



J.R.R. TOLKIEN

by Alexandra Wallner
illustrated by John Wallner

GRADES
1-5

About the Book

This is the story of J.R.R. Tolkien, an ordinary man with an extraordinary imagination who became one of the world's most beloved authors.

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SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Language Arts

Codes—Young John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (J.R.R.) enjoyed making up languages and codes. One such code is shown on page 14. Students can create their own codes, substituting a letter, symbol, or number for each letter of the alphabet. They can then write secret messages to each other to see if their messages can be deciphered by their classmates. The messages should contain something about Ronald's life—either as a boy or as an author.

Good and Bad—Ronald had many good things as well as many bad things happen when he was young. Students could make their own lists of good things and bad things that have happened in their own lives. They could also discuss the steps one might take to make a good thing out of a bad thing.

Courage—Ronald's character Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit* had a great deal of courage. Students can discuss or write about what courage really means to them. When did Ronald show that he had courage? They can describe people they know in their own lives who have shown courage.

Letters—Students can write a letter to J.R.R. Tolkien imagining that he is still alive. What would they want to ask him or say to him?

Autobiography—Using the time line at the back of the book as an example, students can create a sequence of events for their own life.

They might include their birth, information about their siblings, moving to another house or city, starting school, changing schools, and any other important events. They can then write an autobiography, which they may choose to illustrate. They can also learn the difference between an autobiography (written by oneself) and a biography (written by another.)

Geography

Using a world atlas, have students locate all of the places where Tolkien lived and plot his journey on a map. Search places including Bloemfontein, South Africa; Warwickshire, Birmingham, and Oxford, all in England.

Tolkien made trips to Switzerland and France, countries which students can locate on a map to show a more extensive picture of where he traveled.

Visual Observation

Students can do research on Google Images (link below in "Online Resources") to find photos and other illustrations of Tolkien and his characters as well as the places he lived.

Terms to enter might include: J.R.R. Tolkien, the hobbit, Birmingham England 1900, Oxford University, clothing England 1900, etc. They can then compare what they have found with John Wallner's interpretations in his book illustrations. How are they the same or different? Which do students prefer? Why?

Research

Codes—If students are interested in learning more about various codes, they may use print or online resources in their school or public libraries to find information on Morse code, flag signaling, and signal rockets, all of which Tolkien learned when he was in the army during World War I.

Further Reading

Students may be interested in reading other biographies by Alexandra Wallner. She has written books about Abigail Adams, Betsy Ross, and Lucy Maud Montgomery, all published by Holiday House.

Online Resources

www.tolkien-online.com

Presents the most extensive and well-researched information on Tolkien, his life, his works, his characters, and all else relating to him.

www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=ii

Photos and other illustrations of Tolkien and his characters are available here by searching for J.R.R. Tolkien, the hobbit, Birmingham England 1900, Oxford University, clothing England 1900.

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Author and Illustrator

Alexandra Wallner has written and illustrated many biographies for children about remarkable people, including *Lucy Maud Montgomery*, *Grandma Moses*, *Abigail Adams*, and *Beatrix Potter*. She and her husband live in Mexico and often collaborate on their books. Visit her website at <http://alexandrawallner.com>.

John Wallner has illustrated dozens of books for children, including David A. Adler's *Honest Abe Lincoln: Easy-to-Read Stories about Abraham Lincoln*, a Bank Street Best Book of the Year.

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