

## Course Reflection - JRR Tolkien's Middle Earth

*The Hobbit* is one of the books I remember most from my childhood. I never did end up reading *The Lord of the Rings* outside of a couple pages of *Fellowship* before I was deterred by the level of prose I was encountering (mind you, *The Hobbit* was specifically designed for children, and I was around ten years old), but what I do remember from *The Hobbit* was a vibrant world full of locations that felt real. I could name all thirteen dwarves that accompanied Bilbo on his journey, and most definitely remember crying when I had read Fíli and Kíli had both perished. Many years later, though re-reading *The Hobbit* at the onset of the course was a good reminder of all that had happened, I was ready to hop into *The Lord of the Rings*, whose films I adore but whose books I had never ended up reading.

But first came *The Silmarillion*, which I hadn't known even existed before ENG 195. It felt like time-out, in a sense, since I was jonesing to read *The Lord of the Rings*, but I resolved to be patient and let the course run the way it was intended. *The Silmarillion* ended up being not all-too interesting on its own, but the background of Middle Earth and all its important figures ended up being brain space well-spent, as it served to augment the world of *The Lord of the Rings* considerably. Upon starting the trilogy, I almost immediately noticed tongue-in-cheek references to history of Middle Earth totally unknown if *The Lord of the Rings* was someone's first encounter with the world. Equipped with the knowledge of *The Silmarillion*, the trilogy became like *The Hobbit* was to me as a kid: vibrant, complex, and so tangible it might as well have been real. It had me momentarily contemplating fictional history as fact many, many times, and throughout the course of each book I was drawn further and further into a place I loved

returning to. While I still prefer the films, the source of Peter Jackson's inspiration now resonates with me to a much higher degree and helps me enjoy them even more.