

FANTASY

Fantasy is a genre that takes place in imaginary worlds created by authors. All fiction is imaginary though usually the setting is the world we know and only the events of the plot are made up. Science fiction concerns our world, but in a speculative future, often with an emphasis on interaction between humans and technology. If the story takes place *within a world totally imagined by the author, outside of time, outside of history*, chances are it is fantasy story. It follows that the genre is a smorgasbord, and there is a lot of blurring with other genres. Some authors create universes totally different from our own while others use the known world and tweak it just a little (i.e., an elf behind the counter at the coffee shop). Mythology, folklore, and dreams have always inspired fantasy authors. Because of the fairytale aspect, some fantasy titles are aimed towards young people but can definitely be enjoyed by adults; e.g., the *Harry Potter* series or *The Lord of the Rings*. There is a strong tradition in the fantasy genre to write novels in series, so keep an eye out for titles that are the beginning of a multivolume narrative.

Classics

Essentials from past and present.

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*

Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Dunsany, Edward. *The King of Elfland's Daughter*

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Wizard of Earthsea* (first of the Earthsea series)

Leiber, Fritz. *Return to Lankmar* (includes the first book of the Fahrd and the Gray Mouser series)

Beowulf translated by Seamus Heaney (829.3 B481)

Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (first of the Chronicles of Narnia series)

Homer. *The Odyssey* translated by Robert Fagles (883.01 H766o 1996)

Macdonald, George. *The Princess and the Goblin*

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring* (first of the Lord of the Rings series)

Contemporary Fantasy (aka Urban Fantasy)

These feature contemporary settings with fantasy elements, sometimes including vampires and other supernatural beings. Some of these are okay for younger readers, and others definitely are not. Parental discretion is advised.

Bull, Emma. *War for the Oaks*

Butcher, Jim. *Storm Front* (first of the Dresden Files series)

De Lint, Charles. *Moonheart*

Gaiman, Neil. *American Gods*

Hamilton, Laura K. *Guilty Pleasures* (first of the Anita Blake series)

Harrison, Kim. *Dead Witch Walking* (first of the Rachel Morgan series)

Jones, Gwyneth. *Bold as Love*

Murphy, C.E. *Urban Shaman* (first of the Walking Paper series).

Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass* (first of the His Dark Materials series)

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (first of the Harry Potter series)

Dark Fantasy

This is where horror and fantasy meet.

Barker, Clive. *Imajica*

Bradbury, Ray. *Something Wicked This Way Comes*

Brooks, Terry. *Running with the Demon* (first of the Word and the Void trilogy)

Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*

Hoffman, Nina Kiriki. *A Red Heart of Memories*

Joyce, Graham. *The Tooth Fairy* (not the tooth fairy you think you know)

King, Stephen. *The Gunslinger* (first of the Dark Tower series)
Meville, China. *Perdido Street Station*
McKillip, Patricia A. *Ombria in Shadow*
McMullen, Sean. *Voyage of the Shadowmoon*
Powers, Tim. *Last Call*

Epic Fantasy (aka High Fantasy; Sword & Sorcery novels)

This is what most people think of when they think FANTASY. Warriors, wizards, dragons, magic, mystical quests, oh my... brew some tea, and be transported to another world.

Bakker, R. Scott. *The Darkness that Comes Before* (first of the Prince of Nothing trilogy)
Brooks, Terry. *Sword of Shannara* (first of the Shannara trilogy)
Douglass, Sara. *Battleaxe: Book One* (first of the Wayfarer Redemption series)
Eddings, David. *Pawn of Prophecy* (first of the Belgariad series)
Feist, Raymond E. *Magician: Apprentice* (first of the Riftwar series)
Gemmell, David. *Legend* (first of the Drenai series)
Goodkind, Terry. *Wizard's First Rule* (first of the Sword of Truth series)
Greenwood, Ed. *The Annotated Elminster* (first three volumes of the Elminster series)
Jordan, Robert. *The Eye of the World* (first of the Wheel of Time series)
Lackey, Mercedes. *Arrow of the Queen* (first of the Valgerth series)
Martin, George R.R. *A Game of Thrones* (first of the Song of Fire and Ice series)
Weis, Margaret & Tracy Hickman. *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* (first of the Dragonlance Chronicles)

Arthurian Legends

King Arthur and his Knights have been a perpetual muse for fantasy writers. Some of these are very fantastical while others lean towards historical realism.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. *The Mists of Avalon* (first of the Avalon series)
Cornwell, Bernard. *The Winter King* (first of the Warlord Chronicles)
David, Peter. *Knight Life* (King Arthur runs for mayor of modern New York City)
Lawhead, Steve. *Taliesin* (first of the Pendragon cycle)
The Mabinogion. (collection of early Welsh tales with first prose mention of King Arthur)
Malory, Thomas. *Le morte d'Arthur* (823.2 M2579L)
Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*
Walton, Evangeline. *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* (an awarding winning novelization of the Mabinogion tales)
White, T.H. *The Once and Future King*
Whyte, Jack. *The Skystone* (first of the Camulod Chronicles)

Twilight Zone

As mentioned above, the fantasy genre is almost impossible to define. Some of the most rewarding reads do not fit into any category at all. We'll call this category **the twilight zone**.

Cabell, James Branch. *Jurgen*
Crowley, John. *Little, Big*
Delany, Samuel R. *Tales of Nevèrÿon* (first of the Nevèrÿon series)
Kay, Guy Gavriel. *The Summer Tree* (first of the Fionavar Tapestry)
Mieville, China. *Iron Council*
Moorcock, Michael. *Elric of Melniboné* (first of the Elric series)
Murakami, Haruki. *Kafka on the Shore*
Peake, Mervyn. *The Gormenghast Novels*
Powers, Tim. *Declare*

Pratchett, Terry. *The Colour of Magic* (first of the Discworld series)
VanderMeer, Jeff. *Veniss Underground*

Award Winners

Two major fantasy awards are the **Mythopoeic Society Fantasy Award** and the **World Fantasy Award**. Below are some recent winners for each.

Mythopoeic Society Fantasy Award for Adult Literature

2008 – Valente, Catherynne M. *The Orphan's Tales*
2007 – McKillip, Patricia A. *Solstice Wood*
2006 – Gaiman, Neil. *Anansi Boys*
2005 – Clarke, Susanna. *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*
2004 – McKinley, Robin. *Sunshine*

World Fantasy Award

2008 – Kay, Guy Gavriel. *Ysabel*
2007 – Wolfe, Gene. *Soldier of Sidon*
2006 – Murakami, Haruki. *Kafka on the Shore*
2005 – Clarke, Susanna. *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*
2004 – Walton, Jo. *Tooth and Claw*

Compiled by the staff of the Nashville Public Library, 2009