

## **Tolkien's Handwriting — A Guide for the Perplexed**

An Appendix to “Editing the Tolkienian Manuscript”

By Carl F. Hostetter

A familiarity with the idiosyncrasies of Tolkien's handwriting can greatly facilitate interpretation of Tolkien's hastier handwriting. In aid of imparting some of this familiarity, I give here a comprehensive tabulation of the more idiosyncratic, difficult, or otherwise potentially misinterpreted or even opaque letterforms found in the four texts presented in my contribution, “Editing the Tolkienian Manuscript”, to *The Great Tales Never End* (Bodleian,2022). These comprise texts of varying dates, thus exemplifying what might be thought of as early, middle, and late stages in Tolkien's handwriting (and implements thereof).

When coupled with more or less extensive amounts of time staring at texts, this table may help researchers decipher even Tolkien's most difficult handwriting.

*May.*

	Text 1 — c. 1918 nib-pen/soft pencil	Text 2 — c. 1948 broad-nib pen over hard pencil	Text 3.I — c. 1968 broad-nib pen	Text 3.II — c. 1968 ballpoint pen	Text 4 — c. 1968 ballpoint pen
A-		<i>A/A/A/A</i>			<i>A/A/A</i>
a				<i>a/a</i>	
a-	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a/a/a/a</i>	<i>a/a</i>	<i>a</i>
-a		<i>a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i> <i>/a/a/a/a/a/a</i>	<i>a/a/a/a/a/a</i>	<i>a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i> <i>/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i> <i>-/</i>	<i>a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i> <i>/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i> <i>a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i>
-a		<i>a</i>		<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>
af-				<i>f</i>	
-ai-				<i>i</i>	
-al-			<i>l/l</i>		
-am-					<i>m</i>
-an-				<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
-an					<i>n/a/a/a/a</i>
and					<i>a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a/a</i> <i>an</i>
-ar				<i>r</i>	
as-			<i>s</i>		<i>s</i>
-as-		<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s/a</i>	
-as		<i>s/a/a/a</i>	<i>s/s/s</i>	<i>s/a/a/a/a</i>	<i>s/a/a</i>
as			<i>s/a</i>	<i>s</i>	
-at-					<i>t</i>
-at					<i>t</i>
-ay			<i>y</i>		

B-		β/β/β			β
b				h	
b-		β/β/β	β	β	
-b-			β		
be		β			h
be-					β
been					βen
bl-	h				
-bl-		h/h			
-bly				f	hly
by		h		h/v/h	h/h
c-				~	
-c-					e/e
-c				~	
-ces				~	
ch-			ch	ch	h/h
-ch-				h	
-ch		ch		h	
-cre-				~	
D-					β
d-		β		β	β/β/β
-d-					β/β
-d		β/β/β		β/β/β/β/β	β/β/β/β
da-					β

-da-					ᵛᵛ
-dd-				ᵛᵛ	
-dded					ᵛᵛᵛ
-de				ᵛ	
-ded					ᵛᵛ
-der-					ᵛᵛ
-ding		ᵛ			
dis-					ᵛ
do-					ᵛᵛ
-do-					ᵛᵛ/ᵛᵛᵛ/ᵛᵛᵛᵛ
dr-			ᵛ	ᵛ	
-dr-					ᵛᵛ/ᵛ
-dr-	ᵛᵛ/ᵛ				
-ds-		ᵛ			
-ds	ᵛ	ᵛ	ᵛ	ᵛ	
-du-					ᵛᵛ/ᵛᵛᵛ/ᵛᵛ
-dy				ᵛ	
E-		ᵛ/ᵛ	ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ ,ᵛ
-e-		ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ ᵛ/ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ-	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ ᵛ/ᵛ
-e		ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ	ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ
-ed			ᵛ	ᵛ	ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ/ᵛ
-ee-				ᵛ	
-ee					ᵛ



-g-			ʒ	ʒ	ʒ
-g			ʒ		
-ge-	ʊ, ɔ			ʊ, ɔ	
-ge					ʊ
-gh-					
-gh		ʊ	ʊ	ʌ	
Gl-				ʌ	
gl-	d, l, d, l, l, d				
-gn		ʌ			
Gr-		ʌ, ʌ			
gr-	ʌ				
H-		ʌ, ʌ			ʌ, ʌ, ʌ
h-		ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ	ʌ, ʌ, ʌ	ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ	ʌ, ʌ, ʌ
-h-		ʌ, ʌ, ʌ	ʌ	ʌ, ʌ	ʌ
have				ʌ	ʌ
he				ʌ, ʌ	ʌ
her					ʌ, ʌ
his				ʌ	ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ, ʌ
-hter					ʌ -
I					ʌ, ʌ, ʌ
-i-		ʌ, ʌ, ʌ	.		
if				ʌ	

-in			ɪ		
in		ɪn / ɪn / ɪn / ɪn / ɪn / ɪn		ɪn / ɪn	ɪn / ɪn / ɪn
-ing			ɪŋ / oʊŋ / ɪŋ	ɪŋ / ɪŋ / ɪŋ	
is		ɪz			ɪz
-is-		ɪz	ɪz / s		
-is					ɪz
It					ɪt
it				ɪt / ɪt	ɪt / ɪt / ɪt
it is		ɪt ɪz / ɪt ɪz			
its				ɪt	
-iv-		ɪv			
j-			ɪ		
K-				ɪ	
k-				ɪ	ɪ
-k-		k / k / k	k	ɪ	ɪ / ɪ / ɪ
-k				ɪ	ɪ
-ke					ɪ
kn-				ɪ	
-ks	k / k		k		
l-	l			ɪ	
-l-				ɪ	
-ld				ɪ	
li-		ɪ			
-ling			ɪŋ		
-ll		ɪ		ɪl / ɪl	ɪl

-lle-			ل		
-llo-			ل		
-lly		ل			
Lo-				ل	
lo-					ل
-ls		س			
-ly		ل	س/ل	ل/ل	
M-		م			م
m-		م	م/م/م	م/م	م/م
-m-			م/م	م/م	
-m			م/م		
-man				م	
may					م
-me					م
Men					م
-mo-					م
-mong		م			
-ms	م				
my					م
N-		ن		ن	ن
n-		ن		ن	ن/ن/ن
-n-			ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن	ن	ن/ن/ن
-n		ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن ن/ن/ن/ن	ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن	ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن/ن ن	ن
-nd-			ن	ن/ن	ن/ن
-nd		ن	ن/ن/ن	ن/ن/ن/ن/ن	ن



-ndil					ndil
-ne-			~	~	
-ned				~	~
-ng-			~		~
-ngi-					~
-ng	~	~	~	~	~
-ngs-					~
-ngs		~		~	~
not					~
-ns			~	~	~
-n's					~
-nt					~
-nued					~
-ny-					~
O-			~	~	
-o-	~	~	~	~	~
-o		~	~	~	~
of	~	~	~	~	~

of the	ʃ, ʒ, ʒh	ʃ, ʒ, ʒh, ʒh, ʒh, ʒh ʃ, ʒ	ʃ, ʒ	ʃ	ʃ
-om			~		~
on				o	~
-on-					~
one					~
-ons				s	
-oo-				o	o
or		o			
order				o	
-ot-					o
oth-				o	o-
-oth-					o
-ou-				u, u, u, u, u, u	u
-ow-	o, o	o		u, u	
P-			p		
p-		p			p, p
-p-	p	p, p, p, p	p, p, p	p, p, p	p, p, p, p
-p		p, p		p	
-po-				p	
-pp-					pp
pr-				p	p, p
-q-					q





-ti-		l/t/h/h/			
-ti-			h°		h
-tion					h
to		h/h/h/h/h/h/h /h	h/h/h	h	h/h/h/h/h/h/ h/h
to-					h
-to-			h		h
-to			h		
tr-				h	h
-ts		h/h/h	h	h	
-tt-		h			
-ty			h		
u-				h	
-u-			h/h/h/h	h	h/h
-ue					h
-um-			h		
-un-			h		
V-		h/h			h
-v-		h	h/h	h	
-ves					h
W-		h			
w-		h/h	h/h	h	h/h
-w-			h/h		h/h/h
-w		h/h	h		
was				h	h/h/h/h
-way			h		

Wh-					wh
wh-	wh	ʍ/wh/wh		ʍ/wh/wh	ʍ/wh
Why					ʍ
why					ʍ
-wing					ʍ/ʍ/ʍ
-wn			ʍ		
y-			ʍ		
-y-			ʍ		ʍ
-y			ʍ/ʍ		ʍ
-ys		ʍ	ʍ/ʍ		
&		ʍ			ʍ/ʍ/ʍ