

the complete history of middle earth

the complete history of middle earth is a vast and intricate tapestry woven by J.R.R. Tolkien, encompassing myths, legends, and epic tales that span across ages. This comprehensive history details the origins, peoples, and monumental events of the world Tolkien created, known as Middle-earth. From the creation of the universe to the rise and fall of kingdoms, the narrative unfolds through rich storytelling found in works like *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. Understanding the complete history of Middle-earth offers insight into its complex cosmology, diverse races, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. This article delves into the key epochs, major characters, and significant events that define Middle-earth's legendary past. Explore the profound lore and timeless adventures that make Middle-earth one of the most celebrated fantasy worlds in literature.

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The Creation and Early Ages of Middle-earth

The complete history of Middle-earth begins with its creation, rooted deeply in Tolkien's mythology, primarily detailed in *The Silmarillion*. The world was formed by the divine entity Eru Ilúvatar and the Ainur, powerful spiritual beings who shaped the universe through the Music of the Ainur. This cosmic symphony gave rise to Eä, the universe containing Arda, the world that includes Middle-earth.

The Music of the Ainur and the Birth of Arda

The Ainur's music depicted the themes of the world's destiny, with Melkor, the greatest of the Ainur, introducing discord. Despite this, Ilúvatar integrated Melkor's discord into the grand design. Arda was

shaped and prepared for the coming of the Children of Ilúvatar, Elves and Men, marking the beginning of the world's history.

The Ages Before the Sun

The early development of Middle-earth involved the shaping of its lands and seas, the awakening of the Elves by the waters of Cuiviénen, and the early rebellions against Melkor. These events set the stage for the long conflicts that would define the First Age and beyond.

The First Age: The Age of the Silmarils

The First Age is a pivotal era in the complete history of Middle-earth, characterized by the struggle between the forces of good and Melkor, now known as Morgoth. Central to this age is the creation of the Silmarils, three radiant jewels crafted by the Elf Fëanor, which contained the light of the Two Trees of Valinor.

The Silmarils and the Oath of Fëanor

The Silmarils became the cause of immense strife, as Fëanor and his sons swore an oath to reclaim them from Morgoth. This oath led to tragic wars, betrayals, and the eventual exile of the Noldorin Elves from Valinor to Middle-earth.

The Great Battles and Heroes

The First Age featured numerous legendary battles such as the Siege of Angband and the Battle of Unnumbered Tears. Heroes like Fingolfin, Beren and Lúthien, and Túrin Turambar rose to prominence, their tales deeply embedded in the lore of Middle-earth.

Major Events of the First Age

- The Flight of the Noldor

- The Dagor Bragollach (Battle of Sudden Flame)
- The Nirnaeth Arnoediad (Battle of Unnumbered Tears)
- The Fall of Gondolin
- The War of Wrath and the defeat of Morgoth

The Second Age: The Rise and Fall of Númenor

The Second Age marks a time of renewal and great kingdoms, most notably Númenor, a powerful island kingdom gifted to Men who were allies of the Elves. This age is defined by the rise of Sauron, Morgoth's lieutenant, who sought to dominate Middle-earth through the creation of the One Ring.

The Kingdom of Númenor

Númenor flourished as a center of knowledge, power, and longevity for Men. However, pride and fear of death led to its downfall when its leaders defied the Valar and attempted to seize immortality.

The Forging of the Rings of Power

During the Second Age, Sauron deceived the Elven smiths of Eregion into forging the Rings of Power. While the three Elven Rings remained untainted, the creation of the One Ring gave Sauron control over the others, sparking conflicts that shaped the age.

The War Against Sauron and the Downfall of Númenor

The Second Age concluded with the Last Alliance of Elves and Men waging war against Sauron. The defeat of Sauron led to the temporary peace in Middle-earth, but Númenor was destroyed by divine wrath, reshaping the world.

The Third Age: The War of the Ring

The Third Age is perhaps the most well-known period in the complete history of Middle-earth, chronicled extensively in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. It centers on the struggle to destroy the One Ring and the ultimate defeat of Sauron.

The Decline of the Númenórean Kingdoms

After the fall of Númenor, its survivors established realms like Arnor in the north and Gondor in the south. These kingdoms faced gradual decline due to internal strife and external threats, including the resurgence of Sauron.

The Quest to Destroy the One Ring

The Ring's discovery by Bilbo Baggins and its eventual destruction by Frodo Baggins form the core narrative of the Third Age. The Fellowship of the Ring, comprising various races of Middle-earth, journeyed to Mount Doom to end Sauron's reign.

Key Battles and Events of the Third Age

- The Battle of Helm's Deep
- The Siege of Minas Tirith
- The Battle of the Pelennor Fields
- The Fall of Barad-dûr
- The Restoration of the King and the Fourth Age

The Peoples and Cultures of Middle-earth

The complete history of Middle-earth is enriched by its diverse inhabitants, each with unique cultures, languages, and histories. These races contribute to the depth and complexity of the world Tolkien created.

The Elves

Elves are immortal beings closely tied to the fate of Middle-earth. They are known for their wisdom, artistry, and connection to nature. Various Elven clans such as the Noldor, Sindar, and Vanyar play significant roles throughout the ages.

The Dwarves

Dwarves are skilled craftsmen and miners, known for their resilience and loyalty. Their history includes the founding of great halls like Erebor and Khazad-dûm and their involvement in many key events.

Men

Men are mortal and versatile, with kingdoms ranging from the noble Númenóreans to the Rohirrim and the Gondorians. Their fate is closely intertwined with the struggles against darkness in Middle-earth.

Other Races and Creatures

Middle-earth is also home to Hobbits, Orcs, Ents, and many other beings, each adding layers to the world's mythology and narrative richness.

The Legacy and Influence of Middle-earth's History

The complete history of Middle-earth has left a profound impact on fantasy literature and popular culture. Tolkien's meticulous world-building and mythopoeic storytelling have inspired countless authors, artists, and filmmakers.

Impact on Fantasy Genre

Middle-earth set a benchmark for epic fantasy, influencing the development of fictional languages, races, and intricate lore. Its themes of heroism, sacrifice, and the battle between good and evil resonate universally.

Adaptations and Continued Scholarship

The history of Middle-earth has been adapted into films, games, and academic studies, expanding its reach and continuing to captivate generations. Tolkien's legacy endures through ongoing exploration and reinterpretation of his work.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The Complete History of Middle-earth' series?

'The Complete History of Middle-earth' is a 12-volume series edited by Christopher Tolkien that compiles and analyzes the extensive drafts, notes, and unpublished writings of J.R.R. Tolkien, revealing the development of his Middle-earth legendarium.

Who edited and compiled 'The Complete History of Middle-earth'?

Christopher Tolkien, the son of J.R.R. Tolkien, edited and compiled the series, providing detailed commentary and organization of his father's unpublished manuscripts.

What time period do the writings in 'The Complete History of Middle-earth' cover?

The writings span several decades, primarily from the early 20th century until J.R.R. Tolkien's death in 1973, showing the evolution of his mythological world and stories.

Does 'The Complete History of Middle-earth' include the story of The Lord of the Rings?

While the series does not present The Lord of the Rings as a finished narrative, it includes drafts, background materials, and developmental texts related to the story, characters, and world of The Lord of the Rings.

How does 'The Complete History of Middle-earth' contribute to understanding Tolkien's legendarium?

The series offers in-depth insights into Tolkien's creative process, his revisions, and the rich background of Middle-earth's history, languages, and cultures, enhancing appreciation and scholarly study of his works.

Are there any new stories in 'The Complete History of Middle-earth' that are not found in Tolkien's published novels?

Yes, the series contains many unpublished tales, alternative versions, and expansive background material that were not included in Tolkien's main published works.

Is 'The Complete History of Middle-earth' suitable for casual readers or mainly for scholars?

The series is primarily aimed at dedicated fans and scholars interested in Tolkien's creative process and detailed world-building, as it is dense and scholarly rather than a straightforward narrative.

Additional Resources

1. *The Silmarillion*

This foundational volume, edited and published posthumously by Christopher Tolkien, provides the comprehensive mythology and history of Middle-earth. It explores the creation of the world, the rise and fall of the Elves, the wars against Morgoth, and the origins of Men. The book sets the stage for the events depicted in "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings."

2. *The Hobbit*

A charming tale of adventure, this book follows Bilbo Baggins, a reluctant hobbit who embarks on a quest with a group of dwarves to reclaim their homeland. Along the way, Bilbo encounters trolls, goblins, and the creature Gollum, from whom he acquires a mysterious ring. This story introduces key elements that are crucial to the greater saga of Middle-earth.

3. *The Lord of the Rings*

An epic trilogy comprising "The Fellowship of the Ring," "The Two Towers," and "The Return of the King," this series chronicles the struggle to destroy the One Ring and defeat the dark lord Sauron. It delves deeply into the cultures, histories, and politics of Middle-earth's diverse peoples. The narrative is both a heroic quest and a profound exploration of friendship, sacrifice, and power.

4. *The History of Middle-earth Series*

Edited by Christopher Tolkien, this twelve-volume series offers an extensive scholarly look into the development of Tolkien's legendarium. It includes early drafts, essays, and unpublished materials that

illuminate the evolution of Middle-earth's languages, characters, and stories. This collection is invaluable for readers interested in the creative process behind Tolkien's world.

5. *The Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*

This book compiles various narratives and essays that Tolkien left incomplete, providing additional context and depth to the histories found in "The Silmarillion" and "The Lord of the Rings." It includes detailed accounts of significant figures, places, and events such as the story of Tuor, the tale of the Dunedain, and the history of the Rings of Power. It enriches the understanding of Middle-earth's complex past.

6. *The Children of Húrin*

A standalone novel edited by Christopher Tolkien, this work expands the tragic tale of Túrin Turambar and his family during the First Age. It explores themes of fate, doom, and heroism amid the dark shadow of Morgoth's evil. The narrative offers a deeper look into one of the most poignant stories within the broader mythology.

7. *Beren and Lúthien*

This beautifully illustrated volume tells the legendary love story between the mortal man Beren and the immortal Elf-maiden Lúthien. It is a central tale in the First Age, highlighting themes of love, sacrifice, and defiance against evil. The book also traces the story's revisions and its significance in Tolkien's personal life.

8. *The Fall of Gondolin*

Another major First Age narrative, this book recounts the rise and catastrophic destruction of the hidden Elven city of Gondolin. It details the heroism and tragedy of its inhabitants as they confront the forces of Morgoth. This story is a vital part of the mythic backdrop that informs the later ages of Middle-earth.

9. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*

Though not a history book per se, this collection of Tolkien's correspondence provides valuable insights into his creative process, intentions, and the historical context of his works. Through these letters, readers gain a deeper appreciation of the world-building, linguistic invention, and thematic concerns that shaped Middle-earth. It is an essential resource for understanding the complete history from the author's own perspective.

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