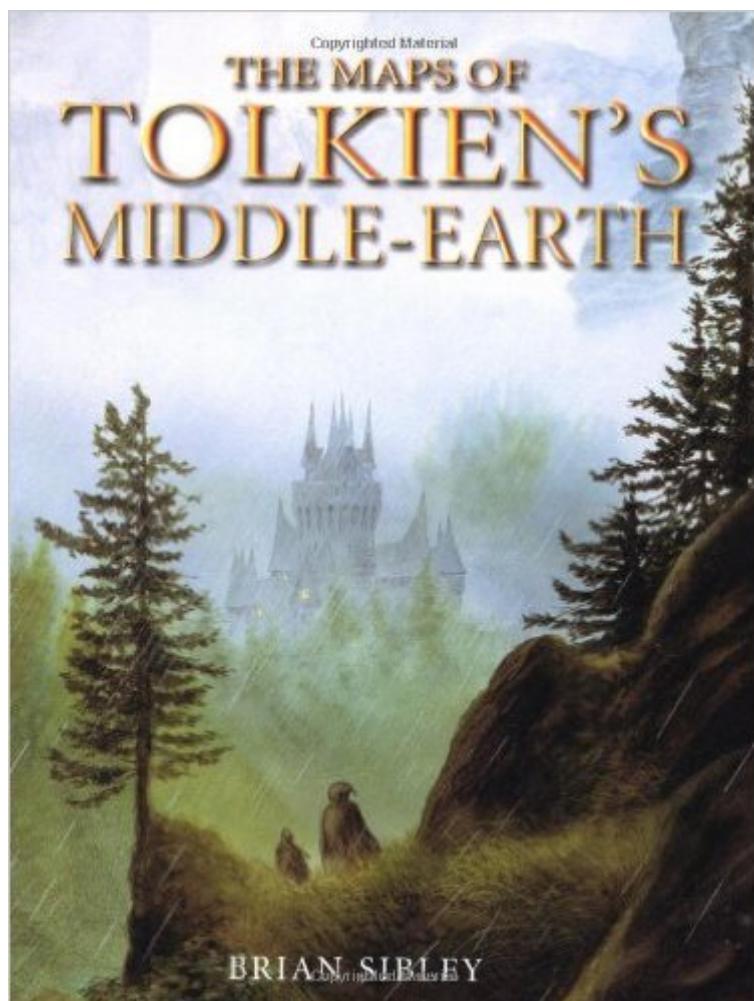


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The Maps Of Tolkien's Middle-earth



Synopsis

Best-selling Tolkien expert Brian Sibley (The Lord of the Rings: The Making of the Movie Trilogy and The Lord of the Rings Official Movie Guide) presents a slipcased collection of four full-color, large-format maps of Tolkien's imaginary realm illustrated by John Howe, a conceptual designer for the blockbuster films directed by Peter Jackson. The set includes a hardcover book describing in detail the importance and evolution of geography within Tolkien's epic fiction and four color maps presented with minimal folds, including two (Beleriand and Númenor) never before published in this country.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Howe and Brian Sibley are both towering figures in the "Lord of the Rings" fanbase -- Howe has been known for years as one of the two finest Tolkien artists, and Sibley gained fame in the past few years as the guy who chronicled the behind-the-scenes information on the movies.

Together, their "Maps of Tolkien's Middle-Earth" is a solid release that adds an extra dimension to ordinary maps. Howe presents four fold-out maps of Middle-Earth: Wilderland, the areas traversed by Bilbo Baggins in "The Hobbit," a general map of Middle-Earth, a map of Beleriand and other lands of the north, and the land of Numenor. The latter two haven't been released in this country, which makes them especially interesting. Admittedly, the maps aren't too detailed or intricate; they seem rather basic. But Howe hasn't just drawn colorful maps -- he surrounds the maps with his exquisite illustrations of trees and hills, castles, Bilbo and the Dwarves at Bag End, Gandalf on

Shadowfax, the seashore and mountains. With Howe's intricate, Celtic-looking borders separating the illustrations from the maps, each poster takes on almost the look of a medieval tapestry. The foldout poster-maps are exceptional on their own. But Brian Sibley's accompanying guide is almost as good -- he has a separate section for each map that details the various cities, mountains, and other important points. What's more, Sibley details the history of each map in Tolkien's life, and the importance of that part of Middle-Earth in his ongoing story. Sibley's essays are well-written and interesting, and his descriptions of the locations in Middle-Earth is quite well done. Don't expect something too earth-shattering -- "Maps of Tolkien's Middle-Earth" is precisely what the title implies.

This is, to say the least, a very, very disappointing product. First the good. The "maps" are on good heavy paper that should last with reasonable care. The printing is adequate but not exceptional in any way. The 'maps' come in a protective binder and are also enclosed in a box that contains both the 'maps' and a short book that tells something about the 'maps' but there are no references provided. Now for the bad. The maps are more art than map. The maps at most take up 50% of the available space and one map maybe 25%. The art work is distracting and adds little to nothing the ascetic value of the product. The title of the product lead me to believe that the maps contained therein would be like the wall maps one sees of the world and of the United States, and they are not. The author is an artist and defiantly not a cartographer. The detail on the maps themselves is very rudimentary and would add little to your understanding of Middle Earth. There are no contour lines to aid in determining the type of land in the area being depicted. One map has only regional names and no cities or other boundaries provided. I have been a longtime lover of maps (my father was a cartographer for the Corps of Engineers US Army) and have studied in some detail the entire published works of professor Tolkien. I began reading the work of the good professor in 1967 and have not been able to stop. I was lead to believe that these maps were well researched and would provide some help as to scale, but since no distance measure is provided it is of no use there either.

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