

Science Fantasy

and Sheenagh Murphy

panions, Gandalf, the illustrious wizard, is introduced in this book.

In the first book of the actual series the ring is passed onto Frodo, the nephew of Bilbo. Through three books Frodo journeys to Mount Doom to destroy the ring in the fires that forged it. On the way he encounters Orcs, Trolls, evil wolf like creatures and the nine Ring Wraiths. The later are always close on his trail and at one point wound him in a battle just before he reaches the Gray Havens.

He is helped by his three faithful companions and a strange group of travellers including Gandalf, the magical wizard, a dwarf, elves, and a Ranger a man with mystifying personality. Ever present is Gollum, a deformed human who was the original keeper of the ring in "The Hobbit".

There is a calendar that comes with drawings depicting events in Tolkien's books. These drawings are done by the Hildebrandt brothers.

The "Simarillion" was actually started before the "Lord of the Rings" or the "Hobbit". This book was not finished by his death so his daughter finished it and had it published posthumously. This book is like a Bible of Middle Earth.

Another novel, very similar to the "Lord of the Rings" is "The Sword of Shanara". Many of the ideas in this book are thin disguises of Tolkien's ideas. The sword is compatible to the ring, and many of the characters are similar to those in Tolkien's books. This book was written by Terry Brooks. Books has also written a sequel "The Elf Stones of Shanara."

Triology's seem to be the fashionable thing in fantasy writings. Besides Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" there are others. These include the Covenant the Unbeliever series which is three books about a man, Thomas Convent, who is summoned to a land that he never knew existed. Here he helps battle the forces of evil and causes the eventual downfall of Lord Foul. He earns the title "the Unbeliever" because he does not believe that what is happening is really happening, he believes that he dreamed about all of it. Eventually he realized that this world is true and discovers how to use the wild magic of his white gold ring. A sincere and penetrating look into the mind of man is the underlying theme.

The Dragon Quest series is one series whose fantasied people world lends itself to hours of fascinated readers. There are five books in this series with each book answering questions created by the preceding book and expanding on the reality of the world called Pem. The books

are about a breed of men who have special telepathic powers that unite them with the dragons on which they fly. To these men is entrusted the responsibility of protecting their planet, Pem, from the feared silver Threads, a natural disaster which each "Tum" ravages the planet's surface. Written by Anne McCaffrey (who also wrote "Restore" among others).

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Lord Dunsays is another writer whose silver pen streaks across pages, creating fertile imaginative worlds with poignant characters and hair raising situations.

Ray Bradbury, although known for his science fiction should be equally worshipped for his fantasy. Bradbury has many books to his credit with some of his better known books being "The Martian Chronicles", "I Sing the Body Electric," "The Illustrated Man" and "Dandelion Wine". His books capture the imagination of both young and old. Very few of his books are full length novels, rather they are a collection of short stories.

H.P. Lovecraft is the 20th century master of the macabre. His is an example of how people felt about fantasy. At his death in 1937 people thought of his work as being merely "pulp". His popularity has increased in the forty years since his death so that now his works are very widely read.

This is just a brief glance at the myriad forms of fantasy which is to be found anywhere books are sold. For those who have not discovered the joy of fantastic literature, our preoccupation with imaginary worlds and mythological beings may seem ludicrous. All we can advise is to say, at least try it, the world around us sometimes depresses and dismays most people, to escape even for an hour the harsh light or reality is a necessary balm to man's soul.

"... The challenge given; the hour at hand to decide his fate; What must be must be This then!... is the realm of fantasy."



Battle scene from "The Elfstones of Shannara"