



The Lord of the Rings Loses Its Way in Race to Top Big Read

November 14, 2003

Startling sales figures reveal Tolkien classic near bottom of charts; purchasing behaviour fails to mirror nation's favourites.

London, November 14, 2003: Startling sales figures released today by Amazon.co.uk--the UK's leading online retailer--reveal a stark contrast between the titles expected to top the BBC's *Big Read* public poll and actual book-purchasing behaviour.

Amazon.co.uk has revealed sales rankings and percentage-uplift figures for all the titles in *The Big Read* top 21, to show how sales have fared since the shortlist was revealed to the nation on Saturday, October 18.

While *The Big Read*'s Top 21 leader board, which is based on public opinion, tips *The Lord of the Rings* to win, with *Pride and Prejudice* a close second, Amazon.co.uk's own sales rankings for the 21 finalists paint a different picture. *The Lord of the Rings* and *Pride and Prejudice* find themselves near the bottom of the *Big Read* sales rankings, with *His Dark Materials* and *The Catcher in the Rye* the real winners at the cash tills.

The Lord of the Rings is yet to be featured on *The Big Read* programme on BBC Two, so demand could still rise, while *Pride and Prejudice* is down at 18 in Amazon.co.uk's *Big Read* sales list, even though Meera Syal promoted it on the October 25 programme. In addition, *Catch-22*, *Rebecca*, *Nineteen Eighty-four*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Wind in the Willows* have all seen major sales increases, making it into Amazon.co.uk's *Big Read* top 10, even though they have yet to benefit from television exposure.

In Amazon.co.uk's *Big Read* sales rankings, *Birdsong* and *Great Expectations* have seen the greatest uplift in sales since they were announced as Top 21 contenders, with a 1200% and 922% uplift in sales respectively. **Bottom of the Pile**

The public support for *The Lord of the Rings* isn't translating into book sales. Experts at Amazon.co.uk have attributed this both to BBC viewers already owning copies of the book and to what they have coined as the "film-franchise factor".

"Sometimes the brand around a book can become bigger than the book itself," commented Fiona Buckland, Amazon.co.uk's Books Editor. "The hype around the movie releases must have influenced voting decisions, with the final instalment, *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, due out in December and the first two parts of the trilogy already out on DVD. Members of the public could be voting on their feet as a result of both the cinematic adaptations and the literary version.

"*Pride and Prejudice* is another great example of this, with many women in Britain visualising Jane Austen's Darcy as Colin Firth, rather than the dashing 19th-century hero she probably had in mind!"

For further information please contact the Amazon.co.uk press office on 020 8636 9280.

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