

Fantasy Books

The wonderful thing about reading fiction is the ability of a writer to take the reader into an imaginary world. Even in fantasy books, this world must be believable. Fantasy writing has a long history and there are debates as to which precise moment saw the dawn of the genre. Writing about things beyond our reality or understanding is the core. We learn fairy stories as children that take us into the world of make believe.

The thirst for fantastic tales is as popular as ever. The person cited as the author most responsible for popularizing the genre is J.R.R.Tolkien. He was a Professor of English who loved language and old Norse myths. He developed these twin passions and produced *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. These stories of wizards, hobbits, men, orcs and elves have influenced countless fantasy books since their publication. Some critics may sneer at fantasy writing but none can deny the literary scope of Tolkien's tales.

Terry Pratchett is one of the world's leading fantasy novelists of today. He is most prolific and his most successful work is the *Discworld* series, containing over 40 books. The satirical and funny books have become a cult and Pratchett has a loyal fan base. The books show influences from fairy tales and past writers, such as Tolkien.

Philip Pullman is another popular, modern writer of fantasy books. His novels are marketed for children but they have crossover appeal and many adults enjoy them. His most famous work is his trilogy, *His Dark Materials*. It consists of *Northern Lights* (*The Golden Compass* in the United States), *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*. There are many themes in the books, including philosophy and physics and there are fantastic creatures. Some Christian groups have spoken out against them, claiming that the stories promote an anti-Christian message.

The most successful fantasy author of today is, of course, J.K.Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series. The nine publishing houses that rejected her book must be regretting it now! The success of the books and the films has been incredible. Adults and children eagerly await each new book, particularly the next one due for release, which will be the final one in the series. Rowling is, above all, a marvelous storyteller and has created characters that people can relate to. Many writers try to imitate her but in vain. Now, the publishing world waits for the next big thing in children's literature and fantasy books to come along. They may wait a long time.