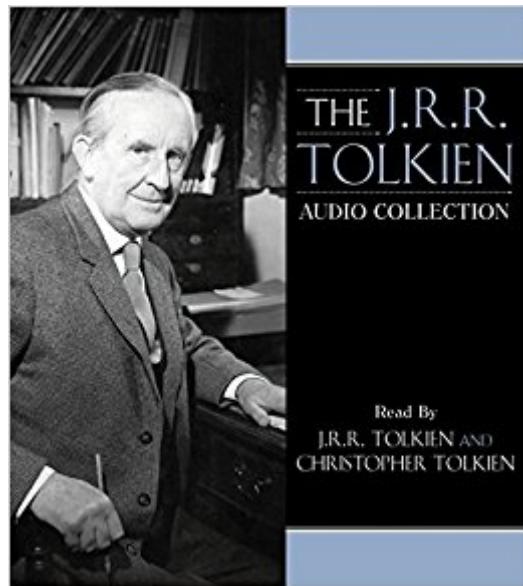


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# The J.R.R. Tolkien Audio Collection



## Synopsis

For generations, J.R.R. Tolkien's words have brought to thrilling life a world of hobbits, magic, and historic myth, woken from its foggy slumber within our minds. Here, he tells the tales in his own voice. Of historic note, these selections from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are based on a tape recording Tolkien made in 1952, which inspired him to continue his own quest to see his vision in print. Also included is a never-published poem, "The Mirror of Galadriel," originally intended for inclusion in the trilogy, yet edited out. And, finally, Tolkien's son, Christopher, reads selections from his father's *The Silmarillion*, the epic foundation upon which rests the whole of his work.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973) was a major scholar of the English language, specializing in Old and Middle English. Twice Professor of Anglo-Saxon (Old English) at the University of Oxford, he also wrote a number of stories, including most famously *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), which are set in a pre-historic era in an invented version of the world which he called by the Middle English name of Middle-earth. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973) was a major scholar of the English language, specializing in Old and Middle English. Twice Professor of Anglo-Saxon (Old English) at the University of Oxford, he also wrote a number of stories, including most famously *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), which are set in a pre-historic era in an invented version of the world which he called by the Middle English name of Middle-earth.

This collection consists mainly of historic readings by J.R.R. Tolkien, made in the 1950s. The sound quality of the oldest recordings isn't very good, but it's nevertheless interesting to hear Tolkien's characterizations of his own soon-to-be-famous characters. Those expecting Tolkien to sound like a dowdy professor will be surprised when they hear the gusto and bluster he brings to the mighty Tom Bombadil and the sinister glee he injects into the voice of the evil cave-dwelling Gollum. The collection is rounded out by newer recordings of the author's son, Christopher, reading from his father's works. J.P.M. © AudioFile 2001, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine

In 1952 J.R.R. Tolkien had come to the end of his longest and best known work, *The Lord of the Rings*. Justifiably proud of his accomplishment but unsure whether he could find a publisher, he sought reassurance from friends by reading selections aloud. One of these friends had a tape recording machine, and Tolkien agreed to do some recordings with it. Hearing how well it sounded and encouraged by the enthusiasm of his friends, Tolkien continued to seek publication and finally achieved it three years later. Those recordings were fortunately preserved and are now available in this 4 CD set. The first two CDs are of Tolkien reading from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and also include some material from *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* that Tolkien recorded later. The third and fourth CDs are of Tolkien's son Christopher reading selections from *The Silmarillion*. All are enchanting to listen to. Tolkien sounds exactly as one would expect him to: a deep sonorous voice which makes even ordinary words impressive and which immeasurably enhances the beauty of his writings. It is no exaggeration to say that Tolkien sounds very much as would Gandalf, Elrond, or Treebeard if we were fortunate enough to be transported to Middle-earth. Christopher Tolkien's voice is very similar to his father's, and it can be difficult to distinguish between them. The recordings are not perfect, particularly the ones dating from 1952. At times doors open and shut and people seem to move around the room, and once a car horn blows, but these do nothing to distract from the magic in Tolkien's voice. Previously I owned one or two LPs with some of these reading selections, but they have been scratched and worn down from many years of use. We are fortunate to be able to own these recordings now in more permanent form.

There're many Tolkien audio-books out there, read by alternative performers. My first audio-book was *The Silmarillion*, read by Martin Shaw. I love his performance of that epic set of legends, and the whole production is excellent. But when I found this other boxed-set, with Tolkien reading passages from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, I knew it was a must-have. I also imagined

that the audio was going to be non-HQ. However, that's not a problem at all, it's even understandable, for they're recordings from the early-1950's. It's a historical collection and that makes it something really special for the ones who've been into Tolkien's works for a long time. I'm thankful for having a copy of it. My thanks go to Christopher Tolkien for having released it so Tolkien readers could have a real treat; his own performances of the selections from *The Silmarillion* are excellent as well. I took advantage of it when it comes to pronounce the Quenya and Sindarin words properly. Martin Shaw mispronounces some of the words by sticking to what an English version of any given word would be. But when listening to Christopher you can be sure he's pronouncing correctly, for he's the languages creator's son. And if one analyses the notes on pronunciation at the end of *The Silmarillion* after (or while) listening to Christopher's reading one can see that it makes justice to it. So this audio-book not only was worth buying because of its historical and emotional importance but also for being a tool that helps improving one's own knowledge of Arda.

#### Great readings from the LTR stories and others by Tolkien

I was spell bound by this audio collection. It adds a completely different dimension to the written word. I read the *Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* over 40 years ago, I am still spell bound by the sheer scale of his creative imagination. I have certainly heard this material before, but I was only too delighted to have the opportunity to once again have the pleasure of hearing Tolkien present his work as only he himself could. His voice conveys so much added depth to an already deep enchanted and philosophical work. I am sure I will listen to it over and over and get a deeper appreciation of Tolkien's stories every listening.

I had this on cassette. It's great to hear Tolkien read his own stories and poems!

According to the inserts, these recordings were made before the "Lord of the Rings" books were even published. J.R.R. Tolkien performed these snippets for friends, in order to get their opinion of his new story as well as inspire himself to pursue publication. It is pretty fortunate that they were recorded. Of course, the recording quality of these informal chats is not top-notch, but I would expect nothing different. These are not professional recordings, but probably just someone with a recording machine in a living room while Tolkien performs. They are intimate, and a wonder to hear. Imagine if you could have been there, with Professor Tolkien trying to interest you in his funny little stories! Tolkien reads excerpts from several of his books, including "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of

the Rings." He reads "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil," and sings a few of his songs. It is great fun to hear the "gollum" noise as he envisioned it, as well as the Elvish language spoken by its author. I highly recommend these recordings. They are a window into the past.

When I was a child, I checked these recordings as audio tapes from our local library, listening constantly and memorizing passages in Tolkien's own voice. To this day I can still recite the poetry, and "Riddles in the Dark" without hesitation... save what the author himself lingered over in these recordings. It was a treat for me to even find these, and gift them to my own children, now in their teens, who grew up reading the books, but never heard the man's voice tell you the stories.

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