

J. R. R. Tolkien – Father of Fantasy Fiction (B2)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you like fantasy fiction?
2. If so, do you have a favourite fantasy book or film?
3. Have you read anything by J. R. R. Tolkien?
4. If so, what did you think of it?

B – Listen and answer

Listen (without reading) and fill in the blanks in the Fact File.

Fact File – J. R. R. Tolkien

- Born in South Africa on 3rd January, ¹ _____.
- Became proficient in ² _____ and _____ while still a teenager.
- Went to ³ _____ to fight in 1915.
- Married Edith Bratt in ⁴ _____.
- Gained a degree in ⁵ _____ in 1911.
- Published his first best seller, *The Hobbit*, in ⁶ _____.
- His best-known work *The Lord of the Rings* has sold over ⁷ _____ copies.
- It has been translated into ⁸ _____ languages.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. Why was Tolkien brought up by a priest who was a friend of his family?
2. When did he start inventing his own languages?
3. Where did he teach for over thirty years?
4. Why did he start writing fantasy tales?
5. How did he come to write *The Lord of the Rings*?
6. How long did it take him?
7. How did Tolkien see the *The Lord of the Rings*?
8. What is the story about?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)

1. While wandering round the old part of the town, we _____ a wonderful art gallery.
2. When her parents died, Maisie was made the _____ of her Aunt Jess, her mother's sister.
3. A recent _____ showed that under 40% of UK citizens trust the government.
4. Though the adults didn't find the cartoon very funny, the children were greatly _____ by it.
5. Nelson Mandela died in 2013, but his legend _____.
6. *Cinderella* is a fairy _____ that has been told to children all over the world for centuries.

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.

1. As a teenager, Tolkien _____ (MASTER) Latin and Greek and invented his own languages.
2. During the First World War, he married his _____ (CHILD) sweetheart, Edith Bratt.
3. In 1925, Tolkien won the _____ (PRESTIGE) chair of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University. .
4. His life changed _____ (EVER) in 1925.
5. While grading exams, he _____ (SUDDEN) began writing a story on a blank page.
6. His words became one of the most famous _____ (OPEN) lines in English Literature.
7. Tolkien created a short, _____ (FURRY-FOOT) creature called ‘a hobbit’.
8. In 1954 and 1955, he published his _____ (MASTER), *The Lord of the Rings*.

F – Write about it

Write about a fantasy story you’ve read recently. Mention:

- who wrote it;
- when it was written;
- when/where it’s set;
- what it’s about;
- what you thought of it.

Answers

B – Listen and answer

1. 1892
2. Latin – Greek
3. France
4. 1916
5. Old English
6. 1937
7. 250 million
8. thirty

C – Read and answer

1. Because he had lost both his parents.
2. While still a teenager.
3. At Oxford University.
4. He started writing them to amuse himself and his four children.
5. His book *The Hobbit* was a surprise success with both adults and children, so his publisher asked for a sequel.
6. It took him 12 years.
7. He saw it as a mythology for England.
8. It's about a group of hobbits who set out to destroy the One Ring to prevent Dark Lord Sauron from using it to conquer Middle-earth.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. came across
2. ward
3. poll
4. amused
5. lives on
6. tale

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English?

1. mastered
2. childhood
3. prestigious
4. forever
5. suddenly
6. opening
7. furry-footed
8. masterpiece