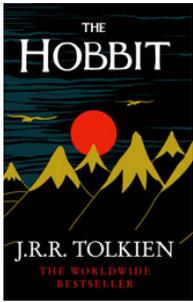
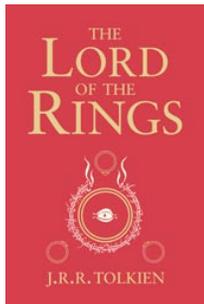


# Evolution of High Fantasy



**Tolkien, J. R. R. (1937). *The hobbit*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.**

This was the first book written and published by J. R. R. Tolkien in his world of Middle Earth. It is an isolated tale of a hobbit that does not want to go on an adventure, and yet he finds himself on one nonetheless. Bilbo's pride will not let a band of dwarves slight him as someone that cannot take care of himself.

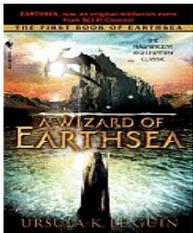


**Tolkien, J. R. R. (1954, 1955). *The lord of the rings*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.**

*The Lord of the Rings* has a group of young hobbits at its core, but the scope of this story is much more grandiose. Bilbo has grown older by this point, but his young cousin has become his heir to both his fortune and his burden. The ring that Bilbo found on

his journey with the dwarves, Gandalf believes, has more power and portents than Bilbo could have imagined. The journey to destroy this ring is only half the novel. Frodo under the weight of the ring separates from the main party with only one companion. His other friends and the party of those who volunteered to accompany Frodo find themselves joining the long awaited battle between good and evil. Bits of history steep this high fantasy tale in its own past.

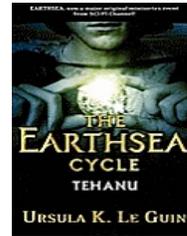
Tolkien may have published it as three separate works, but make no mistake this is a serious, solid single work, and to ignore its place in the history of fantasy would be like going to an art gallery and skipping the works of Michelangelo.



**Le Guin, U. (1968). *A wizard of Earthsea*. New York, NY: Bantam.**

With his people under attack, Sparrowhawk tries to think of any bit of magic that could help. He creates a mist. This magic draws the attention of great wizard

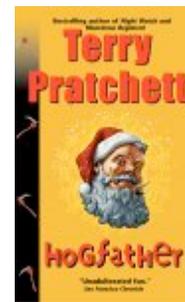
just as the boy becomes a man. The young man has too much youthful foolishness about him. He wants to know more and do more magic. He thinks the old wizard must be slightly doltish for constantly calling for patience, contemplation, and reading. Even in school, Sparrowhawk feels the power inside him and wants to show it off to the point of his own possible destruction. The wizard of Earthsea must defeat what trouble his foolishness has brought into the world. He realizes that it would be easier to face down a dragon than fight the shadow chasing him.



**Le Guin, U. (1990). *Tehanu: the last book of Earthsea*. New York, NY: Atheneum.**

Published a decade after completing Sparrowhawk's story, Le Guin goes back to Earthsea. Tenar, who befriends Sparrowhawk in the second novel, has adopted an abused child, Tehana. Sparrowhawk has

claimed his true name Ged after his magical power has been lost through his previous adventure. This story is very different from those in the "trilogy." The earlier stories have kept Sparrowhawk or Gen as a pivotal character, but this one looks at the world from Tenar's perspective. What role is there for a widow and mother who was once a Priestess to the unnamed ones? The added plot about the need to help an abused girl is one that has real resonance today.

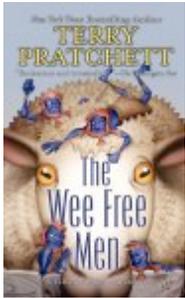


**Pratchett, T. (1999). *Hogfather*. New York, NY: Harper.**

Step into a world where the assassin's guild has taken a deposit on the assassination of Hogfather, the fat man wearing a red suit who says "Ho Ho Ho" a lot. Death has adorned a pillow and red suit to take up the role to keep belief alive and his granddaughter, Susan, investigates why her grandfather is acting so oddly.

Where else would this story end up but the land of the tooth fairy? Hogfather entertains the reader while questioning what happens to all those teeth, and where does the tooth fairy get their money. It was the first in the Discworld series that had a strong young adult feel. Pratchett later picks up this style with *The Amazing Maurice and His*

*Educated Rodents*, and then a whole series about a young witch Tiffany Aching.



**Pratchett, T. (2003). *The wee free men*. New York, NY: Harper.**

Tiffany Aching is a strong-minded, no-nonsense, field-grown girl. When she sees something pop out of the local river that does not look right, she does a little looking in one of her grandmother's book. After a few measurements, she sets her brother up as bait, and hits it with the best weapon in her house, a heavy frying pan. This earns her a little extra notice from the *picsties* that live in the area, as well as from a passing witch. She quickly learns that some of the faerie tales her grandmother read to her might have more truth to them than she initially thought. This novel is the first of a series of YA novels that take place in the Discworld universe. Towards the end, once help has arrived, an older witch reminds her that witchcraft is "not like school at all. First you get the test, and then afterward you spend years findin' out how you passed it."



**Paolini, C. (2003). *Eragon*. New York, NY: Random House.**

Alagaesia is a country at war with itself. Elves and humans used to work together for their mutual benefit under the authority of Dragon riders and their dragons. That time has passed, until Eragon finds an egg. The dragon that hatches and bonds to him become the last hope for the forces of good. To defeat Galbatorix, Eragon must first defeat the Shade that is tracking him. This is just the first novel in the, now complete, Inheritance cycle.

## Author Bio's

### J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

The father of high fantasy came to writing fantasy late in his career. He was a classically trained linguist who was part of a writing group that included C.S. Lewis called the Inklings. His understanding of a

language's place in the creation of a culture led him to pay special attention to the use of language in his works to great effect.

[www.tolkien.co.uk](http://www.tolkien.co.uk) or [www.tolkiensociety.org](http://www.tolkiensociety.org)

### Ursula K. Le Guin (1929- )

The first lady of high fantasy started writing fantasy when most women were sticking to romance novels or cookbooks. However, it was the 1960's and the sexual revolution opened up opportunities for women in all aspects of society. She continues to write for both adults and young adults, with a new series released in the last decade. Her Earthsea series started 40 years ago as a trilogy. Since then, she has added two more novels and a collection of shorts stories set in that universe. Her work in fantasy proved that though Tolkien created a landmark fantasy universe he did not create the only one.

<http://www.ursulakleguin.com/Bio.html>

### Terry Pratchett (1948- )

The court-jester of the fantasy realms proved that as any genre evolves it can certainly use a little satire, and Sir Terry Pratchett fulfills that role admirably. His Discworld functions just like a blank canvas to mock all the one-dimensional worlds in modern fantasy while simultaneously teaching us about the ludicrous nature of our own world. In 2002, he received Britain's highest honor for children's literature for *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*. Then in 2009, Queen Elizabeth II appointed him a Knight Bachelor. He provides a necessary foil for the more sophisticated high fantasy as well as many big laughs. <http://www.terrypratchett.co.uk/>

### Christopher Paolini (1983- )

The young whippersnapper of fantasy turned the world of fantasy on its head when he wrote and published at age 15. His trilogy extended to a fourth volume that came out in 2011. His work takes cues from the entire fantasy genre including role-playing games, while at the time creating a universe and mythological structure all his own.

<http://www.alagaesia.com/author.php>

The images of the book covers are from either the publisher's web page or the authors page for selling the books.