

Continuing the story of **THE HOBBIT**



THE  
**LORD OF THE RINGS**  
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING™  
J.R.R. TOLKIEN

In 1956 *The Return of the King* was published by Houghton Mifflin in the United States—thus completing the publication of the first edition of Tolkien's epic trilogy THE LORD OF THE RINGS.

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“Brilliant in its telling as it is broad in its scope . . . An excitingly good book, and far more than fantasy to us, who have come into possession of the Great Ring of Power, and have turned back one assault of the Shadow only to see it, as Gandalf warned, ‘take another shape and grow again.’ ”

—Maurice Dolbier

*Providence Sunday Journal*

“For anyone who likes the genre to which it belongs, the Heroic Quest, I cannot imagine a more wonderful Christmas present. . . . No fiction I have read in the last five years has given me more joy than *The Fellowship of the Ring*.”

—W. H. Auden

*The New York Times Book Review*

This is the only complete and authorized paperbound edition, containing all of the original text and maps and a new Foreword by the author, J. R. R. Tolkien.

*J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings—of which this book is the first part—is a chronicle of the great War of the Ring, which occurred in the Third Age of Middle-earth. At that time, the One Ring, the Master of all the Rings of Power, had been held for many years by the hobbits, but was eagerly sought by the Enemy who made it. To its wearer, the One Ring gave mastery over every living creature, but since it was devised by an evil power, in the end it inevitably corrupted anyone who attempted to use it. Out of the struggle to possess and control the One Ring, with all its ominous power, there arose a war comparable both in magnitude and in the issues involved to the great wars of our own time. And in that war, the Third Age of Middle-earth came to an end. . . .*

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING begins the story of that great war with the discovery of the nature of the Ring, and the flight of Frodo—unwilling heir to the One Ring—from his own land, closely pursued by the Dark Riders of the Enemy. It tells of the great Council at which it was decided that the Ring must be destroyed. Frodo is appointed the Ringbearer, and he and eight companions set forth on a long and perilous journey, beset by terrible dangers, not least of which is the temptation to use the power of the Ring and so be corrupted by it. For their task is to return the Ring to Mordor, the country of the Enemy himself, and there to destroy it in the only way possible: by casting it back into the Fire from which it came.

It's been fifteen years at this writing since I first came across THE LORD OF THE RINGS in the stacks at the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh. I'd been looking for the book for four years, ever since reading W. H. Auden's review in the *New York Times*. I think of that time now—and the years after, when the trilogy continued to be hard to find and hard to explain to most friends—with an undeniable nostalgia. It was a barren era for fantasy, among other things, but a good time for cherishing slighted treasures and mysterious passwords. Long before *Frodo Lives!* began to appear in the New York subways, J. R. R. Tolkien was the magus of my secret knowledge.

I've never thought it an accident that Tolkien's works waited more than ten years to explode into popularity almost overnight. The Sixties were no fouler a decade than the Fifties—they merely reaped the Fifties' foul harvest—but they were the years when millions of people grew aware that the industrial society had become paradoxically unlivable, incalculably immoral, and ultimately deadly. In terms of passwords, the Sixties were the time when the word *progress* lost its ancient holiness, and *escape* stopped being comically obscene. The impulse is being called reactionary now, but lovers of Middle-earth want to go there. I would myself, like a shot.

For in the end it is Middle-earth and its dwellers that we love, not Tolkien's considerable gifts in showing it to us. I said once that the world he charts was there long before him, and I still believe it. He is a great enough magician to tap our most common nightmares, daydreams and twilight fancies, but he never invented them either: he found them a place to live, a green alternative to each day's madness here in a poisoned world. We are raised to honor all the wrong explorers and discoverers—thieves planting flags, murderers carrying crosses. Let us at last praise the colonizers of dreams.

—Peter S. Beagle  
Watsonville, California  
14 July 1973