+D·FRX·DFR·FFKH·FBRMF4T: P. P.

The last two runes are the initials of Thror and Thrain. The moon-runes read by Elrond were:

4TF+D·BR·ÞM·XRMR·4TF+M·HFM+·ÞM·PRDGH·K+FKKH·F+
D·ÞM·4M+TI·X·4D+·PIF·ÞM·TF4T·TIXHT·FF·DNRIT+4·DFR·
PICT·4HITM·DGF+·ÞM·KMRHFM.

On the Map the compass points are marked in runes, with East at the top, as usual in dwarf-maps, and so read clockwise: E(ast), S(outh), W(est), N(orth).



The hill : hobbiton-across-the-Water



The Hill: Hobbiton-across-the-Water

Chapter I. An Unexpected Party



IN A HOLE in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle. The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats — the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill — The Hill, as all the people for many miles round called it — and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.

This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins. The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected. He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained — well, you will see whether he gained anything in the end.

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End of Sample