

Who really was Tolkien



Tolkien in 1972

Biography

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was a British popular writer of fantasy novels. He was born in 1892 in South Africa. He was a teacher of English language and literature at Oxford University, specialized in Old and Middle English. He became famous publishing the story of the Hobbit and its sequel The Lord of the Rings.

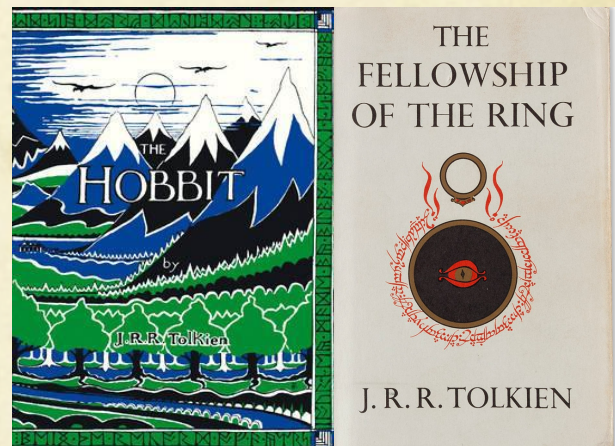
J.R.R. Tolkien was involved in a literary circle called "the Inklings", they gathered at Merton stone table. That included among other C.S. Lewis - the Narnia author, to whom this table inspired the Narnia stone table. With Lewis, it was where they hashed out their ideas for future books.



Merton Stone Table

At the beginning, Tolkien wrote and told stories to his children, that then became the most beloved stories in Western literature. After its publication in 1937, his

first book, the Hobbit, became so popular that his editor asked him to **white** more about hobbits. That's how he started writing the Lord of the Ring trilogy, his most well known book. Since he passed in 1973, his work (including his drawings, poetry and tales, **un** **english** and in his multiple languages) is conserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University.



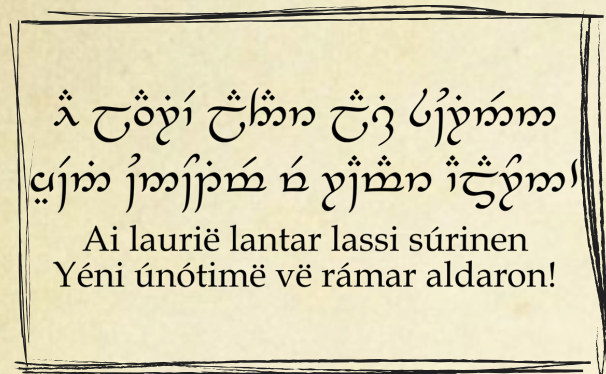
Book covers of The Lord of the ring and The Hobbit

Languages

J.R.R. Tolkien spent his life studying and teaching the English language and literature in English. He started inventing languages as a teenager: Elvish, Dwarvish and any other languages, dialects and alphabets. These languages are the **eart** of his fictional world: The languages were the first coming, and then he invented a place to put them in. But

he didn't only invent one language per specie, he also created dialects and its evolution !

It's impossible to imagine he could create The Lord of the Rings without being an Anglo-saxon teacher, it's obvious that he needed his knowledge in old English : he took some of the themes that appaered in his books in Beowulf, an old epic poem.



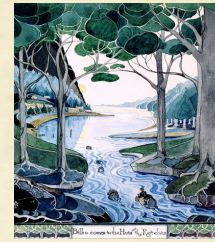
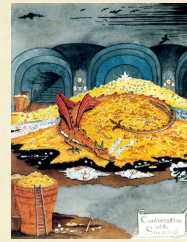
"Ah! like gold fall the leaves in the wind, long years numberless as the wings of trees!"

The beginning of the Quenya poem "Namárië" written in tengwar script (hight) and in Latin script (low)

Quenya is one of the fictionnal language devised by Tolkien in his fictionnal world, the Middle Earth, and used by the Elves.

Illustrations

Even if he's not known as an artist, Tolkien painted beautiful watercolor to illustrate his tales at the same time he wrote it. He did himself the illustrations for The Hobbit. In the Tolkien Archive, you can find very detailed landscapes of the Middle Earth or action scenes. It's hard to tell which comes first, the text or the illustration, because they probably worked together. The illustrations were very important for Tolkien's visualisation of the scenes he was writing about. Tolkien inspired ecologists by some of his landscapes. He thought the nature had a voice, and he worried to see the destruction of nature.



1) The Hall at Bag-End, B. Baggins's home, watercolor from *The Hobbit*;

2) Smaug talking to the invisible hobbit, watercolor from *The Hobbit*;

3) Bilbo and the dwarves escaping from Elvish jail, watercolor from *The Hobbit*;

4) Manwë palace, on the world mountains, watercolor from *The Silmarillion*, II.

The WW1

The first world war influenced Tolkien writing very much, especially the end of the Lord of the Ring, with the death of the elves' nature. Writing must have helped him to cope with the loss of his friends and the atrocities of war.

You can see the Middle Earth as a metaphor of our world. The WW1 mark the beginning of the 20th century and is a pass to the new world, like with the ring destruction : the third age of the Middle Earth will go, the beauty of this world disapeare, because it's men's accession. The fact that he fought in this war was one of the reasons he became an ecologist : he couldn't support to see the destruction of the nature by bombs, fire... and this is also why he loved drawing nature.