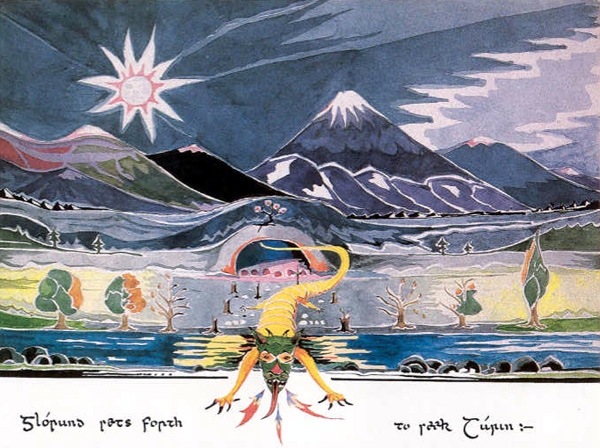
**John Ronald Reuel Tolkien 1892 – 1973**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J.\_R.\_R.\_Tolkien**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien)

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**John Ronald Reuel Tolkien**, [CBE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_British_Empire) (IPA: [/ˈtɒlkiːn/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-0)) (3 January [1892](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1892_in_literature) – 2 September [1973](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_in_literature)) was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_people) [writer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_literature), [poet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry), [philologist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology), and university professor, best known as the author of the [high fantasy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_fantasy) classic works [*The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit) and [*The Lord of the Rings*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings).

Tolkien was [Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rawlinson_and_Bosworth_Professor_of_Anglo-Saxon) of [Anglo-Saxon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_language) at [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University) from 1925 to 1945, and [Merton Professor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merton_Professors) of [English Language and Literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies).[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-1) from 1945 to 1959. He was a close friend of [C. S. Lewis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._S._Lewis) – they were both members of the informal literary discussion group known as the [Inklings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inklings). Tolkien was appointed a Commander of the [Order of the British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_British_Empire) by Queen [Elizabeth II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II_of_the_United_Kingdom) on 28 March 1972.

After his death, Tolkien's son, [Christopher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Tolkien), published a series of works based on his father's extensive notes and unpublished manuscripts, including [*The Silmarillion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Silmarillion). These, together with *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, form a connected body of tales, poems, fictional histories, invented languages, and literary essays about an imagined world called [Arda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arda), and [Middle-earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle-earth)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-2) within it. Between 1951 and 1955 Tolkien applied the word [*legendarium*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legendarium) to the larger part of these writings.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-3)

While many other authors had published works of fantasy before Tolkien,[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-de_Camp-4) the great success of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* when they were published in paperback in the United States led directly to a popular resurgence of the genre. This has caused Tolkien to be popularly identified as the "father" of modern fantasy literature[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-5)—or more precisely, high fantasy.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-encyc-6) Tolkien's writings have [inspired many other works of fantasy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Works_inspired_by_J._R._R._Tolkien) and have had a lasting effect on the entire field. In 2008, [*The Times*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Times) ranked him sixth on a list of 'The 50 greatest British writers since 1945'.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-7)

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| **Contents**   * [1 Biography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Biography)   + [1.1 Tolkien family origins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Tolkien_family_origins)   + [1.2 Childhood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Childhood)   + [1.3 Youth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Youth)   + [1.4 Courtship and marriage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Courtship_and_marriage)   + [1.5 World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#World_War_I)     - [1.5.1 Homefront](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Homefront)   + [1.6 Academic and writing career](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Academic_and_writing_career)   + [1.7 Family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Family)   + [1.8 Friendships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Friendships)     - [1.8.1 C.S. Lewis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#C.S._Lewis)     - [1.8.2 W.H. Auden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#W.H._Auden)   + [1.9 Retirement and old age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Retirement_and_old_age)   + [1.10 Death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Death) * [2 Views](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Views)   + [2.1 Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Religion)   + [2.2 Politics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Politics) * [3 Writing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Writing)   + [3.1 Influences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Influences)   + [3.2 The Silmarillion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#The_Silmarillion)   + [3.3 Children's books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Children.27s_books)   + [3.4 The Hobbit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#The_Hobbit)   + [3.5 The Lord of the Rings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#The_Lord_of_the_Rings)   + [3.6 Posthumous publications](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Posthumous_publications) * [4 Languages and philology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Languages_and_philology)   + [4.1 Linguistic career](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Linguistic_career)   + [4.2 Language construction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Language_construction) * [5 Legacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Legacy)   + [5.1 Adaptations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Adaptations)   + [5.2 Memorials](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Memorials)   + [5.3 Blue plaques](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Blue_plaques) * [6 Bibliography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Bibliography) * [7 References](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#References)   + [7.1 General references](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#General_references)   + [7.2 Notes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Notes)   + [7.3 Further reading](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#Further_reading) * [8 External links](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#External_links) |

**Biography**

**Tolkien family origins**

Most of Tolkien's paternal ancestors were craftsmen. The Tolkien family had its roots in the [German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany) [Kingdom of Saxony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Saxony), but had been living in England since the 18th century, becoming "quickly and intensely English".[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-8) The surname *Tolkien* is Anglicized from *Tollkiehn* (i.e. German *tollkühn*, "foolhardy", etymologically corresponding to English *dull-keen*, literally [*oxymoron*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxymoron)), and the surname *Rashbold*, given to two characters in Tolkien's [*The Notion Club Papers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Notion_Club_Papers), is a [pun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pun) on this.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-9)

Tolkien's maternal grandparents, John and h Jane Suffield, were [Baptists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptists) who lived in [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham) and owned a shop in the city centre. The Suffield family had run various businesses out of the same building, called Lamb House, since the early 1800s. Beginning in 1812 Tolkien's great-great grandfather William Suffield owned and operated a book and stationery shop there; Tolkien's great-grandfather, also John Suffield, was there from 1826 with a [drapery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drapery) and [hosiery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hosiery) business.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-10)

**[] Childhood**

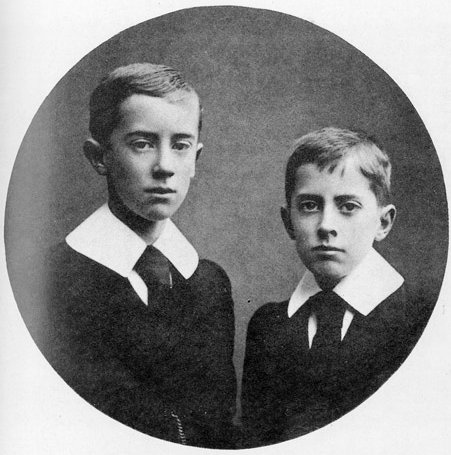
John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on 3 January 1892, in [Bloemfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloemfontein) in the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State) (now [Free State Province](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_State_Province), part of [South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa)) to [Arthur Reuel Tolkien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Tolkien) (1857–1896), an English bank manager, and his wife Mabel, *née* Suffield (1870–1904). The couple had left England when Arthur was promoted to head the Bloemfontein office of the British bank he worked for. Tolkien had one sibling, his younger brother, Hilary Arthur Reuel, who was born on 17 February 1894.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-Biography22-11)

As a child, Tolkien was bitten by a large [baboon spider](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baboon_spider) (a type of [tarantula](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarantula)) in the garden, an event which would have later echoes in his stories. [[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-12) In another such incident, a family house-boy, who thought Tolkien a beautiful child, took the baby to his kraal to show him off, returning him the next morning.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-13)

When he was three, Tolkien went to England with his mother and brother on what was intended to be a lengthy family visit. His father, however, died in South Africa of [rheumatic fever](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rheumatic_fever) before he could join them.[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-14) This left the family without an income, so Tolkien's mother took him to live with her parents in Stirling Road, Birmingham. Soon after, in 1896, they moved to [Sarehole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarehole) (now in [Hall Green](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hall_Green)), then a [Worcestershire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worcestershire) village, later annexed to Birmingham.[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-15) He enjoyed exploring [Sarehole Mill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarehole_Mill) and [Moseley Bog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moseley_Bog) and the [Clent Hills](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clent_Hills) and [Malvern Hills](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malvern_Hills), which would later inspire scenes in his books, along with other Worcestershire towns and villages such as [Bromsgrove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromsgrove), [Alcester](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcester), and [Alvechurch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvechurch) and places such as his aunt's farm of Bag End, the name of which would be used in his fiction.[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-16)

Mabel tutored her two sons, and Ronald, as he was known in the family, was a keen pupil.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-17) She taught him a great deal of [botany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botany), and awakened in her son the enjoyment of the look and feel of plants. Young Tolkien liked to draw landscapes and trees, but his favourite lessons were those concerning languages, and his mother taught him the rudiments of [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) very early.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-DoughanBio-18) He could read by the age of four, and could write fluently soon afterwards. His mother allowed him to read many books. He disliked [*Treasure Island*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treasure_Island) and [*The Pied Piper*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pied_Piper), and thought [*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice%27s_Adventures_in_Wonderland) by [Lewis Carroll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Carroll) was amusing but disturbing. He liked stories about ["Red Indians"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) and the fantasy works by [George MacDonald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_MacDonald).[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-Biography22-11) In addition, the "Fairy Books" of [Andrew Lang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Lang) were particularly important to him and their influence is apparent in some of his later writings.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-19)

Tolkien attended [King Edward's School, Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Edward%27s_School,_Birmingham) and, while a student there, helped "line the route" for the [coronation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation) parade of King [George V](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom), being posted just outside the gates of [Buckingham Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace).[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-Letters306-20) He later attended [St. Philip's School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Philip%27s_School).



Ronald (left) and Hilary Tolkien in 1905 (from Carpenter's *Biography*)

Mabel Tolkien was received into the [Roman Catholic Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church) in 1900 despite vehement protests by her Baptist family,[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-21) who then stopped all financial assistance to her. She died of acute complications of [diabetes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diabetes) in 1904, when Tolkien was 12, at Fern Cottage in [Rednal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rednal), which they were then renting. Mabel Tolkien was then about 34 years of age, about as long as a person with [diabetes mellitus type 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diabetes_mellitus_type_1) could live with no treatment—[insulin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insulin) would not be discovered until two decades later. For the rest of his own life Tolkien felt that his mother had become a [martyr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr) for her faith. This feeling had a profound effect on his own Catholic beliefs.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-22)

Prior to her death, Mabel Tolkien had assigned the guardianship of her sons to Fr. Francis Xavier Morgan of the [Birmingham Oratory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_Oratory), who was assigned to bring them up as good Catholics. Tolkien grew up in the [Edgbaston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgbaston) area of Birmingham. He lived there in the shadow of [Perrott's Folly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perrott%27s_Folly) and the [Victorian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_architecture) tower of [Edgbaston Waterworks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgbaston_Waterworks), which may have influenced the images of the dark towers within his works. Another strong influence was the [romantic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism) medievalist paintings of [Edward Burne-Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Burne-Jones) and the [Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Raphaelite_Brotherhood); the [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_Museum_and_Art_Gallery) has a large and world-renowned collection of works and had put it on free public display from around 1908.

### [] Youth

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Jrrt_1911.jpg)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/skins-1.5/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Jrrt_1911.jpg)

J. R. R. Tolkien in 1911 (from Carpenter's *Biography*)

In 1911, while they were at [King Edward's School, Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Edward%27s_School,_Birmingham), Tolkien and three friends, Rob Gilson, Geoffrey Smith and Christopher Wiseman, formed a semi-secret society which they called "the T.C.B.S.", the initials standing for "Tea Club and Barrovian Society", alluding to their fondness for drinking tea in Barrow's Stores near the school and, illicitly, in the school library.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-23) After leaving school, the members stayed in touch, and in December 1914, they held a "Council" in London, at Wiseman's home. For Tolkien, the result of this meeting was a strong dedication to writing poetry.

In the summer of 1911, Tolkien went on holiday in Switzerland, a trip that he recollects vividly in a 1968 letter,[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-Letters306-20) noting that [Bilbo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilbo_Baggins)'s journey across the [Misty Mountains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misty_Mountains) ("including the glissade down the slithering stones into the pine woods") is directly based on his adventures as their party of 12 hiked from [Interlaken](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interlaken) to [Lauterbrunnen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lauterbrunnen), and on to camp in the [moraines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moraine) beyond [Mürren](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%BCrren). Fifty-seven years later, Tolkien remembered his regret at leaving the view of the eternal snows of [Jungfrau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungfrau) and [Silberhorn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silberhorn) ("the Silvertine ([Celebdil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celebdil)) of my dreams"). They went across the [Kleine Scheidegg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleine_Scheidegg) on to [Grindelwald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grindelwald) and across the [Grosse Scheidegg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grosse_Scheidegg) to [Meiringen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meiringen). They continued across the [Grimsel Pass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grimsel_Pass) and through the upper [Valais](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valais) to [Brig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brig,_Switzerland), and on to the [Aletsch glacier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aletsch_glacier) and [Zermatt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zermatt).[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-24)

In October of the same year, Tolkien began studying at [Exeter College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exeter_College,_Oxford), one of the constituent colleges of the [University of Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford). He initially studied [Classics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classics) but changed to [English Language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Language), graduating in 1915.

### [] Courtship and marriage

At the age of 16, Tolkien met [h Mary Bratt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edith_Bratt), who was three years older, when J.R.R. and Hilary Tolkien moved into the same boarding house. According to Humphrey Carpenter:

h and Ronald took to frequenting Birmingham teashops, especially one which had a balcony overlooking the pavement. There they would sit and throw sugarlumps into the hats of passers-by, moving to the next table when the sugar bowl was empty. ...With two people of their personalities and in their position, romance was bound to flourish. Both were orphans in need of affection, and they found that they could give it to each other. During the summer of 1909, they decided that they were in love.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-25)

His guardian, Father Francis Morgan, viewing h as a distraction from Tolkien's school work and horrified that his young charge was seriously involved with a [Protestant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) girl, prohibited him from meeting, talking, or even corresponding with her until he was twenty-one. He obeyed this prohibition to the letter,[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-26) with one notable early exception which made Father Morgan threaten to cut short his University career if he did not stop.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-27)

On the evening of his twenty-first birthday, Tolkien wrote to h a declaration of his love and asked her to marry him. h replied saying that she had already agreed to marry another man, but that she had done so because she had believed Tolkien had forgotten her. The two met up and beneath a railway viaduct renewed their love; h returned her engagement ring and announced that she was marrying Tolkien instead.[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-28) Following their engagement h converted to Catholicism at Tolkien's insistence.[[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-29) They were formally engaged in Birmingham, in January 1913, and married in [Warwick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warwick,_England), [England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England), at Saint Mary Immaculate Catholic Church on 22 March 1916.[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-30)

### [] World War I



Tolkien in 1916, wearing his British Army uniform (from Carpenter's *Biography*)

The [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) was then engaged in fighting [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), and Tolkien volunteered for military service and was commissioned in the [British Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Army) as a [Second Lieutenant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Lieutenant) in the [Lancashire Fusiliers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancashire_Fusiliers).[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-31) He trained with the 13th (Reserve) Battalion on Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, for eleven months. He was then transferred to the 11th (Service) Battalion with the [British Expionary Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Expeditionary_Force), arriving in France on 4 June 1916.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-32) He later wrote:

Junior officers were being killed off, a dozen a minute. Parting from my wife then ... it was like a death.[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-33)

Tolkien served as a signals officer during the [Battle of the Somme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Somme_%281916%29), participating in the [Battle of Thiepval Ridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Thiepval_Ridge). He came down with [trench fever](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trench_fever), a disease carried by the lice which were so very plentiful in [No Man's Land](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Man%27s_Land), on 27 October 1916. According to the memoirs of the Reverend Mervyn S. Evers, [Anglican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican) chaplain to the Lancashire Fusilliers:

On one occasion I spent the night with the Brigade Machine Gun Officer and the Signals Officer in one of the captured German dugouts ... We dossed down for the night in the hope of getting some sleep, but it was not to be. We no sooner laid down than hoards of lice got up. So we went round to the medical officer, who was also in the dugout with his equipment, and he gave us some ointment which he assured us would keep the little brutes away. We anointed ourselves all over with the stuff and again lay down in great hopes, but it was not to be, because instead of discouraging them it seemed to act like a kind of *ors d'oeuvre* and the little beggars went at their feast with renewed vigor.[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-34)

Tolkien was invalided to England on 8 November 1916.[[36]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-35) Many of his dearest friends, including Gilson and Smith of the T.C.B.S., were killed in the war. In later years, Tolkien indignantly declared that those who searched his works for parallels to the [Second World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) were entirely mistaken:

One has indeed personally to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression; but as the years go by it seems now often forgotten that to be caught in youth by 1914 was no less hideous an experience than to be involved in 1939 and the following years. By 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead.[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-36)

The weak and emaciated Tolkien spent the remainder of the war alternating between hospitals and garrison duties, being deemed medically unfit for general service.[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-37)[[39]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-38) It was at this time h bore their first son, John Francis Reuel Tolkien.

#### [] Homefront

During his recovery in a cottage in [Great Haywood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Haywood), [Staffordshire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staffordshire,_England), England, he began to work on what he called [*The Book of Lost Tales*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Lost_Tales), beginning with [*The Fall of Gondolin*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fall_of_Gondolin). Throughout 1917 and 1918 his illness kept recurring, but he had recovered enough to do home service at various camps, and was promoted to lieutenant.

When he was stationed at [Kingston upon Hull](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingston_upon_Hull), he and h went walking in the woods at nearby [Roos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roos), and h began to dance for him in a clearing among the flowering hemlock:

We walked in a wood where hemlock was growing, a sea of white flowers.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-39)

This incident inspired the account of the meeting of [Beren and Lúthien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beren_and_L%C3%BAthien), and Tolkien often referred to h as "my [Lúthien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BAthien)."[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-40)

### [] Academic and writing career

Tolkien's first civilian job after World War I was at the [*Oxford English Dictionary*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_English_Dictionary), where he worked mainly on the history and etymology of words of Germanic origin beginning with the letter *W*.[[42]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-41) In 1920 he took up a post as [Reader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reader_%28academic_rank%29) in English language at the [University of Leeds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Leeds), and in 1924 was made a professor there. While at Leeds he produced *A Middle English Vocabulary* and, (with [E. V. Gordon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._V._Gordon)), a definitive ion of [*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Gawain_and_the_Green_Knight), both becoming academic standard works for many decades. In 1925 he returned to Oxford as [Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rawlinson_and_Bosworth_Professor_of_Anglo-Saxon), with a fellowship at [Pembroke College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pembroke_College,_Oxford).



20 [Northmoor Road](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northmoor_Road), the former home of J.R.R. Tolkien in [North Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Oxford)

During his time at Pembroke, Tolkien wrote [*The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit) and the first two volumes of [*The Lord of the Rings*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings), largely at 20 [Northmoor Road](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northmoor_Road) in [North Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Oxford), where a [blue plaque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_plaque) was placed in 2002. He also published a philological essay in 1932 on the name '[Nodens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nodens)', following Sir [Mortimer Wheeler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_Wheeler)'s unearthing of a [Roman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome) [Asclepieion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asclepieion) at [Lydney Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydney_Park), [Gloucestershire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloucestershire), in 1928.[[43]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-42)

Of Tolkien's academic publications, the 1936 lecture "[Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf:_the_Monsters_and_the_Critics)" had a lasting influence on [Beowulf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf) research.[[44]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-43) Lewis E. Nicholson said that the article Tolkien wrote about Beowulf is "widely recognized as a turning point in Beowulfian criticism", noting that Tolkien established the primacy of the poetic nature of the work as opposed to the purely linguistic elements.[[45]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-44) At the time, the consensus of scholarship deprecated *Beowulf* for dealing with childish battles with monsters rather than realistic tribal warfare; Tolkien argued that the author of [*Beowulf*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf) was addressing human destiny in general, not as limited by particular tribal politics, and therefore the monsters were essential to the poem.[[46]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-45) Where *Beowulf* does deal with specific tribal struggles, as at [Finnsburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnsburg), Tolkien argued firmly against reading in fantastic elements.[[47]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-46) In the essay, Tolkien also revealed how highly he regarded Beowulf: "Beowulf is among my most valued sources," and this influence can be seen in *The Lord of the Rings*.[[48]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-47)

In 1945, Tolkien moved to [Merton College, Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merton_College,_Oxford), becoming the [Merton Professor of English Language and Literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merton_Professors), in which post he remained until his retirement in 1959. Tolkien completed *The Lord of the Rings* in 1948, close to a decade after the first sketches.

Tolkien also helped to translate the [*Jerusalem Bible*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_Bible), which was published in 1966.[[49]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-48)

### [] Family

The Tolkiens had four children: John Francis Reuel Tolkien (17 November 1917 – 22 January 2003), Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien (22 October 1920 – 27 February 1984), [Christopher John Reuel Tolkien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Tolkien) (born 21 November 1924) and Priscilla Mary Anne Reuel Tolkien (born 18 June 1929). Tolkien was very devoted to his children and sent them illustrated letters from [Father Christmas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Christmas) when they were young. There were more characters added each year, such as the Polar Bear, Father Christmas' helper, the Snow Man, the gardener, Ilbereth the elf, his secretary, and various other minor characters. The major characters would relate tales of Father Christmas' battles against [goblins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goblins) who rode on [bats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bats) and the various pranks committed by the Polar Bear.

### [] Friendships

#### [] C.S. Lewis

[C. S. Lewis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._S._Lewis), whom Tolkien first met at Oxford, was perhaps his closest friend and colleague, although their relationship cooled later in their lives. They had a shared affection for good talk, laughter and beer, and in May 1927 Tolkien enrolled Lewis in the Coalbiters club, which read Icelandic sagas in the original [Old Norse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Norse), and, as Carpenter notes, 'a long and complex friendship had begun.' It was Tolkien (and Hugh Dyson) who helped C.S. Lewis return to Christianity, and Tolkien was accustomed to read aloud passages from *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to Lewis' strong approval and encouragement at the Inklings—often meeting in Lewis' big Magdalen sitting-room—and in private.

It was the arrival of [Charles Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Williams_%28UK_writer%29), who worked for the Oxford University Press, that changed the relationship between Tolkien and Lewis. Lewis' enthusiasm shifted almost imperceptibly from Tolkien to Williams, especially during the writing of Lewis' third novel [*That Hideous Strength*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/That_Hideous_Strength).

Tolkien had for a long time been extremely bothered by what he perceived as Lewis's [Anti-Catholicism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Catholicism). In a letter to his son Christopher, he declared:

... hatred of our Church is after all the only real foundation of the C[hurch] of E[ngland]—so deep laid that it remains when all the superstructure seems removed (C.S.L. for example reveres the [Blessed Sacrament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blessed_Sacrament) and admires nuns!). Yet if a [Lutheran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran) is put in jail he is up in arms; but if Catholic priests are slaughtered—he disbelieves it (and I daresay really thinks they asked for it).[[50]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-49)

Lewis' growing reputation as a Christian apologist and his return to the Anglican fold also annoyed Tolkien, who had a deep resentment of the Church of England. By the mid-forties, Tolkien felt that Lewis was receiving a good deal "too much publicity for his or any of our tastes".[[51]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-50)

Tolkien and Lewis might have grown closer during their days at Headington, but this was prevented by Lewis' marriage to [Joy Davidman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joy_Davidman). Tolkien felt that Lewis expected his friends to pay court to her, even though as a bachelor in the thirties, he had often ignored the fact that his friends had wives to go home to. Tolkien also may have felt jealous about a woman's intrusion into their close friendship, just as h Tolkien had felt jealous of Lewis' intrusion into her marriage.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] It did not help matters that Lewis did not initially tell Tolkien about his marriage to Davidman or that when Tolkien finally did find out, he also discovered that Lewis had married a divorcee, which was offensive to Tolkien's Catholic beliefs. Tolkien described the marriage as "very strange".[[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-51)

The cessation of Tolkien's frequent meetings with Lewis in the 1950s marked the end of the 'clubbable' chapter in Tolkien's life, which started with the T.C.B.S. at school and ended with the Inklings at Oxford.

His friendship with Lewis was nevertheless renewed to some degree in later years. As Tolkien was to comment in a letter to Priscilla after Lewis' death in November, 1963:

So far I have felt the normal feelings of a man of my age - like an old tree that is losing all its leaves one by one: this feels like an axe-blow near the roots.[[53]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-52)

#### [] W.H. Auden

[W. H. Auden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._H._Auden), who attended Tolkien's lectures as an undergraduate, was also an occasional correspondent and was on friendly terms with Tolkien from the mid-1950s until Tolkien's death, initiated by Auden's fascination with *The Lord of the Rings*: Auden was among the most prominent early critics to praise the work. Tolkien wrote in a 1971 letter:

I am […] very deeply in Auden's debt in recent years. His support of me and interest in my work has been one of my chief encouragements. He gave me very good reviews, notices and letters from the beginning when it was by no means a popular thing to do. He was, in fact, sneered at for it.[[54]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-53)

### [] Retirement and old age

During his life in retirement, from 1959 up to his death in 1973, Tolkien received steadily increasing public attention and literary fame. The sale of his books was so profitable that he regretted he had not chosen early retirement.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-DoughanBio-18) While at first he wrote enthusiastic answers to readers' enquiries, he became more and more suspicious of emerging [Tolkien fandom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolkien_fandom), especially among the [hippie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippie) movement in the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States).[[55]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-54) In a 1972 letter he deplores having become a [cult-figure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolkien_fandom), but admits that:

... even the nose of a very modest idol [...] cannot remain entirely untickled by the sweet smell of incense![[56]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-55)

Fan attention became so intense that Tolkien had to take his phone number out of the public directory[[57]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-56) and eventually he and h moved to [Bournemouth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bournemouth) on the south coast.

Tolkien was appointed by [Queen Elizabeth II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II_of_the_United_Kingdom) a Commander of the [Order of the British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_British_Empire) in the [New Year's Honours List](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year%27s_Honours_List) of 1 January 1972[[58]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-57) and received the insignia of the Order at [Buckingham Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace) on 28 March 1972.

### [] Death



The grave of J. R. R. and h Tolkien, [Wolvercote Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolvercote_Cemetery), [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford)

h Tolkien died on 29 November 1971, at the age of 82.[[59]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-58) Tolkien had the name [Lúthien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BAthien) engraved on the stone at [Wolvercote Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolvercote_Cemetery), [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford). When Tolkien died 21 months later on 2 September 1973, at the age of 81, he was buried in the same grave, with [Beren](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beren) added to his name. The engravings read:

|  |
| --- |
| h Mary Tolkien **Lúthien** 1889–1971 John Ronald Reuel Tolkien **Beren** 1892–1973 |

**[] Views**

Tolkien was a devout [Roman Catholic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church), and in his religious and political views he was mostly conservative, in the sense of favouring established conventions and orthodoxies over innovation and modernization; in 1943 he wrote, "My political opinions lean more and more to [Anarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchy) ([philosophically understood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophical_anarchism) to mean abolition of control, not whiskered men with bombs)—or to 'unconstitutional' [Monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchism)."[[60]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-59)

Tolkien had an intense dislike for the side effects of [industrialization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrialization), which he considered to be devouring the English countryside. For most of his adult life, he was disdainful of [automobiles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automobile), preferring to ride a bicycle.[[61]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-60) This attitude can be seen in his work, most famously in the portrayal of the forced "industrialization" of [The Shire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shire_%28Middle-earth%29) in *The Lord of the Rings*.[[62]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-61)

Many[[63]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-MEreffotrForeword-62) have commented on a number of potential parallels between the Middle-earth saga and events in Tolkien's lifetime. *The Lord of the Rings* is often thought to represent England during and immediately after World War II. Tolkien ardently rejected this opinion in the foreword to the second ion of the novel, stating he preferred applicability to allegory.[[63]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-MEreffotrForeword-62) This theme is taken up in greater length in his essay "[On Fairy-Stories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_Fairy-Stories)", where he argues fairy-stories are so apt because they are consistent with themselves and some truths about reality. He concludes that Christianity itself follows this pattern of inner consistency and external truth. His belief in the fundamental truths of Christianity and their place in mythology leads commentators to find Christian themes in *The Lord of the Rings*, despite its noticeable lack of overt religious references, religious ceremony or appeals to God. This is not surprising, since the phenomena which in our real world give rise to religious impulses are, in Middle-earth, an ordinary and expected part of the natural world. Use of religious references was frequently a subject of disagreement between Tolkien and C.S. Lewis,[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)] whose work is often overtly allegorical. This having been said, Tolkien, on many occasions, spoke of the Catholicity or overt Catholic nature of his work.[[64]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-63)[[2]](http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/arts/al0161.html)

His love of myths and devout faith came together in his assertion that he believed that [mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythology) is the divine echo of "the Truth".[[65]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-64) This view was expressed in his poem [*Mythopoeia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythopoeia_%28genre%29),[[66]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-65) and his idea that myths held "fundamental truths" became a central theme of the [Inklings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inklings) in general.

**[] Religion**

Tolkien's devout faith was a significant factor in the conversion of [C. S. Lewis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._S._Lewis) from [atheism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism) to [Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), although Tolkien was greatly disappointed that Lewis chose to join the [Church of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England),[[67]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-CSL-66) which Tolkien objected to as "a pathetic and shadowing medley of half remembered traditions and mutilated beliefs", instead of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the last years of his life, Tolkien became greatly disappointed by the reforms and changes implemented after the [Second Vatican Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council), as his grandson [Simon Tolkien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Tolkien) recalls:

I vividly remember going to church with him in [Bournemouth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bournemouth). He was a devout Roman Catholic and it was soon after the Church had changed the [liturgy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy) from Latin to English. My grandfather obviously didn't agree with this and made all the responses very loudly in Latin while the rest of the congregation answered in English. I found the whole experience quite excruciating, but my grandfather was oblivious. He simply had to do what he believed to be right.[[68]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-67)

According to a recent article:

[Tolkien] knew that his imaginative and spiritual roots were in the Ancient Church, and he was bewildered by the theological wreckers who would, as he put it, pull up a tree to discover its roots. No matter how scandalized, he reaffirmed his Faith in the Church and the Pope because they defended the Blessed Sacrament and kept it in its prime place as the center of our worship.[[69]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-68)

**[] Politics**

Tolkien's views were guided by his strict Catholicism. He voiced support for [Francisco Franco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Franco)'s regime during the [Spanish Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Civil_War) upon learning that [Republican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Spanish_Republic) [death squads](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_squads#Spain) were destroying churches and [killing large numbers of priests and nuns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Terror_%28Spain%29).[[70]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-Franco-69)[[71]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-70) He also expressed admiration for the South African poet and fellow Catholic [Roy Campbell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Campbell_%28poet%29) after a 1944 meeting. Since Campbell had allegedly served with Franco's armies in Spain, Tolkien regarded him as a defender of the Catholic faith, while C. S. Lewis composed poetry openly satirising Campbell's "mixture of Catholicism and [Fascism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism)".[[72]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-71)

The question of [racist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism) or [racialist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racialism) elements in Tolkien's views and works has been the matter of some scholarly debate.[[73]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-72) Christine Chism[[74]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-73) distinguishes accusations as falling into three categories: intentional racism,[[75]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-74) unconscious [Eurocentric](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurocentric) bias, and an evolution from latent racism in Tolkien's early work to a conscious rejection of racist tendencies in his late work.

Tolkien is known to have condemned [Nazi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism) "race-doctrine" and [anti-Semitism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism) as "wholly pernicious and unscientific".[[76]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-75) He also said of [racial segregation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_segregation) in [South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa),

The treatment of colour nearly always horrifies anyone going out from Britain.[[77]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-76)

In 1968, he objected to a description of Middle-earth as "Nordic", a term he said he disliked due to its association with [racialist theories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordic_theory).[[78]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-77) Tolkien had nothing but contempt for [Adolf Hitler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler), whom he accused of "perverting ... and making for ever accursed, that noble northern spirit" which was so dear to him.[[79]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-78) However, he could get just as agitated over "lesser evils" that struck nearer home; he denounced [anti-German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-German_sentiment) fanaticism in the British war effort during World War II. In 1944, he wrote in a letter to his son Christopher:

It is distressing to see the press grovelling in the gutter as low as [Goebbels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Goebbels) in his prime, shrieking that any German commander who holds out in a desperate situation (when, too, the military needs of his side clearly benefit) is a drunkard, and a besotted fanatic ... There was a solemn article in the local paper seriously advocating systematic exterminating of the entire German nation as the only proper course after military victory: because, if you please, they are [rattlesnakes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattlesnake), and don't know the difference between good and evil! (What of the writer?) The Germans have just as much right to declare the [Poles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poles) and [Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew) exterminable vermin, [subhuman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Untermensch), as we have to select the Germans: in other words, no right, whatever they have done.[[80]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-79)

He was horrified by the [atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki), referring to the [Bomb's creators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan_Project) as "these lunatic physicists" and "[Babel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_Babel)-builders".[[81]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-atom-80)

**[] Writing**



Tolkien's cover design for the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*

Beginning with [*The Book of Lost Tales*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Lost_Tales), written while recuperating from illnesses contracted during [The Battle of the Somme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Battle_of_the_Somme), Tolkien devised several themes that were reused in successive drafts of his [*legendarium*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legendarium). The two most prominent stories, the tales of [Beren and Lúthien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beren_and_L%C3%BAthien) and that of [Túrin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BArin), were carried forward into long narrative poems (published in [*The Lays of Beleriand*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lays_of_Beleriand)).

**[] Influences**

*Main article:* [*J. R. R. Tolkien's influences*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien%27s_influences)

One of the greatest influences on Tolkien was the [Arts and Crafts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_movement) polymath [William Morris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Morris). Tolkien wished to imitate Morris's prose and poetry romances,[[82]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-81) along with the general style and approach, he took elements such as the Dead Marshes in *The Lord of the Rings*[[83]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-82) and Mirkwood.[[84]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-83)

[Edward Wyke-Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Wyke-Smith)'s *Marvellous Land of the Snergs*, with its 'table-high' title characters, strongly influenced the incidents, themes, and depiction of Bilbo's race in *The Hobbit*.[[85]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-84)

Tolkien also cited [H. Rider Haggard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._Rider_Haggard)'s novel [*She*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She_%28novel%29) in a telephone interview: 'I suppose as a boy *She* interested me as much as anything—like the Greek shard of Amyntas [Amenartas], which was the kind of machine by which everything got moving.'[[86]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-85) A supposed facsimile of this [potsherd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potsherd) appeared in Haggard's first ion, and the ancient inscription it bore, once translated, led the English characters to She's ancient kingdom. Critics have compared this device to the Testament of Isildur in *The Lord of the Rings*[[87]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-86) and Tolkien's efforts to produce as an illustration a realistic page from the [Book of Mazarbul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Mazarbul).[[88]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-87) Critics starting with [Edwin Muir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwin_Muir)[[89]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-88) have found resemblances between Haggard's romances and Tolkien's.[[90]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-89)[[91]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-90)[[92]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-91)

Tolkien wrote of being impressed as a boy by [S. R. Crockett](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Rutherford_Crockett)'s historical novel *The Black Douglas* and of basing the Necromancer ([Sauron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sauron)) on its villain, [Gilles de Retz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilles_de_Retz).[[93]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-92) Incidents in both *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* are similar in narrative and style to the novel,[[94]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-93) and its overall style and imagery have been suggested as an influence on Tolkien.[[95]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-94)

Tolkien was much inspired by early [Germanic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_peoples), especially [Anglo-Saxon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxons) literature, [poetry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_poetry) and [mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_mythology), which were his chosen and much-loved areas of expertise. These sources of inspiration included [Anglo-Saxon literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_literature) such as [*Beowulf*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf), [Norse sagas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saga) such as the [*Volsunga saga*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volsunga_saga) and the [*Hervarar saga*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hervarar_saga),[[96]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-95) the [*Poetic Edda*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetic_Edda), the [*Prose Edda*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prose_Edda), the [*Nibelungenlied*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nibelungenlied) and numerous other culturally related works.[[97]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-DayTolkiensRing-96)

Despite the similarities of his work to the *Volsunga saga* and the *Nibelungenlied*, which were the basis for [Richard Wagner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wagner)'s opera series,Tolkien dismissed critics' direct comparisons to Wagner, telling his publisher, "Both rings were round, and there the resemblance ceases." However, some critics[[98]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-97)[[99]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-98)[[100]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-99)believe that Tolkien was, in fact, indebted to Wagner for elements such as the "concept of the Ring as giving the owner mastery of the world..."[[101]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-100) Two of the characteristics possessed by the One Ring, its inherent malevolence and corrupting power upon minds and wills, were not present in the mythical sources but have a central role in Wagner's opera.

Tolkien himself also acknowledged [Homer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homer), [Sophocles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophocles), and the [Finnish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_people) and [Karelian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karelian) [*Kalevala*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalevala) as influences or sources for some of his stories and ideas.[[102]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-101)

Dimitra Fimi, along with Douglas Anderson, John Garth and many other prominent Tolkien scholars show that Tolkien also drew influence from a variety of [Celtic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_mythology) ([Scottish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_mythology) , [Welsh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_mythology) and [Gaelic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaelic_mythology)) history and legends,[[103]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-102)[[104]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-103) though after the *Silmarillion* manuscript was rejected, in part for its 'eye-splitting' Celtic names, Tolkien rejected their Celtic origin:

Needless to say they are not Celtic! Neither are the tales. I do know Celtic things (many in their original languages Irish and Welsh), and feel for them a certain distaste: largely for their fundamental unreason. They have bright colour, but are like a broken stained glass window reassembled without design. They are in fact 'mad' as your reader says—but I don't believe I am.[[105]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-104)[[106]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-105)

A major philosophical influence on his writing is [Alfred the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_the_Great)'s Anglo-Saxon translation of [Boethius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anicius_Manlius_Severinus_Boethius)' [*Consolation of Philosophy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolation_of_Philosophy), known as the [*Lays of Boethius*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lays_of_Boethius).[[107]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-106) Characters in *The Lord of the Rings* such as [Frodo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frodo_Baggins), [Treebeard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treebeard), and [Elrond](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elrond) make noticeably Boethian remarks. Also, [Catholic theology and imagery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church) played a part in fashioning Tolkien's creative imagination, suffused as it was by his deeply religious spirit.[[108]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-107)[[97]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-DayTolkiensRing-96)

**[] *The Silmarillion***

Tolkien wrote a brief 'Sketch of the Mythology' of which the tales of Beren and Lúthien and of Túrin were part, and that Sketch eventually evolved into [*the Quenta Silmarillion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quenta_Silmarillion), an epic history that Tolkien started three times but never published. Tolkien hoped to publish it along with *The Lord of the Rings*, but publishers (both Allen & Unwin and Collins) got cold feet; moreover printing costs were very high in the post-war years, leading to *The Lord of the Rings* being published in three books.[[109]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-108) The story of this continuous redrafting is told in the posthumous series [*The History of Middle-earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_Middle-earth), which was ed by Tolkien's son, [Christopher Tolkien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Tolkien). From around 1936, he began to extend this framework to include the tale of *The Fall of* [*Númenor*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%BAmenor), which was inspired by the legend of [Atlantis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantis).

**[] Children's books**

In addition to his [mythopoetic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythopoeia) compositions, Tolkien enjoyed inventing fantasy stories to entertain his children.[[110]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-109) He wrote annual Christmas letters from [Father Christmas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Christmas) for them, building up a series of short stories (later compiled and published as [*The Father Christmas Letters*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Father_Christmas_Letters)). Other stories included [*Mr. Bliss*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Bliss), [*Roverandom*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roverandom), [*Smith of Wootton Major*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smith_of_Wootton_Major) and [*Farmer Giles of Ham*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmer_Giles_of_Ham). *Roverandom* and *Smith of Wootton Major*, like [*The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit), borrowed ideas from his *legendarium*.

**[] *The Hobbit***

Tolkien never expected his stories to become popular, but by sheer accident a book he had written some years before for his own children, called [*The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit), came in 1936 to the attention of Susan Dagnall, an employee of the London publishing firm George Allen & Unwin, who persuaded him to submit it for publication.[[111]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-110) However, the book attracted adult readers as well, and it became popular enough for the publisher to ask Tolkien to work on a sequel.

**[] *The Lord of the Rings***

Even though he felt uninspired on the topic, this request prompted Tolkien to begin what would become his most famous work: the epic three-volume novel [*The Lord of the Rings*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings) (published 1954–55). Tolkien spent more than ten years writing the primary narrative and appendices for *The Lord of the Rings*, during which time he received the constant support of the [Inklings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inklings), in particular his closest friend Lewis, the author of [*The Chronicles of Narnia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chronicles_of_Narnia). Both [*The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit) and [*The Lord of the Rings*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings) are set against the background of [*The Silmarillion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Silmarillion), but in a time long after it.

Tolkien at first intended *The Lord of the Rings* to be a children's tale in the style of *The Hobbit*, but it quickly grew darker and more serious in the writing.[[112]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-111) Though a direct sequel to *The Hobbit*, it addressed an older audience, drawing on the immense [back story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Back_story) of [Beleriand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beleriand) that Tolkien had constructed in previous years, and which eventually saw posthumous publication in [*The Silmarillion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Silmarillion) and other volumes. Tolkien's influence weighs heavily on the [fantasy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasy_fiction) genre that grew up after the success of *The Lord of the Rings*.

*The Lord of the Rings* became immensely popular in the 1960s and has remained so ever since, ranking as one of the most popular works of fiction of the 20th century, judged by both sales and reader surveys.[[113]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-112) In the 2003 "[Big Read](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Read)" survey conducted by the [BBC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC), *The Lord of the Rings* was found to be the "Nation's Best-loved Book". Australians voted *The Lord of the Rings* "[My Favourite Book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Favourite_Book)" in a 2004 survey conducted by the [Australian ABC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Broadcasting_Corporation).[[114]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-113) In a 1999 poll of [Amazon.com](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon.com) customers, *The Lord of the Rings* was judged to be their favourite "book of the millennium".[[115]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-114) In 2002 Tolkien was voted the 92nd "[greatest Briton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/100_Greatest_Britons)" in a poll conducted by the BBC, and in 2004 he was voted 35th in the [SABC3's Great South Africans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SABC3%27s_Great_South_Africans), the only person to appear in both lists. His popularity is not limited to the English-speaking world: in a 2004 poll inspired by the UK’s "Big Read" survey, about 250,000 Germans found *The Lord of the Rings* to be their favourite work of literature.[[116]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-115)

**[] Posthumous publications**

Tolkien had appointed his son [Christopher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Tolkien) to be his [literary executor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_executor), and he (with assistance from [Guy Gavriel Kay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Gavriel_Kay), later a well-known fantasy author in his own right) organized some of the unpublished material into a single coherent volume, published as *The Silmarillion* in [1977](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1977_in_literature) – his father had previously attempted to get a collection of 'Silmarillion' material published in 1937 before writing *The Lord of the Rings*[[117]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-116).

In [1980](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1980_in_literature) Christopher Tolkien followed *The Silmarillion* with a collection of more fragmentary material under the title [*Unfinished Tales*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unfinished_Tales). In subsequent years ([1983](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1983_in_literature)–[1996](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996_in_literature)) he published a large amount of the remaining unpublished materials together with notes and extensive commentary in a series of twelve volumes called [*The History of Middle-earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_Middle-earth). They contain unfinished, abandoned, alternative and outright contradictory accounts, since they were always a work in progress, and Tolkien only rarely settled on a definitive version for any of the stories. There is not complete consistency between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, the two most closely related works, because Tolkien never fully integrated all their traditions into each other. He commented in 1965, while ing *The Hobbit* for a third ion, that he would have preferred to completely rewrite the entire book due to the style of its prose.[[118]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-117)

More recently, in [2007](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_in_literature), the collection was completed with the publication of [*The Children of Húrin*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Children_of_H%C3%BArin) by [HarperCollins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HarperCollins) (in the UK and Canada) and [Houghton Mifflin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houghton_Mifflin) in the USA. The novel tells the story of [Túrin Turambar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BArin_Turambar) and his sister [Nienor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nienor), children of [Húrin Thalion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%BArin). The material was compiled by Christopher Tolkien from [*The Silmarillion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Silmarillion), [*Unfinished Tales*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unfinished_Tales), [*The History of Middle-earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_Middle-earth) and unpublished works.

The Department of Special Collections and University Archives of John P. Raynor, S.J., Library at [Marquette University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquette_University) in [Milwaukee, Wisconsin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milwaukee,_Wisconsin) preserves many of Tolkien's manuscripts;[[119]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-118) other original material is in [Oxford University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University)'s [Bodleian Library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodleian_Library). Marquette has the manuscripts and proofs of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit* and other works, including *Farmer Giles of Ham*, while the Bodleian holds the *Silmarillion* papers and Tolkien's academic work.[[120]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-119)

**[] Languages and philology**

**[] Linguistic career**

Both Tolkien's academic career and his literary production are inseparable from his love of [language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language) and [philology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology). He specialized in [Ancient Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek) philology at university, and in 1915 graduated with [Old Norse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Norse) as special subject. He worked for the [Oxford English Dictionary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_English_Dictionary) from 1918, and is cred with having worked on a number of words starting with the letter W, including [walrus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walrus), over which he struggled mightily.[[121]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-120) In 1920, he went to [Leeds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leeds) as Reader in English language, where he claimed cr for raising the number of students of [linguistics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistics) from five to twenty. He gave courses in [Old English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English) [heroic verse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heroic_verse), [history of English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_English), various [Old English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English) and [Middle English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_English) texts, Old and Middle English philology, introductory [Germanic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_languages) philology, [Gothic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_language), [Old Icelandic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Icelandic), and [Medieval Welsh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Welsh_language). When in 1925, aged thirty-three, Tolkien applied for the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professorship of Anglo-Saxon, he boasted that his students of Germanic philology in Leeds had even formed a "[Viking Club](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_revival)".[[122]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-121) He also had a certain, if imperfect, knowledge of [Finnish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_language).[[123]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-122)

Privately, Tolkien was attracted to "things of [racial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_%28classification_of_human_beings%29) and linguistic significance", and he entertained notions of an inherited taste of language, which he termed the "native tongue" as opposed to "cradle tongue" in his 1955 lecture [*English and Welsh*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_and_Welsh), which is crucial to his understanding of race and language. He considered [West Midlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Midlands_%28region%29) dialect of [Middle English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_English) to be his own "native tongue", and, as he wrote to [W. H. Auden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._H._Auden) in 1955, "I am a West-midlander by blood (and took to early west-midland Middle English as a known tongue as soon as I set eyes on it)".[[124]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-123)

**[] Language construction**

*See also:* [*Languages of Middle-earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Middle-earth)

Parallel to Tolkien's professional work as a philologist, and sometimes overshadowing this work, to the effect that his academic output remained rather thin, was his affection for the construction of [artificial languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_language). The best developed of these are [Quenya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quenya) and [Sindarin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sindarin), the etymological connection between which formed the core of much of Tolkien's *legendarium*. Language and grammar for Tolkien was a matter of [aesthetics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics) and [euphony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphony), and Quenya in particular was designed from "phonaesthetic" considerations; it was intended as an "Elvenlatin", and was phonologically based on Latin, with ingredients from [Finnish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_language), Welsh, English, and Greek.[[125]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-letter144-124) A notable addition came in late 1945 with [Adûnaic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad%C3%BBnaic) or [Númenórean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%BAmen%C3%B3rean), a language of a "faintly [Semitic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semitic_languages) flavour", connected with Tolkien's [Atlantis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantis) legend, which by [*The Notion Club Papers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Notion_Club_Papers) ties directly into his ideas about inability of language to be inherited, and via the "[Second Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Age)" and the story of [Eärendil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E%C3%A4rendil) was grounded in the legendarium, thereby providing a link of Tolkien's twentieth-century "real primary world" with the legendary past of his Middle-earth.

Tolkien considered languages inseparable from the mythology associated with them, and he consequently took a dim view of [auxiliary languages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auxiliary_language): in 1930 a congress of Esperantists were told as much by him, in his lecture [*A Secret Vice*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Secret_Vice), "Your language construction will breed a mythology", but by 1956 he had concluded that "[Volapük](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volap%C3%BCk), [Esperanto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esperanto), [Ido](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ido), [Novial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novial), &c, &c, are dead, far deader than ancient unused languages, because their authors never invented any Esperanto legends".[[126]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-letter180-125)

The popularity of Tolkien's books has had a small but lasting effect on the use of language in fantasy literature in particular, and even on mainstream dictionaries, which today commonly accept Tolkien's idiosyncratic spellings *dwarves* and *dwarvish* (alongside *dwarfs* and *dwarfish*), which had been little used since the mid-1800s and earlier. (In fact, according to Tolkien, had the [Old English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English) plural survived, it would have been *dwerrows*.) He also coined the term [*eucatastrophe*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucatastrophe), though it remains mainly used in connection with his own work.

**[] Legacy**

**[] Adaptations**

*Main article:* [*Works inspired by J. R. R. Tolkien*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Works_inspired_by_J._R._R._Tolkien)

In a 1951 letter to Milton Waldman, Tolkien writes about his intentions to create a "body of more or less connected legend", of which

The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama.[[127]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-126)

The hands and minds of many artists have indeed been inspired by Tolkien's legends. Personally known to him were [Pauline Baynes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_Baynes) (Tolkien's favourite illustrator of [*The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Adventures_of_Tom_Bombadil) and [*Farmer Giles of Ham*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmer_Giles_of_Ham)) and [Donald Swann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Swann) (who set the music to [*The Road Goes Ever On*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_Goes_Ever_On)). Queen [Margrethe II of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margrethe_II_of_Denmark) created illustrations to *The Lord of the Rings* in the early 1970s. She sent them to Tolkien, who was struck by the similarity they bore in style to his own drawings.[[128]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-127)

However, Tolkien was not fond of all the artistic representation of his works that were produced in his lifetime, and was sometimes harshly disapproving. In 1946, he rejected suggestions for illustrations by Horus Engels for the German ion of *The Hobbit* as "too [Disnified](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Walt_Disney_Company)",

Bilbo with a dribbling nose, and Gandalf as a figure of vulgar fun rather than the [Odinic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odin) wanderer that I think of.[[129]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-128)

Tolkien was sceptical of the emerging [Tolkien fandom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolkien_fandom) in the United States, and in 1954 he returned proposals for the dust jackets of the American ion of *The Lord of the Rings*:

Thank you for sending me the projected 'blurbs', which I return. The Americans are not as a rule at all amenable to criticism or correction; but I think their effort is so poor that I feel constrained to make some effort to improve it.[[125]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-letter144-124)

In 1958, after receiving a [screenplay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screenplay) for a proposed movie adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* by Morton Grady Zimmerman, Tolkien wrote:

I would ask them to make an effort of imagination sufficient to understand the irritation (and on occasion the resentment) of an author, who finds, increasingly as he proceeds, his work treated as it would seem carelessly in general, in places recklessly, and with no evident signs of any appreciation of what it is all about.[[130]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-129)

Tolkien went on to criticize the script scene by scene ("yet one more scene of screams and rather meaningless slashings"). But Tolkien was in principle open to the idea of a movie adaptation. He sold the film, stage and merchandise rights of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to [United Artists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Artists) in 1968. However, guided by an intense hatred of their past work, Tolkien expressly forbade that [The Walt Disney Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Walt_Disney_Company) should ever become involved in any future productions[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing_sources)].

United Artists never made a film, although director [John Boorman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Boorman) was planning a live-action film in the early 1970s. In 1976 the rights were sold to [Tolkien Enterprises](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolkien_Enterprises), a division of the [Saul Zaentz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saul_Zaentz) Company, and the [first movie adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings_%281978_film%29) appeared in 1978, an animated [rotoscoping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotoscoping) film directed by [Ralph Bakshi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Bakshi) with screenplay by the fantasy writer [Peter S. Beagle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_S._Beagle). It covered only the first half of the story of *The Lord of the Rings*.[[131]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-130) In 1977 an [animated TV production of *The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit_%281977_film%29) was made by [Rankin-Bass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rankin-Bass), and in 1980 they produced an animated [*The Return of the King*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Return_of_the_King_%281980_film%29), which covered some of the portions of *The Lord of the Rings* that Bakshi was unable to complete.

From 2001 to 2003, [New Line Cinema](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Line_Cinema) released [*The Lord of the Rings* as a trilogy of live-action films](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings_film_trilogy) that were filmed in [New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand) and directed by [Peter Jackson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Jackson). The series was successful, performing well commercially and winning numerous [Oscars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Awards).

**[] Memorials**

Posthumously named after Tolkien are the Tolkien Road in [Eastbourne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastbourne), [East Sussex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Sussex), and the [asteroid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asteroid) [2675 Tolkien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2675_Tolkien) discovered in 1982. Tolkien Way in [Stoke-on-Trent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoke-on-Trent) is named after Tolkien's eldest son, Fr. John Francis Tolkien, who was the priest in charge at the nearby Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Angels and St. Peter in Chains.[[132]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-131) There is also a [professorship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professorship) in Tolkien's name at Oxford, the J.R.R. Tolkien Professor of English Literature and Language.[[133]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-132)

**[] Blue plaques**

 [Sarehole Mill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarehole_Mill)'s blue plaque

 *The Plough and Harrow'*s blue plaque

that commemorate places associated with Tolkien, one in [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford), one in [Harrogate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrogate), and four in [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham). The Birmingham plaques commemorate three of his childhood homes right up to the time he left to attend [Oxford University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University). The Oxford plaque commemorates the residence where Tolkien wrote [*The Hobbit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit) and most of [*The Lord of the Rings*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings). The Harrogate plaque commemorates the residence where Tolkien convalesced from [trench fever](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trench_fever).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Address** | **Commemoration** | **Date unveiled** | **Issued by** |
| [Sarehole Mill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarehole_Mill) [Hall Green](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hall_Green), [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham) | "Inspired" 1896–1900 (i. e. lived nearby) | 15 August 2002 | [Birmingham Civic Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_Civic_Society) and [The Tolkien Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tolkien_Society)[[134]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-133) |
| 1 Duchess Place [Ladywood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ladywood), [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham) | Lived near here 1902–1910 | Unknown | [Birmingham Civic Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_Civic_Society)[[135]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-134) |
| 4 Highfield Road [Edgbaston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgbaston), [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham) | Lived here 1910–1911 | Unknown | [Birmingham Civic Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_Civic_Society) and [The Tolkien Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tolkien_Society)[[136]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-135) |
| Plough and Harrow [Hagley Road](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagley_Road), [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham) | Stayed here June 1916 | June 1997 | [The Tolkien Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tolkien_Society)[[137]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-136) |
| 20 [Northmoor Road](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northmoor_Road) [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford) | Lived here 1930–1947 | 3 December 2002 | [Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxfordshire_Blue_Plaques_Board)[[138]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._R._R._Tolkien#cite_note-137) |
| 96 Valley Drive [Harrogate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrogate) |  |  |  |  |

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*Please see* [*Bibliography of J. R. R. Tolkien*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliography_of_J._R._R._Tolkien)

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**[] Notes**

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* [HarperCollins Tolkien Website](http://www.tolkien.co.uk)
* [Tolkien Biography](http://www.tolkiensociety.org/tolkien/biography.html) (The Tolkien Society)
* [Tolkien Archives](http://www.marquette.edu/library/collections/archives/tolkien.html) at the Raynor Library, Marquette University
* [The Tolkien Library](http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/)
* [The Tolkien Collector's Guide](http://www.tolkienguide.com/)
* [Works by or about J. R. R. Tolkien](http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n79-5673) in libraries ([WorldCat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WorldCat) catalog)
* [J.R.R. Tolkien](http://www.iblist.com/author54.htm) at the [Internet Book List](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Book_List)