



FANTASY GENRE STUDY

The ARRT Genre Study Group studied the Fantasy genre from 2004-2005.

What is Fantasy?

Everyone read *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien

Fantasy IS...

A departure from reality

Appeals mainly to the emotional rather than the intellectual

Magic (not science)

Many are series books

Good vs. evil

Goblins and animals are used as metaphors/allegories of good and evil

Can be read/appreciated on multiple levels. As children, we can understand the adventure, as adults can understand the symbolism; beyond plot there is a texture but entertainment can also be gotten strictly from plot.

Characters are mythological—fairies, dragons, talking trees.

Traditional storytelling elements

Has an internal logic--stories are true to their own logic internally, but are not necessary congruent to what we know.

"What is" vs. "What if"?

Fantasy IS NOT...

Based in reality

Intellectual

Science/rationalization

Extrapolation of human knowledge/human laws

"What if" vs. "What is"

Characteristics of *The Hobbit*

Journey quest

Mythological creatures

Good vs. evil

Human values (ex. lots of greed)

Emotional aspect of characters are very strong

Style is episodic: Starts lightheartedly, gets gloomy, lots of up and downs, very tiring—how much can characters go through?

Compared to Lord of the Rings language is simpler, characters not as developed (except Bilbo), story more basic (not as well told as LOTR)

Phrases chosen are in line with oral storytelling style/tradition: repeating key phrases to bring you back to the point, narrator speaks to audience

Writing style exciting, fun, lighter--feels like it is being read to us

Enchanting language--fight is described a "gorgeous row", lyrical quality

Visually descriptive

Elaborate setting, sense of authenticity/antiquity

Main character is underdog—fairy tale aspect of the overlooked person

Although there is magic (staves, swords, etc.), everything Bilbo does is through his own willpower. He needs to look to himself to find his own courage over and over again; uses his own mental wit to get through life rather than rely on magic forces. In this sense, he grows as a character.

Ecology symbolism--barrenness of mountain is symbolic of what man is doing to the environment

Tolkien patterned Bilbo after rural Englishmen.

Other Books Read:

King Solomon's Mines by H. Rider Haggard

Set in the late 1800s/ not really a departure from reality/ everything pretty much follows from what was know at the time/ mainly legend and lore-- What if?/ not really magic

Princess of Mars by Edgar Rice Burroughs

The first Tarzan book was better; this was really science fiction

Readalikes:

If patrons liked the Hobbit, we might suggest...

The Harry Potter series

Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever by Stephen R. Donaldson

Mithgar series by David Eddings (borrows from Tolkien)

Wheel of Time series by Robert Jordan
Pern series by Anne McCaffrey
Dragonlance or Forgotten Realms series
Joel Roseberg's adventure stories
Fred Saberhagen's sword series

Important: Must have **first** or **all** to sell patron on series.

Swords and Sorcery

Everyone read *Swords and Deviltry* by Fritz Leiber

General comments:

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- Swords are the main focus of the plot
- Disappointing ending/unromantic series meant to continue *forever*
- Series began in 1939/a bit dated
- Awarded the Nebula and Hugo
- Chronology of the series is problematic/Arrangement in chronological order according to character was completed in the 1970s
- The stories were collected later
- Harry Fischer invented the character and location of the series
- Is this genre considered pulp? Books of this length are not available today, except perhaps *The Green Mile Series*
- Short stories are not popular
- Fritz Lieber also wrote horror
- Does this book meet fantasy criteria? Neither emotional nor intellectual
- Fantasy is more world building than science fiction/Depends on the author, however, as the world building system must work(Tolkien is the master)
- The reader needs to believe the science fiction world an author creates
- Enjoyed "Snow Women" though it was difficult at first/Too much casual sex for a 12 year-old/Yet this age group is exposed to much on TV, movies and video games
- "An Unholy Grail" was funny and interesting
- "Ill Met" was the best story

- Stilted language, awkward to read/some stories seem to have been written by another author as their style changed
- Tongue in cheek/light/farcical writing/British humor
- Lots of alcohol/Fritz Lieber was an alcoholic
- Boring/lost interest/politically incorrect as far as women are concerned/
- Might appeal to 12-15 year-old boys looking for adventure
- This was considered a benchmark title/Is it unfair to compare it to today standard's/Do all benchmarks meet the same fate as *Swords and Deviltry*?
- Cliches/but he was one of the original/"swords" was a relatively new sub-genre in the seventies
- No honor code
- Burning of the sorcerer was worse than the burning of women
- Leiber is just a storyteller/little careful research like Tolkien/
- Reader requires some code of honor...whether good or evil
- All these titles share swords, wizardry, sidekicks, sorcery, magic and the quest
- Early movies in this genre included swashbuckling heroes like Errol Flynn, Robin Hood, Zorro/These heroes were a huge segment of popular culture
- Sorcery is more apparent in the books than movies, though some elements of it are found in *Star Wars* films.
- Fantasy seems more difficult to film than science fiction
- Reader needs to accept an author's style, humor, satire, characters, world building systems in order to find the book credible as a whole/ Example: Jasper Fforde, Connie Willis, etc., are good examples
- What is Fantasy? Males want to read about sword fights/What about girls? Are these books usually from the male point of view? Are they merely swashbuckling adventure with magic?

Individual Titles:

Sword and Sorceress Marion Zimmer Bradley

An enjoyable anthology of heroic, fantasy short stories edited by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Nothing outstanding.

Sword Dancers Saga Jennifer Roberson

Romantic fantasy/Central character has a magical sword capable of unexplainable feats/Some Science Fiction elements here/Repetitive, basic

language/ Liked characters though they were not finely developed/Good relationships between men and women /Latter aid former in crossing the desert.

Sword Series First Book Fred Saberhagen

Sword has the power to destroy, heal and is the central character/Computer is built that will end all war/Only magic works/A great read/Swords are fun/Animals are not described and there is difficulty in imagining them.

A Wizard of Earthsea Ursula K. LeGuin

Coming of age fantasy/boy grows to manhood while attempting to confront evil he unleashed on the world as an apprentice to a Wizard/A great hero who suffers the consequences of his actions/YA rather than YS appropriate/

Elric Michael Moorcock

A series/plots are almost Biblical, episodic retelling of past sagas/Does the underdog always need to be the hero?

The Novaria Series (I) L. Sprague de Camp

Order of publication is confusing/Each world has its own political system/{Jan Karon, Elizabeth George, Louise Bujold, Larry Mc Murtry and Nat Heller often publish outside of a series to flesh out a character or plot/This is confusing to patrons/Oftentimes there is a different audience, especially when years exist between publications}/There are seven titles in the Novaria Series, a quirky world of the Dark Ages.

Time Master Trilogy: The Initiate Louise Cooper

No swords/Son of Chaos is the hero in power/He is evil and fulfills an evil calling/Ends on a gloomy note.

Half Blood Chronicles: Elvenbane Andre Norton

Coming of age adventure in which a cruel elven society controls the last remnant of humanity/Shape-changing dragons/Fantasy epic/Magic.

The Sunset Warrior Eric Van Lustbader

Freehold is an ice city below the Earth/Its bravest swordsman, Ronin, attempts to rescue the lost scroll of the Ancients/Phantom savagery stalks this lower world in which Ronin is destined to fulfill his mission

Arthurian Legend

Everyone Read *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley

General Comments:

An accomplished retelling of the Arthurian legend based on tangible, historical events.

Elements of magic and mysticism appear in the women/these elements are intertwined with legends of the Goddess/Power of myths, the Goddess and her rituals, are the strongest features of novel.

Women are psychic and the narrative reveals their feminist, goddess points of view.

Predestination is a theme throughout.

Great emotional appeal/women are sympathetic.

Characters and relationships, longings and hurts, play strong roles in the story.

Loved all the realistic characters with their flaws and strengths.

Politics and the old religion versus intellectual aspects of worship and faith.

Subtle fantasy but really the Arthurian story

Bradley's sources: Nieblelungeleid/Chanson de Geste

(Author knew courtly love and history of the church)

Themes of good and evil prevail: Mordred is evil/Morgause is a power hungry woman with a dark, evil heart and she is recognized as such. Morgan le Fay is a sympathetic character. Merlin and Viviane maintain power. Merlin is a bard, Druid and keeper of the old ways.

Slim use of animals (stag). Fairies are evident/ history and mythology abound with them.

Language: high language that appeals to literary fiction fans/language was intoxicating on the audio. Writing is beautiful and reader is immediately drawn into a lovely world. Believable dialogue.

Movie; audio; book; each media has its own appeal.

Romance is not an appealing factor here though a love triangle exists.

What has happened to Merlin?

Is *Mists of Avalon* a 300? Is it fantasy, historical fiction, fiction? It is too literal and realistic for the fantasy reader/not a made-up world/Bradley did not consider her work a genre novel.

Recommend to those interested in Arthurian legends, and intrigued by the power of religion, its rituals and effect on people/ would also appeal to those who enjoy the retelling of a legend ala Gregory Maguire.

Is this book considered a benchmark? What about *Morte d'Arthur* and *Idylls of the King*? *Mists of Avalon* is a dense, multi-layered tale combining religion, fantasy, mythology and political elements smoothly.

**We often try too hard to pigeonhole people's reading tastes and interests.

Individual Titles:

Enchantment by Orson Scott Card

A remake of sleeping beauty/ wonderful story/would appeal to time travel fans/multi-layered.

Brian Rose by Jane Yolen

A dark tale of sleeping beauty with emphasis on the Holocaust/ would recommend for people with memories of the Holocaust/ good for discussion though language is a bit lofty/ YOUNG ADULT.

Deer Skin by Robin McKinley

A dark, violent tale based on the story "Donkey Skin."

Finn MacCool by Morgan Llewelyn

For fantasy readers interested in Celtic mythology/Finn MacCool is a third century Irish warrior- poet who leads the Fianna, the first Irish army/separated from his parents at birth after a battle with the enemy Morna clan, Finn is forced to live in primitive circumstances until his true heritage is discovered/story contains lots of fighting, a love triangle, and is amoral play of mythic and historical significance.

Firebird by Mercedes Lackey

Interesting retelling of the Russian firebird legend with lots of interesting characters/ story takes place in rural Russia with a tsar who refuses to

select an successor from among his eight sons, instead preferring to allow them to solve things among themselves with brutal pranks and fighting. Ilya is the youngest son and eventual hero who "sees" the firebird and fulfills his destiny as the destroyer of the evil one and "savior" of the firebird. Magic (animals can talk), humor and some smooth, solid writing make this an enjoyable coming of age tale.

Guinevere the Legend in Autumn by Persia Woolley

Literary cop-out/nauseating in its detail/wanted to love the book but could not/Woolley's Guinevere is a tomboy and not as well rounded as the Guinevere of Mists of Avalon/too many plot points were cliched. (*Another reader's opinion*)

Woolley's research into Arthurian legends is apparent in this third book of her trilogy about Guinevere/historical emphasis with detail *ad nauseum* that overwhelms the story line/too many characters/volume covers the fall of Camelot as an explainable historical event/Arthur makes crucial errors (especially in his rejection of Mordred) which cause the downfall of his Round Table/In the end all have died under tragic and preventable circumstances, except Guinevere.

Lady of the Forest by Jennifer Roberson

Confusing story that was not enjoyable/ unromantic/ author takes liberties with the original tale of Robin Hood and Maid Marian. (*Another reader's opinion*)

An award worthy cover/enjoyed the characters of Marian, Robin, and Sheriff Will, but the writing was pedestrian and the pacing snail-like/description is repetitive.

Daughter of the Forest by Juliet Marillier

New appealing fantasy The Sevenwaters Trilogy (Daughter of the Forest is the first) features Sorcha as its heroine, the daughter of an Irish chieftain/ her six brothers have been turned into swans by their wicked stepmother and it becomes Sorcha's duty to weave magic shirts so that her brothers will return to human form/lots of action, adventure and more romance than fantasy/good narration with an appealing, powerful heroine.

Little Country by Charles de Lint

Book within a book/contemporary setting/young girl is reading a book in which events are unleashed to create "other story" /Button searches to

become large again/ a satisfying read though somewhat dark and at times violent/ Little People/ some myths and magic

Silver Hand by Stephen Lawhead

Second in the *Song of Albion Trilogy*/a world of Celtic myth and magic/music and bards are the most important creations/recommended for readers of historical fiction (little fantasy)/well-developed characters/ real people/ some humor.

Merlin's Harp by Anne Eliot Compton

Poorly developed plot/emphasis on place/first person feminine narrative /would help to know the background of the Arthurian legend/details the culture of the Fey people/ the "she" is Merlin's maid and "her brother" is Lancelot/Is she Merlin's daughter?/Well written/YOUNG ADULT.

The Crystal Cave by Mary Stewart

Historical adventure without romance or magic/ Merlin tells his story and he is a likable person/world building elements/good to read after *Idylls of the King*/ YOUNG ADULT. (Another opinion) Loved the Mary Stewart trilogy and it was well done on all appeal factors.

Princess Bride by William Goldman

Lots of action in this classic tale of swashbuckling adventure, humor and love. Beautiful Buttercup is captured because cruel Prince Humperdink wants to marry her. Wesley, her childhood sweetheart, turns into the Dreaded Pirate and eventually rescues her. Along the way we meet strange, interesting characters and enjoy lots of fun and mayhem.

The Once and Future King by T.H.White

This wonderful magic, fantasy classic depicts the glory days of King Arthur and Merlin from the former's childhood to his shining hour as head of the Knights of the Round Table. Filled with mystery, historical legend and wizardry, this outstanding, poignant story should be read by all/a sad tale of love and loss.

Fairy Tale

Everyone read *Stardust* by Neil Gaiman

General comments:

Fairy tale with a naïve code of honor.

Cute and sweet in his love for Victoria.
Strong, classical, romantic elements / good versus evil.
Wide age appeal / compared to **Princess Bride** and **the Lion,**
(Unexpected events, outcomes and ironic tone) **the Witch and the**
Wardrobe. The boy turned to a goat to pull the witch's cart)
Good visuals such as the ships and lightning scenes.
Reality and fantasy elements.
Time suspension rather than time travel.
Tristan matures with the romantic elements.
Would recommend to Young Adults who enjoy fantasy.
Not high fantasy/conversational tone and easy to read..
Style and tone are old-fashioned/language is simple but contains complex
ideas.
Some humor and violent aspects.
Contrast between good magic and bad people turned into things like a tree,
bird or goat.
Coming of age is a major theme.
Main character must cross into an "unknown" world reluctantly through
sheer necessity.

The Pullman Trilogy by Philip Pullman

Pulled in from the beginning.
Appeal is for JH and beyond.
Addresses the issues of good and evil.
Some concepts may offend Christians.
Lots of symbolism as story line progresses / needed to look up some of the
biblical references.
Initially marketed to adults.

The Eye of the Hunter by Dennis L. McKiernan

Similar to Tolkien's world of heroes with some twists.
Time shifts in story and plot are distracting.
Elves speak in special ways.
Violence
Dwarf and Warrior worlds.
Character, not plot driven.
For older teens.
Generational and slow paced.
Not a coming of age tale.

The Elvenbane by Andre Norton

Dragons and self-centered elves.

More political than a quest or coming of age novel.

Good fantasy elements.

The Black Gryphon by Mercedes Lackey

Character driven, but little character development.

For readers who love the McCaffrey series.

Not a quest.

Young Adults, especially boys.

Good escape fiction.

Interesting sketches.

Quest for the Fallen Star by Piers Anthony

Star must be reached for one to rule.

A female elf is the questor with the magic / singer of songs.

High language with no contractions.

A medieval world / thriller with lots of battles / Keeps reader's interest.

Characters are not fully developed.

Unexpected events make this book interesting.

For Young Adults and Adults.

Poorly written / little humor.

Good versus evil.

There is a crack in creation that was once perfect.

The Innkeeper's Song by Peter S. Beagle

A quest novel.

Wonderful sense of place with good descriptions.

The Ancient One by T. A. Barron

Crater in the forest is discovered and this leads to environmental issues (Logging).

Indian mythology. / Different tribes have different powers.

Aunt has a magic walking stick.

Lightning strikes and young girl is placed 500 years back to the past.

Time travel enables characters to understand current issues.

Mountain scenery is well depicted.

Action based.

Good map at the beginning.

Junior High, Young Adult appeal.

The Hero and the Crown by Robin McKinley

Female heroine who has THE SWORD. / King's daughter / Charming tomboy.

Flame resistant material for armor.

Important animal relationships.

For Junior High/ Young Girls.

Magical experiences.

Definite quest. / Uncle has the hero's crown.

Some romance elements / Tor is her sweetheart.

Prequel to **The Blue Sword**.

No graphic violence.

Golden Trillium by Andre Norton

Third in trilogy.

Princess Caden has a sword with 3 eyeballs.

Identity quest. / She must fight the plague. Meets the vanished ones.

Real sense of good and evil that is creepy.

Disappointing tale and the writing seemed forced.

Good adventure.

Some bonding elements that may appeal to Young Adult boys.

The Wizard of Earthsea by Ursula Le Guin

Well-written/ not much depth along plot lines.

Gad is main character who is on a quest/ coming of age.

He is destined for greatness.

Dark tale with medieval elements and beautiful settings.

Shadow's Realm by Mickey Zucker Reichert

Medieval Scandinavia.

Chaos from storm causes disasters.

Revenge theme / Magic elements.

Norse gods interact with people.

Elf with twentieth century personality returns.

Complex story of action.

Interesting Characters.

Mediocre writing.

The Goblin Mirror by C. J. Cherryh

Jagged writing style.

Fairy tale, but the forest is "wounded."

Bad magic and the good wins.
Few battles.
A quest story with focus on characters.
A tale of troubled times in the land of Maggiar.

Bestiary

Everyone read *The Last Unicorn* by Peter S. Beagle

General Comments:

Cover should be changed so book will appeal to boys.
Enjoyed the descriptive language, romance, humor (ala Monty Python) and songs.

Archaic tone of the fairy tale with the sarcastic one of modern stories was an awkward mix.

Abridged Audio format only. Publication rights for unabridged version are unavailable.

Small readership/Most fantasy books are too long to be popular.

Fantasies are nearest genre that adults have to "fairy tales," so why aren't they as popular as Science Fiction?

Suitable for Young Adults and it has been marketed to children. Younger children would probably find the strong, humorous layers difficult to grasp.
Great Story.

Schmendrick is the real hero. Unicorn as hero can be "sweet " escape fiction for girls, and magic elements may appeal to boys, or an older, mature child who enjoys fantasy.

Similar to the *Wizard of Oz* because all characters are missing something. Not unlike *Princess Bride* also.

Liked author's use of recognizable types but with unusual characteristics.

May also appeal to Ray Bradbury fans.

Escape fiction with a different universe.

Scariest than realistic books; the magic is frightening. We all have comfort zones with our reading tastes.

Identified with the human characters.

The magic is messy. (Schmendrick) Magic is not a strong element.

A "buddy book" with characters on a journey/Each has different needs, yet together they attain their goals.

Enjoyed the expected plot resolution, that is, good conquers evil.

Explores philosophical issues. Reality and illusion are strong themes.

Which is more important of the two?

Be happy with where you are and what you have in life seems to be another message.

The nice thing about this genre is that the author is a world builder and she/he makes the rules. (Fans of Science Fiction, Literary, Fantasy, Romance, Mystery, etc., have predetermined needs which they hope will be met by their specific genre. Most readers want closure and would like to see things in terms of black and white. It is our job to listen to our patron's needs.)

What would you give to a non-fantasy reader?

Harry Potter series

Aunt Dimity series

Time Travel

Shakespeare's The Tempest, Midsummer Night's Dream, the mythology of any culture

Individual Titles:

Gayle Greeno

Finder's Keepers

Mind-Speaker's Call

Exile's Return

Definitely for cat lovers. Like the Sneaky Pie Brown books or the "Big Mike" mysteries. Animals play a strong part as in a bestiary. Animals are main characters and speakers.

Anne McCaffrey

No One Noticed the Cat

Cute. A prince is reared by a mentor who eventually dies, and the latter's cat is the prince's inheritance. The cat points the way (ala Braun) for the prince to fall in love. The cat is the rescuer from evil neighbors. Evil Green has a niece and the prince is in love with her. Queen poisons people...she is allergic to cats. The cat dabs his paws in the poison, scratches the queen and she dies! There *is* justice in the world!

Tanith Lee

Black Unicorn

The mother is a sorceress. Unicorn is in background. Tanaquil digs up unicorn's bones and with them she is able to mend things. The unicorn itself does return to life and the young girl follows her, later discovering

that the two are indeed sisters. They go on their quest. Sweet for Young Adults/ A coming of age story/Good relationship between the sisters is explored.

Richard Adams

Watership Down

An allegory marketed for children, but they would have difficulty figuring out the allegory. Men destroy animal's environment at an alarming rate.

Rabbits are presented as intelligent and caring creatures who endure much suffering because of man's indifference to nature. Adams is suggesting that humanity has lost much because it has betrayed natural world for its own comfort. A social, political commentary.

Tad Williams

Tailchaser's Song

Classic fantasy with a male cat as the unwilling hero. Cats possess the full range of emotions. (Human) They create alliances with squirrels, confront their ancestors, and discover a horrible catacomb of enslaved cats ruled by a disgusting "Java the Hut" type. Though the story does take a dark turn, there is a happy resolution to the story's events. Children's story in a great format.

Gabriel King

The Golden Cat

A cat society with humans inhabiting the edges. Reader needs to suspend belief as there is a good deal of magic; for example, rays take Tag and his "friends (cats)" to the planet Egypt to search for three missing cats connected to a mysterious prophecy. Grim lab scene for the cats. Evil mage/ Good writing and an interesting story.

Barbara Hambly

Dragonsbane

A nice mix of interesting characters faced with choices and lots of action. Hambly draws a universe that is engaging with Jenny Waynest, wife of John Aversin (Dragonsbane) and mother of his two sons. Jenny is a telepathic and becomes immortal as a dragon. The only problem is that she then must forsake John and her children to fulfill her tasks. Together she and John face many perils in this the first of the series.

Barbara Hambly Dragonshadow

Four years have passed and Jenny and John now confront demons that have enslaved dragons and mages, among them their twelve-year-old son, Ian. To save them all, including his wife Jenny, John must forfeit his own soul in order to pay the demons' price. A magical world of beauty, evil and real characters that must face the temptations of power and the price of resisting evil.

Aside: Is a bestiary about animals that talk, or is it about talking animals?

Bestiary

A collection of descriptions of animals, some of them fabulous, such as the unicorn. Origins are traceable to a time *before* ancient Greece. In fifth century B.C., Herodotus collected oral accounts, as did Aristotle a century later in his *Historia Animalium*. Plutarch was the first to discuss the relationship of symbolism to animals, and he noted that the early Egyptians believed that animals revealed mystical truths about their gods.

Latin bestiaries were popular in England and the Continent from the twelfth century on. They contained elaborate, ornate pictures and were supposed to impose religious and moral doctrines. Monks created these books for over two hundred years.

Literary Terms Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz

Bestiary

Literature popular during the medieval period in which habits of beasts, birds and reptiles were created into allegories. The animals possessed human qualities and expounded on church doctrine. Natural history (more imagined than scientific) popularizes the phoenix, siren, and unicorn. Qualities that literature commonly attributes to animals comes from these bestiaries. This form was first attributed to Physiologus, a Greek naturalist (150 A. D.) and was soon taken over by Christian preachers throughout Europe. The bestiary in one form or another has appeared in many world literatures. *A Handbook to Literature. 7th edition.* William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman

Beast Epic/Fable

Medieval ***literary form*** that is a series of linked stories grouped around animal characters that present satirical comment on the church or court by

means of human qualities attributed to the animal characters. The oldest example is that of Paulus Diaconus, a cleric at Charlemagne's court in the eighth century. Beast epics were very popular in northern France, western Germany and Flanders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The form has one central episode and other tales evolve around it. Animals common to this form were lions, cocks (Chanticleer), foxes, cats, hares, camels, unicorns, stags, etc. The best known is *Roman de Renart*, a poem of thirty thousand lines comprising twenty-seven "branches" of the original story. *A Handbook to Literature*. 7th edition. William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman

- *By now you all are thinking...more than I ever wanted to know, right?*

Urban Fantasy

Everyone Read *Moonlight and Vines* by Charles De Lint

General Comments:

Horror readers may enjoy this subgenre for its horror elements.

Narrative voices may shift and characters are often upbeat and creative.

Contemporary social issues, for example, lesbians, homelessness, gangs etc.

Mythic fiction with evil creatures. Death may be a character.

Elegance of language and the feeling is intellectual, especially in DeLint's stories.

Magical realism or at least a perception of horror and realism.

Setting is urban and often gritty. Some zones are peripheral, some safe, Ambiguity between good and evil exists. Science fiction's world has rules, but Fantasy's does not? Zones may be safe, threatening, and even peripheral.

Moonlight and Vines is for Young Adults: no adult role models to offer advice for teens. Teens have no responsibility.

Multicultural elements.

Individual Titles:

Trader by Charles DeLint

Plot:

Story takes place in the mythical city of Newford, Canada where magic is rampant though its citizens do not realize they are directly affected by it.

Several conflicting plot lines. Max Trader and Johnny Devlin trade bodies, thus a story is about identity crises. Lisa and Nia Fisher, Trader's mother and daughter neighbors are suffering through Nia's adolescence, and Lisa, a lesbian struggles to reveal this fact to her daughter. Nia discovers this information on her own and flees, because she believes her mother has been switched by aliens. Devlin's girlfriend Tanya must decide if she is going to be defined by the whims of others or blossom into her own person. Trader's character strongly affects the others in this story though Devlin's character creates the link among them.

Trader may really be Devlin.

Identity theft

Pacing is slow, wordy and at times lush and visual.

Writing style becomes cumbersome.

Some magic elements.

DeLint seems better at short story writing.

Characters have real life crises, generic social issues.

The issues are more than mere magic/fantasy.

Friendship Song by Nancy Springer

Plot:

Springer's plot is taken from the Orpheus legend, though this fantasy is set in a contemporary urban city. Sixth-grade Harper despises moving into the junk –laden eerie home of her stepmother, Gus. When Harper meets Rawnie, life begins to improve for her. The girls attend a rock concert of their favorite group, Neon Shadow. The event becomes a frightening adventure as they are pulled into a realm of dead musicians. (Hendrix, Elvis, etc.) Lots of side issues including stepparenting, friendship and the Orpheus myth. Slangy-first person narrative is convincing, music details are interesting and the friendship between Rawnie and Harper is realistic.

Mythical elements borrowed from the legend of Orpheus in Hades.

Easy language and dialogue.

Racist and Nazi elements.

Not a real urban fantasy.

Expiration Date by Tim Powers

Plot:

When eleven-year-old Koot Hoomie Parganas becomes possessed by the ghost of Thomas Alva Edison, a feeding frenzy develops among West

Coast ghost eaters attempting to acquire Edison's genius. Kootie's avoidance of his pursuers coincides with electrical engineer Pete Sullivan's quest to prevent his evil stepmother from eating the ghost of his father. This crazy world is built on physics, metaphysics and eccentric characters; Sherman Oaks can detect people with his phantom limb and Nicky Bradfield, a dead celebrity lives in cinnamon candy. Lots of chase sequences plus revelations of magic that within everyday reality.

Ghosts take human forms as in Edison and Houdini.

Dark, mythical mood with ghosteaters.

Several protagonists.

Not for teens.

Steel Rose by Kara Dalkey

Plot:

Set in Pittsburgh with a performance artist heroine, this contemporary, realistic fantasy is intense and comprises a vast array of spiritual creatures. Young TJ employs two "tommyknockers" to help her act appeal to audiences on a more spiritual level. Elvin powers of good and evil do not appreciate her "magical interference or assistance and vie for control of the city. TJ' Kaminski's use of her latent magical gifts may be the only means of saving the city.

Whiney protagonist.

Language is trite and filled with cliches.

Dialogue is poorly executed with lots of ambiguity.

Main character is a performance artist.

Preachy social issues.

Setting is Pittsburgh.

The Godmother by Elizabeth Ann Scarborough

Humor and modern take on fairy tales in this urban fantasy suitable for teens.

Wild adventure best enjoyed if one suspends belief/clean sex, violence and sports with a happy ending.

Plot:

The premise is that the original Fairy Godmother, to keep up with demand, has created a sorority of Fairy Godmothers, with each receiving her magic allowance to fulfill her assignment. The heroine, Rose Samson is a social worker in Seattle and is frustrated with the system and mounds of

paperwork. Unbeknownst to her, her friend Linde, owner of a vintage clothing store, Fortunate Finery, is really a Fairy Godmother in training. Linden gets Rose to make a wish while visiting the clothing store, and Rose wishes for a doozy. A Fairy Godmother for all of Seattle! Enter Felicity Fortune, Rose's Fairy Godmother. Between them, they thwart several modern takes on the classic Fairy Tale, such as Hank and Gigi and the pedophile (Hansel and Gretel) and Snohomish Quattrill and the 6 Viet Nam vets (Snow White and the 7 Dwarves). In the end, Rose finds her prince charming and true love.

Never, Never by Will Shetterly

Plot:

In this sequel to **Elsewhere**, Ron has been changed into a werewolf. His friends are still elves, humans, and halfies, and his job is to protect Florida, the unwilling heir to the Elflands throne. This cyberpunk fantasy blends magic, teen gangs and elves within a murky plot. Murder, kidnapping and adventure lead the characters into the magical forest of Nevernever. (**Elsewhere** must be read first.) Fast-paced dialogue, lots of adventure and a character (Ron) that teens can identify with make this an appealing tale.

Elsewhere by Will Shetterly

Plot:

Elsewhere is a bookstore in Bordertown, a place where homeless youth can find safety and a sense of belonging. While searching for his older brother, Tony, Ron becomes involved with a family of elves, half-elves and humans near Castle Pup and takes a job at Elsewhere. His closest friend is Mooner, a somewhat unpredictable half-elf biker. When residents of Castle Pup refuse to allow Mooner to turn their home into a nightclub, he commits arson and accidentally burns to death. Ron survives and is blamed for the fire. He flees to a rival gang, but eventually returns to face his accusers and confront his own demons, that is, the knowledge that his brother did commit suicide. Characters are reminiscent of the creatures in the Star Wars Bar. Lots of talk and little action often overshadow Shetterly's literary illusions and clever social satire on the human condition. A complex, multi-layered tale.

Romantic Fantasy

Romantic Fantasy

The main characters are in love, but separated by internal motivations or external interference. Elements of the fantastic may add to or help solve the problem. Romance is featured in almost all subgenres.

Romance is often a major element in many subgenres of fantasy. Many sword and sorcery books, particularly epics, have a strong element of romance. Romance also appears in many stories and books fitting into the fairy tale category. It is not at all uncommon to find it in fantasy involving alternate universes, parallel worlds, and in fact throughout the genre. (Information from *Fluent in Fantasy* by Diana Tixier Herald, 1999, Libraries Unlimited, Inc.)

Everyone Read *Winter Rose* by Virginia McKillip

General Comments:

More fairy tale or love story than true romance.

Based on the Tam Lin Myth.

Suitable for YA.

Parental approval/search for identity/unrequited love.

Melodramatic and dreamy.

Mystery elements, i.e., Corbet's true identity and Rois's mother being impregnated in the woods.

Father is out of it...as well as Perrin.

A pragmatic world with portals to another world.

Very visual.

Themes: dream versus reality, enchantments, seasonal imagery, spring versus summer, city versus wood, Laurel's obsession with Corbet, dormancy of winter/female quest for identity, men keep plodding.

Romance is female centered.

Adventure is male centered.

Individual Titles:

The Princess Bride by William Goldman

Prince and Princess meet, fall in love and overcome all obstacles to be together. Fantasy does solve some of their problems. True love wins/ a romantic fantasy/vengeful elements/ Movie was also enjoyable. A clever tale with a wonderful narrator. Many levels for interpretation. There is no

S.Morgenstern but he is a wonderful literary device. Tongue in cheek humor/wonderful.

Zinnia by Jayne Castle (Jayne Ann Krentz)

Jayne Ann Krentz's futuristic setting finds Nick Chastain searching for a "full-spectrum prism" to aid him in directing his psychic talents and to locate his father's lost journal. The diary is a treasury of alien facts sought by many including the prism Zinnia. The world of the Castle forbids divorce and life-long marriages are arranged by matchmaker-type agents. But as Nick and Zinnia join forces to discover the journal and a murderer, the laws of society are ignored by this pair of lovers. A paranormal romance.

Zel by Donna Jo Napoli

Atypical retelling of Rapunzel tale. Zel is reared in the mountains by Mother who became a witch after her husband abandoned her because she was barren. Desirous of her own child, Mother acquires Zel in an unusual trade. Her neighbor, pregnant with Zel craves a special variety of lettuce from Mother's garden. When the later refuses to sell the lettuce, the neighbor's husband is forced to steal lettuce each night. One night Mother discovers the husband, and using her powers, traps him into trading his freedom for his child. For thirteen years Mother and Zel live happily in the mountains. Just days before her birthday the pair make their bi-annual trip in to town where Zel meets the young Count Konrad. Her memory haunts him and he begins to search for her, finding her two years later in an abandoned tower where Mother had imprisoned her. In a night of passion Zel and Konrad declare themselves husband and wife. The next morning Konrad returns to rescue Zel only to discover that Mother has spirited her away. As Mother throws Konrad from one of the tower windows, she discovers that the pair is truly meant for each other and uses the last of her powers to save him. Konrad though blind from his fall continues to search for Zel and finds her and their twin children three years later. Her tears cure him of his blindness. YA and JH. A happy ending/poorly written/ Adolescents without parents. Recalling the Rapunzel tale makes the story richer.

The Bride Finder by Susan Carroll

The Bride Finder is a man blessed with unusual insight and brings together Madeleine Breton and Anatole St. Leger at Cornwell. Any dreams of a happy union are quickly destroyed when Anatole remembers the curses to which he is heir. Madeleine embarks on a journey both real and imagined where she and her husband fall hopelessly in love. Their brief joy is

destroyed by Madeleine's terrifying vision of murder and an enemy that threatens both their lives. (Sequel is *The Night Drifter*) Magic elements/ Bride finder is an elder kinsman with special powers. Sequel exists. Fairy pact makes it a romance.

Aquamarine by Alice Hoffman

Not a real romance. Suitable for YA and JH/ Fantasy elements. Claire and Haley spend their last summer together at Capri Beach Club before Claire and her family move to Florida. After a freak storm the girls discover Aquamarine, a mermaid in the club's pool. The later has fallen in love with Raymond, a concession stand employee. The girls plan a going away dinner for Raymond and Aquamarine before he leaves for college in Florida. The following day, Claire and Haley bring Aquamarine to the ocean before she drowns in the pool. Later while swimming in the ocean, Raymond is discovered by Aquamarine. Two loves stories run through this novel: the platonic relationship between Haley and Claire and the romantic one between Aquamarine and Raymond. Fantasy elements exist in the relationship between Raymond and Aquamarine as well as the seashells Aquamarine leaves for them. The eventual separation between Claire and Haley is handled with sympathy and maturity... a good story for JH or YA facing the similar problems.

The Tower at Stony Wood by Patricia McKillip

During a wedding celebration for his king, Cyan Dag, knight of Gloinmere, is told by a mysterious bard that the king has married a false queen. Cyan then departs to discover the real queen with the hopes of preventing war and awakening the magic in a land that has lost its way. Many legends and fairy tales are interwoven in this novel. Beautifully written. Spoiler element. Story is really about three fates. Similar to works of Robin McKinley and Ursula le Guin.

Beauty by Robin McKinley

Gentle Beauty lives with and loves Beast in whose castle she is forced to live. Her love releases him from the spell that has turned him into an ugly monster and eventually he becomes the handsome prince. Sleeping beauty tale. Beauty longs to find her mother. Lots of fairy tale elements. Strong environmental presence. Witty, strong female protagonist. Men are weak. Some time travel.

The Enchantment by Orson Scott Card

Ten-year-old Ivan is both terrified and drawn to a beautiful lady frozen in a Russian forest. Years later as an adult he returns to rescue the princess and marry her. Though his skills are of little value in the ninth century, he must defeat the powerful witch Baba Yaga, who has taken over Princess Katerina's kingdom. Ivan brings her into his world and the lovers learn to appreciate and understand each other's skills and weapons. Upon their return to the fairy tale world, the couple, aided by Ivan's relatives and modern day knowledge, is able to conquer the evil Baba Yaga. Sleeping Beauty myth with Russian culture. Very well written Common theme of good versus evil.

Amaryllis by Jayne Castle

A woman dies in an accident and is given a second chance for life with another woman's body. Finding herself in a loveless marriage with children, she soon wins her husband's love and they live happily ever after. The only fantasy element in the novel is how the woman becomes Amaryllis, otherwise this story is a straight romance.

Comments on what is a romantic fantasy?

All romances are fairy tales? But not all fairy tales are romances?

Power and control are issues

Commentary on **The Outlanders** by Diana Gabaldon:

Historical romance? Time Travel? More fantasy than science fiction?

Love and romance aid the protagonist in accomplishing goals.

Witches and magic are often present.

Romance is central to the story and this is not necessarily the case in subgenres.

Commentary on **The Lord of the Rings**: the quest is the central driving force with the romance elements adding to or solving problems. Romance is also offered as a reward at the story's conclusion.

Commentary on **Eye of the Hunter** by Dennis L. McKiernan: the quest is again the central driving force with the romance adding another dimension to the plot.

Does a fantasy need to have romantic love?

When is a story no longer Romantic Fantasy, but a Romance with fantastic elements?

Dark Fantasy

Everyone Read *Lost Boys* by Orson Scott Card

General Comments:

More horror and suspense than fantasy/similar to *The Shining*

Feelings of foreboding and doom are apparent from the beginning, especially in the situation of the father

Not really a dark fantasy and it is not meant to terrorize reader as in the case of horror

A malevolent serial killer

Is there an appeal here for Christian fiction fans? Be cautious with a recommendation. Puritanical strains within storyline.

Card may have attempted to do too much.

Humor arises from computer situations.

Evil is the evil in men's hearts, anywhere, anytime, any place.

Book's plot is frustrating because "I was not being lead...Stevie's death."

Many things are going on here: doom, child molestation, lack of security at home or work.

A didactic parenting manual or cautionary tale on the Mormon method of child rearing? (*Novelist*)

Not very literary but a rather pedantic style.

Flashes of the minutiae of daily family life are realistic.

Individual Titles:

Running with the Demon by Terry Brooks

Setting is Mississippi and the Rock River. First in the series. Good for Young Adults. Good character development and evil is conquered by good.

Comparable to **Star Wars**? Nest Freemark is a very engaging strong female character. Grandmother is the drinker and pot smoker here.

Stephen Kingish.....Strong family with a sense of resolution. But you are in a fantasy world.....the Feeders are creepy.

Blood and Chocolate by Annette Curtis Klause

Horror or fantasy? Its appeal characteristics are very subjective. It depends on whom the reader identifies with. How recognizable are the human creatures and their attributes? You do empathize with the victim. What does Klause want you to understand? Is it uncomfortable for the reader to empathize with a vampire?

Klause does for werewolves what Rice does for vampires. Vivian Gandillon and her family of werewolves are having a difficult time fitting into their new suburban environment. Though expected to mate with "one of her own kind," sixteen-year-old Vivian falls in love with a gentle-poetry loving human. This is a dark, suspenseful tale with some shocking and bloody episodes. Ages fourteen and up.

A Kiss of Shadows by Laurell K. Hamilton

Erotica/fantasy. A world of humans and fairies. The immortal sidhe are the most beautiful, powerful fairies and were once worshiped as gods. They are powerful lovers who despise cities and technology and seldom live among humans. Mixed blood princess, Meredith NicEssus, leaves the fey world to pass as human Merry Gentry, a detective that specializes in solving supernatural problems with magical solutions. Sexual encounters, memorable encounters, and lots of fantasy. Hierarchy of fairies. Darker elements of fantasy because encounters often end in death.

Conjure Wife by Fritz Leiber

Not a dark fantasy. World of academia where women are witches. World War II. Professor is striving for tenure and wife is a witch trying to protect him. He thinks she is crazed with her African voodoo spells and chants. Ultimately the husband needs to use his intelligence to protect his wife from a coven of witches attempting to destroy her.

Dark Dance by Tanith Lee

Doom and predestination. Not considered horror because evil is not a threatening presence. England. Woman is forced to leave bookstore and return to her father's house containing a bizarre caste of characters. She is lulled into a physical relationship with her father and becomes pregnant. Daughter is farmed out and is lulled into the same type of union with grandfather.....but the mother is unwilling for this to happen. The horror in this tale is that it can be reality. Mood is similar to that of Poe's
Where is the fantasy element? Is it perhaps that this cannot happen here?
What are your fears, phobias, paranoias?

The mood is dark and the landscape is purgatorial.....evil lurks in the hearts of men.

Dark Sister by Graham Joyce

Stay-at-home mom (Maggie) becomes intrigued with a diary found in a fireplace and then gets involved with Wiccan herbal lore. A witch is tortured to death and her body is found by Alex, Maggie's husband. It seems that only Maggie can be the one to accept the magical lore. The ending is ambiguous. There may have been an occult relationship between a brother and sister. There are graphic sexual scenes and the torture of a witch may not be suitable for Young Adults.

Indigo by Graham Joyce

Jack Chambers is summoned to Chicago after the death of his mysterious father to publish the latter's manuscript on "Invisibility: a Manual of Light." Jack meets his half sister and her young son and the trio soon find themselves in Rome. They discover that the elder Chambers headed a secret cult of artists seeking the power of invisibility through psychological and surgical techniques related to the color indigo. Dull and unintelligent.

Parallel/Alternate Worlds

Everyone Read *The Lathe of Heaven* by Ursula LeGuin

General Comments:

A great book/similar to *1984* and *Animal Farm* with a *Twilight Zone* premise.

Political ideas just below surface.

An unsettling feeling as dreams segue from one scene to another, i.e. from dream state to reality.

Suitable for JH and beyond.

Slim line between fantasy and science fiction, though book appears to be SF because it is not heavily descriptive. A dystopia or apocalyptic fantasy.

George and Haber are not heroes but victims of their own wishes and desires.

Le Guin is an elegant writer as well as a sly, humorous one despite the book's grim events.

Does the story end with a success or failure? Depends on the reader.

Timely themes: Is LeGuin a doomsayer, scary prognosticator? She

appears to have nailed most that has happened, i.e., overpopulation, environmental pollution. (Paul Erlich)
Book is relevant for its inclusion of these current, disturbing issues/events.
Good versus evil. How truly evil are the characters?
Alien force has great energy. How is this created? Book reveals universal, archetypal fears of all creation.
Difficult to read.
Winner of a Hugo and Nebula.
Le Guin sketches out consequences and allows reader to fill in details.
(She respects her reader)
Provocative but open-ended.

Other Titles:

Changewinds/ Jack L. Chalker

Gross, unsophisticated language that gets old.
Witches and demons.
Alternate world with a magic stone.
Dreams/ lots of descriptive passages of an alternate universe. Adventure.
The changewinds both random and consistent blow across worlds they have created. Throughout these many universes rule the Akhbreed whose sorcerers have absolute power because they are masters of physical laws.
The plot revolves around two Earth women who have been trapped in the fury of the winds.

Top Dog/ Jerry Jay Carroll

Top Dog is a coarse, crude person-Wall Street trader turned into a dog/another world.
Dark Wizard is the devil... good versus evil.
Angel is good.
At what point does Bogey choose to become good or evil and return home? However, even upon his return home and to human form, he still chooses evil. Is he a real pragmatist? A morality play in novel format. Bogey is supposed to be Everyman since Good and Evil are real characters. His inner running commentaries on the life that surrounds him are not too preachy. Alternate reality.

The Golden Compass/ Philip Pullman (First of Dark Materials)

Many layers of meaning.
Religion and family play important roles.

A very dark tale within an alternate universe.

Real cruelty.

Best audio book I have ever listened to!

Not necessarily a children's story, but children can get something from it on their level. What is beyond them is beyond them!

Lord Asriel returns from the North with tales of horrible crimes being committed against children. His niece Lyra then decides to rescue the kidnapped children and their familiars from imprisonment.

Seventh Son/Orson Scott Card (First in Alvin Maker Series)

Interesting alternate American history based on magic and folklore; Taleswapper's stories about what happened to the country and people famous in our history are interesting. Ending is definitely a set-up for a series/no closure and pacing is a bit slow.

Lord High Protector of England sends citizens who demonstrate magic talents to the American colonies. Alvin Maker and his family are moving west. Though highly successful in the past, they are soon losing everything. Wife Faith is expecting a child. If her child is male, he will be the seventh son of a seventh son and they are said to possess special magical qualities.

Three Hearts and Three Lions/Poul Anderson

A parallel universe/primeval Denmark.

The hero needs a quest to return home/Chaos (Nazi) versus evil is the battle/A foundling from a medieval world? Is he a Danish King Arthur or Charlemagne? Holger like King Arthur is waiting until the world needs him. Law abiding citizens believe that he will be their savior and carry the war to the Chaotic elves.

High language and adolescent slang.

A fairy tale retold/ predates Tolkien and the medieval romance. From the Hans Christian Anderson tale/fantasy adventure.

Holger is fleeing the Nazis in occupied Norway and finds himself unconscious in an alternate Earth.

The Time of the Dark (First in the Darwath Series/ Barbara Hambly

Author is a good storyteller:

Sympathetic characters, compelling human elements. (Biker can diaper a baby).

Female characters are strong.

A quest story.

Human relationships are very satisfying.

A cliffhanger... the second in the series?

Suddenly black floating monsters flow from abandoned caverns and begin devouring human civilization. Gil and Rudy are survivors who must find safety in the Keeps, fortresses built 3000 years ago and impregnable for any dark, evil force.

Through the Ice/Piers Anthony

Robert Kornwise was the first author and upon his death, Anthony completed the story.

Seth Warner, Rame, Tirsa, and Viday are the Chosen ones predicted by prophecy to take part in the conflict between Nefarious (evil sorcerer) and a greedy empire. The outcome of the battle affects the four planes of earth. Parallel universe.

Logical plot twist. Communication is through telepathy. Each character is plagued by the manner of his or her death. Travel between universes is through dream sequences.

Suitable for Junior High...ala Roald Dahl and his *James and the Giant Peach*.

Coraline/Neil Gaiman

Coraline lives with her distracted parents in an immense old house. It is also filled with other eccentric characters such as the former actresses Miss Forcible and Miss Spink and their aging Highland terriers. And then there is the mysterious old man upstairs.

Definitely an alternate universe. What is on the other side of the door? A mirror world that distorts everything...

Maybe like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, but certainly much darker and stranger than Carroll's book. A real fairy tale.

Ages 11 and up. Younger readers should be able to identify with the young heroine as she attempts to rescue her friends with the aid of a talking cat.

Slightly bizarre, humorous and frightening at times.

Spellsinger/Alan Dean Foster (First in the Spellsinger series of 6)

Jon-Tom (Jonathan Thomas Meriweather) law student, wanna-be rock star, and Sanitation Engineer of Earth, is transported to an alternate world by the turtle wizard Clothahump. The latter is seeking the Great Wizard to help him defeat the evil threatening to destroy all worlds. Jon-Tom finds himself in a world where humans are only part of the sentient population. Various species of animals along with humans inhabit the warmlands, and man-

sized insects are their enemies. Jon-Tom, Clothahump and a Marxist fire-breathing dragon set out to warn everyone of the eminent attack.

While on this quest, Jon-Tom learns that he is a Spellsinger or wizard whose magic is found in his music.

Some humor/Author employs great imagination to combine elements of science, music and culture within one story.

Suitable for Young Adults.

Political Fantasy

Everyone Read *Wicked* by Gregory Maguire

General Comments:

Slow Going. We do not need to understand Oz.....movie is good to see.

Not magic, but magical. More practical elements than fantasy elements.

Would appeal to literary fiction lovers rather than fantasy lovers.

Similar to science fiction with political-social overtones.

Magical realism.

Personal relationships, betrayals, intrigues, etc.

Not necessarily for Young Adults. Whom would the latter try to identify with?

Elphaba...L. F. B. is her name origin.

Story slacks off at the end.

Too philosophical for audio format.

Did not feel like a fantasy because the plot was dense and story was character driven.

No one is really bad...explores the duality of good and evil.

Maguire's skill as a novelist is revealed in his ability to take the classic concepts of good and evil (fairy tale) and turn them around.

Requires thoughtful concentration.

Familiar characters are well defined, interesting and sympathetic.... book's strongest feature.

Those who love the "OZ" books will appreciate *Wicked*.

Did not feel the book was steeped in political issues even though enslavement of animals was Elphaba's primary motive for her activism.

Powerful theme of forgiveness runs through story.

Tone is not right for fantasy fans and presence of magic is insufficient.

Appropriate for fans who enjoy literary fiction with a strong message.

Individual Titles:

Robin and the Kestral by Robin McKinley

Not a challenging read. Medieval pet society. Fantasy and magic elements with humans and non-humans. Musicians do not believe in caging anything. Church issues. Episodic in scope. A gentle story. Young Adult appropriate. Big brother is watching. Music has the power to free one. Easy read with some serious political issues.

Gathering Blue by Lois Lowry

The individual is dead. A dark story. Big brother is watching. A good novel of ideas. People have no memory. This is somewhat of a sequel to *The Giver*. Young Kira's mother suddenly dies and she finds herself alone within her community. A Council Guardian recognizes her skill as an embroiderer and allows her to live in the Council Edifice as a restorer and repairer of the Singer's robe. As the young protagonist Kira learns about responsibility through knowledge and the choices she makes for her community.

An Acceptable Time Madeleine L' Engle

Straightforward story, easy to understand tale. A farm is erected over a sacred pool. It is an historical area...an alternate world. Time Travel. Friendship and betrayal issues in all the worlds are present. For young teens. Visiting her grandparents in Connecticut, Polly discovers some old friends and startling new ones. With a lightening flash Polly finds herself transported from her comfortable farmhouse to mist –enshrouded mountains where she is confronted by men with spears.

The Curse of Chalion by Lois McMaster Bujold.

A big world. Political treachery moves the story. Death/magic are revenge issues. Both protagonists die. Complex, intriguing characters. Very political themes. World building. Fast paced. No Technology. Five gods rule the world. They are avatars for the people. Not for Young Adults. A series but could be read as stand-alone. Cazaril returns to the noble Court of Cadegoss where he must tutor the daughter of the castle. Only through forbidden magic will he be able to protect his young charge and lift the horrible curse that hangs over Chalion.

Freedom and Necessity by Steven Brust

Densely written. Similar to Wilkie Collins. 1849/England. Chartists. Political

turmoil. Four main characters. An historical adventure novel with rich detail. Also a good, strong fantasy .Not for Young adults. Rather wordy. I felt as though I were reading personal letters of each character. In 1849 London, James Cobham is believed to have drowned in a tragic boating accident. Two months later his cousin receives a letter from him and urges Cobham to continue his writing while in hiding. Thus this unique novel of adventure begins with letters, diaries, and contemporary documents. Lots of sword fighting, family intrigues, secret societies, occult influences and passionate romance. Complex, historical characters and exciting events.

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

Highly recommended for a wide variety of readers, that is, Young Adults, science and fantasy lovers, as well as for mainstream readers.

In 2025, Lauren Oya Olamina lives in southern California, which is racially mixed: African-Americans, Hispanics, and a few whites. Global warming, pollution, drug-crazed gangs, unemployment, homelessness.... Social, economic and cultural problems have caused American life to fray to the point where beleaguered residents build walls around their communities and post armed guards to repel invaders. Police come to the aid of people who can afford their services. When Lauren's community is destroyed, she becomes a refugee, heading north for a better life.

This book is science fiction (or speculative fiction) rather than fantasy. A coming of age story, journey or quest. Apocalyptic vision of the future: grim with some reason for optimism. Lauren spreads her developing philosophy among her travelling companions.

A Swiftly Tilting Planet by Madeleine L'Engle

I chose to read this book because when I first read it in college it was my favorite of the L'Engle Time trilogy. Upon a re-reading. I am not as charmed. The tone is preachy, the plot is strong, the characters are by turns childish and condescending and just plain vapid. I found the Murrays to be a great bore this time around but loved the characters from the past. I did not find much that was political in this book either. Using the destruction of the world and a crazy world leader are merely plot devices to ratchet up the action and tension---L'Engle is not really making any statements. I have always been a big fan of the time travel theme of changing past events to affect future one, so I enjoyed this book on that level. I also liked the way L'Engle wove an ancient Welsh/Native American myth through the story and if the myth is one she created, it is sensational (I wanted to go looking

for its origins) and if it is one she heard and just happened to use in her book, well done.

Humorous Fantasy

Everyone read *A Spell for Chameleon* by Piers Anthony

General Comments:

First in the Xanth Series/lots of background information

Impressed with the book's structure, that is, the map

Politically incorrect attitudes, especially in regards to women

How are we supposed to feel about the female characters?

Plot driven/no theme

Young teenage boys (12-13) may identify with the quest/young male fantasy

Unsophisticated

Not really that funny

Light fiction/too many simple solutions

Struggle to finish/tedious

Read this book to figure out the end

Trent the magician was the most intriguing of all the characters

Lots of plot twists and magical creatures

Not a compelling or absorbing fantasy, but a good setup for a series

General comments on this humorous fantasy:

Within this sub-genre, I enjoy political fantasy only

Not enough "meat" in the plots or strength in characters to keep me interested

Enjoyed the MYTH books on car rides because they were not deeply distracting or thoughtful

Humor and characters in XANTH books did not connect with me either.

Enjoy the ironic humor of Bujold and Maguire

Prefer humor to be a "subtle thread in a larger stronger heavier book"

Other titles:

Good Omens by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett

Extremely funny British humor/even footnotes are humorous

Angel and the devil are working together and man has ruined everything

Tongue-in cheek humor/a satire/Think of Vonnegut, Tom Robbins,

Christopher Moore

Having some background in British literature may help

Story takes place in four days

The Hollow Chocolate Bunnies of the Apocalypse by Robert Rankin

A parallel world

Steve is the magician's apprentice

Retarded dragon

A funny, compelling universe

Pacing is more like science fiction than fantasy

Wisdom is imparted to a young man

Intelligent story/good characterization

Big Over Easy Jasper Fforde

A clever adaptation of nursery rhyme characters but the puns and allusion tire after awhile

Reader does care about the REAL people/characters and some of them are interestingly and vividly drawn

Story/plot could have been more compelling were it not so convoluted /I had to go back and listen to the story often to pick up threads

Wrap-Up Session

General Comments on the Fantasy genre

Not my favorite genre but found some very good writers within fantasy.

Subgenres were not clearly defined/lots of overlapping with science fiction and horror.

Magic was used to resolve situations.

Are we too old for this genre? Do we daydream as often as we did when younger?

This genre should be read in phases.

Stories are poorly written.

Fantasy is seeing a rebirth, i.e., Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Maguire, Rowling.

We all have our preferences: good yarn, great setting, good characterizations...if these elements are present, the book will be read, regardless of its genre.

True fantasy fans know exactly what they want.

Perhaps fantasy's appeal for teens is the fact that they are able to exert

control over their worlds in this genre. They also do not need concrete realities.

Why do adults read fantasy?

- Goal oriented
- Escapism
- Certain amount of control

What science fiction offers as opposed to most fantasy

- New ideas
- Control
- Themes, settings, ideas are plausible
- Offers concrete reality that adults need

People who read science fiction think they are reading about science in story form; they do not apologize for their tastes. Adult fantasy readers, however, may be reading romances.

Is there a connection between video games and fantasy? What about the "electronically underserved"?

Where do you shelve science fiction? Fantasy? Mystery? Thriller? Horror?

Sex in fantasy fiction (therefore, appropriate for teens) is not objectionable as it maybe in science fiction. (Exceptions here are in the works of Laurel Hamilton and some political fantasies.) Crossover books are more sexual than straight fantasy, for example, comic books. The code for fantasy is that of an honorable young man who protects the maiden while on his quest. He is her savior...like romance genre.

The members of the ARRT Genre Study wish to thank Corky for leading us through two years of studying the fantasy genre and its sub categories. Our knowledge of this genre has increased, and we are able to assist patrons with fantasy titles.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Cella