



The History of the Hobbit (One-Volume Edition)

John D. Rateliff, J.R.R. Tolkien

Download now

Read Online ➔

The History of the Hobbit (One-Volume Edition)

John D. Rateliff , J.R.R. Tolkien

The History of the Hobbit (One-Volume Edition) John D. Rateliff , J.R.R. Tolkien

A major new examination of how J.R.R.Tolkien came to write his original masterpiece 'The Hobbit', including his complete unpublished draft version of the story, and many little-known illustrations and previously unpublished maps by Tolkien himself.

For the first time in one volume, The History of the Hobbit presents the complete unpublished text of the original manuscript of J.R.R.Tolkien's The Hobbit, accompanied by John Rateliff's lively and informative account of how the book came to be written and published. As well as recording the numerous changes made to the story both before and after publication, it examines – chapter-by-chapter – why those changes were made and how they reflect Tolkien's ever-growing concept of Middle-earth.

The Hobbit was first published on 21 September 1937. Like its successor, The Lord of the Rings, it is a story that "grew in the telling", and many characters and story threads in the published text are completely different from what Tolkien first wrote to read aloud to his young sons as part of their "fireside reads".

As well as reproducing the original version of one of literature's most famous stories, both on its own merits and as the foundation for The Lord of the Rings, this new book includes many little-known illustrations and previously unpublished maps for The Hobbit by Tolkien himself. Also featured are extensive annotations and commentaries on the date of composition, how Tolkien's professional and early mythological writings influenced the story, the imaginary geography he created, and how Tolkien came to revise the book years after publication to accommodate events in The Lord of the Rings.

Like Christopher Tolkien's The History of The Lord of the Rings before it, this is a thoughtful yet exhaustive examination of one of the most treasured stories in English literature. Long overdue for a classic book now celebrating 75 years in print, this companion edition offers fascinating new insights for those who have grown up with this enchanting tale, and will delight those who are about to enter Bilbo's round door for the first time.

The History of the Hobbit (One-Volume Edition) Details

Date : Published November 24th 2011 by HarperCollins (first published October 26th 2007)

ISBN :

Author : John D. Rateliff , J.R.R. Tolkien

Format : Kindle Edition 480 pages

Genre : Fantasy

 [Download The History of the Hobbit \(One-Volume Edition\) ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The History of the Hobbit \(One-Volume Edition\) ...pdf](#)



Download and Read Free Online The History of the Hobbit (One-Volume Edition) John D. Rateliff , J.R.R. Tolkien

From Reader Review The History of the Hobbit (One-Volume Edition) for online ebook

Douglas says

This book is exactly what it intends to be - it is a manuscript history of The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien. It is incredibly well-researched, including collections in multiple countries, private collections and rare editions. The author had access to Tolkien's own notes and copies of more manuscripts than I knew existed. Probably required reading for Tolkien nerds.

J. Mellinger says

Mr Rateliff clearly did his research into the writing history of one of the most beloved children's books. I loved learning about Tolkien's process of writing and re-writing The Hobbit. The facsimile of the first edition of The Hobbit was a great addition to the book.

H. says

Writing a post on John Rateliff's encyclopedic The History of the Hobbit isn't the problem. The problem is writing one that doesn't turn into a 3,000 word behemoth itself. I will try very hard to keep this post to a reasonable length while dropping as many nuggets of knowledge as possible.

Rateliff's primary focus is Tolkien's original draft of The Hobbit. A full, heavily annotated copy is included. The text itself is footnoted, and each chapter (there were no chapter divisions in the original draft, so according to the final book) is followed by a section digging into it. Most notable perhaps are the notes on the etymology of various words Tolkien invented and comparisons with the Silmarillion as it existed at that time (quite different than what would eventually be published). Rateliff also includes Tolkien's occasional bouts of outlining, and notes the probable splits in the drafting (Tolkien tended to work in great spurts in between academic semesters).

Rateliff views The History of the Hobbit as complementary to Douglas Anderson's The Annotated Hobbit (which I have not read). The Annotated Hobbit "takes as a starting point the first printing of 1937 and scrupulously records every change and correction to the text by Tolkien from that point onward, while [Rateliff looks] backwards from the moment of the first printing to tell the story of how the book was written."

Rateliff's book is particularly interesting for its examination of Tolkien's source material. Many books note that, for example, Tolkien was inspired by Beowulf, but the length of Rateliff's book and the focus on just The Hobbit allow for him to cast a far wider net. For example, Rateliff gives examples from Dunsany of "really good and legendary burglars."

I find myself thinking a lot these days about the inherently derivative nature of fantasy. The History of the Hobbit makes that obvious. It isn't that Tolkien directly copied someone else; it is that there were sometimes dozens of examples of a single motif that he could draw from. The idea that he drew heavily from Wagner's

Ring Cycle is a lot less convincing when you consider that his original conception of the ring was very different and that magic rings are a common motif in folklore. Even something like petrification, that he may have introduced to English fiction, was an example of Tolkien popularizing, rather than inventing, a motif. In Tolkien's case, this was intentional. He saw great value in folklore, in the reinvention of folklore, and in "ancient belief over artificial invention."

As I mentioned above, the ties to Beowulf are hardly unknown, but Rateliff's analysis is robust and welcome. Even more so are his comparisons to Sigurd.

I have few points of contention, although Rateliff's refusal to speculate on Beorn's height and his dismissiveness toward those who have is weird coming from a guy who wrote a book analyzing and speculating on everything else in *The Hobbit*.

Rateliff makes a very convincing case that *The Hobbit* is and was always intended to be closely tied to Tolkien's legendarium. Of course that legendarium would look very different by the time it was finally published. That created any number of problems for Tolkien, as did the elements pulled into *The Lord of the Rings*, but he had a knack for fixing seeming contradictions in worldbuilding with more worldbuilding, "solving a problem in the received text by addition, not contradiction or replacement."

It is remarkable is how little Tolkien changed his original draft prior to its first publication. But there are some important differences from his first conception. Thranduil and the Mirkwood wood elves, not so heroic even in the published book, were originally worse. The biggest change, though, is that Tolkien originally planned a large battle near the Anduin on the return journey. This would have involved Beorn and the goblins, but not the dwarves. Eventually he settled on bringing Beorn and the goblins east for the Battle of Five Armies. In doing so, he avoided the problems the Scouring of the Shire would later create for *The Lord of the Rings*. Rather than place an important scene in an overlong denouement, he is able to incorporate it into a stronger climax.

More nuggets:

- Rateliff dates the drafting as starting in the summer of 1930 and ending in January 1933 (there is quite a bit about why he settles on these dates even though others, including Humphrey Carpenter, offer different dates)
- Tolkien started work on a full revision of *The Hobbit* in 1960 to match *The Lord of the Rings* in both tone and canon, but abandoned it early on after feedback; the new work simply wasn't *The Hobbit* (Peter Jackson would later apparently receive no such feedback)
- According to Tolkien, "Mirkwood is not an invention of mine, but . . . probably the Primitive Germanic name for the great mountainous forest regions that anciently formed a barrier to the south of the lands of Germanic expansion"
- Tolkien toyed with the idea that "the original orcs were the least of the spirits corrupted by Morgoth, just as balrogs are greater spirits"—the orcs and goblins we see would have been their lesser descendants
- John the Evangelist was Tolkien's favorite apostle
- Dunsany used man-sized spiders in his story *The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth*
- Tolkiens' elves were originally smaller than humans
- The Mirkwood chapter (one of the best, in my opinion) was the only chapter extensively rewritten prior to the book's original publication (Tolkien cut Bilbo using a ball of spider-thread to find his way and added the enchanted stream)
- The Jewish influence on Tolkien's dwarves both resulted in a much more positive depiction than that of the folklore from which he drew and long predated his 1965 radio interview in which he directly identified the influence
- Tolkien at one point made a note asking "what happened to the musical instruments used by the Dwarves at

Bag-end?" (I'm glad I'm not the only one who wondered that)

Jeff Bryant says

A must if you are a diehard Tolkien fan. A weighty tome, deeply researched and thoroughly annotated, it provides a unique look into the drafting of the book as well as revisions and a never before view into a revision Tolkien abandoned to try and shift *The Hobbit* into the feel of the *Lord of the Rings*.

The annotations can be a bit deep and intimidating, but the author himself encourages the reader to utilize only what they feel they need.

Highly recommended

Matthijs Krul says

Turns out to be just as essential and informative as the volumes of "The History of Middle-Earth".

Tom says

this is no light read. it is a work of serious scholarship intended for serious students of Tolkien.

Guy Haley says

NB, this review also contains a review of *The Lord of The Rings Companion*

A pedant's feast of minutiae for the most ardent of Tolkien fans.

There are some brands of knowledge that seem utterly pointless, and for all but the most obsessive Tolkien fanatics, the information contained in these three books is of that brand. It is so detailed, so relentlessly comprehensive that it robs the subject of its magic. The level of information, for example, in *The Lord of The Rings Reader's Companion* goes as far as cataloguing an instance where Tolkien contradicts himself in his letters on the date he started the Moria sequence.

Though they share the collector's desire to pin every butterfly fact to the boards of posterity, the books are slightly different. *The History of the Hobbit* contains the first draft of the *Hobbit*, and expends most of its energy on a comparative study of it and the published work, and the development of the former to the latter. It is the more interesting, and the less portentously written. *The Lord of The Rings companion* does not contain the novel's text, for obvious reasons of space. It is instead intended to be useful alongside any edition of the novel, ticking off unusual vocabulary and *The Lord of The Rings'* internal referencing of Tolkien's mythos page by page, with extra detail provided by mini-essays. It's comprehensive, but does a book that is delivered in the dense style of academia then need to explain the words 'raiment' or 'mantle'? Its discussion of Middle-earth place names and Tolkien's linguistic playfulness are more appropriate, and you do get a feel, here and there, for Tolkien's state of mind. But it is all rather dry, and a far better insight into Tolkien as a man is to be had from the many biographies about him.

Impressive achievements, they get points for their sheer exhaustiveness. However, they are likely to prove only exhausting to the casual reader. For the academically interested or hard-core fan only.

Jenna (Falling Letters) says

Oh. my. gosh. What an incredible book. The amount of work that must have gone into this enormous volume is staggering. There is just so much information packed into this book, on every single topic you could want to know more about and many more you might never have considered (such as what kind of thrush Bilbo would have encountered at Erebor). At times I felt the book was a bit heavy on aspects such as related story inspirations or historical information, but really, if you're not interested in such things they are easily skimmed. Even more rarely, the book strayed more into Tolkien's mythology than seems related to *The Hobbit* (for example, a lengthy passage on Thingol) but these segments of course will be enjoyed by strong Tolkien fans and again, easily skimmed over by those only interested in *The Hobbit*. To be able to see so precisely how *The Hobbit* developed, and to read such insightful commentary on that development, is a very great treat for any Tolkien or Hobbit fan. Highly recommended!

James says

Incredibly in-depth study on the writing of arguably the world's most famous children's story.

Krista Ivy says

an in-depth look into how the Hobbit changed over time, the book and Bilbo. Explanations are even given for the changes and choices that were originally made. references to the works that Tolkien looked at himself are given for the reader to look back to, if they so wish. it has an air of explanation without demeaning the reader for not knowing already what was being explained.

Dr. Andrew Higgins says

Third Time through - A MUST READ!!!!!!

Aaron says

Tolkien enthusiasts will have a great time wading through this sizeable tome. Rateliff has thrown his heart and soul into exhaustively researching the drafting and crafting that went into Tolkien's quintessential fable. There's pretty much all you ever wanted to know about how *The Hobbit* evolved as a written text. For those with a passion for Middle Earth, or those with a literary bent, this is well worth your time. Casual Fantasy readers on the other hand will likely find the discussion overly dense.

Brian says

Discussion of book never written.
