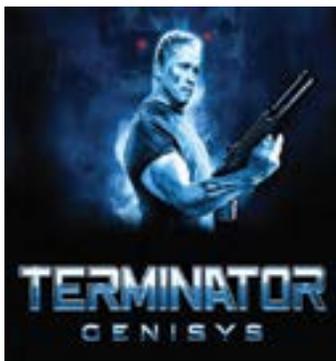


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3 Traits of Hobbits

by Danita White



The Hobbit book and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien are some of my favorite stories to read. They are like the greatest fantasy series ever written – EVER! All of the characters are memorable and even some of the not so good guys (like Gollum) are pretty unforgettable. Of course, the main race of creatures in the story are the Hobbits and throughout their adventurous journeys they teach us many good lessons. Here are three traits of Hobbits that we all should develop:

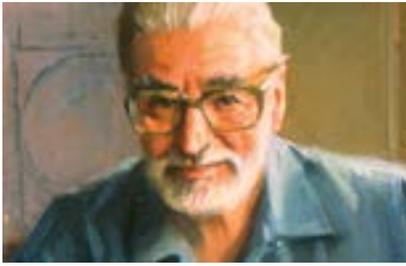
1. **STRENGTH** – Despite their small size, the Hobbits are tough and strong. If a man, dwarf, elf or even a wizard had been given the task of taking the one ring to Mordor they most likely would have been destroyed by the ring before they destroyed it. Always remember that strength and toughness is not in the size or might of a person, but in the heart. “It is not the strength of the body that counts, but the strength of the spirit.” (J.R.R. Tolkien)

2. **LOYALTY** – Friends come along everyday but very seldom do true friends come along. Sam understood the definition of friendship and he stuck with Frodo to the very end. There was no one (not the Urukhai, the Orcs, Saruman, the Nazgul) and nothing (war, death, pain, uncertainty, hunger, fear) that could make Sam betray or leave Frodo. “I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam.” (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*)

3. **HOPE** – They were far from their homes in the Shire and far from all the things that they had ever known and loved. It seemed that the end would come and still all would be lost for so much had gone wrong already. Yet the four hobbits in the trilogy and Bilbo in his story believed in the face of peril and grief and dark places and shadows. They believed in themselves, in each other, in their men, elf and dwarf friends. They believed in the good and the light and high beauty and all fair things. “There is some good in this world, and it’s worth fighting for.” (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*)

Do you persevere in hard uncertain times? Are you loyal to your friends? Do you hope when there is no earthly reason to hope? Do you have the heart of a hobbit?

Wise Words



DR. SEUSS

Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope.



LLOYD ALEXANDER

Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality. It's a way of understanding it.

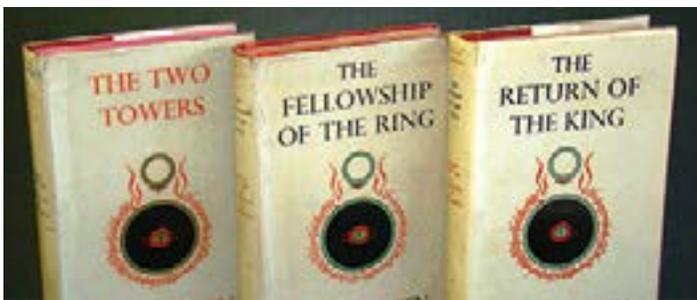


TERRY PRATCHETT

Stories of imagination tend to upset those without one.

Why Everyone Should Read *The Lord of the Rings*

by Danita White



The Lord of the Rings is the best fiction book series ever written because its author, J. R. R. Tolkien, takes readers into a world with a history much deeper than the average fantasy stories of today. However, not all people have been fortunate to read these books. Some people who may have heard of it but not yet read it, may be turned off by the number of pages. The three books in the trilogy combined are well over a thousand pages long. But *The Lord of the Rings* is a classic work and should be read by everyone because it has had a great effect on modern fantasy and opened up the book world for other writers and lovers of fantasy fiction. This trilogy has appeared in several large surveys as the “best,” “favorite,” or “most important” book of the twentieth century (Cliffs Notes) and since its first publication date it has been republished numerous times and translated into fifty-six different languages.

For many, *The Lord of the Rings* is more than just another fantasy story. J. R. R. Tolkien said that he only wrote it to entertain his readers, but his story world has grown much bigger than anyone imagined it would and now means many things to different people. The hippies of the 1960s embraced the fantasy story and were the first of the Tolkien “fandom” because in pushing an anti-war movement, they pursued “mellow freedom like that of the Shire” (Wikipedia). To the dismay of

Tolkien, they put their own meaning on his works and compared the Dark Lord Sauron who trained his orcs to fight to the United States military draft during the Vietnam War. After the 9/11 attacks many people found comfort in reading the words of the wise wizard Gandalf and hearing them, since Peter Jackson’s first film of the trilogy came out in December of that year. They took to heart Gandalf’s thoughts to the hobbit, Frodo Baggins, and his three friends because just as they were little people fighting a big war, we also were about to begin a big war against a large and evil enemy. Many green environmentalists loved *The Lord of the Rings* because they identified the dying out of the Ents with their cause to preserve nature. But above all of these things, people worldwide embraced the story because it showed how the different races of Middle-earth (hobbits, dwarfs, elves, men, etc.) put aside their differences and worked together to bring peace and to fight for things they all loved.

The elements of the story, including its well thought out history, connect with readers of all ages. The maps and the language of the Elves that Tolkien took the time to give, make this story almost believable. And instead of pulling many different characters from Greek myths and ancient legends, Tolkien invented different races and cultures to put in Middle-earth, bringing together a clash of different cultures and people including orcs and wizards. In writing, Tolkien gives clear descriptions of the nature of Middle-earth, and uses rich language that draws us to a better appreciation for poems and songs which is a common past time of the hobbits and elves and dwarfs.

Ever since *The Lord of the Rings* came out, many have clamored to write the next epic work of fantasy but none

have quite reached the heights of Tolkien's work. The lessons and motives behind the story is what makes it a worthwhile read. As every good story has, *The Lord of the Rings* gives us characters who are both good and bad; they have to fight a just war to save their land and the people they love. These characters show the reader the miserable price that comes with evil and the victory that comes after fighting long and hard for that which is good. *The Lord of the Rings* shows the reader that heroism and bravery is not always found in the big people but the smallest of folks, namely the Hobbits who show that small people can change the world, too. It helps the reader remember that anything is possible, and we can be the ones to change the world and help bring peace if we can just step out of our comfortable homes and not be afraid to face the dark evil that is fighting to take over our earth. Loyalty and good friendship is showed throughout this story and the depiction of grace reminds of where our salvation comes from. We do nothing to earn it but it comes as a free gift from God. *The Lord of the Rings* also shows a great depiction of the fight against evil and the bad things that come along with that like death and fear, but it also tells us that even when all else fails, "There is always hope." As Christians, this is something we should know very well because even when the light seems to go out on earth, we can find hope and comfort in our God.

Finding Our Society In *The Dark Knight*

by Evan G. Lin



The Dark Knight is the sequel to Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) and the second movie in his Batman trilogy which concluded in 2012 with *The Dark Knight Rises*. This movie reminded me of our present society in three ways:

(1) **Evil is always hungry, and when good people do nothing, it will feast.** At the beginning of the movie, thugs rob a bank in broad daylight. Besides the bank manager, no one tries to stop them. Crime has become so common in Gotham City that many people now turn a blind eye. All that is wrong has become normal in our world too. Every once in a while something will happen like Sandy Hook or ISIS' beheadings that will jolt us wide awake for a brief moment; but crimes like robberies, murders, assaults, kidnappings that we hear daily on the local news have ceased to shock many us. Even though this is the world we have to live in, we should never accept that this is the way it should be. Edmund Burke said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Like The Joker, evil often has no motive or reason; but as long as we are ready to believe in good, as long as we endure and make the right choice, and as long as we remain decent men in indecent times, evil cannot win.

(2) **The war on terror we're fighting is much like Batman's war on crime.** Should one man be killed in order to preserve the lives of many? Should Batman turn himself in to stop The Joker's madness? Should the civilians blow up the convicts in order to save themselves and vice versa? Likewise, should we torture a few terrorists in order to preserve the freedom of many? Should the childhoods of Iraqi children be disrupted by bombs and warfare in order to protect the futures of Western children? Batman shows that being the good person is not always easy. Harvey Dent serves as a warning that while fighting evil, we must be careful not to become the evil.

(3) Towards the end of *The Dark Knight*, Bruce Wayne shows Lucius Fox a device he had developed that tracks the locations of all the residents of Gotham City by way of their cell phones. At first, Fox is reluctant to use such invasive technology, but in order to stop The Joker, he decides it must be done. In the end, the device self-destructs. *The Dark Knight* was released in 2008; however, these scenes are eerily similar to NSA actions as revealed by Edward Snowden in 2013. Spying on others may be morally wrong, but is it ethically right to do when the lives of thousands of innocent people are at stake?

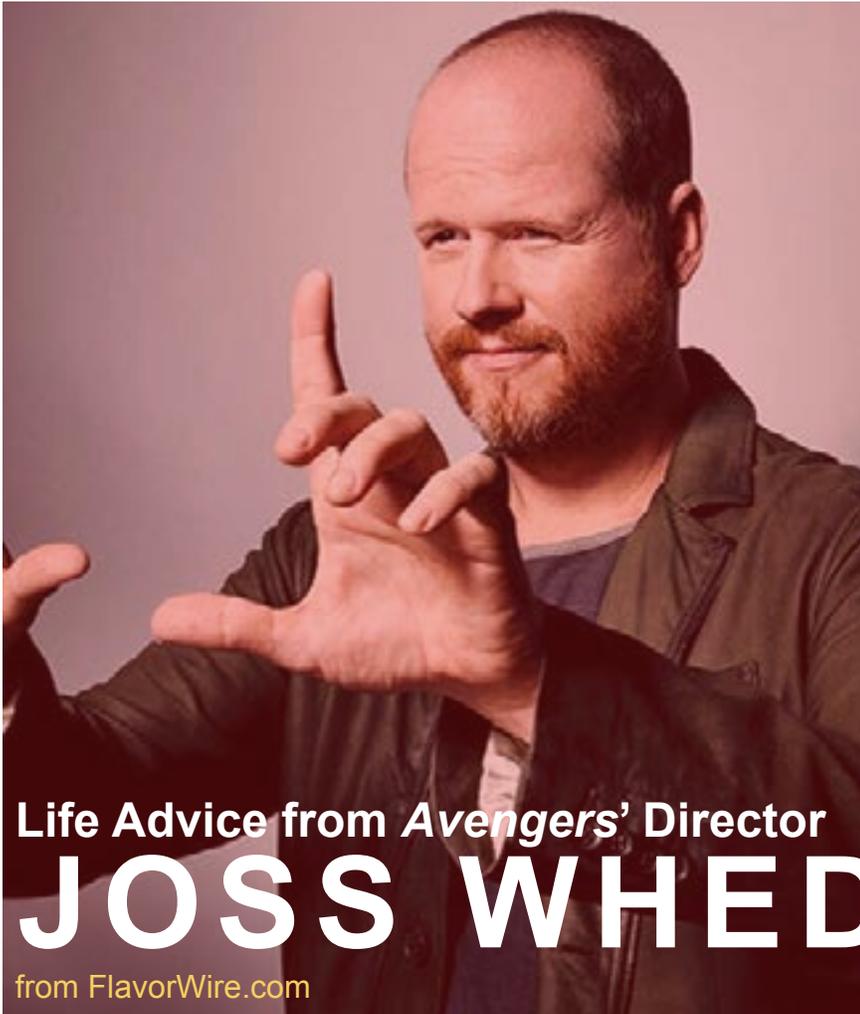
WE BID A FOND FAREWELL TO THE WONDERFUL CHRISTOPHER LEE



by Simon Brew

Christopher Lee crammed a dozen lives into one. His Special Forces work in the Second World War remains shrouded in mystery. We do know that, in 1944, he climbed Vesuvius three days before it erupted. A fine, operatic singer, he famously released a heavy metal album in his later 80s. A skilled fencer, he performed all his own sword fights and has been killed on screen more than any actor in cinematic history. As a child Lee briefly encountered Prince Felix Yusupov, murderer of Rasputin, a part Lee would later of course play. Ian Fleming was a cousin, Muhammed Ali a friend and once dedicated a victory to Lee. Fluent in five languages, passable in another four, people like Lee don't really exist anymore. In truth they probably never did.

One could write a lengthy, riveting biography of this remarkable man without ever mentioning his career as an actor. But it is as an actor that Christopher Lee shall ultimately be remembered. One of the greatest ever, one of the most iconic. Most actors are lucky to have a single celebrated role. Lee has multiple; Dracula the most famous, undoubtedly, but if Lee never played Dracula once he'd still be remembered as a horror legend. If he hadn't played Saruman people would still marvel at his late career renaissance. If he never played Scaramanga we'd still think of Lee as the ultimate bad guy. Such was the richness and breadth of a truly astounding career, the like of which shall never be seen again.



It's corny, but take the road less traveled. And it will be difficult.

“Let’s just say that, hypothetically, two roads diverged in a wood and you took the path less traveled. Part of you is going, ‘Look at that path over there! It’s much better! Everybody’s traveling on it and it’s...it’s paved and there’s like a Starbucks every 50 yards... This is wrong. This path’s got nettles and Robert Frost’s body and... somebody should have moved that, right? It feels weird.’ Not only is your mind telling you this, it is on that other path. It is behaving as if it is on that path, it is doing the opposite of what you are doing. And for your entire life you will be doing, on some level, the opposite of not only what you are doing but of what you think you are. That is just going to go on. And what you need to do is to honor that. To understand it. To unearth it. To listen to this other voice.”

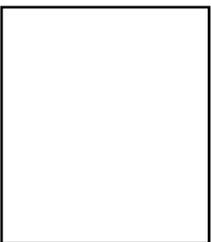
(Wesleyan Commencement Speech, 2013)

Life Advice from Avengers’ Director

JOSS WHEDON

from FlavorWire.com

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