

J.R.R. TOLKIEN: POCKET GUIDE A new guide to the life and work of J.R.R. Tolkien, the premier British fantasy author of the 20th century, and his great works: *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. This guide is clearly written for the general reader, offering an all-round introduction to this hugely popular writer. **EXTRACT FROM THE INTRODUCTION** Philip Toynbee declared, in 1961, that Tolkiens childish books had passed into a merciful oblivion, a wonderful statement, just a tad inaccurate. In 1997, *The Lord of the Rings* was voted the top book of the 20th century by readers in a British bookstores poll (Waterstones). 104 out of 105 stores and 25,000 readers put *The Lord of the Rings* at the top (1984 was second). Around 100 million copies of *The Lord of the Rings* had been sold by the end of the twentieth century, and 60 million copies of *The Hobbit*, with sales of around 3 million per year of the two books combined. Readers just love reading Tolkiens books. Its that simple. You cant force people to buy books or go see movies; theres isnt a magic formula (or ruling ring) to hypnotize readers and consumers (if there was, itd be worth billions). And the Tolkien phenomenon began with readers. Back in 1937, 1954 and 1955, the publishers Allen & Unwin did their bit, of course, with reviews, blurbs, advertizing and so on, promoting *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, as did the critics, but it was readers who first started the phenomenon that has become truly global. Tolkiens influence on literature has been considerable, too, and not just in the realm of fantasy, sci-fi, fairy tales and related genres. As fantasy author Terry Brooks said, Tolkien was the premier fantasy writer of the last century, and all of us writing today owe him a huge debt. No other writer W.H. Auden reckoned had created an imaginary world and a history in such detail. Colin Wilson agreed that only a few writers have concocted a total universe, and that Tolkiens was very impressive. Tolkiens mythological writings may be the largest body of invented mythology in the history of literature, according to David Day. Invented, that is, by one person. Its also certainly the most complex and detailed invented world in all literature. Jeremy Robinson has written many critical studies, including Steven Spielberg, Arthur Rimbaud, Jean-Luc Godard, and *The Sacred Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky*, plus literary monographs on: Samuel Beckett; Thomas Hardy; Andre Gide; Robert Graves; and Lawrence Durrell.

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