



Your Guide to The Hobbit

Charles River Editors

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- *Includes characters spotlights on Bilbo, Gandalf, and other important characters.
- *Explains the origins of Middle Earth, its creatures, and its magic.
- *Comprehensively covers the plot and themes of the book.
- *Explains the book's legacy.
- *Includes a Table of Contents.

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

So starts one of Western literature's most epic journeys, *The Hobbit*, a fantasy novel that has delighted adults and children alike since it was published in 1937 by professor J.R.R. Tolkien. Ostensibly, *The Hobbit* is an adventurous tale about hobbit Bilbo Baggins, who leaves the cozy comforts of his home to try to win a share of a treasure guarded by a dragon named Smaug. The novel follows Bilbo and an assorted cast of magical characters and creatures, including dwarves, the wizard Gandalf, giants, goblins, and the mysterious Gollum. Tolkien brings so many different characters to life and keeps the plot moving at a fast enough pace that readers of all kinds have been easily engrossed reading the novel over the last 75 years.

Of course, there is a never-ending number of fantasy novels, so why has *The Hobbit* endured so long and remain as popular as ever before? Part of the reason comes from Tolkien's background as a professor well versed in Anglo-Saxon literature, which made him extremely familiar with old medieval fairy tales. Others have pointed to his experience in World War I as being responsible for the militaristic and heroic motifs found throughout his books. Furthermore, Tolkien manages to make his characters come across as down to earth, even in the midst of a fantasy world, and at the heart of the novel is a coming of age story that people on Planet Earth have always identified with.

That said, the novel is ultimately successful because Tolkien completely immerses readers in the different environments of Middle Earth, so that they feel they are on the quest with Bilbo. Tolkien constructed his fantasy world so thoroughly that he created a language that appears in the work, was instrumental in the book's designs and illustrations, and eventually set *The Hobbit* as the prequel for his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. As C.S. Lewis, whose fantasy novel credentials no reader of the Narnia series would deny, put it about Tolkien's book, “The truth is that in this book a number of good things, never before united, have come together: a fund of humour, an understanding of children, and a happy fusion of the scholar's with the poet's grasp of mythology... The professor has the air of inventing nothing. He has studied trolls and dragons at first hand and describes them with that fidelity that is worth oceans of glib ‘originality.’”

Your Guide to *The Hobbit* is the perfect resource for understanding Tolkien's classic, explaining the background of the book and its author, its characters and plot, its major themes, and its influential and enduring legacy. With *The Hobbit* as popular as ever, get caught up quickly with this resourceful guide.

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