Twitter Thread by David Eyk ■



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THREAD. You have not read Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings until you've read it out loud.

Seriously, the language *soars* when spoken. Last night I was reading the scene where Gandalf and co. fight off Wargs beneath Caradhras, and the beauty of the language he employs brought me nigh upon tears. TEARS.

That is a minor and otherwise-forgettable scene. You likely don't remember it. They didn't bother to put it in the movie. You read right over it if you're reading silently to yourself.

Reading it out loud though, suddenly these mythic figures of Gandalf, Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas stride out of legend and onto the field of imagination and strike a pose in the firelight, surrounded by glimmering green eyes, and you see them as if for the first time.

I am not a visual person, but the image is seared into my mind the day after reading it.

Tolkien does this with heightened, poetic language. (Yes, the heightened language that his detractors complain about.)

(It might also help if you took a medieval literature course at some point in your life, and read some of the earliest surviving English poetry, so that you recognize what he's doing.) :D

You also won't notice it as easily until you read it aloud. On the page, it's just funny squiggles that convey meaning. But the funny sentence structure and the alliteration has a real purpose, the same purpose it has in the epic poetry of oral cultures:

Tolkien's use of language, when read aloud, is engaging to the ear and paints a vivid picture of heroic deeds.

You have not read Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings until you've read it aloud.

Bonus points if you read it aloud to an eight-year-old who's hearing the story for the first time. This also heightens the effect. :)

/end