

Question: How does the novel you have studied in class reflect elements of the fantasy genre such as characters, plots/settings and themes?

Fantasy is a genre where strange, wondrous events happen and characters that can have abilities not of this world, it is fundamentally different in some way to the real world. Many fantasy books contain common themes and concepts, thus creating different subgenres and tropes such as heroic fantasy or high fantasy. The novels studied reflect important aspects of the fantasy genre such as plot, themes, for example, good vs evil or friendship in Harry Potter, characterisation in Northern Lights and different settings in A Wrinkle in Time. An additional part of the genre is magical objects that were shown in The Hobbit.

One common theme of fantasy is the quality of friendship between characters. The bond between Harry, Ron and Hermione shows their friendship. An example of this is when Harry was going to fight Professor Snape to stop him getting the Philosopher's Stone, but Ron and Hermione don't let Harry face Snape by himself and insist he let them come with him. Hermione and Ron ask a rhetorical question; 'Oh come off it, you don't think we'd let you go alone?' This is to show they will not let Harry get into danger by himself. This shows that they have such a solid friendship that they are willing to risk their lives for one another. Harry and his friends showed their great friendship by standing by each other in the face of adversity; this reflecting the thematic quality of friendship in fantasy texts.

The settings in A Wrinkle in Time reflect the fantasy genre by having extraordinary differences to that of the real world. These worlds all have differing inhabitants, laws of physics and environments. For example the setting of Camazotz, one of the worlds in A Wrinkle in Time, is different from the 'real world' because all of the people do the exact same thing in time with one another and all appear to have the same house, the only difference between the people is the clothes they wear, " 'Look!' Charles Wallace said suddenly. 'They're skipping and bouncing in rhythm! Everyone's doing it at the same moment.'". Madeline L'Engle, the author, uses foreshadowing to build up suspense and tension: she describes the character's feelings that something isn't right in this world. Then she shows the reader what was wrong in a kind of 'Voilà' moment. This technique was used effectively to show the difference between Earth and this alternate setting.

Magical items are a common element of fantasy texts, being found in both sword and sorcery epics as well as other subgenres of fantasy. These items are usually imbued with special abilities or found on quests. Magic artefacts can have different powers, for example; turning the wearer invisible, controlling the elements, flying and talking to animals. The objects, in this case two magical clay pipes, described in this extract of The Hobbit are part of the fantasy genre because they behave in a manner not possible in our world; blowing enormous smoke rings that can change colour and be directed around the room. "He [Thorin] was blowing the most enormous smoke-rings, and wherever he told one to go, it went – up the chimney, or behind the clock on the mantelpiece, or under the table, or round and round the ceiling; but wherever it went it was not quick enough to escape Gandalf Pop! He sent a smaller smoke-ring from his short clay pipe straight through each one of Thorin's." J.R.R Tolkien uses onomatopoeia to describe the sound of the pipes puffing out the smoke rings. The sound he chose 'Pop!' lends a jovial, relaxed atmosphere to the setting. Magic is an important aspect of most fantasy stories and magical items are an integral part of this subgenre.

Lyra embodies the fantasy character convention of a heroine in Northern Lights. She is leaving what she knows and is moving to London where she will have to fend for herself "Quick now, child," he [The Master] said quietly. "The powers of this world are very strong. Men and women are moved by tides much fiercer than you can imagine, and they sweep us all up into the current. Philip Pullman uses a metaphor to tell Lyra that she will have to fend for herself against things she couldn't even comprehend. This has the effect of making the master sound like a wise, knowledgeable person who is slightly mysterious. Lyra reflects the fantasy character convention of a heroine/hero fending for themselves.

The novels studied in class reflect aspects of the genre through literary devices such as different settings in A Wrinkle in Time, characterisation in Northern Lights, magical objects in The Hobbit and common themes such as good vs evil or friendship in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.