THE FANTASY GENRE

Genre is a term used often to describe a theme, style or category a text, art, music or literature is. The fantasy genre is common style of genre, with some common characteristics being themes such as 'good vs evil', unreal worlds and creatures, and motifs such as castles, magical kingdoms and magic objects. Some great examples of the fantasy genre that are commonly known to be fantasy novels are, 'A Wrinkle in Time,' 'Northern Lights,' 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone', and Ready Player One. Throughout this essay, the settings, themes, characters and plot of all these texts will be covered, demonstrating the fantasy genre.

The fantasy genre has multiple conventions that are encountered whilst reading any fantasy text. The novel of A Wrinkle in Time is a great example and displays the convention of fantasy settings. Within this novel, there are many different worlds that the characters discover throughout their journey, such as Uriel or Camazots. These worlds have abnormal creatures and plants, some friendly and others hostile. This is noticeable in the descriptions of the flowers that assist in breathing, seen when Mrs Whatsit says, *"Hold the flowers up to your face and breathe through them and they will give you enough oxygen."* The description of the flowers uses personification, to truly bring the world to life for the reader and give them a connection. The author uses these techniques to make the fantasy setting more vivid to the reader and allows them make connections to the story. The settings in A Wrinkle in Time have a unique quality that is a successful demonstration of fantasy settings.

Within the fantasy genre, readers expect to find specific types of characters. The conventions of fantasy tell us that should encounter a hero/ heroine character, as well as magic users, royals and imaginary creatures. This is seen in Northern Lights by Philip Pulman, there are unreal creatures called daemons who are an extension of a person's soul. They change form in your youth and then settle as a certain form once you enter adulthood. The main character, Lyra, has a daemon called Pantalaimon who is constantly changing. In the story Lyra is advised that she will want him to stay the same one day, and settle as

one form. *"There'll come a time when you'll be tired of his changing about, and you'll want a settled kind of form for him (Pantalaimon)...there's compensations for a settled form...knowing what kind of person you are."* The settling of the form of a daemon is symbolic of the process of growing up and discovering who you are. The author has used the symbolic process of a daemon taking a single form to demonstrate to us how characters grow up and become their own person. For these reasons, Northern Lights is a perfect example of the conventions of the fantasy genre in action.

Themes are also an important aspect throughout the fantasy genre. A theme often gives the reader a moral to the story or teaches them something, as is seen throughout Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone. In this novel, fantasy themes are commonly displayed, such as 'good vs evil', the theme of courage, and the theme of friendship. These all add important ideas to the story. The theme of friendship is a big part of all the Harry Potter sequels and can be seen when Hermione says *"Books! And cleverness! There are more important things - friendship and bravery and - oh Harry - be careful!"* The use of exclamation points all through this quote add higher modality, and enhances Hermione's point about friendship, and a warning for Harry. The author uses higher modality to display how much Hermione cares about friendship, and Harry. Therefore, Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone is an outstanding example of fantasy themes.

Plot is also another important part of the fantasy genre, and fantasy texts. Plot usually involves a journey of some kind, as well a quest or obstacle to overcome. This is prominent in the novel of 'Ready Player One.' This novel shows a futuristic and science-fiction fantasy plot. Ready player One also gives a different, but still successful approach to the fantasy genre, as well as fantasy plot. This is visible when the main character says, *"I didn't have much choice. Winning the contest was my one chance of escaping the stacks. Unless I wanted to sign a five-year indenturement contract with some corporation, and that was about as appealing to me as rolling around in broken glass in my birthday suit."* The use of a simile here works well to enhance the idea that the main character does not want to lose the contest, and can't. This quote emphasises on the 'journey' or quest part of the plot. The author uses a simile to immerse the reader into what the main character may feel about this. So, overall, Ready player One is an exceptional example of plot in the fantasy genre.

In conclusion, the texts of A Wrinkle in Time, Northern Lights, Harry Potter and Ready Player One, are all excellent examples of fantasy settings, themes, characters and plot. They all demonstrate ideals for a fantasy story and show common fantasy conventions and creative fantasy ideas.