

The Fantasy Genre: A Master Guide for Year 7

Welcome to the realm of the impossible! Fantasy is a genre of literature where the rules of the real world are broken, magic is possible, and the only limit is the author’s imagination.

1. The Core Definition

At its heart, Fantasy is a genre that uses **supernatural elements** or **magic** as a primary plot element, theme, or setting. Unlike Science Fiction (which relies on future technology), Fantasy relies on wonder, ancient lore, and the "impossible."

2. The "Big Three" Pillars of Fantasy

Every great fantasy story usually relies on these three components:

- **The Hero’s Journey:** A protagonist (often an "underdog") is plucked from their normal life and sent on a dangerous quest.
- **World-Building:** The author creates a unique world with its own geography, history, and rules of physics.
- **The Magic System:** A set of rules that governs how magic works. Is it learned from books, or is it a biological gift?

3. Common Sub-Genres

Not all fantasy is the same. Here is how we break it down:

Sub-Genre	Characteristics	Examples
High (Epic) Fantasy	Set entirely in a different world; often involves a "Save the World" stakes.	<i>The Hobbit, Wings of Fire</i>
Low (Urban) Fantasy	Magical elements occur in our real, modern world.	<i>Percy Jackson, Harry Potter</i>
Portal Fantasy	Characters travel from the real world into a magical world through a "gate."	<i>Narnia, Alice in Wonderland</i>

Dark Fantasy	Combines fantasy with elements of horror to create a spooky atmosphere.	<i>Coraline, The Graveyard Book</i>
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4. Essential Fantasy Tropes

A **trope** is a common theme or device used in storytelling. In Year 7 English, you'll want to look out for these:

- **The Chosen One:** A character destined by prophecy to defeat the villain.
- **The Mentor:** An older, wiser figure (think Gandalf or Dumbledore) who guides the hero.
- **The Quest:** A journey to find a specific object or reach a specific location.
- **The Dark Lord:** An antagonist who represents pure evil and seeks total control.

5. Common Archetypes & Creatures

In these stories, you will often encounter "The Hero," "The Sidekick," and "The Shapeshifter." These are called **archetypes**. You will also find a bestiary of creatures, often pulled from mythology:

- **Dragons:** Often hoarders of gold or ancient wisdom.
- **Elves/Dwarves:** Races with distinct cultural traits (e.g., Elves are often immortal/graceful; Dwarves are often miners/warriors).
- **The Chimera:** Beasts made of different animal parts.

6. The Structure: The Hero's Journey

Most fantasy stories follow a specific structure called **The Monomyth**.

1. **The Ordinary World:** The hero starts in a boring, safe place.
2. **The Call to Adventure:** A problem arises that forces them to leave.
3. **The Threshold:** They leave the "normal" world and enter the "magical" one.
4. **Challenges & Temptations:** They fight monsters and make friends.
5. **The Abyss:** The darkest moment where all hope seems lost.
6. **The Transformation:** The hero learns a lesson or gains a power.
7. **The Return:** They go home, changed by their journey.

7. Literary Techniques to Use

When writing your own fantasy, keep these techniques in your "spellbook":

- **Sensory Imagery:** Don't just say the dragon was scary. Describe the *smell* of sulfur and the *heat* radiating from its scales.

- **Anthropomorphism:** Giving human traits to animals or objects (like a talking sword).
- **Neologisms:** Making up new words for your world (e.g., "Muggles" or "Hobbits").

Teacher's Tip: When analyzing a fantasy text, always ask: *"What are the rules of this world, and what happens when those rules are broken?"*