



The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the Oxford English Dictionary

Peter Gilliver, Jeremy Marshall, Edmund Weiner

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The Ring of Words describes the powerful and unique relationship between Tolkien's creative use of the English language in his fictional works and his professional work on the Oxford English Dictionary. Tolkien's earliest employment was as an assistant on the staff of the OED, and he later said that he had 'learned more in those two years than in any other equal period of [his] life'.

Here three authors, themselves senior editors of the OED, engage directly with Tolkien's language and his fictional world. Two discursive sections explore Tolkien as a lexicographer and his creativity as a word user and creator. The main section of the book is made up of individual 'word studies' which explore over 100 words found in Tolkien's fiction in terms of their origins, development, and significance in his fictional world. Words such as 'hobbit', 'attercop', 'precious', 'Smeagol', and 'waybread' are explored in fascinating detail.

The Ring of Words offers a new and unexplored angle on the creative world of one of our most famous and well-loved writers, presenting new archive material for the first time.



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