



## Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham

*J.R.R. Tolkien*

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## Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham J.R.R. Tolkien

Two bewitching fantasies by J.R.R. Tolkien, beloved author of THE HOBBIT. In SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR, Tolkien explores the gift of fantasy, and what it means to the life and character of the man who receives it. And FARMER GILES OF HAM tells a delightfully ribald mock-heroic tale, where a dragon who invades a town refuses to fight, and a farmer is chosen to slay him.

## Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham Details

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# From Reader Review Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham for online ebook

## J.Aleksandr Wootton says

*Smith of Wootton Major* is unquestionably my favorite work by J.R.R. Tolkien.

No, the last name has nothing to do with it.

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## Mark says

While not as heavy a read as *The Lord of the Rings* it was still a pair of good short stories that show his literary talents even outside of Middle-Earth.

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## Bob H says

Two lesser-known but lovable works from the master, J.R.R. Tolkien. *Farmer Giles of Ham* is a hilarious romp through ancient Britain, in which a humble peasant must master a giant, a dragon and then a foolish king. This would be a wonderful film (note to Peter Jackson: one film only, please). *Smith of Wootton Major* is a deeper story, with Tolkien's darker views of fantasy in a gentle telling: "the elves have left us, and we have not mourned their passing," a critic tells us (no spoiler) and this is what we see. Highest recommendation.

(Note: these are not really Middle Earth stories, but still fine examples of Prof. Tolkien's craft).

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## Timothy Ball says

"It was five miles, if it was a step and stiff going; and Giles trudged along puffing and blowing but never taking his eye off the worm. At last on the West Side of the Mountain they came to the mouth of the cave. It was large and black and forbidding and its Brazen doors swung on great pillars of iron. Plainly it had been that a place of strength and pride and days long-forgotten. For dragons do not build such Works nor delve such mines but dwell rather when they may in the tombs and treasuries of Mighty Men and Giants of old."

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## Stephanie says

Five stars for the *Smith of Wootton Major*.

Maybe four stars or three and a half for the *Farmer Giles of Ham*. I loved the magic and mystic beauty of the first Tale. I would spend many more days reading of wandering through Faery.

*Farmer Giles* did not capture my wonder and imagination in the same way.

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## Carl says

My favorite in this book is Smith of Wooten Major, though Farmer Giles of Ham is a fun romp in its own right. "Smith" is in fact probably my favorite of Tolkien's short works. Leaf by Niggle was also very enjoyable, and if we take the portions of the Silmarillion as individual pieces I might revise my opinion, but there is just something about "Smith" which is not only enjoyable, but which speaks to something in the heart of anyone drawn to something "beyond", to the fantastic, the mythic, to another world, or an idea of another world, or a vision of THE world which may only be seen in the "fiction" of fantasy. Though I would not call it an allegory, the reference to Tolkien's own life seems strongly implicit, with the dual tragedy of both losing that fantasy world, and discovering that one has come late to the beauty of one's own world-- and yet there is the hopeful fact that the more pragmatic, everyday world has been enriched by this contact with the Other world.

Out of all of Tolkien's work, "Smith" seems to me to hold by far the greatest debt to George MacDonald's work. I know that Tolkien, later in life, found much of MacDonald's work distasteful, but I feel the debt here is a positive one. A very different work than Lord of the Rings or his other Middle Earth material, but it is a pleasant change and cannot help but feel more personal, Tolkien's own vision of his life, as Leaf by Niggle was.

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## Andy says

I am by no means a Tolkien aficionado, this book was in fact, the first Tolkien I've ever read, so please keep that in mind as you read this review. I'm sure other Tolkien-ites would review this book differently.

Smith of Wootton Major: It wasn't that great. It's more of an allegory than anything else. Tolkien uses the short story format to explain what happens to men when they embrace, or shun, Faerie. It's an interesting idea, but a lifeless story. I was bored throughout.

Farmer Giles of Ham: Better than the former. This is the story of a self-concerned farmer who reluctantly becomes a dragon slayer. Though there isn't any dragon slaying because the dragon won't have it. The quirky characters make this short more enjoyable.

My understanding is that these two stories were published posthumously. I can't help but wonder if Tolkien would have published them the way they are, or if he would've tweaked them a bit. Would he have made "The Smith of Wootton Major" more engrossing? Would he have changed the story of "Farmer Giles of Ham"? I guess those questions only help the legend of Tolkien grow.

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## Justin says

Two short stories/novellas by the master of fantasy fiction.

"Farmer Giles of Ham" is a very amusing story of a farmer in an ancient and fantastic England who surprisingly succeeds in stopping a dragon from destroying his homeland. A little bit of a parody of fantasy and myth with an unlikely (and sometimes hilarious) hero.

"Smith of Wootton Major" is my favorite of the two and indeed probably my favorite short story of any kind. It has the flavor of a story passed down through the ages from some Middle Earth-like realm while having some of the detailed imagery and cohesive plot of a modern story. I read somewhere (probably in the preface!) that this is a fantasy about fantasy or the power of fantasy. I think that's as good a one-line summary as any, but it is also about gifts given and received, and vistas found through long journeys. Smith is a citizen of a small, insular country who is given a desire to explore unknown lands. He returns home after each journey to live his "mundane" life: he has a family and a job assisting a master cook. His experiences seem to inoculate him to a thirst for status or power or wealth, even while his boss takes advantage of him.

"Smith" is not an allegory, but its story is maybe analogous to how faith and/or knowledge and/or imagination raise up the spirit and not only enrich the receiver but those around them.

Highly recommended.

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### **Pablo says**

An anthology of Tolkien's short stories that sheds some light into Tolkien's thoughts regarding Faerie and the value of Fantasy. As usual, Tolkien's prose shines through his capacity of creating natural landscapes of intense wonder and delight. Worth it if you're into his work.

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### **David says**

My first Tolkien left an early impression on me. Named swords! Blunderbusses (early prototype Rock-It Launcher)! Talking dogs! Dragons!

And uh, that first story... which escapes me....

But, yeah. Dragons! I've been obsessed with them ever since Chrysophylax's story (and his cover portrait!).

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### **Geoff Gander says**

It was odd reading works of Tolkien's that were not set in Middle Earth, but enjoyable all the same. Both tales were more deeply immersed in classic English folklore, but the overall tone reminded me of a grandfather or old uncle spinning you a yarn by the fireplace, just after tea. Quite delightful.

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### **Wild-Rogue-Rose says**

This is my second time wrestle-I-mean-reading! something by Tolkien. I will openly admit, I slept-read The Hobbit. \*gasp\*

I know, I know...how can someone do that? Like I have a clue, I was a freshman in high school - that on a whole is an unsolved mystery in itself.

So, as I helped my Mum put books away, this fell from a stack and hit me.

In the face.

I took it as a sign to get back on the horse and charge headlong back into Tolkien's imaginative writing. My steed was derailed a few pages later. After a few more pages, it took me by the hand and we began to run.

These two short stories were very charming to read, I'm a bit surprised no nerds and geeks talk about them; or seem to have read them!

While reading *Smith of Wootton*- every time Tolkien would mention the Star, my mind flashed to something along the lines of Paul Stanley.

Farmer Giles- it was just a snortfest for me. From now on, if I were to ever learn Latin or Latin names for things, I'm going to use the phrase, "Or in the vulgar tongue-". That, and I desperately want to commission a Dragon tail cake for my next birthday.

Lightening of Heaven, what are you still reading this for? Go on out, right this minute, and procure yourself a fine copy!

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### **Ben Goodridge says**

I was never quite sure where "*Smith of Wootton Major*" was going, so I'll stick to "*Farmer Giles of Ham*." I've seen the story of the brave knight vs. the evil dragon subverted more often than I've seen it played straight, but there's something very modern about the uneasy alliance between Giles and Chrysophylax that shows that there's always room for a new wrinkle. Maybe they could make a movie of this one. Just don't let Peter Jackson anywhere near it; it'll be nine hours long.

My father is a certified Tolkien lunatic who read me "*Lord of the Rings*" in its entirety when I was six, while all my friends were getting Dr. Seuss. I'd rather he'd have read me this one, which has the advantage of not being eight hundred pages featuring over six hundred characters. Maybe I wouldn't have been so fidgety.

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### **Brittany ♥♥~Proud Hufflepuff and supporter of S.P.E.W. ~♥♥ says**

If you love J.R.R. Tolkien, you need to read this book. It's short and amazing. That's all there is to it really. Stop reading this review, go out buy the book, and read it. NOW!

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### **Olivia says**

I liked it. It was no *Return of the King*, mind you, but it was a charming, quaint duo with surprising depth to the first one. I preferred *Farmer Giles of Ham*, but *Smith of Wootton Major* definitely has merit as well. SoWM delved a little deeper into slightly more "significant" themes, and I could see it making a great story to be passed on through word-of-mouth:) And then, of course, FGoH was just fun. It was a bit like *The Hobbit*, but...\*whispers\* I actually might have liked it better. Anyway, the book was entertaining and cheerful, a perfect quickie read.

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### **Claire says**

Lovely. Farmer Giles of Ham was decent and may deserve another reading. Smith of Wooten Major has positively enchanted me. I think I've gone through it 5 times now and am ready for a 6th. It's story is simple and magical and has everything a story should - cake, silver stars, cloaked figures, faery, traveling through distant lands, jokes, underestimated heroes, a crotchety village curmudgeon, and endearing fathers and sons. A gem in Tolkien's crown.

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### **Molly Ringle says**

Light and charming! None of the depressing nature of the Silmarillion here. These two stories are a breeze, and suitable for children as well as fairy-tale fans like many of us grown-ups. "Smith of Wootton Major" is an actual fairy tale, with the land of Faery being similar to the lands of the Elves in Lord of the Rings; and "Farmer Giles of Ham" was reminiscent of The Hobbit with its clever dealings with a dragon, although it's lighter in tone even than that one. Glad I finally read these two!

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### **Robin Hobb says**

In these two tales, we see Tolkien in two story-telling modes. Farmer Giles of Ham is playful, while Smith of Wooten Major does exactly what fantasy does best: it examines a larger question and wakes a sense of wonder. If you have only seen the movies, or if you've never read Tolkien or seen the movies, I'd recommend Smith of Wooten Major as a wonderful place to sample his story telling. I've read this aloud to children and they loved it.

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### **Sara says**

What wonderful short stories! This is the first Tolkien I've read that is set outside of the Middle-Earth universe, and I loved every minute of it! I listened to both of these stories on audio as read by Derek Jacobi and I highly recommend them. He is a phenomenal narrator and really brings these tales to life! I especially liked Farmer Giles of Ham because of the dragon. Chrysophylax is really a great character. Both of these stories are certainly appropriate for children, and would be a great place to start them on fantasy.

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### **Phillip says**

A vet good book.

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