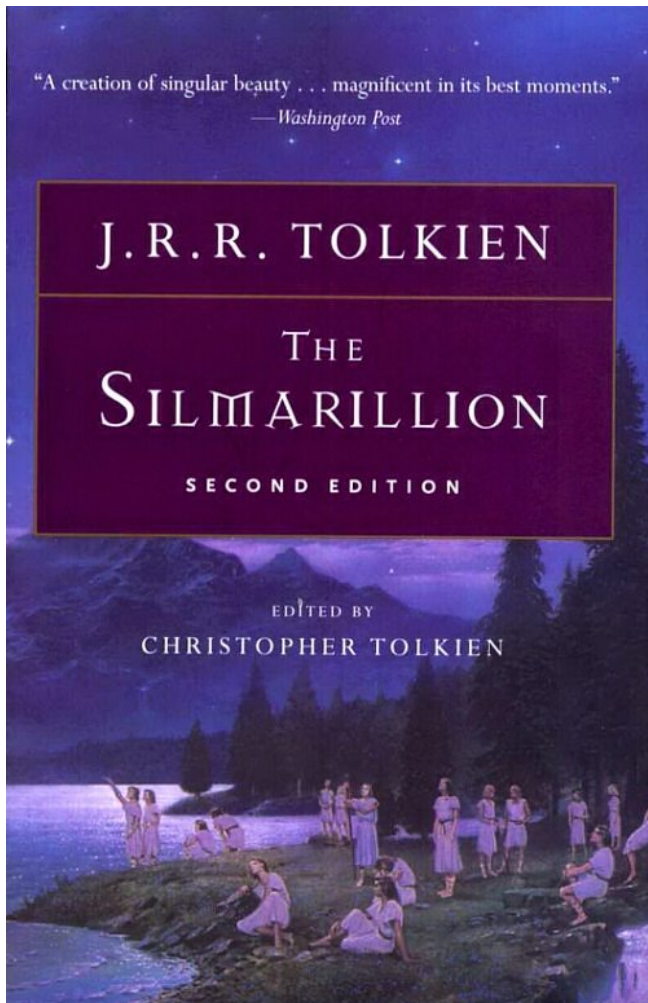


The Other Stories of J.R.R. Tolkien

Considered by many as one of the greatest authors of the 20th century, J.R.R. Tolkien is best known for his two masterpieces of the fantasy genre: *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. Yet the good professor wrote so much more than just those two great books. With the recent announcement of a previously unpublished story by Tolkien that is to be released this August (*The Fall of Gondolin*), we felt this was a good time to shine the light on some of his lesser-known works. Ben Plunkett, Nathan Patton, and Phill Lytle discuss some of their favorite “other” stories by J.R.R. Tolkien. After you read their recommendations, stick around and tell us about the other Tolkien stories that you love in the comment section below.

The Silmarillion – Benjamin Plunkett

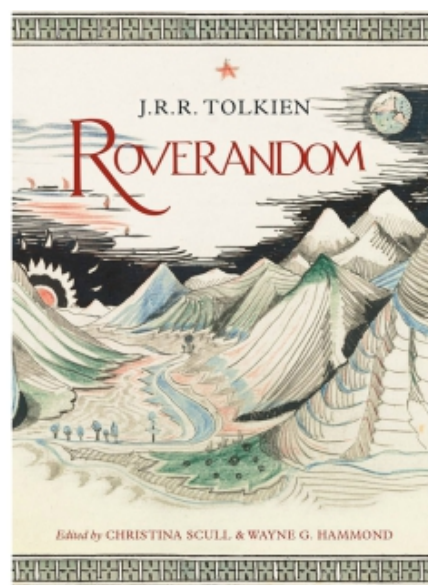
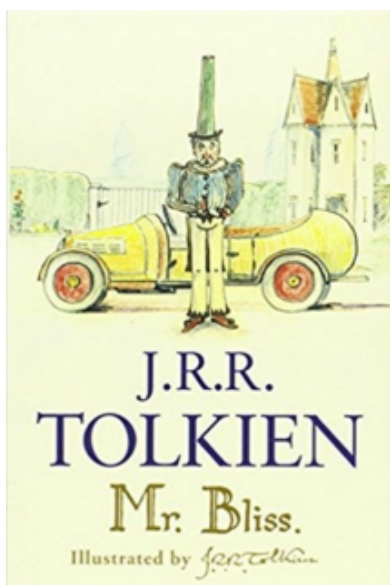


To make a huge understatement, J.R.R. Tolkien was a slow and very meticulous writer. It took him 14 years to write *The Lord of the Rings*. That right there is a very long time for an already published author to write a novel for an expectant editor. But that has got nothing on his writing of the text of what would become *The Silmarillion*. He began working on it in 1917 during World War I and kept on working on it until his death in 1973. His son, Christopher, took up the task of compiling the many texts that would ended up becoming what we now have. It was as a soldier in the trenches that Tolkien started composing the vast and rich mythology of the Middle Earth universe. *The Silmarillion* begins at the literal creation of Middle Earth. Much of the rest of it discusses the history of the elves, with the other races playing very key roles throughout time.

As you probably know, elves are immortal so although the book spans many thousands of years, there are elves most readers will be familiar with who were living at the time of *LOTR*, which chronicles a story that comes at the tail end of *The Silmarillion*.

Like the *LOTR* story, many of the stories herein are expounded upon more fully elsewhere. But don't think of *The Silmarillion* as just a book of summaries. It is a masterpiece. It is probably my second favorite Tolkien book after *LOTR*. There is so much more of rich complexity than I have mentioned here. There is so much more depth. There is the Ainur, Beleriand, Glaurand, Hurin, Morgoth, the rings of power, Gondolin—and these are only the tip of the iceberg. But if you are not familiar at all with *The Silmarillion*, be warned: It does not read like a regular novel. It is first and foremost a history of Middle Earth which gives Tolkien's vast mythological creation an incredible richness.

***Mr. Bliss, Roverandom, and Letters From Father Christmas* –
Nathan Patton**



Many of Tolkien's books began as stories that he told to his own children, inspired by events in the lives of their family.

Mr. Bliss

In 1932, Tolkien went out and bought himself a motorcar and, evidently, had a series of misadventures with it that inspired this tale.

This is a silly story about a man named Mr. Bliss who buys a motorcar on a whim and experiences rather ridiculous events as a result. It is a delightful and charming read. We also see our first glimpse of Sergeant Boffin and Gaffer Gamgee, whose names, at least, we will see again in Lord of the Rings.

Sadly, this book is out of print. Even the 2007 25th anniversary edition is no longer available. (However, the audiobook version, read by the excellent Sir Derek Jacobi, is quite affordable on [audible](#).) If you can manage to find a copy, though, you really should read the hardback edition, as it contains copies of the entire original manuscript including many original illustrations by Tolkien himself.

Tolkien had originally attempted to have Mr. Bliss published as a picture book, but his publishers deemed it too expensive at the time.

Roverandom

In 1925, the Tolkien family took a holiday to the Yorkshire coast where a five-year-old Michael Tolkien lost his favorite toy: a miniature lead toy dog.

Papa Tolkien, in order to console his heartbroken son, told him the tale of what happened to that toy dog afterward. That story became Roverandom.

It turns out that the toy used to be a real dog named Rover, who got on the bad side of a grumpy wizard and found himself turned into a toy as a punishment. That toy spent some time

with a nice young boy who unfortunately misplaced him on the beach. The toy dog then meets a “sand-sorcerer” who sends him on a series of adventures including a trip to the moon and a journey under the sea.

Unlike Mr. Bliss, Roverandom is still in print and widely available.

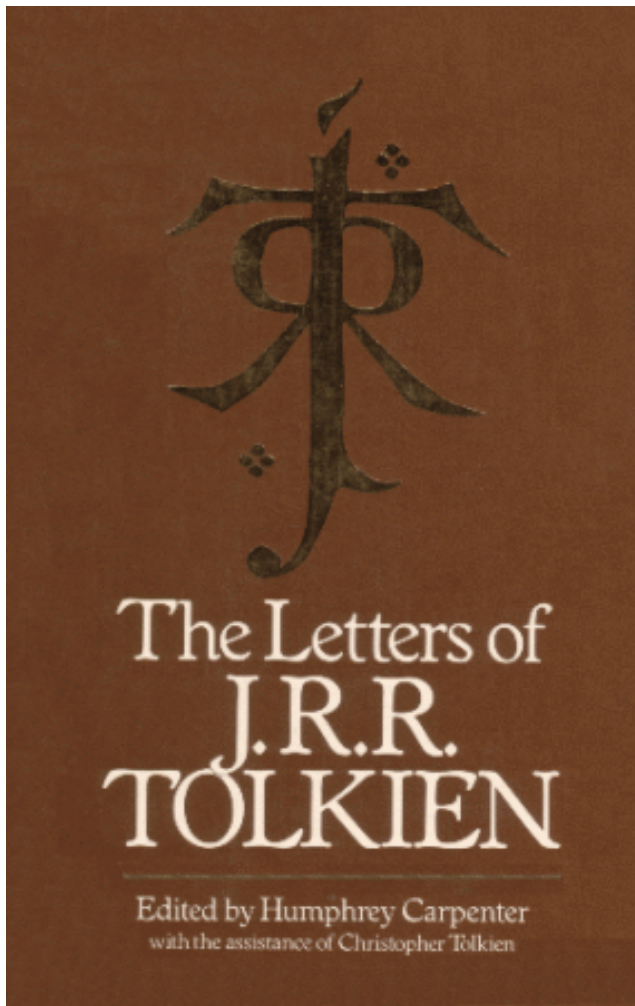
Letters From Father Christmas

Starting in 1920, when John Tolkien, the eldest child, was three, every Christmas the Tolkien children received a letter from Father Christmas detailing the happenings at the North Pole that year. His primary companion is the North Polar Bear who is continually getting into mischief. Later letters include Snow-elves, Red Gnomes, Snow-men, Cave-bears, and the North Polar Bear’s nephews. There’s even an attack by Goblins attempting to raid Father Christmas’ cellars.

This book contains the letters from 1925 through 1938 as well as the final letter and a short note from the North Polar Bear written in an invented alphabet based on Goblin drawings. Each letter is accompanied by illustrations by Tolkien himself.

We, as a family, traditionally read the letters, one per day, in the days leading up to Christmas.

Like *Mr. Bliss*, the hardcover version is the way to go with *Letters From Father Christmas* as it includes copies of the original letters and illustrations; however, it is also, like Mr. Bliss, seemingly out of print.



Professor Tolkien is my favorite author of all time, and much of that is due to his two most popular works *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. But my love for his writing goes well beyond those two. Tolkien was a prodigious letter writer, a skill-set that I fear is quickly becoming extinct. He wrote letters to friends, to family members, to fans, and to publishers. This book – *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* – selects some of the best correspondence to and from the great author. His wit is on full display throughout the book. His passion for language, faith, and family is evidenced as well. Tolkien was a man of strong beliefs and not so insignificant stubbornness. His back-and-forths with his publishers are a highlight of the book. Perhaps the best moments though, are when he engages with fans or his family and you can see the teacher, the father, and the deeply committed believer shining through. This book does a fabulous job of adding insight and

clarity to his other books once you see the man behind the words.