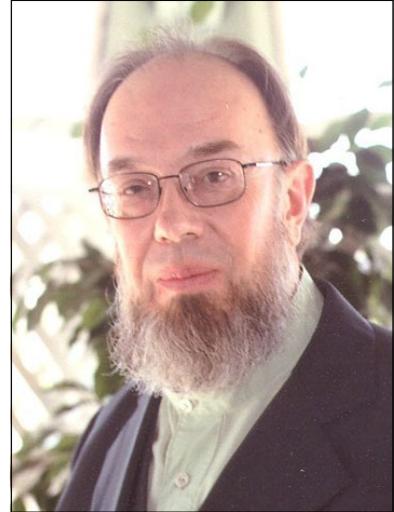


Hugo's Bookshelf



*An American Tolkien™ Society
News and Review Feature*

*edited and selected by
Philip W. Helms*

The Children of Hurin

J.R.R. Tolkien

edited by Christopher Tolkien

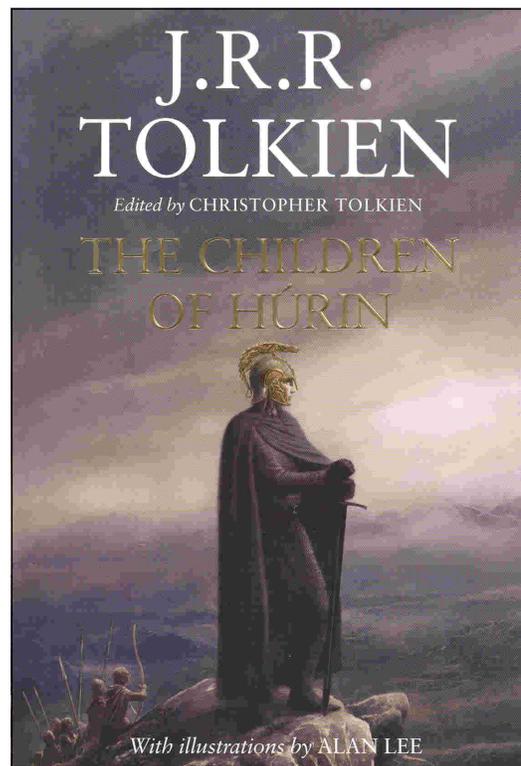
Illustrations by Alan Lee

Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007

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This is the book many fans have long awaited. *The Children of Hurin* is eminently readable, a testament to Christopher Tolkien's sensitivity to his father's devotees. Editorial comment on the several manuscripts, the history of the



composition, and other minutiae which fascinate the scholar have been confined to a preface, and introduction, and the appendices. The actual text of the tale is free of footnotes, parenthetical insertions, and the like, permitting the reader more readily to engage the momentum and drama of the story.

An additional innovation - and a welcome and ingenious one at that - is the placement of the note on pronunciation *before* the story, to permit readers unfamiliar with similar notes in prior publications to enter the story pronouncing the names more-or-less correctly.

The general design of the book is similarly aimed at the more casual reader rather than the most solemn scholar. Alan Lee's illustrations include eight paintings, reproduced as four-color, glossy plates, and 25 pencil drawings, appearing at the head (or foot) of chapters. The accompanying map is a fold-out, bound into the book proper (rather than an insertion), and is a careful extension of the style of *The Silmarillion* map, with certain modifications and simplifications. This also seems a fine idea, though it results in a smaller map, of course. Overall, this is a very appealing package.

There is also an enticing and hopeful note at the close of the preface, wherein Christopher Tolkien thanks his son, Adam Tolkien, for assistance rendered in preparing this volume.

With regard to the story itself, this is the *Narn I Chin Hurin*, the long/complete version of the tale which has appeared in shorter form in *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales*, and of course, in *The History of Middle-earth*. It is one of the three major tales of *The Silmarillion* (or *The Book of Lost Tales*, depending on the stage of composition), the others being the tale of Beren and Luthien and the Fall of Gondolin. The composition of these elder tales dates to 1918, and marks the literary origin of Middle-earth.

The storyline will be familiar to many readers, but for those who found *The Silmarillion* and subsequent works too weighty to complete: Hurin incurred the especial enmity of Morgoth, who captured him and placed him and his descendents under a curse. Hurin was magically bound to a high seat in the mountains, from which he could see all that happened to his children, but could not assist or warn them.

Turin was fostered with Thingol in Doriath. The story chiefly follows his career, which was marked by a series of tragic misadventures. Glaurung, the Father of Dragons, becomes Turin's nemesis as Turin passes through a series of *noms de guerre*, seeking to leave his cursed identity behind him. It would be unjust to detail the ending(s) here for those not yet familiar with the tale.

Suffice it that we heartily recommend this book to every reader: rush out and buy it *now!* (Some retailers are discounting, and there has been advance publicity by the Science Fiction Book Club.)

- PWH