The elves, hobbits, dwarves, wizards, and demons in the episodic novel *The Lord of the Rings* are humans by a different form– which is the ultimate aim of all fantasy. In essence, good fantasy is an allegory for the tiny journeys humans take every day. The hero's journey, that classic and unfailing narrative arc, is compelling to read because it reaffirms an innate human desire for meaning in daily tasks, and when amplified on the scale of a thousand page fantasy novel is reassuring and reliable. The hero *always* gains something at the end. It is *always* worth the effort, or maybe the effort wasn't so bad after all.

In J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* the hero's journey is naturally an element simply because of the cyclical nature of the story, and is experienced by several of the characters. Tolkien's use of this element isn't unique, or really interesting at all, when one steps away from the story. Most characters have clearly defined roles and play an explicit part in Tolkien's narrative– always moving the action or teaching the main characters something new. It is a result of his worldbuilding that richens the story. A reader with an understanding of narrative structure could predict the major plot points of a fantasy story given a loose description of the protagonist, the antagonist, and the setting. And yet, in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, there is no predictability. His world is so crafted that to the reader the action isn't unfolding in a narrative way. It simply happens, because the reader understands that this is the way Middle Earth functions, and they are not reading a story. They are reading a real-time account of true events, just ones that are occurring in a different world.

What is the purpose of making a world so detailed? The scope of Tolkien's worldbuilding cannot go unappreciated and is to credit for the significance of his novel. Through the course of its writing, Tolkien created whole languages and several dialects of each with all the etymology and history necessary, which is an incredible feat. As a result of this linguistic element of the novel, however, Tolkien had to design histories and contexts that would inform the words used by the language. For example, a language used by forest-dwelling elves may not have the same depth of language for rocks and ores like a cave dwarf language might. Tolkien also has to answer the questions of who invented the language, how has it changed or been influenced, and when is it used, among others, all which inadvertently create a richer background for his story. And yet, what is the purpose of putting such work into a worldbuilding facet that isn't even utilized in the story? The reader doesn't encounter Tolkien's invented languages much, so it seems like he wasted a lot of time on creating something unnecessarily complex. The answer for this is clear, however, when one examines the popularity and reception of his novel.

Tolkien's world is so uniquely convincing because of these very efforts. The story becomes so defined by the world it's happening in that Tolkien really doesn't need to put much effort into guiding the events– as long as he understands the way his world would operate in such a situation, the plot becomes logical and realistic. To a reader, there are enough glimpses of background given that they have a sense of this scope. *The Lord of the Rings,* when read, feels less like entertainment and more like history as a result.

Tolkien's epic universe is a perfect example of the magic that can happen when a writer is familiar with the rules that govern the world they are writing about. Memoir is often uniquely potent because it is so *real* to the writer. They experienced the events that they are retelling, and therefore can accurately decide what is important for the reader to know in order to feel the desired emotions. Since Tolkien obviously didn't experience his story himself, he had to first design a world he knew and teach himself how it operated so that he could find a story within. Then, he was able to discard unneeded details. This is dedication on a level matched by few other authors, and is inarguably the most remarkable aspect of *The Lord of the Rings*.