Database Shortcuts

A little show of reminders to find the Citations, and more on the databases.
To Kill a Mockingbird


Full Text:

To Kill a Mockingbird Novel by Harper Lee, published in 1960. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1961, the novel was praised for its sensitive treatment of a child's awakening to racism and prejudice in the American South. It takes place in a small Alabama town in the 1930s and is told from the point of view of six-year-old Jean Louise ("Scout") Finch. She is the daughter of Atticus Finch, a white lawyer hired to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a white woman. By observing the townspeople's reactions to the trial, Scout becomes aware of the hypocrisy and prejudice that exist in the adult world.
Courage would be the critical virtue most required if anyone were to attempt an essay that might be called "The Limitations of Shakespeare." Tolstoy, in his most outrageous critical performance, more or less tried just that, with dismal results, and even Ben Jonson might not have done much better, had he sought to extend his ambivalent obiter dicta on his great friend and rival. Nearly as much courage, or foolhardiness, is involved in discoursing on the limitations of Dickens, but the young Henry James had a critical gusto that could carry him through every literary challenge. Reviewing Our Mutual Friend in 1865, James exuberantly proclaimed that "Bleak House was forced; Little Dorrit was labored; the present work is dug out as with a spade and pickaxe." At about this time, reviewing Drum-Taps, James memorably dismissed Whitman as an essentially prosaic mind seeking to lift itself, by muscular exertion, into poetry. To reject some of the major works of the strongest English novelist and the greatest American poet, at about the same moment, is to set standards for critical audacity that no one since has been able to match, even as no novelist since has equalled Dickens, nor any poet, Walt Whitman.
Fairy-Stories That Fueled The Hobbit.

Language: English

Authors: Swank, Kris

Source: Critical Insights: The Hobbit; 2016, p115-129, 15p

Document Type: Article

Publication Information:
Grey House Publishing Inc.

Subject Terms: TOLKIEN, J. R. R. (John Ronald Reuel), 1892-1973
CHILDREN'S literature
FANTASY fiction
CARROLL, Lewis, 1832-1896
MACDONALD, George, 1824-1905
GRAHAME, Kenneth, 1855-1932
GRIMM, Jacob, 1785-1863
GRIMM, Wilhelm, 1786-1859

Abstract: The article traces the children's stories and fantasies that author J. R. R. Tolkien grew up on or shared with his children. They include classical children's literature such as Lewis Carroll's Alice stories, George MacDonald's "The Princess and the Goblin" and Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows." Also mentioned are the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers, Rudyard Kipling's collections of stories and illustrations, and Edward Wyke-Smith's "Mervellous Land of Shers."
Critical Insights: Chaucer, Geoffrey

Biography of Geoffrey Chaucer

by Scott Lightsey

Dict Galfridus—“Of the said Geoffrey . . . .”

Geoffrey Chaucer is perhaps the most widely known author of early English poetry, familiar more for his posthumous reputation as the “father of English verse” than for the life he lived amid the tumult of late medieval Europe. What we know of his life comes to us through his poetry and through details recorded in documents among the historical records of English life in the later Middle Ages. In the latter, he is often designated armiger regis, “king’s esquire,” or the like in reference to his work—the jobs he did for the noble families in whose service he spent much of his life. Although he became widely known as a poet in his later years—and in the century after his death, his reputation flourished—for much of his life, it was his career in royal service that essentially defined him for contemporaries. The surviving record of Geoffrey Chaucer’s service gives the impression of a capable civil servant both at war and in peace, a young man faithfully serving in arms and as a messenger, and in midlife, a competent diplomatist and bureaucrat—his was a long and varied life by medieval standards. Many historical figures’ stories could be told using such records, but in Chaucer’s case, we have the added benefit of a wealth of poetry, from which we can infer all manner of things about the writer. When we combine these sources to assemble something of a portrait of Chaucer, we find not only the spectacular genius of later encomia but also a genial, capable, and complex man whose brilliant poetry was an outgrowth of the life he lived in the outer periphery of the splendid courts of the most influential men and women of his time.

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in the early 1340s, in or near London, “filium Johannis Chaucer vitarellii Londoniae” or son of John Chaucer, vintner of London (L-R 1). The family had come to London in the early decades of the fourteenth century from Ipswich, where they appear to have been tavern keepers (L-R 2-3). His father John Chaucer is identified as a citizen and vintner, “ciuis & vinetarius,” indicating he was a property owner and prominent member of the wine trade (Furnivall 135). John had been in attendance during one of King Edward III’s journeys to Europe and was deputized for administrative roles for King Edward’s government, suggesting a man of some wealth with professional connections in the king’s own household.