

Naomi Novik--Novik combines well-researched historical military fiction with dragons, producing fantasy that reads more like historical fiction. Her novels focus on a Napoleonic-era British aerial corp of sentient dragons, guided by human pilots, who carry human fighters into thrilling and believable aerial battles. The stories focus on characters' exploration of the globe and its political and social issues Start with: **HIS MAJESTY'S DRAGON**. When the HMS Reliant captures a French ship and its priceless cargo, an unhatched dragon egg, Captain Will Laurence is swept into an unexpected kinship with an extraordinary creature and joins the elite Aerial Corps as a master of the dragon Temeraire.

Terry Pratchett--Pratchett won a large following for his 'Discworld' series by creating interesting characters, placing them in a well-crafted world, and combining humor and compassion. Pratchett used humor to parody elements of literary genres, and also to raise questions about contemporary society. Pratchett's writing style uses cinematic techniques, cutting from scene to scene to show different perspectives, as well as lots of dialogue and a fast pace to propel the reader along. Start with: **THE COLOR OF MAGIC**. A slightly disorganized and somewhat naive interplanetary tourist named Twoflower joins up with a bumbling wizard and embarks on a chaotic voyage through a world filled with monsters and dragons, heroes and knaves.

Brandon Sanderson--Sanderson writes epic, fast-paced stories. He is widely admired for his sophisticated world building, imaginative premises, and intricately drawn magic systems. Through vibrant, witty prose he tells gripping, action-packed, and tightly plotted adventures featuring large casts of colorful and believable characters making epic journeys, overthrowing oppressive regimes, and using swords, guns, and magic to fight enemies. Start with: **MISTBORN**. A large cast of courageous characters acquire the powers of the Mistborn -- abilities based on the internal burning of certain metals -- when they come of age. They go on to battle the self-styled god oppressing their mist-haunted, ash-ridden world.

J.R.R. Tolkien--Tolkien drew from sagas, languages, and cultures of old to create the untamed world and richly-realized peoples of Middle Earth. Motifs from ancient stories immerse readers into the minds and hearts of characters who 'quest' toward their truest destinies. Start with: **THE HOBBIT**. Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, well-to-do hobbit, lives comfortably in his hobbit-hole until the day the wandering wizard Gandalf chooses him to take part in an adventure from which he may never return.

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Classic Fantasy



Fantasy novels create worlds in which magic exists and battles between good and evil resolve questions of right and wrong. Novels cover a wide range of tones, from the humorous to the dark and gritty. Fans of familiar stories such as fairy tales, folk tales, and myths, or legends, discover much to appreciate here, as these stories often form the foundation of much fantasy. Popular themes -- good versus evil, coming of age, struggling to reach one's potential and find one's place -- permeate all forms of the genre. Protagonists may be male or female, and writers of both genders spin their tales here.

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Terry Brooks--Brooks' straightforward plots and use of traditional Fantasy elements make his stories a good choice for readers new to the genre. They are fast-paced and action filled, with lots of swordplay and fighting, interspersed with long journeys around foreign landscapes. His characters are devoted to their quests and to saving their world from great evil. All of these books have an optimistic tone with good ultimately defeating evil. Start with: **MAGIC KINGDOM FOR SALE--SOLD!**. Ben Holiday purchases the magical kingdom of Landover for a million dollars only to learn that Iron Mark, lord of the demons, expects him to fight a duel to the death.

Diana Gabaldon--Gabaldon creates robust combinations of time travel fantasy, historical fiction, and romance, with Scotland as her vividly realized setting of choice, from the mid-18th-century to post WWII and with brisk prose in character-driven stories. Dialogue is used with particular skill. The tenacity of relationships and invincibility of the human spirit are recurrent themes. Start with: **OUTLANDER**. Hurtled back through time more than two hundred years to Scotland in 1743, Claire Randall finds herself caught in the midst of an unfamiliar world torn apart by violence, pestilence, and revolution and haunted by her growing feelings for James Fraser, a young soldier.

Neil Gaiman--Gaiman has written in a dizzying number of genres and formats, meeting critical and popular success in all of them. His characters are memorable and complex, and find themselves in surreal, often supernatural, settings. He evokes a creepy, sometimes horrifying, atmosphere, but balances this with whimsical interludes and comic relief. The novels are complex, with frequent use of literary and cultural references. Despite their complexity, Gaiman's prose is straightforward and reader-friendly, and the stories move quickly. If you want to try his graphic novels start with: **THE SANDMAN: PRELUDES & NOCTURNS**. An attempt to summon and imprison Death, results, instead, in the capture of Morpheus, the Sandman, who must regain the tools of his powers. If you want to try a novel, start with: **ANANSI BOYS**. His past marked by his father's embarrassing taunts and untimely death, Fat Charlie meets the brother he never knew and is introduced to new and exciting ways to spend his time.

Terry Goodkind--Goodkind's "Sword of Truth" novels are akin to great fantasy quests, such as Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings series, but with a darker, more mature edge. Intermingling any number of typical fantasy characters parlaying their craft in wizardry and magic, Goodkind's tales feature heavier themes such as torture and murder in a fantasy world. Start with: **THE WIZARD'S FIRST RULE**. An unearthly adversary descends on an idyllic fantasy world, corrupting magic against good and slaughtering innocents, and only a single man can stop him.

Robert Jordan--In his 'Wheel of Time' novels, Jordan has created a sprawling complex world, where magic and power compete. The books detail the struggle between the forces of light and darkness, following the adventures of a small band of characters in their quest to save the world. Jordan's detailed descriptions and his formal, elegant language slow the progress of these stories, drawing the readers more fully into his multi-layered worlds. Start with: **THE EYE OF THE WORLD**. Relates a tale of the bestial Trollocs, the witch Moiraine, and three boys, one of whom is fated to become the Dragon--the World's only hope and the sure means of its destruction.

Mercedes Lackey--Readers enjoy Mercedes Lackey for great storytelling, focused on her characters' journeys-not just their destinations. She depicts elaborate worlds, inhabited by well-realized characters. Protagonists are strong-willed and good-hearted; even villains are complex, having vulnerabilities and likable traits. Rapid pacing befits the high-stakes, epic adventures her characters face. Start with: **ARROWS OF THE QUEEN**. Talia, a trainee Herald, must use her untried psychic and empathic powers to protect the Queen of Valdemar and her child from a deadly conspiracy that threatens to destroy the kingdom.

George R.R. Martin--Martin writes Fantasy/Science Fiction novels, most notably his 'Song of Ice and Fire' series. Evolving, dark, and compelling medieval-tinged worlds are a backdrop for characters that are driven by relentless love, honor, greed, power, devotion, and revenge. Intrigue, nobility, and betrayal are recurrent themes played out in fantastic guise. Despite some novels' somber tone and sheer length, his simple language, rapid-fire action, and brilliant plots reward prolonged attention. Start with: **A GAME OF THRONES**. The aristocratic Stark family faces its ultimate challenge in the onset of a generation-long winter, the poisonous plots of the rival Lannisters, the emergence of the Neverborn demons, and the arrival of barbarian hordes.

Anne McCaffrey--Adventure, romance, intricate worlds, and detailed scientific backgrounds fill McCaffrey's stories. Noted for her Pern series, she also writes stand-alone romance and science fiction novels with contemporary or futuristic settings. Well-drawn characters, whose observations gradually reveal their world, draw readers in. Action interspersed with fine details sets a brisk pace. Start with: **DRAGONFLIGHT**. At a time when the number of Dragonriders has fallen too low for safety and only one Weyr trains the creatures and their riders, the Red Star approaches Pern, threatening it with disaster.