

Let's Work Together Teaching Guide

Dear Teacher,

Students easily fall in love with reading fantasy as it connects to their delight in magic while feeding their imagination. Fairy tales, myths, and legends are kin to fantasy novels, and reading these prepares students for the complexities of longer books. Children in primary grades enjoy fantasies with animals as the main characters, while enchanted journeys, alternative worlds, and heroic quests appeal to students in grades four on up. Magic and the supernatural are elements common to all fantasies. Not only do readers meet animals, trees, and inanimate objects that talk, feel, and think, but they are drawn into the world of magical beings like dragons, trolls, elves, dwarves, and goblins. Open a world of adventure to students and stock your class library with fantasy novels and series. Involve your students by asking, "What fantasy novels do you want to see in our library?" Show that you value their recommendations by adding appropriate book suggestions to the library and inviting students to book talk a favorite.

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Inspire Teaching
and Learning with
Outstanding Books.

Fantasy

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START WITH YOURSELF:

Read aloud from favorite fantasy books to ground students in the elements that define the genre:

- Magic and the supernatural are an important part of the story.
- The protagonist can reveal heroism as he/she battles evil to protect his/her alternative world.
- Quests are often part of fantasy. The protagonist's quest is to fulfill a prophecy, prevent the prophecy from happening, or destroy a creature harming the world.
- Settings contain elements that would never happen in our world, such as worlds below a city or ocean or dwellings that change in size and location.
- Characters can include magic beings like dragons, elves, and dwarves.

These fantasy elements can transform into discussion points that help partners or small groups have meaningful literary conversations when each student has read a different book. Equally important, these elements act as reading road maps for students navigating longer fantasy novels.

Keep building students' excitement by book talking new fantasy novels. Show the front cover and explain why the book intrigues you. Start the first chapter and stop at an exciting moment so students will want to check out the book and read it. Most of all, they'll enjoy entering strange, new magical worlds!

MOVE TO STUDENTS

Demonstrate the art of browsing to students. Check out dozens of fantasy books from your school's media center that are appropriate for the grade you teach. Model how you browse through a book to see if it interests you and if it's a "good fit" book (see pages 2–4 of the guide on realistic fiction). Look at the front cover and the table of contents and share your thoughts. Read aloud the text on the back cover and the first few pages of chapter 1. Share your feelings and why you do or don't want to check out the book. Set aside fifteen to twenty minutes for browsing and explain that it's a great way to discover books you can't stop reading!

Once students have chosen a book, give them sticky notes and have them divide the book into three to five chunks. When chunking, students can place a sticky note at the end of a chapter and write "stop to think" on each note.

TEACHING TIP

If fantasy is a new genre for most of your students, take time to read aloud to them and build their background knowledge of the fantasy elements. Consider reading Greek myths about heroes such as Theseus or Perseus, for these men are on quests and battle magical creatures.

After students complete a chunk, pair them up and have them select a question/prompt from the list below to discuss. Remind them to offer text details and/or inferences to support their thinking.

- Choose two important settings and explain the elements of fantasy you see in each one. How do the settings connect to the protagonist's quest or journey?
- Is there a struggle between the forces of good and evil? Who wins? Explain why.
- What special powers does the protagonist possess? For what purposes does he/she use these powers?
- Is the protagonist heroic? First, define the term *heroic* and then consider whether the protagonist meets the standards.
- How has this book changed your thinking about people, relationships, or fear of the unknown?
- What magical beings populate the book? How do they support/challenge the protagonist? What do you learn from them?
- What does the protagonist learn about himself/herself by the end of the story?
- Did a prophecy control the protagonist's quest or journey? Explain the prophecy and how the protagonist dealt with it.

NOTEBOOK WRITING

Have students head a clean page in their notebooks and include the title and author of their book. They can choose a question they discussed with their partner, write the question in their notebook, and jot a list of notes that will be part of the response. Next, ask students to transform their notes into sentences that contain text evidence. Here are additional suggestions for notebook writing:

- Design an illustrated map of the places the protagonist visited on his/her quest. Have the map begin where the quest starts and take it to the end.
- Illustrate two to three magical beings. For each one, explain its importance to the story.
- Make two lists—one for the forces of good and a second for the forces of evil. Explain which force was victorious and why.
- Illustrate a scene that shows what the world the protagonist lives in is like.

