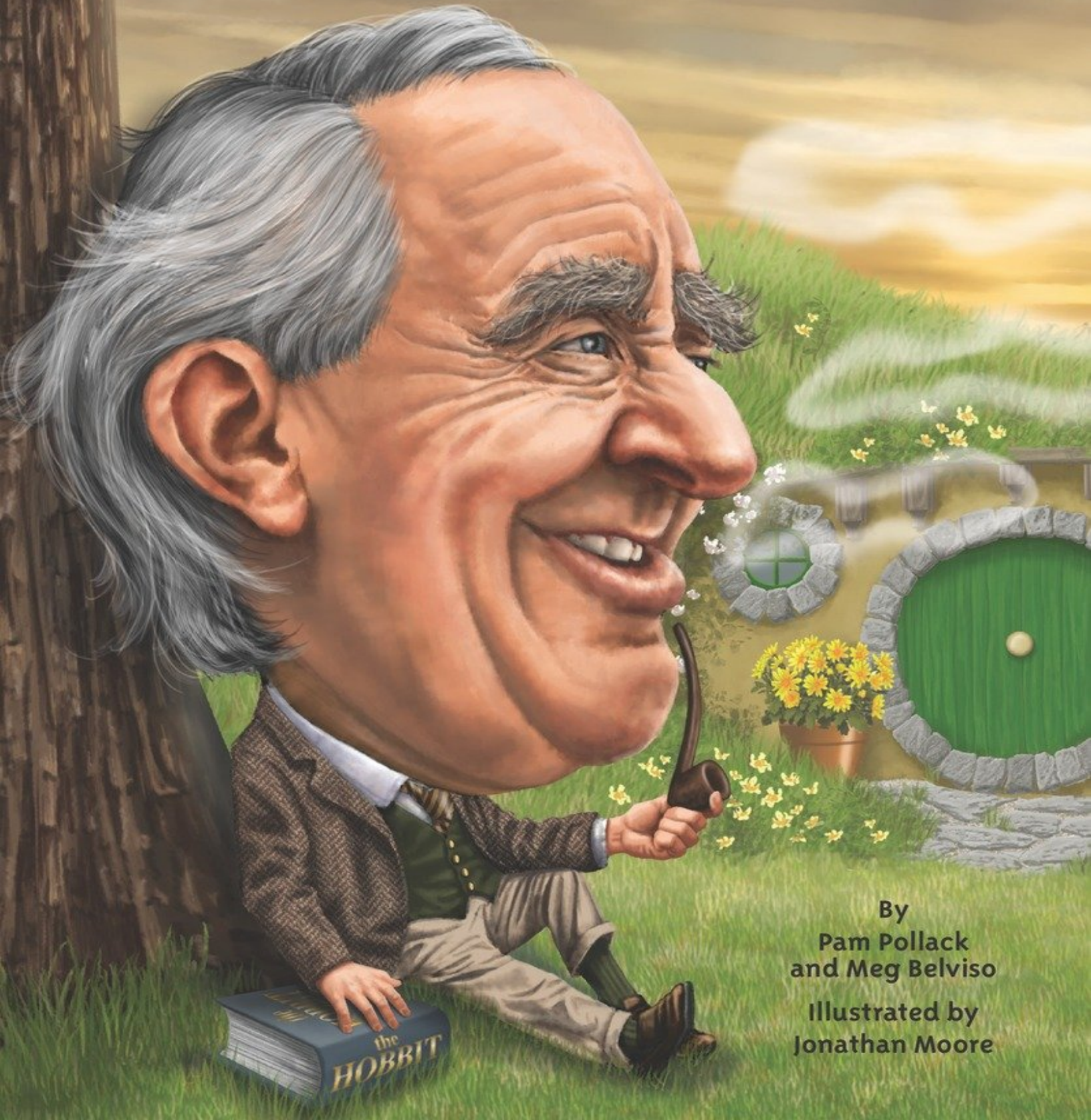


# Who Was J. R. R. Tolkien?



By  
Pam Pollack  
and Meg Belviso

Illustrated by  
Jonathan Moore

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Grosset & Dunlap  
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To Pete Savage—we met in the wars—PP

To the ladies of Frodo's Kitchen—  
because we love him, whether or no—MB

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## Who Was J. R. R. Tolkien?

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Deep inside a lonely mountain, a dragon sleeps on a mound of gold. Suddenly, he wakes. Someone has come to steal his treasure! Only a great warrior would do something so brave and foolish. Who dares to challenge him?

The burglar is brave, but he isn't a warrior. He is small and quiet, and he has furry feet. He is a hobbit.

Hobbits were born on a summer day around 1930 in Oxford, England.

Through the open window of his study in his house on Northmoor Road, Professor John Ronald Reuel Tolkien could smell the flowers outside as he sat at his desk grading papers. He was a professor of



Anglo-Saxon at the famous Oxford University. He was an expert in ancient languages once spoken throughout Europe.

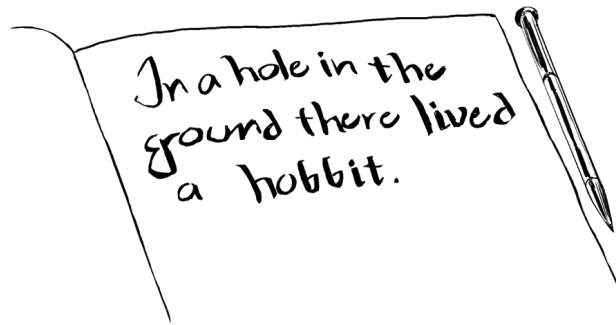


He did not earn much money, and Ronald, as he was called, had four children to support. So even though it was summer, he was grading School Certificate exam papers. These were the tests that all British students took when they were sixteen. Ronald earned extra money during his vacations by grading them. Ronald had already read dozens of student essays. But he still had more to read. He didn't have time to daydream.

Ronald's daydreams were rich and exciting. He loved to write stories about heroes in magical lands.

They reminded him of the ancient myths that he loved as a child. When Ronald wrote, he didn't feel like he was making up stories. He felt as if he were rediscovering things that had once truly existed.

He turned a page in the essay booklet he was reading and found it empty. The student had left it blank. Without thinking, Ronald let his own pen scribble on the paper. He wrote: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit."



Ronald didn't know what a hobbit was. He didn't know why it lived in a hole. But he was going to find out.