

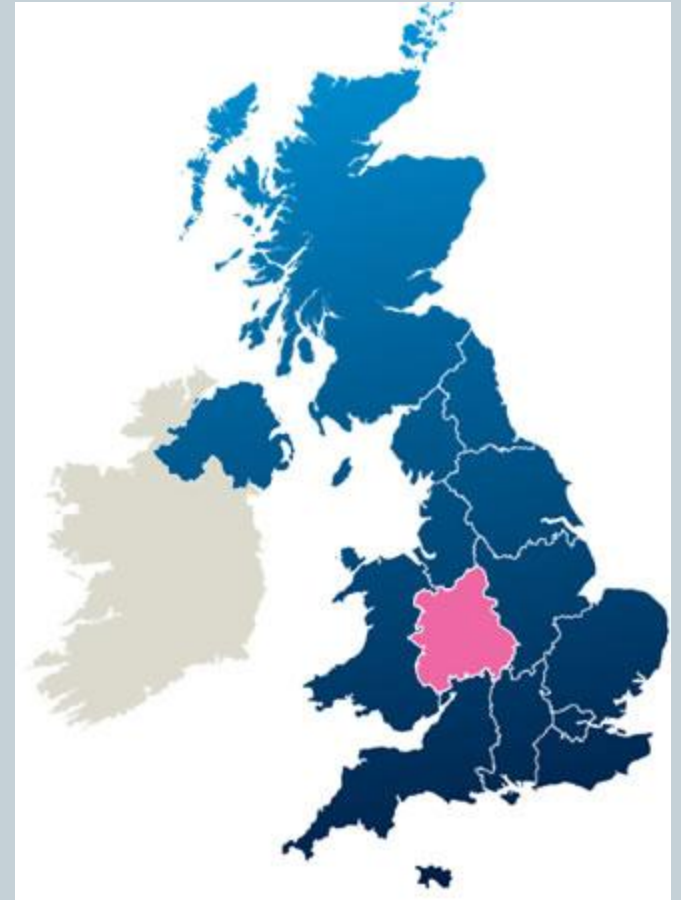
A Brief Introduction to J.R.R. Tolkien & *The Hobbit*



TOLKIEN BIOGRAPHY



- **John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973)**
 - Pronounced “tol-keen”
 - Born in South Africa, he spent a happy childhood growing up in the English countryside
 - His deep love of the rural landscape can clearly be seen in his writings.



TOLKIEN BIOGRAPHY



- Tolkien was twelve when his mother died
 - He and his brother attended King Edward's School, Birmingham, England, where he achieved distinction in classical literature.
 - At this time also, he began to develop his writing by inventing languages which he thought 'fairies' or 'elves' would speak.

TOLKIEN BIOGRAPHY



- He knew much about war, something that occurs a lot in his novels.
 - He became a British infantryman and served in the Battle of Somme (World War I, 1916)
 - Two of his three closest friends were killed.

TOLKIEN BIOGRAPHY



- After the war, he got a job working on the New English Dictionary, and began to write a collection of stories which he originally called “The Book of Lost Tales”.
- This book eventually became known as The Silmarillion, one of his most popular books after The Hobbit and the LOTR trilogy.

TOLKIEN BIOGRAPHY



- Tolkien became a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University. He loved words and their origins, especially very old words.
- Meanwhile, his four children encouraged him to use his imagination at home.
 - At night, Tolkien would put his children to bed and tell them stories he made up until they went to sleep.
 - One such story would later go on to become the story of *The Hobbit*, published years later in 1937

C.S. Lewis and the Inklings



- After *The Hobbit*, he developed a friendship with another Oxford professor and writer, C. S. Lewis.
 - You may recognize his name: he is the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
- The two critiqued each other's work as part of an informal writers' group known as "The Inklings".
 - As a group, several writers would get together to talk, have wine, and read from their work-in-progress.

TOLKIEN BIOGRAPHY



- After his wife's death in 1971, Tolkien returned to Oxford and died after a very brief illness on September 2, 1973.
- He left his great mythological book The Silmarillion to his son to be edited and published posthumously (after his death).



The Hobbit



The Hobbit



- J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy classic
- Takes place in the fictional world of Middle Earth.
 - This world looks similar to Europe.
- Treated like the prologue (or prequel) to *The Lord of the Rings*, but this isn't exactly true. It was meant to stand alone as a children's or young adult book.
 - The significance of the ring is one major thing that changed.



Origin

(not necessary to copy this)



- At Oxford one day while Tolkien was marking papers, his mind started to wander.
- On a blank exam booklet, he wrote down a single very famous line: “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.”
- He forgot about it for awhile, then decided later on that he needed to find out what a hobbit was, what sort of a hole it lived in, why it lived in a hole, etc.
- From this search grew the tale that would become *The Hobbit*.



The Hobbit



- The hobbit is Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit of good manners, somewhat lazy habits, and very hairy feet. He prefers napping to going on adventures.
- One day he is visited by a wizard named Gandalf and a group of dwarves and accepts a challenge to steal back a fortune in gold from a dragon.



Real-Life Connection



- The setting for the story was very inspired by Tolkien's world growing up.
 - Two places in particular, Moseley Bog and Sarehole Mill, formed the background setting for many parts of the story.
 - These places are still around today and have become popular tourist landmarks in England.



Childhood hangout #1: Moseley Bog



Tolkien used the bog, and the entrance to it, as inspiration for many places in his fictional world.



Childhood hangout #2: Sarehole Mill



The town of Sarehole Mill would later become the inspiration for The Shire, Bilbo's home:



The Hobbit



- **Major Themes and Conflicts:**
 - Good vs. Evil: can good triumph over evil?
 - Courage: what does it mean to have courage, and how does someone get it?
 - Heroism: what is a hero? Is it something we are born as, or something we can become?

The Hobbit



● Key Facts:

- Narrator: third person limited.
- Tone: Casual, fun, bright, warm.
- Mood: Skips between joyful/happy in good times to dark/desperate in times of danger.
- External Conflict: Bilbo versus the many enemies they face.
- Internal Conflict: Bilbo versus his fear and timid nature.