

Winter 1-15-1967

Memo from Houghton Mifflin Co.

Houghton Mifflin Co.

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Memo from Houghton Mifflin Co.

Memo

From: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2 Park St, Boston, Mass. 02107
To: Friends of J.R.R. Tolkien:

In celebration of his 75th birthday, we would like to share with you from our editorial files these quotes from the readers' first reports on each new Tolkien manuscript as it arrived in our offices. It is hard to believe that THE HOBBIT arrived 30 years ago, but it has lost none of its freshness, nor have the subsequent books been received with less enthusiasm.

THE HOBBIT

". . . This is an almost impossible book to describe adequately. . . I enjoyed it enormously. . . It is fine for reading out loud. The author has, I think, just the right touch . . . The success of this book in this country is a great gamble . . . but it might very easily go like wildfire.

To publish"

3/16/37

FARMER GILES OF HAM

". . . Mr. Tolkien has a lovely time gently kidding the romantic legends of chivalry. This book is both like and unlike THE HOBBIT. It has the same absolutely unmalicious satire, the same restraint, the same unheralded absurdities.

To publish by all means"

9/2/49

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

". . . limitless. This is a rich book and a deadly serious one. I think it is wonderful, but it has drawbacks. Who will read 423 pages about an unfinished journey undertaken by mythical creatures with confusing names? Probably no one, but I still say it is wonderful and, with my heart in my mouth--

To publish"

10/26/53

THE TWO TOWERS

". . . The magic holds right through. The poetry, the imagery, the richness and excitement are as strong as ever, but there is a difference. As Gandalf says, the tide has turned, the battle is beginning to go their way, though there

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are many dangers before them. . . Only one thing troubles me. This is not a sequence of three separate books. It is one book arbitrarily divided into three parts. . . I'd rather publish the three books simultaneously, but I suppose that wouldn't work. Anyway--whenever and however--

To publish!"

4/15/54

THE RETURN OF THE KING

". . . Tolkien has told his story and made his point. It is a great story and the point is one that cannot be made too often.

To publish"

9/2/54

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL

". . . a collection of sixteen poems preceded by one of the author's scholarly prefaces, in which he explains that they come from the same Red Book which provided the material for THE HOBBIT and THE LORD OF THE RINGS. They have the same rollicking and yet elusive quality as the verse in the earlier books. This will be a gift book, lavishly illustrated. It should appeal to children as well as to all members of the Tolkien cult, a passionately loyal and ever-growing group of all ages. We may not make money on this, but as Tolkien's publishers in America we should certainly have it on the list.

To publish"

10/23/62

TREE AND LEAF

". . . a magnificent example of Tolkien at his best--very learned and also very provocative in his analysis of what fairy stories really are, as opposed to "travel tales", "dream stories", or "beast fables". . . To all followers of Tolkien this is a must. Curiously, the book it reminds me of is THE WORLD OF FICTION--a comparison that would have infuriated B. DeVoto, who abominated fantasy. . . This book explains why Tolkien wrote THE LORD OF THE RINGS, what it meant to him, and how hard he struggled to finish it.

To publish"

2/6/64