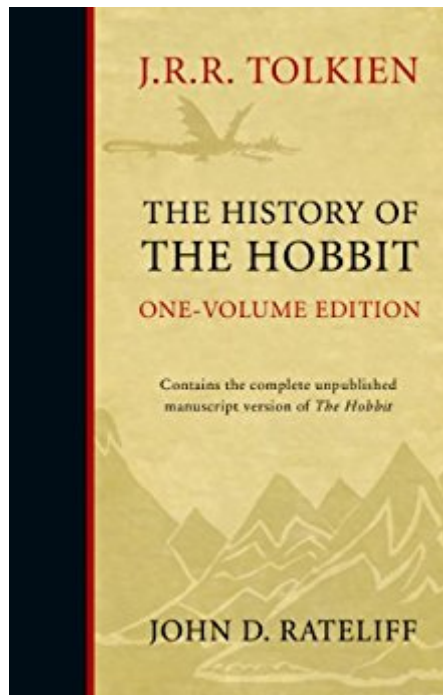


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The History Of The Hobbit: Mr Baggins And Return To Bag-End: Mr Baggins V. 1



Synopsis

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major new examination of how J.R.R.Tolkien came to write his original masterpiece *The Hobbit*, including his complete unpublished draft version of the story, and many little-known illustrations and previously unpublished maps by Tolkien himself. For the first time in one volume, *The History of the Hobbit* presents the complete unpublished text of the original manuscript of J.R.R.Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, accompanied by John Rateliff's lively and informative account of how the book came to be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as the foundation for *The Lord of the Rings*, this new book includes many little-known illustrations and previously unpublished maps for *The Hobbit* by Tolkien himself.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.

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Customer Reviews

J.R.R. Tolkien must be among the most heavily analyzed of twentieth century writers. His drafts and redrafts of his Middle earth legendarium, in some cases dating back to his years in service during World War I, have been published as *The History of Middle-earth* by his son and literary executor Christopher Tolkien. Through their multiple volumes students can trace the evolution of Tolkien's world. Until now, however, we have been unable to trace the story of the work which made Tolkien and Middle-earth well known to the general public. John D. Rateliff, after many years of patient scholarship, has now filled that gap with *The History of the Hobbit*. Mr. Baggins is the first of two volumes in *The History of the Hobbit*, and readers should buy it with its companion *Return to Bag End* at the same time. The second volume starts with page 469, and there is no Index in Volume I, for example. Mr. Rateliff has identified five phases in the writing of *The Hobbit*. Mr. Baggins covers the first and most of the second phases. Practically every word Tolkien wrote is printed, with extensive and fascinating notes and short essays by Mr. Rateliff interpolated with Tolkien's text. Colored plates showing some of Tolkien's sketches and maps are included, too. The early versions of *The Hobbit* are startling, to say the least. Bilbo Baggins walks out of his hobbit hole one morning to meet the wizard Bladorthin, who brings thirteen dwarves led by their chieftain Gandalf to visit him. Bilbo is strongarmed into becoming the dwarves' burglar, charged with recovering an immense treasure from the dragon Pryftan. People who have read the published *Hobbit* will recognize that the essential story is present, but with many variations and false starts which Tolkien eventually straightened out.

For some reason, Christopher Tolkien did not extend his *History of Middle-Earth* scholarship to the *Hobbit*. Rateliff provides an invaluable contribution by chronicling J.R.R. Tolkien's writing of his first and arguable best novel. In many respects, the early drafts of the *Hobbit* do not differ much from the

published version. The first phase of the draft (most of which are covered in this volume) remains startlingly similar to the final book. The key plot elements - from the unexpected party to the trolls to Beorn - are all present. There are a few minor differences, particularly the names (I won't spoil the surprise, but Gandalf and Thorin go by different aliases). In the second volume, the end of the second phase of the draft and third, and fourth phases deal with the latter half of the Hobbit story, and boy were there some changes. Bard wasn't the original dragon-slayer - not by long shot! It's fascinating to see how Tolkien originally envisioned the story and how much it differs from the final version. Finally, the book covers the fifth phase, Tolkien's attempt to rewrite the Hobbit in 1960 to make it better fit the style of Lord of the Rings. Ultimately, Tolkien only got to Rivendell and most of the changes only affect the tone, not the plot, of the story. Still, it's a fascinating "what if". I took off one star for something that bugged me throughout Rateliff's book. Rateliff supplements Tolkien's drafts with hundreds of detailed endnotes at the end of each chapter commenting on the text. These are generally very insightful, but because they're endnotes it's difficult and quite frustrating to have to flip back and forth to see how the comment relates to the text.

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