



TIKVAH
ONLINE
ACADEMY

“A Sword Day”: Battle Speeches from *The Lord of the Rings*

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Sunday, Aug. 22 at 11:00 AM EDT

Course Description:

Children and adults alike have been reading the fantasy literature of J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) for nearly a century. *The Hobbit* (1936) and Tolkien’s epic trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) are regularly voted among the most popular novels in the English language. What many readers don’t realize is that Tolkien’s depictions of evil, the unnatural severing of man from nature, and both the destruction and glory of war, were not only products of his powerful imagination but were, in part, shaped by his own experiences in the deadly trenches of France and Belgium in World War I. In this seminar, we will carefully read (and watch) two of Tolkien’s most stirring battle speeches: Théoden of Rohan’s Battle Cry at the Battle of Pelennor Fields, and (from Peter Jackson’s film adaptation) Aragorn’s War Speech at the Gates of Mordor. Both speeches evoke the power, glory—and tragedy—of noble war, the honor code of the warrior class, and the stakes of battle against the most feared evils civilized man and woman must face in a world on the brink of destruction.

“Théoden’s Battle Cry”

J.R.R. Tolkien

Watch the speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POdknqszMDY>

Théoden's Battle Cry is spoken by the [King of Rohan Théoden](#) before the [Battle of the Pelennor Fields](#). After the recital of the battle cry, Théoden blew on the horns of [Rohan](#).

*Arise, arise, Riders of Théoden!
Fell deeds awake, fire and slaughter!
spear shall be shaken, shield be splintered,
a sword-day, a red day, ere the sun rises!
Ride now, ride now! Ride to Gondor!*

After blowing the horn, Théoden adds:
Ride now, ride now! Ride to Gondor!

“Aragorn’s Speech at the Black Gate”

J.R.R. Tolkien

Watch the speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA8wkz0uGLE>

Sons of Gondor!

Of Rohan!

My brothers.

I see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart of me.

A day may come when the courage of Men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship, but it is not this day.

An hour of wolves and shattered shields when the Age of Men comes crashing down, but it is not this day!

This day we fight!

By all that you hold dear on this good earth, I bid you stand, Men of the West!