



J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century

By Tom Shippey

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Recent polls have consistently declared that J.R.R. Tolkien is "the most influential author of the century," and *The Lord of the Rings* is "the book of the century." In support of these claims, the prominent medievalist and scholar of fantasy Professor Tom Shippey now presents us with a fascinating companion to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, focusing in particular on *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*.

The core of the book examines *The Lord of the Rings* as a linguistic and cultural map and as a response to the meaning of myth. It presents a unique argument to explain the nature of evil and also gives the reader a compelling insight into the unparalleled level of skill necessary to construct such a rich and complex story. Shippey also examines *The Hobbit*, explaining the hobbits' anachronistic relationship to the heroic world of Middle-earth, and shows the fundamental importance of *The Silmarillion* to the canon of Tolkien's work. He offers as well an illuminating look at other, lesser-known works in their connection to Tolkien's life.

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J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century By Tom Shippey Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a wonderfully readable study aimed at not just the Tolkien fan but any literate person curious about this fantasy author's extraordinary popularity, British scholar Shippey (*The Road to Middle-earth*) makes an impressive, low-key case for why the creator of Middle-earth is deserving of acclaim. (Recent polls in Britain have consistently put *The Lord of the Rings* at the top of greatest books of the century lists.) Having taught the same Old English syllabus at Oxford that his subject once did, Shippey is especially well qualified to discuss Tolkien's Anglo-Saxon sources, notably *Beowulf*, for the elvish languages and names used in the fiction. The author's theory on the origin of the word hobbit, for example, is as learned as it is free of academic jargon. Even his analyses of the abstruse *Silmarillion*, Tolkien's equivalent of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, avoid getting too technical. In addition, Shippey shows that Tolkien as a storyteller often improved on his ancient sources, while *The Lord of the Rings* is unmistakably a work of its time. (The Shire chapters, like Orwell's 1984, evoke the bleakness of late-'40s Britain.) In treating such topics as the nature of evil, religion, allegory, style and genre, the author nimbly answers the objections of Tolkien's more rabid critics. By the end, he has convincingly demonstrated why the much imitated Tolkien remains inimitable and continues to appeal. (May 16)Forecast: With the long-awaited part one of the *Lord of the Rings*, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, due for movie release later this year, this, like all Tolkien-related titles, will benefit from hobbit fever.

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From Library Journal

Shippey, an expert on Old English literature and the author of *The Road to Middle Earth*, has written a critical appreciation of the popular creator of *The Hobbit* and "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. The subtitle refers to Tolkien's ability to write about concerns of the 20th century (evil, religion, etc.) in stories that at first glance seem to be mere fantasy. Shippey examines Tolkien's published and many unfinished works (such as *The Silmarillion*), as well as the shorter poems and stories. He convincingly argues that Tolkien deserves to be ranked as a major literary figure. Shippey also castigates those critics, the so-called literati, for their vituperative and ill-informed attacks on Tolkien's reputation and achievements. This study is definitely not an introduction to the "Rings" books; because of the detailed readings on the major and minor works, it should be read by those who have already enjoyed the titles surveyed. Recommended for all public libraries, especially in the wake of the upcoming film version of "The Lord of the Rings"; undergraduate academic libraries will also want to obtain this fine work of criticism. Morris Hounion, New York City Technical Coll. Lib., CUNY

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review

Like J. R. R. Tolkien, Shippey is a philologist who believes that language and literature are inextricably related. Names, especially, carry meaning, and, proceeding from Tolkien's assertion that his fantasy fiction was "*fundamentally linguistic* in inspiration," Shippey demonstrates how Tolkien used names to generate the plots, moral concepts, and cultural resonance of his works, especially *The Lord of the Rings*. He argues that Tolkien's larger project was to re-create the prehistory of the Anglo-Saxons by writing the literature suggested by the relationships among old names. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were set near the end of the prehistory he constructed. Shippey maintains that, despite their backward glancing, Tolkien's Middle-Earth stories are essentially modern in their concern with the nature of evil, the hollowness of victory, and--

though Tolkien characterized *The Lord of the Rings* as a Catholic book--deep religious skepticism. However academic such a proceeding may seem, it is keenly interesting because of Shippey's clear, if not uncomplicated, writing and because it substantiates "common" readers' great esteem for Tolkien. In several recent polls, British readers declared that *The Lord of the Rings* is the greatest book of the twentieth century, to the great dismay, the press noted, of the literati. Similar results of and reactions to polls in America are highly likely, which only makes this magisterial book more intriguing. *Ray Olson*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Byler:

The reserve untitled J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century is the e-book that recommended to you you just read. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to a person. The language that author use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of analysis when write the book, and so the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also can get the e-book of J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century from the publisher to make you a lot more enjoy free time.

Elida Allman:

The guide with title J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century includes a lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of advantage after read this book. This book exist new know-how the information that exist in this guide represented the condition of the world now. That is important to yo7u to learn how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you within new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on the smart phone, so you can read this anywhere you want.

Anna Williams:

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