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Salem Press Announces the Newest Addition to its Critical Insights Series; *Critical Insights: The Hobbit*

Edited by Stephen W. Potts, from the University of California, San Diego, *Critical Insights: The Hobbit* presents essays on *The Hobbit*, written by authors from North America, New Zealand, France, and Eastern Europe. In experience, the contributors span the entire history of Tolkien scholarship, from one who learned firsthand from J.R.R. Tolkien and his friend C.S. Lewis to young scholars just beginning their quests into the wild lands of literary critique.

Beginning with **The Book and the Author**, Editor Stephen W. Potts provides an introductory essay that approaches *The Hobbit* as a children's story, fairy tale, and entry point for Tolkien's work as a whole. It considers the novel as Tolkien's version of the archetypal fairy-tale hero's journey, showing both what it shares with its fantasy predecessors and what makes it unique for its genre. It also includes an essay on the author, J.R.R. Tolkien.

The essays in the **Context** section offer background and a framework for approaching the novel. Kelly R. Orazi investigates "J.R.R. Tolkien's World: Literary, Cultural, and Historical Influences on Middle-earth's Subcreator," focusing on the elements that shaped Tolkien's career; his fantasy world, Middle-earth; and the narratives set therein. In "An Unexpected Success: *The Hobbit* and the Critics," Alicia Fox-Lenz surveys the critical reaction to the novel from first reviews in the late 1930s to the growth of formal Tolkien scholarship following the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. A single critical approach to the novel is showcased in Jason Fisher's "The Riddles and the Cup: Medieval Germanic Motifs in *The Hobbit*." Finally, John Rosegrant compares Tolkien with another popular fantasist, J.K. Rowling, in "Bilbo Baggins, Harry Potter, and the Fate of Enchantment."

The remainder of this volume, **Critical Readings**, encompasses a range of other topics and critical perspectives, beginning with a set of essays that look at Tolkien's influences and borrowings in more detail. With her essay "'Of Gold and an Alloy': Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, and the Northern Heroic Spirit," Hannah Parry returns to the mythic tradition that most captured Tolkien's imagination as both scholar and author, that of Germanic northern Europe. Veteran critic Jared Lobdell debates the nature of Tolkien's version of the "fairy-story" in "Witness Those Rings and Roundelays': *The Hobbit* as Fairy-Story." Kris Swank turns to "Fairy-Stories That Fueled *The Hobbit*," tracing in greater detail the children's stories and fantasies that Tolkien grew up on or shared with his children. Josh Brown brings a poet's sensibility to "The Poems of *The Hobbit*." In "A Turning Point in His Career: The Effect of *The Hobbit* on Middle-earth,"

Sara Waldorf places this novel in relationship to the larger works that followed: *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. Other essay topics are:

- “*The Hobbit: A Mythopoeic Need for Adventure*” by Jelena Borojević
- “Growing Up Tolkien: Finding Our Way through Mirkwood” by Kayla Shaw
- “How to Slay a Dragon When You Are Only Three Feet Tall” by Aurélie Brémont
- “Tolkien and the Illustrators: Visual Representations of *The Hobbit*” by M. Lee Alexander

This volume will provide an overview of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* – in fact, several overviews from several different perspectives. It is a guidebook to not only a classic children’s novel but to Tolkien’s first journey into his fantastic otherworld: Middle-earth. It is *The Hobbit*, after all, that first brought to life Tolkien’s elves and dwarves; the wizard Gandalf; the creature Gollum; and, above all, the hobbits themselves – especially those unlikely, surprisingly heroic Bagginses.

Each essay in *Critical Insights: The Hobbit* is 2,500 to 5,000 words in length, and all essays conclude with a list of Works Cited and detailed endnotes. Also included in this volume are **Appendixes** to provide readers with additional information and opportunities for further research, including a **Chronology of Tolkien’s Life**, a list of **Works by J.R.R. Tolkien**, an annotated **Bibliography**, biographies of the **Editors** and **Contributors**, and an alphabetical **Index**.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world’s most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia’s most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: The Hobbit* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

Free Online with Print Purchase.

In addition, *Critical Insights: The Hobbit* comes with complimentary online access via <http://online.salempress.com>. A single purchase of the printed version is all it takes to gain access to this important title on the web.

Critical Insights: The Hobbit

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