



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

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, Tom Shippey, the prominent medievalist and scholar of fantasy, 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 consists of three chapters that examine *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* as a linguistic and cultural map, as a twisted web of story, and as a response to the meaning of myth. Shippey presents a unique argument to explain the nature of evil and gives readers a compelling insight into the complicated interweaving of many strands as the narrative moves between characters and into the remarkable skill behind the construction of such a rich and complex story. Other chapters examine *THE HOBBIT*, explaining the hobbits' anachronistic relationship to the heroic world of Middle-earth; the fundamental importance of *THE SILMARILLION* to Tolkien's canon; and an illuminating look at *FARMER GILES OF HAM*, *LEAF BY NIGGLE*, and other lesser-known works in connection to Tolkien's life.

With a clear and accessible style, Shippey offers a new approach to Tolkien, to fantasy, and to the importance of language in literature. He demonstrates how *THE HOBBIT*, *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, and *THE SILMARILLION* form part of a live and continuing tradition of storytelling that can trace its roots back through Grimms' *FAIRY TALES* to *BEOWULF*. *J.R.R. TOLKIEN: AUTHOR OF THE CENTURY* not only gives readers a deeper understanding of Tolkien and his work, but also serves as a learned and entertaining introduction to some of the finest and most influential works of fantasy ever written.

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