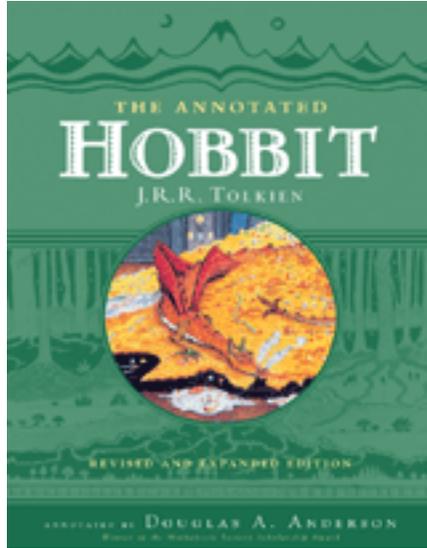


## Press Release



# The Annotated Hobbit

by Douglas A. Anderson

- [Introduction](#)
- [About the Author](#)
- [A conversation with Douglas A. Anderson](#)
- [Other Resources](#)
- [Bestseller position for Tolkien-related titles January 2002](#)

## Introduction

---

Since 1937, few books have provided more pleasure than J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Originally published in England with a first printing of 1,500 copies, *The Hobbit* is now nearing its 65th anniversary, with fifty million of copies in more than forty languages. For readers throughout the world, this classic novel offers an enchanting introduction to the imaginary world of Middle-earth, home of the fantastical creatures depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, and Tolkien's other captivating tales. But *The Hobbit* is more than an entertaining fantasy adventure story; it has significant roots in European folklore, mythology, fairy story, and language. In *The Annotated Hobbit*, renowned Tolkien scholar Douglas A. Anderson expertly explores these roots.

Newly expanded, revised, and completely redesigned for a new generation of readers, *The Annotated Hobbit* is the authoritative explication of the sources, references, characters, places, and things of Tolkien's timeless novel. The many new annotations in this edition reflect more than a decade's additional scholarship on the history and evolution of *The Hobbit*. *The Annotated Hobbit* shows how Tolkien worked as a writer; what his interests and inspirations were (literary, linguistic, and otherwise); and how these pertain to the fascinating particulars of Middle-earth. Readers will discover

- information about Tolkien's influences, which included *Beowulf*, the Brothers Grimm, Rudyard Kipling, William Morris, and E. A. Wyke Smith's *The Marvellous Land of Snergs*
- valuable background information about Tolkien's life and the publishing history of *The Hobbit*, including a complete account of changes to the text over the years
- new material by Tolkien—a few never-before-published poems (one called "Glip" about a Gollum-like creature, written a few years before *The Hobbit*) and the long version of "The Quest of Erebor" (a chapter-sized retelling of the story of *The Hobbit* from Gandalf's point of view)

Integrated with Anderson's notes and placed alongside the fully restored and corrected text of the original story are more than 150 lavish illustrations from all over the world. This

artwork displays vivid visual interpretations of *The Hobbit* specific to each of the cultures—from Japan to Estonia, Finland to Romania—that have embraced Middle-earth. Many of Tolkien's original line drawings, maps, diagrams, and color paintings are also included.

Anderson is eminently qualified to present and comment on this wealth of material. An expert in the history of fantasy literature in general and Tolkien's work in particular, Anderson has written essays on the textual history and evolution of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* that have appeared in most editions of those works published in English for the past fifteen years.

Anderson's revelations in *The Annotated Hobbit* will surely result in a deeper appreciation among all readers of what J.R.R. Tolkien truly accomplished in *The Hobbit* and why his work has endured.

## About the Author

---

Douglas A. Anderson is a renowned Tolkien scholar whose expertise in the complicated textual history and evolution of both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* has led to the inclusion of his essays on these topics in most editions of those works published in English since 1987. He collaborated with Wayne G. Hammond on *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography*. With an expertise in the history of fantasy literature, he was instrumental in reintroducing the world to E. A. Wyke-Smith's *The Marvellous Land of Snergs*, a children's fantasy that Tolkien cited as an influence on *The Hobbit*, and to such neglected writers as Kenneth Morris, Clemence Housman, and Leonard Cline. Anderson lives in Three Rivers, Michigan.

## A conversation with Douglas A. Anderson about *The Annotated Hobbit*

---

**Q) What exactly is an "annotated" book? And what precisely can be found in your *Annotated Hobbit*?**

**A)** An "annotated" book prints the full of the text being annotated, and in the margins alongside the text the annotator adds commentary. So in *The Annotated Hobbit*, I have the full of *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, along with about three hundred annotations covering Tolkien's sources and influences, the relationship between *The Hobbit* and Tolkien's other writings, and the textual differences when Tolkien revised the book. There are also over a hundred and fifty black-and-white illustrations, including Tolkien's own artwork, and various artistic interpretations of the story that were published with foreign translations, including Estonian, Japanese, French, Russian, etc. I have also included the longest version of "The Quest of Erebor" by J.R.R. Tolkien, which is a chapter-sized retelling of the story of *The Hobbit* from Gandalf's point of view. It was originally intended to be part of an appendix to *The Lord of the Rings* but was omitted for reasons of space. And there is a long introduction on the writing and publication of the first edition of *The Hobbit*, and at the back of the book, an appendix on runes, a bibliographical guide to Tolkien's works, and a detailed listing of the forty-one translations of *The Hobbit*.

**Q) You say Tolkien himself revised the text of *The Hobbit*. Why?**

**A)** He actually revised the published text twice. The book was first published in 1937, and after it was successful, Tolkien was pressed for a sequel. He began *The Lord of the Rings* in December 1937, and the way the sequel grew during the process of writing made it necessary for Tolkien to go back and rewrite the Gollum chapter. In the first edition, Gollum wasn't quite so nasty a character—Gollum actually shows Bilbo the way out, in return for not being able to provide Bilbo with a present for winning the riddle-game. And Bilbo says goodbye to Gollum as he leaves!

The revisions to the Gollum chapter were published in 1951, a few years before *The Lord of the Rings* began to come out. In 1966, Tolkien published a further revised text of *The Hobbit*. This second set of revisions fixes a lot of small but interesting points and brings the world of *The Hobbit* more into accord with that of *The Lord of the Rings*.

**Q) *The Lord of the Rings* is a work for adults that is a sequel to a children's book. Can you elaborate on the relationship between the two works?**

**A)** It's actually a more complex situation than that. In his early twenties, Tolkien had begun working on an elaborate invented mythology—complex histories and legends of elves and men, with much work on the imagined Elvish languages. This "legendarium" was written and rewritten in various forms throughout Tolkien's life. A version was published posthumously as *The Silmarillion* in 1977. *The Hobbit* began merely as a story Tolkien told to his children as they grew up in Oxford in the early 1930s, but elements from the "Silmarillion" stories crept in. After *The Hobbit* was published and the publisher asked to see Tolkien's other writings, he submitted some of the various legends, but they were not found suitable as a successor to *The Hobbit*. When Tolkien began to write *The Lord of the Rings*, an actual sequel to *The Hobbit*, the new book quickly took on the grander scale and higher tone of the earlier legendarium, and it became as much a sequel to "The Silmarillion" as it was a sequel to *The Hobbit*.

**Q) The first edition of *The Annotated Hobbit* came out in 1988. What was the original inspiration for your book, and how does the new "revised and expanded" edition differ from the earlier version?**

**A)** Strangely, the revisions that Tolkien made to the text of *The Hobbit* were the inspiration for doing the annotated edition. I had known that Tolkien revised the text, and if you are really interested in the details of Tolkien's invented world and its evolution, you can't help but wonder what he felt he needed to revise, when he revised it, and why. For such bibliographical work, I photocopied the appropriate editions of *The Hobbit*, pasted the pages next to each other on one-foot by four-foot sheets, and read them across, using various colored highlighters and pencils to note the changes. I had thought about the possibility of doing a variorum *Hobbit*, but found that there weren't really enough changes to justify that. So I thought—well, there are a lot of other interesting things to say, so how about an *Annotated Hobbit*?

The new revised edition is greatly expanded from what was in the 1988 version. There is at least twice as much text to the annotations themselves, and the introduction is something like four times the size of that in the first edition. There are many more illustrations, and the

color insert is new. Plus there are some new items by Tolkien—a few never-before-published poems, including one called "Glip" about a Gollum-like creature, written a few years before *The Hobbit*, and the long version of "The Quest of Erebor" (a shorter version appears in *Unfinished Tales*, edited by Christopher Tolkien). The design of the new edition is much superior too—the book has a more integrated and comfortable feel to it.

### **Q) How do you come to be interested in Tolkien?**

**A)** I first read *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* when I was thirteen. I was visiting my older sister, who is nine years older than I am, and I was bored and complaining that there was nothing to read. She stomped in from the kitchen, grabbed the Tolkien books, and thrust them at me, saying: "Here. Read these. You'll like them. Now leave me alone!" And I did like them.

Since then, my interest in Tolkien has evolved through various stages. At first, I relished the simple details of the imagined history of Middle-earth. Then I became interested in the medieval works that were Tolkien's inspiration, and following that, in Tolkien's own medieval scholarship. Along the way there came an interest in learning more about the author, and in collecting his complete works, and then in finding the variant forms. I became interested in publishing history, in the literary tradition of fantasy before Tolkien, and in mythology and children's literature. An ever-widening net, and when I had learned something in any one of these different fields and come back to Tolkien, I could see further depths in what he was doing as a literary writer. And there are many dimensions yet to explore!

### **Q) What is the most surprising or intriguing thing you uncovered in your research?**

**A)** Probably that Tolkien did indeed think of hobbits as having pointed ears. There were suggestions of this before, as in a letter where Tolkien refers to hobbits as having "ears only slightly pointed and 'elvish.'" But there is further evidence. And I had never realized before that in Tolkien's own illustrations, if you look closely at the really good and large reproductions (like those found in *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator*, by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull), you can see Bilbo's ears are drawn as pointed!

The question of elves and pointed ears is another matter entirely. Tolkien made no close-up drawings of elves, but there is in Tolkien's notes on Elvish word relationships a mention that Elven ears were more pointed and leaf-shaped than human ones. This statement has sparked many debates. But Christopher Tolkien and I agreed that all that can be said with certainty is that at one time, probably in the mid-1930s, J.R.R. Tolkien held this view.

## **Other Resources**

---

Teacher's Guide for THE HOBBIT [http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers\\_guides/hobbit/](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/hobbit/)

Teacher's Guide for THE LORD OF THE RINGS [http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers\\_guides/lotr/](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/lotr/)

Reader's Guide for THE LORD OF THE RINGS [http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers\\_guides/lotr/lotr\\_rg.shtml](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/lotr/lotr_rg.shtml)

Houghton Mifflin's dedicated Tolkien site (includes news, interviews, and related publishing content) <http://www.lordoftheringstrilogy.com>

Houghton Mifflin's "Complete Tolkien Catalog" (a static listing of every Tolkien title HMCo publishes) [http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/lordoftheringstrilogy/tolkien\\_catalog.pdf](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/lordoftheringstrilogy/tolkien_catalog.pdf)

## **Bestseller position for Tolkien-related titles January 2002**

---

### **THE LORD OF THE RINGS**

**(one volume movie tie-in edition, unless otherwise noted)**

#1 Amazon (paperback boxed set)

#1 Publishers Weekly

#1 Washington Post

#1 Boston Globe

#1 Los Angeles Times

#2 Book Sense

#3 USA Today

#3 Amazon (hardcover boxed set)

#3 Southeast Booksellers Association

#3 Northern California Independent Booksellers Association

#4 New England Booksellers Association

#5 Amazon (collector's edition)

#10 Independent

#13 Amazon (illustrated edition)

### **THE HOBBIT**

#3 Los Angeles Times

#6 Amazon

#11 Southeast Booksellers Association

#15 New England Booksellers Association

### **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING**

#3 Boston Globe

#3 Independent

#5 Book Sense

#5 New England Booksellers Association

#5 Southeast Booksellers Association

#9 Publishers Weekly

#13 Amazon

## **THE TWO TOWERS**

- #1 Independent
- #8 Book Sense
- #9 Southeast Booksellers Association
- #11 New England Booksellers Association

## **THE RETURN OF THE KING**

- #4 Independent

## **THE LORD OF THE RINGS OFFICIAL MOVIE GUIDE**

- #3 New York Times (paperback)
- #14 Publishers Weekly
- #33 New York Times (hardcover)
- #57 USA Today

## **THE LORD OF THE RINGS VISUAL COMPANION**

- #18 New York Times (hardcover fiction)
- #24 Amazon
- #100 USA Today

The Annotated Hobbit (ISBN 978-0618134700), by Douglas Anderson and J.R.R. Tolkien, was a comprehensive study of the publication history of The Hobbit. The most recent revised edition was published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in August 2002. This book is the definitive explication of the sources, characters, places, and all things Hobbit. Integrated with Anderson's notes, and placed alongside the fully restored and corrected text of the original story, are more than 150 illustrations showing visual Annotated Hobbit, New Edition, brief review I just received a review copy of the new edition of the Annotated Hobbit (working in the industry has some...Â Annotated Hobbit, New Edition, brief review. I just received a review copy of the new edition of the Annotated Hobbit (working in the industry has some benefits). I have only been able to skim over it.