



## Tree and Leaf; Smith of Wootton Major; The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth

*J.R.R. Tolkien , Pauline Baynes (Illustrator)*

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An anthology collecting Tree and Leaf, Smith of Wootton Major and The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth under the same covers.

Not reprinted.

## Tree and Leaf; Smith of Wootton Major; The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Details

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Author : J.R.R. Tolkien , Pauline Baynes (Illustrator)

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# **From Reader Review Tree and Leaf; Smith of Wootton Major; The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth for online ebook**

## **John says**

splendid little book!

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## **Nutkin says**

This book was mainly a collection of two essays and by Tolkien with two short stories and a poem. I found the essays just too dry to enjoy.

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## **Suzy says**

Tree and Leaf is my all time favourite Tolkien short story - a beautifully constructed fable of life.

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## **Donna says**

2005:

"It included his essay "On Fairy Stories" which is one of the best essays on anything I've ever read, and I recommend it to everyone. It also had Smith of Wootton Major, Leaf by Niggle, and The Homecoming of Beorhtnot, also all very very good. But my favourite of his short stories has got to be Roverandom. I didn't read it on this holiday, but it was lovely."

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## **Geoffery Crescent says**

Tree and Leaf is a collection of short stories, essays and a play inspired by the Old English poem "The Battle of Maldon."

Tree and Leaf is itself split into two parts, the essay "On Fairy Stories" and the short story "Leaf by Niggle." On Fairy Stories deals primarily with the reclamation of fairy stories as either fanciful fluff that can only be enjoyed by children or literary pieces that can only be studied by academics. It's an intriguing essay, peppered liberally with Tolkien's bone-dry wit and occasionally touching on techniques and whims which would later find their way into his best known work. It is heavy going however, if you couldn't make it through the Silmarilion then you're unlikely to make much headway here either, and it's probably of more interest to students of the etymology and anthropology of myth than to fans of the Lord of the Rings. And this is completely discounting the final paragraph of the essay, in which Tolkien feels fit to have a bit of a pro-Christian rant, reminding us all that man will be redeemed by Christ the saviour when he reaches the kingdom of Heaven, that the Bible was directly translated from the word of God and that even if the Bible

seems like a fairy story, its definitely real.

Leaf by Niggle is a curious little tale, dark and almost dystopian in tone. There's something undeniably weird about it, when painter Niggle finds himself first working as a slave in an authoritarian workhouse run by mysterious voices and later when he is released to live in a fantastical version of one of his own paintings. It's a great read.

Smith of Wootton Major is without a doubt one of the most effortlessly charming and wonderful stories I've read in a long time. It's very similar to Farmer Giles of Ham, both stories revolve around the preparation of a cake for a feast, but much more mystical and really quite stunning. The illustrations by Pauline Baynes, probably best known for her work on the Chronicles of Narnia, set the whole thing off. Truly lovely.

The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth is also divided up, two essays entitled "The Death of Beorhtnoth" and "Ofermod" sandwich the play itself, which takes the form of an alliterative poem. It's a slightly disappointing affair, the Ofermod essay is particularly dreary and having read neither Beowulf or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, which it referenced heavily, I wasn't able to make out much of it. The Death of Beorhtnoth is more interesting, as it gives a background to the play at hand, but the play itself is destined to be unsatisfying as its based on a poem of which only 325 lines remain extant.

In short, two charming stories coupled with two slightly less inspiring essays.

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### **James M. Madsen, M.D. says**

There are various collections of Tolkien's shorter works, sometimes published under the same title but with different stories. Look carefully at the contents of any work that you choose, but find at least "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son" and "Leaf by Niggle." I give each of these my highest rating, the former because of Tolkien's excellent commentary on the Old English word (and concept) "overmod" and the latter because it's one of the few largely allegorical works that Tolkien produced and is, at least to me, heartbreakingly autobiographical in its depiction of his hopes and fears for the eventual reception of his Middle-earth legendarium. Tolkien had managed to find a kind of mature peace by the time that he wrote his valedictory Smith of Wootton Major (also a highly recommended work), but that story, lovely as it is, lacks some of the autobiographical angst of "Leaf by Niggle," which can still move me to tears. (It helps, of course, to have read The Lord of the Rings, if not The Silmarillion as well, and to know something of Tolkien's life.)

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### **Joey says**

This collection is a great companion to J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth saga. The book offers a valuable glimpse into the author's storytelling philosophy, and provides details on the context surrounding some of Tolkien's most beloved work. I recommend this edition to anyone who is a fan of The Hobbit or The Lord of the Rings.

The book is split into three sections of varying relation and intrigue to the Tolkien fan. "Tree and Leaf" includes the essay "On Fairy Stories" and the delightful short story "Leaf by Niggle." This is followed by the more fantastical short story "Smith of Wootton Major" and finally the historical fiction of "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth." All sections have merit, with each exploring a unique facet of Tolkien's ethos. However, my favourite piece would have to be "Tree and Leaf", particularly "Leaf by Niggle." The story concerns a painter working on his masterwork; an allegorical presentation of how Tolkien saw himself as an artist. Rather than presenting a genius at work, the story portrays the painter as an insecure procrastinator who doubts the validity of his artistic contribution. It is interesting to note that this story followed *The Hobbit*, likely as the germ of *The Lord of The Rings* was taking shape in Tolkien's mind. Here we see a normal person wrestling with a grand idea, and exhibiting a lot of trouble in making it work. I read this at a time when I was beginning to explore my creative potential, and found myself struggling with the same things as Tolkien. It was a warm reminder that fine art takes time, and that even the masters are apt to struggle. It's just a wonderful and simple little story, and reads very much like *The Hobbit*.

The other entries in this collection are solid, and I found myself enjoying them very much. I was a little less enthused about "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth" and I found myself wondering about its inclusion in the book. The other sections elaborate on Tolkien's belief in fairy stories and fantasy, whereas "Beorhtnoth" was an adapted poem about an English battle. I suppose this could be of interest for its anti-war sentiment and exploration into battle literature, but it was rather weak in comparison to the other stories. Perhaps this is another facet of Tolkien to delve into, but it appeared out of place here.

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## **Merry says**

A mixed bag - but a solid one!  
(Longer review to follow)

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## **Nina says**

### **ON FAIRY-STORIES**

One of the best essays I've ever read!

### **LEAF BY NIGGLE**

Just like any of us, Niggle was occupied with all sorta things throughout his life - mostly helping others out, that he didn't have time to do what he really wanted to do: finish his painting; and prepare what's awaiting us all: 'the great trip'.

When he catches a chill helping his neighbour once again, his time has come sooner than expected and ended up in some kind of institution where 'voices' decide about the continuation of his journey.

Because of his selflessness, he gets 'a little gentle treatment' and gets sent to a new country: the true realization of his painting. He gets reunited with his old neighbour Parish and side by side they complete his work.

Finally, Niggle journeys farther and deeper into the Forest, and beyond into the great mountains that he only faintly glimpsed in his painting, leaving Niggle's Parish behind...

Life, death, purgatory and paradise. A truly wonderful story!

### SMITH OF WOOTTON MAJOR.

Every twenty-four years in the village of Wootton Major a special edition of the The Feast of Good Children was held. This was a very special occasion and to celebrate it a Great Cake was prepared, to feed the twenty-four children who were invited. The cake was very sweet and rich and entirely covered in sugar icing. But inside there were some very strange ingredients and whoever swallowed one of them would gain the gift of entry into the Land of Faery...

A great story about all what's good and bad in one's heart.

### THE HOMECOMING OF BEORHTNOTH

A short historical story inspired on the poem 'Battle of Maldon'.

Consists of 3 parts:

- The death of Beorhtnoth ~ essay concerning the battle.
- The homecoming ~ the actual work
- Ofermod ~ another essay discussing the old English word

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### **Kim says**

It's an odd assortment of pieces. Possibly for fans only, though I found his views in the opening essay on fantasy very interesting. "Leaf by Niggle" too is surprisingly touching; not a story for children, as the title might suggest, but a reflection on the frustrations of living a creative life in the midst of everyday interruptions and duties.

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