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In Defense of Magic: Using Fantasy Literature in the Classroom

A Thesis Presented

by

Marisa Florence Cignarella

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Abstract of the Thesis

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This thesis argues for the greater inclusion of fantasy literature in high school and middle school English classrooms. Through an analysis of the popularity of fantasy series, including recent movies and their widespread pop cultural appeal, this thesis illustrates that fantasy resonates with many readers. A close examination of various works of fantasy literature appropriate to be read in full or excerpted in the classroom demonstrates that fantasy usefully illustrates various literary concepts, such as symbolism, metaphor, allusion, allegory, and character foils; provides clear examples of the hero's journey, which appear in various canonical texts as well as other media; offers numerous connections to canonical texts studied in the high school curriculum, including works which contain elements of the fantastic; and that fantasy can be used to demonstrate different theories of reading literature, such as biographical, new criticism, reader response, postcolonialist, feminist, and disability studies approaches. Moreover, the abstract themes that fantasy makes concrete can be helpful and powerful ways to help students understand themselves and relate to their peers.

Dedication Page

To my parents, Linda and Michael Cignarella, for their continuous support of my education.

Table of Contents

In Defense of Magic: Using Fantasy Literature in the Classroom 1

Works Cited 71

Acknowledgments

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In Defense of Magic: Using Fantasy Literature in the Classroom

At the conclusion of a dream in the seventh and final installment of the *Harry Potter* series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry's deceased mentor and former headmaster Albus Dumbledore tells him, "Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?" (723). This dialogue has implications far beyond this scene in one novel; for all readers, fiction has very "real" significance and importance. Particularly for teachers and students, like Dumbledore and Harry, the question of reality is essential in order to make meaning of fiction. Students often, justifiably, wonder how what they learn connects to their own lives and why what they study is meaningful. These same questions become especially pointed when one considers fantasy literature. O'Keefe, in her examination of children's fantasy literature, defines it as "a type of fiction containing something impossible, contrary to the laws of nature as we know them" (22). Fantasy uniquely "flaunts its deviations from reality" and "create[s] the unbelievable, twist[s] the taken-for-granted, and turn[s] things inside out" (O'Keefe 22). Free from many of the restrictions of mundane reality, fantasy explores ideas and the human condition in a way that realistic fiction cannot. How can fantasy literature, which is by definition unreal, have meaning and significance? How can teachers and students use fantasy literature to understand the world around them and all genres of literature? Although fantasy literature is imaginative and depicts a world more magical than reality, it still has a "real" meaning for many students and teachers. It is essential to incorporate fantasy literature into middle school and high school English classrooms because fantasy relates to students' lives on a more dramatic scale, illustrates valuable literary concepts present in diverse works of literature, provides new perspectives, and enables students and teachers to examine difficult and abstract concepts in concrete and powerful ways.

Fantasy literature is not frequently studied in middle school and high school settings because of a pervasive stigma. In a 2003 article in *English Journal*, Melissa Thomas advocates for the use of fantasy literature in English classrooms, and states that fantasy literature is underutilized in school settings because "the genre itself continues to be dismissed as escapist fluff" (60). In a 2004 article for *Language Arts*, Cruz and Pollock describe their experiences teaching fantasy to fourth graders, and title a section of their article "An Often-Overlooked Genre," stating that they initially viewed "fantasy as a fun, albeit somewhat shallow, genre" which "lacked the seriousness and depth of more respected genres" (185). According to Sparknotes.com, the top ten guides sought out by visitors to the site, presumably students, are *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *1984*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Brave New World*. Of these ten canonical titles, seven are realistic fiction and three are science fiction—*1984*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *Brave New World*. Cliffsnotes.com lists their "Top 10 LitNotes" as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Animal Farm*, *Catching Fire*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Outsiders*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Lord of the Flies*. Only one of these novels, *Catching Fire*, is a work of fantasy. These student aids illustrate that the stigma against fantasy is reflected in the selection of novels for classrooms across the country.

The Common Core State Standards, a set of nationally recommended educational standards for schools across the country, which have been adopted in 43 states ("Standards in Your State"), express this same bias. Although the Common Core Standards do not mandate texts to be read, they often overlook fantasy literature. Under the heading "Range of Text Types," the English Language Arts Standards state that "Stories" include "the subgenres of adventure stories, historical fiction, mysteries, myths, science fiction, realistic fiction, allegories, parodies, satire, and graphic novels" (Common Core State Standards Initiative 57). While some of these listed genres overlap with fantasy, fantasy itself is not listed. The sample titles the English Language Arts Standards list are also representative of this bias against fantasy literature. "Texts Illustrating the Complexity, Quality, and Range of Student Reading 6–12" in the English Language Arts Standards include 20 works of literature, not including the 18 literary nonfiction titles, yet only four are fantasy—*The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe, and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (Common Core State Standards Initiative 58). In a 30 second video made by Council of the Great City Schools to promote the Common Core State Standards, which CoreStandards.org recommends under the page "Other Resources," seven titled books are displayed—*Moby Dick*, *Long Walk to Freedom*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *The House on Mango Street*, *Becoming Naomi Leon*, *Lewis and Clark*, and *The Great Gatsby*—none of which are fantasy (CGCS Video Maker). Then, a child's voice gleefully announces, "I'm reading *James and the Giant Peach*," and the adult announcer mentions that students in other schools may be reading *Charlotte's Web* (CGCS Video Maker). While this suggests a greater diversity in literary genres recommended by the common core, this video also seems to relegate fantasy to a genre just for young children, and does not address the appeal fantasy holds for high school and middle school students. While the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts can be applied to any work of literature regardless of genre, it appears that fantasy is under represented. This is a disappointing reflection on the status of fantasy literature in middle school and high school English classrooms, especially when studying fantasy literature can enlighten readings of literature of all genres.

In order to uncover why fantasy literature is not utilized to its fullest extent in classrooms, one must first examine the general stigma against fantasy as an escapist genre. In her essay "Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons," renowned fantasy author Ursula K. Le Guin addresses some of the reasons why American adults are so hesitant to read and respect fantasy literature. She writes that in her search for *The Hobbit* at a local library, the librarian told Le Guin that the library keeps the book only in the adult collection since the library staff "do[es]n't feel that escapism is good for children" (39). This attitude is still pervasive today, as reflected in the literary works alluded to by the Common Core and the popularity of other genres in student study aids. Even outside of the classroom there is a disparaging tone against fantasy. O'Keefe, in her 2003 book about children's fantasy literature, writes, "Some nervous adults worry that fantasy books may be unhealthy: Does this reading encourage children to hide from reality? Does it make them less able to solve problems?" (O'Keefe 17). There is a fear that fantasy is so far removed from reality that its readers will be unable to face everyday life. Le Guin also argues that many Americans believe that fantasy lacks educational value and so they consider the genre "self-indulgence or escapism" (Why 40). The phrase "self-indulgence" is suggestive of laziness, irresponsibility, and vanity. A moral judgment is also being made. Fantasy literature is not only distanced from reality, but immoral. Pointing out that fantasy has very little to do with monetary manners Le Guin writes, "The kind of thing you learn from reading about the problems of a hobbit who is trying to drop a magic ring into an imaginary volcano has very little to do with your social status, or material success, or income" (43). However, Le Guin's phrase "the kind of thing you learn" (43) suggests that there is an educational value to fantasy literature, despite this stigma against a genre which is typically considered impractical.

In many ways this pervasive stigma against fantasy is flawed. Fantasy is inherently escapist in that it does not depict reality as readers understand it; however, this sort of escapism does not reduce the reflection of reality. Fantasy is rarely a venture into blithe utopias where characters face no problems. Instead, fantasy uses its ability to distort and alter reality to reflect the human condition and comment on it. A degree of distance is essential to convey different themes and insights about reality. This distance can also provide a measure of safety for the readers, without eliminating dangers for the characters. The very escapism that is often criticized can be helpful in a classroom setting. Fantasy is a safe environment for students to explore complex issues because fantasy takes place in a world very different from students' everyday lives (Cruz and Pollock 185). It may be easier for students to think about death when reading about an immortal family, as in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*, than to think about the passing of a loved one. Young adult author Shannon Hale, known for her *Books of Bayern* series and *The Princess Academy*, a Newberry Honor Book of 2006, captures the ability of works of fantasy to acknowledge hardship by quoting *Fairy Tales* published by Greenhaven Press, "Classic fairy tales do not deny the existence of heartache and sorrow, but they do deny universal defeat" (Hale, Mincemeat). Many fantasy novels, and some fairy tales, do not even give readers the gratification of a happy ending. Fantasy does not necessitate ignorance of hardship and struggles, but it does give readers a new understanding of such concepts.

Through its unique ability to circumvent reality, fantasy enables readers to examine their world in a different way and to understand essential truths of the human condition, often called literary themes in English classes. The imaginative capabilities of fantasy are often particularly suited to helping readers, especially young adults, understand the more abstract and complicated situations of life, such as love, coming-of-age, prejudice, sacrifice, knowledge, and death. Fantasy has the ability to transform metaphors and symbols into people, events, and places that actually exist within the realm of the novel. For instance, in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the Mirror of Erised, which the reader fond of letter puzzles will note is "desire" spelled backwards, possesses the magical property of showing those standing in front of it their deepest desires. Dumbledore warns Harry that others have willingly sat immobilized by the mirror or gone insane (Sorcerer's 213) and issues the caveat, "It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that" (214). Within the fantasy universe of Hogwarts, this symbol becomes a literal object of magic and enables readers to contemplate the danger of all consuming desire. This tangible danger clearly represents the perils of dreaming without action in a way that is easy to understand for readers of all ages. The Mirror of Erised is just one example of many in which fantasy offers new perspectives on the human condition. In this way, fantasy opens up possibilities so that "[r]eaders get perspective on their own worlds by exploring a strange fictional place" (O'Keefe 11-12). Understanding one's world through relating the fantastic to the everyday is anything but escapism. The concepts examined in fantasy are the same as those examined in other works of literature; fantasy only depicts these ideas on a larger, more dramatic scale.

Beyond being relatable to student readers, fantasy can also help its readers understand and relate to the experiences of others. Le Guin comments on the dual ability of fantasy to relate to readers and to relate readers to others, writing, "The use of imaginative fiction is to deepen your understanding of your world, and your fellow men, and your own feelings, and your destiny" (Why 43). A student who has never travelled far from home could still understand the trepidation of Bilbo Baggins in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Expanding one's world through reading fantasy can also be a positive and vital part of growing up. In relating to others and understanding unfamiliar experiences, readers become more thoughtful, compassionate people. They also prepare themselves for experiences they will have in the future. Patrick Ness' *A Monster Calls* is a novel accessible to readers who have experienced loss and their peers who have not yet encountered grief. As his mother undergoes treatment for cancer, Conor speaks with the yew tree that comes alive in the graveyard just beyond his house. Through the three stories that the tree, the eponymous "monster," tells, Conor comes to understand his world and his impending loss. In an article for the Daily Mail, Kate Wheeler, a consultant pediatric oncologist, discusses the positive effect this novel can have on doctors, patients, and their families, writing, "Since coming across this book I have recommended it to many patients and their families, health professionals and teachers, and, of course, my friends. Universally, they have been pleased to have read it, even if at times they have found the content upsetting" (Wheeler). The novel, which includes stunning illustrations, has also been repackaged with just the text to appeal to a larger adult audience (Wheeler). Such fantasy novels can thus be powerful tools in creating empathy and understanding. Many other works of fantasy literature have this same ability to create empathy in readers, while nurturing healthy emotional responses. Although not "real" in the sense that fantasy has actually occurred, fantasy does reflect very important, relatable, real-world situations, whether the reader herself has experienced these situations or whether fantasy enables the reader to more fully understand the experiences of others.

When combined with a classroom environment, using fantasy literature in the classroom can be a powerful and fruitful tool for teachers and students. Fantasy novels often take the form of a Bildungsroman, or coming-of-age story, and these novels are well-suited to classroom discussion. Students can easily relate to growing up, journeys to new places, and the desire to prove oneself. Thomas points out that "[t]he heroic cycles in fantasy are tailored to students" since heroes in fantasy literature are often orphans, eliminating the need for "inconvenient parental monitoring" (60). Middle school and high school students are often faced with newfound independence, just like the protagonists of many fantasy novels. The quests heroes in fantasy literature embark on also "reflect… the need of students to make an impact on their world," and the wise mentor figures who heroes in fantasy stories frequently encounter "reflect the desire of students for guidance" (Thomas 60). The struggles of protagonists of fantasy literature often reflect students' lives in a more urgent, dramatic manner. Whether these struggles are serious or trivial, students can often see themselves in parallel situations. Rowling describes Harry's final exams in very accessible terms, "Professor McGonagall watched them turn a mouse into a snuffbox—points were given for how pretty the snuffbox was, but taken away if it had whiskers. Snape made them all nervous, breathing down their necks while they tried to remember how to make a Forgetfulness potion" (Sorcerer's 262). This firm grounding in real situations is present in many other works of fantasy as well. The weightier struggles of characters in fantasy literature are no less relatable. In Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*, Ella, cursed with obedience, faces the difficult decision of selfishly accepting Prince Char's proposal to marry her or refusing him for the greater good. Ella fears that someone will discover her curse and force her to harm Char or the kingdom. Instead of acting as "a secret delivered to his enemies, a letter written in [her] own hand, a covert signal given by [her], poison in his glass, a dagger in his ribs, a fall from a parapet" (Levine 224), Ella claims that she never had feelings for Char and denies her own happiness. Although this is a conflict caused by a magical curse, many readers can relate to a struggle between selfish desires and the need to protect those they love. Even the enemies heroes encounter in fantasy literature can be quite relatable for students, as foes can “easily represents bullies, drugs, gangs, violence, abuse, prejudice, or any of the obstacles placed before our young, modern-day heroes” (Thomas 61). Students can easily connect with fantasy stories through relatable characters and universal conflicts.

Due to its relatable nature, a reader response approach to fantasy can be particularly helpful for classroom discussion. According to reader response theory, otherwise known as transactional theory, each individual reader interacts with a text in a different way and creates his own meaning from a work of literature (Smith). Louise Rosenblatt’s perspective of reader response theory takes into account the author, the text itself, and the reader, with particular emphasis on the role of the reader who “has hitherto been neglected” (Rosenblatt 5). Since fantasy is distanced from reality, this gives students an opportunity to respond to these novels with great freedom of interpretation. Citing Appleyard’s application of reader response theory, Smith notes that students may be asked “to provide an emotional or intellectual response to a reading” as the teacher links their responses (Smith). These emotional responses demonstrate that the reader is “actively involved in building up a poem [or another work of literature] for himself out of his responses to the text” using personal experience (Rosenblatt 10). The heightened reality and common use of metaphor in fantasy are apt to produce an emotional response in student readers as they actively draw on parallel personal experiences. A reader response question a teacher might pose to her class would include, “Can you relate to this novel?” or “Did you enjoy reading the novel?” Because reader response theory “focuses on how readers make knowledge or meaning by reading” a particular text (Smith), it gives students space to discuss whether they liked a particular novel, and then to explain why. Determining why an individual values a particular work of literature “can lead to self-understanding” (Rosenblatt 160), a particularly important endeavor in middle school and high school classrooms, where students are forming and further developing their own identities. Rosenblatt also comments on the power of an evolving reader response throughout an interaction with a text. Some works of literature create a “cumulative building-up of effect” (Rosenblatt 60-61), while others require “a revision of earlier understandings” to produce a dramatic effect (61). Since fantasy dramatizes everyday problems and triumphs through altering reality, student understandings and changes in perspective are likewise dramatic. Moreover, since a reader response approach represents the meeting of “[a] specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place” (Rosenblatt 14), using reader response theory in tandem with fantastic symbols, which can be interpreted in many different ways, allows for a great variety of classroom responses. Tapping into student responses and emotions to better understand a work of fantasy can be a key teaching tool.

Based upon the ever-increasing popularity of fantasy literature, it seems that many students have already recognized the connections between the dramatized conflicts and themes in fantasy and their own lives. The fourth edition of Ruth Lynn’s *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*, published in 1995, lists 4,800 books published in the United States, a 45 percent increase from the third edition, published in 1989 (O’Keefe 12). The *Harry Potter* series has been published in 69 languages, and the books have been sold more than any other series, with a staggering 400 million copies sold worldwide (Haak). In 2012, *The Hunger Games* sold 277 million copies and Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series sold 5.6 million copies (Roback). Just before the release of Peter Jackson’s movie adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* in 2001, Houghton Mifflin’s director of Tolkien projects announced that sales had tripled from 1999 to 2000 (Rosen 20). Because of their pop culture appeal, particularly the numerous movie adaptations of young adult fantasy series in recent years, even students who have not read fantasy books firsthand have some familiarity with these novels. The simple fact that students enjoy reading fantasy literature is an argument for its place in the classroom. While popularity cannot always determine merit, it is vital for teachers to have some knowledge of what their students are reading and to connect to their students' lives and interests.

A quick search on *Fanfiction.net* suggests that fantasy literature can lead to a passion for writing and creating, as well as reading. Of the top five book series fan fiction is based on, all five—*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Hunger Games*—are works of fantasy. Memes, Buzzfeed articles, the creation of *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* theme park at Universal Studios in Orlando Florida, and other fandom of *Harry Potter* serve as an additional testament not only to the popularity of the series, but as evidence that readers, particularly middle school and high school students, turn to the literature they read, particularly fantasy literature, as a way of understanding the world around them. Without prompting, these readers have responded to fantasy literature. Teachers can tap into students' experiences reading fantasy in order to help them understand other novels, regardless of genre. Harry and Voldemort serve as an exquisite example of character foils. Myriad allusions in the *Harry Potter* series and Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games* series can be used to illustrate how all authors carefully plot references to create greater significance. If students are already enjoying how these fantasy novels work, why not discuss them in class, and use passages from popular fantasy novels to analyze how other works of literature employ similar techniques? When the educational value of fantasy literature is combined with student interest, the positive ramifications for the classroom can be both advantageous and mind-opening.

One of the foremost educational reasons to utilize fantasy literature in the classroom is that fantasy can clearly illustrate literary concepts present in all genres of literature, such as etymology, allusions, symbolism, metaphor, setting, character foils, parallels, allegory, tropes, archetypes, conflict, and theme. *The Hunger Games* series and the *Harry Potter* series both utilize etymology extensively and place a heavy significance on names. Collins chooses thematic names throughout her dystopian *Hunger Games* series. The protagonist, Katniss, takes her name from a plant with edible roots, an essential form of sustenance (Hunger 52), while her younger sister, Primrose, has a more decorative name. Whereas Katniss recalls her father telling her, "As long as you can find yourself, you'll never starve" and utilizes her namesake to sustain her family (Hunger 52), in *The Hunger Games* Prim is depicted as a character who needs to be protected. As the series continues, however, Prim matures; "[t]ime and tragedy have forced her to grow too quickly…into a young woman who stitches bleeding wounds" (Mockingjay 33). A primrose, which is pretty and delicate, but can also survive the cold weather, is thus an appropriate name for this character. Although a primrose is less essential than edible katniss, through her name Prim stands for the importance of beauty and love in a harsh world. Collins' other names are similarly fitting: Effie Trinket possesses the shallowness her last name suggests; Peeta Mellark "the boy with the bread" (Hunger 297) is an apt name for a baker's son, especially as bread comes to symbolize life and nourishment in the series; Seneca Crane, Caesar Flickerman, Portia, and Cinna all hearken back to the Roman Empire and suggest the cruel pleasure of public spectacles of brutality which is so central to the series. These names also point to another concept fantasy literature is adept at implementing and explaining: allusions. Collins is very aware of the mythological references she makes. For instance, the name of the totalitarian state in *The Hunger Games* series, Panem, is an allusion to the Latin phrase "*Panem* *et Circenses*," or "Bread and Circuses" (Mockingjay 223). Katniss learns that Panem's strategy of preventing insurrection mirrors that of ancient Rome; "in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power" (223). Readers can see that the dystopian Panem is modeled after ancient Rome. Excess characterizes the Capitol of Panem and gladiatorial spectacle creates the entertainment in the Hunger Games. Collins also draws from Greek mythology. In *Mockingjay*, brothers Castor and Pollux film for District 13, the head of the rebellion against the government of Panem. As Katniss infiltrates the Capitol with them, readers are informed of Castor's death by his absence rather than a violent scene; Katniss thinks, "Pollux, Gale, Cressida, Peeta, and me. We're all that's left" (313). In Greek mythology, Castor and Pollux are also inseparable brothers (Hamilton 42). When Castor is killed, leaving Pollux "inconsolable," Pollux prays to die also, but Zeus takes pity on him and allows both brothers to live and divide their time between the underworld and heaven (43). This connection to brotherly love and loss through naming intensifies the connection between Castor and Pollux in *Mockingjay*. Discussing these connections with students would serve not only to make them more aware of the impact of these allusions on *The Hunger Games* series itself, but would also make students more attuned to allusions in other works of literature, even beyond the classroom.

Like Collins, Rowling employs names throughout the *Harry Potter* series that are evocative because of their allusions. Some names are straightforward, such as Sirius Black, Harry's godfather who can transform into a black dog and is named after Sirius the dog star, and Sibyll Trelawney, the divination teacher named after ancient prophetesses. Other names, like Castor and Pollux in Collins' *Mockingjay*, take on greater significance as the series progresses and require a more in-depth analysis. For instance, Voldemort's mother, Merope, has a name with mythological significance. Through flashbacks in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, readers learn that Merope came from the Gaunts, an old, noble all-wizard family, or "pure-bloods" as they refer to themselves, but fell in love with a "Muggle" or non-magical human, Tom Riddle. When she married him, she severed all connection with her abusive family. This is a clear parallel to the mythological Merope, a woman transformed into a star who, ashamed of falling in love with a mortal, became the faintest in her group of stars, the Pleiades ("Pleiades"). In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Merope's father disparages her for having feelings for "a filthy, dirt-veined Muggle," calling her a "filthy little blood traitor!" (Half-Blood 210). Rowling uses deliberate diction to strengthen this allusion; when her father mocks her, Merope "st[ands] quite still, her back against the wall between the filthy window and the stove, as though she wishe[s] for nothing more than to sink into the stone and vanish" (206). Her position in the corner of the Gaunt's hovel and her dress which is "the exact color of the dirty stone wall behind her" (204-5) are also suggestive of a fading, unnoticed presence. Again, until readers reach the end of Merope's story in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, they cannot fully understand the meaning of her name, although a reader familiar with the allusion might predict some of her circumstances. Rowling also uses allusions beyond her character names to foreshadow future events, as when Harry encounters a centaur in the forest who enigmatically tells him, "Mars is bright tonight" (Sorcerer's 253). Since Mars is the Roman god of war, this anticipates the impending struggle between Harry and Voldemort, and the war within the wizarding world which develops over the course of the series.

The careful selection of names is not limited to fantasy literature; for instance, William Golding chooses character names for their etymology in *Lord of the Flies*, but fantasy literature can help illustrate authors' use of etymology in a clear, understandable manner. Several classroom lessons could be created using Collins' and Rowling's names as a basis for understanding the importance of etymology and allusion. Students could be asked to independently research the meanings of character names in *The Hunger Games* or *Harry Potter* and then to explain why these name choices are important to the novel as a whole. A mini-lesson could also be designed in which students and their teacher work together as a class to understand the significance of a name or an etymological allusion. Remus Lupin, Harry's Defense Against The Dark Arts teacher in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, has a name that is compelling to analyze. His first name comes from the legendary founder of Rome, who, along with his brother Romulus, was raised by wolves (Stentiford). In the *Harry Potter* series, Remus Lupin is revealed to be a werewolf, as suggested by the legendary Remus' childhood and his last name, which is one letter away from "lupine" or wolf-like. Readers could use etymology to predict Lupin's secret long before Hermione "realize[s] that [he is] always ill at the full moon" and that his worst fear is the full moon (Prisoner 346). Also, the Remus of legend was later murdered by a jealous Romulus (Stentiford). Rowling then also uses Remus Lupin's name to foreshadow his death in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Like his counterpart in the founding myth of Rome, Remus Lupin's death has a sacrificial note, and the battle of Hogwarts signifies the reestablishment of a just government in the wizarding universe similar to the creation of Rome in myth. Classes could read a version or summary of this myth and discuss how this informs Rowling's choice of names.

Fantasy abounds with allusions and connections to myth which can help connect content to students' multiple literacies. The Daedalus and Icarus myth, which features prominently in James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is one such example. The English Language Arts Common Core State Standards even mention this subject matter in CCSS.ELA-

Literacy.RL.9-10.7, "Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic media, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and Breughel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*)" (Common Core State Standards Initiative 38). A student who has an interest in art may find a lesson which uses allusion to connect art and literature memorable. Students who learn best through visual methods can also find such lessons enlightening. Teaching with multiple literacies and connecting students to diverse works of literature, including fantasy, through allusion appeals to many different students with various interests. Fantasy therefore has the potential to aid in the process of decoding allusions across literary genres and multiple media.

One of the most powerful ways to use fantasy in the classroom can be to address metaphor and symbolism. Metaphor and symbolism can be used to discuss difficult and abstract concepts and to reflect life and everyday situations. In turn, fantasy can be particularly helpful in illustrating how metaphor and symbolism function in literature because examples are numerous, clear, and often insightful. In C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis symbolizes temptation, addiction, and vice through Turkish Delight. The evil White Witch first gains Edmund Pevensie's trust by feeding him Turkish Delight, which is enchanted so "that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves" (Lewis 126). On the surface, readers can sense that Edmund's alliance with the White Witch and his choice to believe her over the word of his own sister Lucy are perilous mistakes. Lewis' narrator reminds readers that they should feel unsettled by Edmund's decision, as when he writes, "[W]hen [Edmund] heard that the lady he had made friends with was a dangerous witch he felt even more uncomfortable. But he still wanted to taste that Turkish Delight again more than he wanted anything else" (128). Even without an explanation of the symbolism, readers therefore distrust the White Witch and question Edmund's judgment and selfish desires. Cruz and Pollock suggest that ideas expressed metaphorically in fantasy can create classroom analysis that "cross[es] the boundaries of reading ability" (185). Some students will only manifest this discomfort, but others may grasp the symbolism behind Edmund's temptation. As the novel progresses, Lewis' symbolism intensifies. When Edmund fails to bring his siblings to the White Witch, she forces him to follow her. At first Edmund only thinks about his addiction and hunger, begging, "Please, your Majesty, could I have some Turkish Delight?" (Lewis 161). A slave to his desires and unfulfilled temptation, Edmund only thinks of himself, although the White Witch issues a command to her underling to "kill whatever you find" (162). Lewis' somewhat sarcastic language reflects Edmund's self-absorbed nature; readers are told that "[t]his was a terrible journey for Edmund, who had no coat…. And oh, how miserable he was! It didn't look now as if the Witch intended to make him a King… How Edmund hoped she was going to say something about breakfast!" (162). Although Edmund soon undergoes a change of character, at his worst moments he is only focused on satisfying himself, and he is left alone and empty. While the Turkish Delight is a fairly straightforward symbol for sin and temptation, the consequences of Edmund's transgression are more complex and spur further analysis and discussion. Through analyzing symbols such as this, simple concepts which lead to greater discovery and have larger ramifications on the novel as a whole, students can fully explore how well-developed symbols work, not just in fantasy, but in all literature.

Sometimes metaphor in fantasy is so subtly executed that a magical description appears very real. In Shannon Hale's *The Goose Girl*, a retelling of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale of the same name, certain characters have magical abilities of communication. The protagonist, princess Ani, can communicate with certain animals, and she later learns to communicate with the wind. Her foil, the duplicitous lady-in-waiting Selia, has the "gift of people-speaking," a magical ability of persuasion that can make "people listen to [those who possess it], and believe them, and love them" (Goose 5). Painfully shy Ani is self-conscious about her language use, telling her father, "I'm so worried that I will say all the wrong things and that they think I'm a dim, sickly, bird-speaking girl that I actually shake, and my mind goes blank, and I just want to run away" (26). Selia, on the other hand, skillfully uses language to convince the men escorting Ani to her arranged marriage that she should take Ani's place as princess. During Selia's eloquent speech flaunting her own merits, "[e]ven Ani…had to stop herself from nodding" and she begins to believe in the power of Selia's language (79). Although explained with a magical origin, this gift of people-speaking is not far removed from reality. Many individuals possess the ability to make others believe their rhetoric although they have wicked purposes. Hale represents this truth compellingly in her novel, and uses this as a springboard to examine leadership and courage. Ani's outward struggle against Selia's power of persuasion is mirrored by her coming-of-age and her internal struggle to overcome her shyness and gain self-confidence. Just as Lewis uses symbolism of Turkish Delight to concretely explain the abstract concept of temptation, Hale uses this metaphor of "people-speech" to dramatically convey an external conflict between truth and deceit and Ani's internal struggle with her own confidence. A classroom examination of such fantastical uses of metaphor is worthwhile because it illustrates how metaphor can capture and intensify real life conflicts and externally illustrate inner conflict.

Fantasy is also well suited to help students gain an understanding of allegory. A very early example of an allegorical tale of fantasy is the story of Cupid and Psyche presented in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. Psyche, the Greek word for "soul," (Hamilton 134) undergoes a series of trials in order to be united with Cupid, the god of Love. Following the advice of an oracle, Psyche unknowingly marries the god Cupid and lives without seeing him. Driven by the advice of her jealous sisters and her curiosity, Psyche betrays her mysterious husband and lights a lamp while he is sleeping, thus fulfilling her desire to "know [his] face" and fully understand her husband (Apuleius 83). At this moment, she "f[alls] in love with Love" (88). Burnt by the lamp, Cupid flees, and Psyche devotedly undertakes Venus' challenging tasks to regain her husband. In this allegory, Psyche, the soul, completes these feats with supernatural aid—for instance, an ant helps her sort hundreds of miniscule seeds. Cupid himself also forgives her and comes to her aid. A wrathful and vain Venus disparagingly comments that Psyche has not completed these tasks alone, but with the help of "[him] whose fancy you have taken" (99), illustrating that within this allegory love itself enables impossible achievements. After this series of tasks is completed, Cupid and Psyche are married by the gods, legitimizing their union. Moreover, Psyche drinks ambrosia and becomes immortal, making their "marriage…perpetual" (105). In this allegorical tale the soul and physical love are united permanently. In her brief introduction to the tale, Hamilton writes, "The writer is entertained by what he writes; he believes none of it" (121). Although Apuleius does not believe that these events actually transpired and although he does not believe that the tale is a religious truth, without this mythological and allegorical dimension, the union of love and the soul could not be made concrete. In Apuleius' tale, these abstract ideas, love and the soul, become characters. This provides a tangible representation of a healthy relationship and enables various events in the story to take on larger symbolic significance. The tasks Psyche completes, including a journey into the underworld, could represent any type of obstacle in love. Without fantasy, this allegory could not exist.

A more modern example of allegory in fantasy is C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Each book uses allegory to depict Christianity. The clearest allegory in the series occurs in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in which Lewis retells the Christian idea of the crucifixion. When the White Witch, allegorically representing Satan, claims that since "every traitor belongs to [her] as [her] lawful prey" (Lewis 175), she has a right to kill Edmund who betrayed his siblings, the noble lion Aslan, the allegorical Christ figure, sacrifices himself to save Edmund. Aslan explains to Lucy and Susan that "when a willing victim who ha[s] committed no treachery [i]s killed in a traitor's stead, the Table [with the magical laws of Narnia inscribed on it] w[ill] crack and Death itself w[ill] start working backwards" (185). Because of Lewis' clarity and straightforward style, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* would be a good example to illustrate the concept of allegory for students. Lewis also successfully uses quintessential features of allegory to succinctly represent events, people, and ideas. Animals, like Aslan the lion, are often used in allegory to represent particular values in a person. As a lion, Aslan is instantly characterized as a powerful and noble being; he is also "the King of Beasts," representing his role as a spiritual ruler (146). Objects, like the Stone Table, are also often used as symbols in allegory because a number of qualities can be expressed with an economy of words. Lewis plainly describes the Stone Table, on which Aslan is sacrificed to the White Witch, as "a great grim slab of grey stone supported on four upright stones. It looked very old; and it was cut all over with strange lines and figures…" (168). The Stone Table is thus quickly described as an ancient, crude, and somewhat harsh object with laws that seem rigid. The allegorical connotations for the moment when it breaks are similarly powerful without lengthy description. Lewis only writes, "The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end" (184). Although this language is sparse, in the allegory, this leads to a reversal of the natural laws and creates a miracle. A brief discussion of allegorical themes like sacrifice could help point out similar thematic uses in other works, for instance parallels to the crucifixion in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* would be a quick read for high school students, but it would also be easy to take excerpts from a few key chapters and analyze the moments that have particular allegorical significance in a middle school classroom. Likewise, the tale of Cupid and Psyche could be particularly valuable because it has been retold in a number of formats, and with its relatively short length, it could be analyzed in depth without expending a great deal of class time on reading the tale itself.

Fantasy also makes character foils and parallels concrete through the use of magical descriptions. For instance, Harry Potter and his enemy Tom Riddle, who becomes Voldemort, grow up in remarkably similar circumstances: both are orphaned in their infancy and are left in the care of cruel guardians. Like Harry, Tom Riddle must leave the welcoming environment of Hogwarts and return to the Muggle world, in particular his grim orphanage, "at the very least, every summer" (Half-Blood 268). The parallel between these characters continues beyond these circumstances and extends into Harry and Voldemort's personalities. Every Hogwarts student is sorted into a house based on his personality. The magical Sorting Hat almost places Harry in the same house that Tom Riddle belongs to, Slytherin. The Sorting Hat tells Harry, "You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that" (Sorcerer's 121). However, Harry has heard that many evil wizards, including Voldemort, are part of Slytherin, and when he begs, "*Not Slytherin, not Slytherin*," the Sorting Hat places him in Gryffindor (121). Like Voldemort, Harry can also speak Parselmouth, the language of snakes. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry is unsettled by these similarities. Voldemort, in the appearance of a memory of his sixteen-year-old self, even comments, “There are strange likenesses between us…. Both half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even *look* something alike…” (Chamber 317). The circumstantial parallels could be present in any work of literature, but through fantasy, Rowling uses magical means to stress the connection between Harry and his nemesis. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, Harry’s lightning bolt scar burns when Voldemort is nearby. In *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*, Harry has visions of Voldemort’s thoughts. Dumbledore tells him, “[T]his ability of yours—to detect Voldemort’s presence, even when he is disguised, and to know what he is feeling when his emotions are roused—has become more and more pronounced since Voldemort returned to his own body and his full powers” (Order 827). Dumbledore also reveals that when Voldemort tried to kill him as a baby, he was trying to prevent a prophecy, but in doing so he “mark[ed Harry] as his equal” (842). Instead of choosing another wizard who fit the description of the prophecy, Voldemort chooses Harry because he recognizes similarities between them, namely that Harry is a “half-blood, like himself,” the child of a “pureblood” father and a mother whose parents are Muggles, or nonmagical people (842). Each of these magical connections establishes the similarities between Harry and Voldemort. Moreover, the fantastical connections serve to highlight the very human qualities that Harry and Voldemort share, including a sense of loss, feelings of abandonment and alienation, a desire for revenge, and a thirst to prove themselves.

Despite these apparent parallels, Harry and Voldemort are truly foils. Although both characters are orphans and experience neglect under the care of their Muggle guardians, Harry remains kind and compassionate, while young Tom Riddle lashes out against his peers. When

Dumbledore fetches Tom from his orphanage to introduce him to the magical world of Hogwarts, he discovers that Tom has killed another boy's rabbit (Half-Blood 267). Tom himself tells Dumbledore, "I can make bad things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to" (271). On the other hand, although Harry sleeps in a cupboard under the stairs and is treated as a servant for his aunt, uncle, and cousin, Harry never retaliates. His bouts of magic are all accidental and harmless. Also, whereas Harry humbly argues that there "must have [been] a mistake" because he doesn't "think [he] can be a wizard" (Sorcerer's 58), Tom Riddle is quick, and proud, to admit that he is "different" and "special" (Half-Blood 271). Character foils in various genres work in the same fashion: characters bear certain similarities in order to emphasize key differences. Through fantasy, Rowling highlights how drastically different these characters are despite their superficial similarities. Voldemort is obsessed with immortality and uses magic to kill others and create horcruxes, magical objects which contain a part of one's soul, while Harry sacrifices himself to prevent the deaths of his friends. Harry can "see into [Voldemort's] thoughts, his ambitions, …understand the snakelike language in which he gives his orders, and yet…despite [Harry's] privileged insight into Voldemort's world…[he has] never been seduced by the Dark Arts, never, even for a second, shown the slightest desire to become one of Voldemort's followers" (511). These differences in magic between Harry and Voldemort reflect their differences of personality. Voldemort only values power and immortality, while Harry understands the importance of sacrifice and love. Moreover, the close connection and key differences established through magic, and Rowling's use of fantasy, illustrate the importance of choice. Dumbledore astutely points out that although Harry and Voldemort share many qualities, "[i]t is [their] choices…that show what [they] truly are, far more than [their] abilities" (Chamber 333). While Voldemort chooses Dark Magic and murder in a quest for immortality and power, Harry chooses to protect those he loves and sacrifice himself for the greater good. Rowling's use of foils through magic thus illustrates choice, a key theme throughout the entire series. Because of such tangible differences through magic, and because these differences reflect an essential foil between the souls and personalities of these characters, such fantastical uses of foil would be helpful in studying and understanding the concept of foils in the classroom. This type of analysis could be applied to characters such as the passionate Mr. Rochester and the restrained severely moralistic St. John in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the idealist Romeo and his realist friend Mercutio in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, or respectable Dr. Jekyll's sinister alter ego Mr. Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Fantasy also contains tropes that occur across different media and genres. One example that springs to mind is the idea of a "moral compass," or an innate sense of right and wrong. Fantasy frequently makes this idea literal, as in Phillip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*. The protagonist, Lyra, is given the alethiometer, a "truth measure" (Pullman 111). This magical compass guides her on her journey and reveals whom she can trust. Lyra's conversations with the alethiometer represent the difficult and highly individual nature of truth. The Master of Jordan College tells Lyra what the alethiometer is but he also says, "As for how to read it, you'll have to learn by yourself" (65). Since the alethiometer is so difficult to read, even very wise characters refer to it as "incomprehensible" (153); this device challenges Lyra to determine the truth for herself. No one else can simply tell Lyra what the truth is; instead, she must rely on her own judgment to determine right and wrong for herself. Symbolically, this signifies that one's morals are highly individual and cannot be prescribed by an external source. One must determine right and wrong for oneself. A slightly more modern example of this trope is Captain Jack Sparrow's seemingly broken compass in *The Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the*

Black Pearl. This magical compass points to whatever the wielder most desires instead of pointing North, the symbolic representation of society's rules. As Mr. Gibbs tells a skeptical Will Turner, "Aye, the compass doesn't point North. But we're not trying to find North, are we?" (Verbinski). While the stringent, orderly Commodore Norrington considers this compass broken, other characters recognize the value of a compass that does not point north. In its fantastical capacity, the compass proves far more useful than a guide or a map. In the same way, the characters in *The Pirates of the Caribbean* learn that they must do what they feel is right, even if it contradicts the law or if it does not lead to a predetermined North. Notably, these two examples of a moral compass as a literal symbol occur in different media. Moreover, both *The Golden Compass* and *The Pirates of The Caribbean* use this trope to advance similar themes: truth and morals are dependent on each individual's values and judgment. Such examples show students that tropes, and connotations and meanings related to such tropes, appear in diverse forms of expression.

Additionally, setting often plays a heightened role in fantasy literature. O'Keefe notes that fantasy often features "special harmonious place[s]," in which characters resolve conflicts and move "away from habit and system, outward to freedom and insight" (76). Rivendell and Lorien in *The Lord of the Rings* are such serene safe havens (76). These safe environments are often juxtaposed with danger and evil lurking beyond their bounds. For instance, the first six books in the *Harry Potter* series primarily take place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, but the seventh novel departs from this formula as Harry, Ron, and Hermione traverse the world looking to defeat Voldemort by destroying his remaining horcruxes. In the first six novels, Hogwarts is a relatively safe environment, secluded from the outside world by magical protections. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, however, the order of Hogwarts classes is obliterated and any guise of safety is removed as Harry rushes from one adventure to the next, often sleeping in the wilderness. This pattern represents the real-world experience of all students graduating from the known environment of their schools and homes to enter into new responsibilities. Harry has now become part of the larger world. When Harry does finally return to Hogwarts at the end of the novel, the school itself is in disarray as students desperately try to defend it from Voldemort and his underlings. In Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, and throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, the Shire takes on a significance similar to Hogwarts; it is a place of home and safety. Although Bilbo's house is described as "a hole in the ground" Tolkien tells readers that "it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort" (Hobbit 29). The walls are paneled, the floors have tile and carpet, and there is plenty of room for the coats and hats of visitors (29). Tolkien's descriptions of this inviting home stress convenience and even suggest excess: "No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage" (29). As the hobbits and their companions travel outside of this relatively insulated environment, the danger grows. Bilbo, Gandalf, and the dwarves they travel with encounter trolls, "a small slimy creature….as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face" called Gollum (118-119), giant spiders, Wargs or clever demonic wolves, goblins or orcs, and even a dragon. The vast difference between the inviting, comfortable hobbit-hole and the larger, perilous world of Middle-Earth, filled with magical beasts and dangers dramatically depicts the difference between remaining safely at home and travelling into the larger world. These fantastical variations in setting thus stress the importance of setting itself, and illustrate how setting can contribute to themes, such as coming-of-age.

Other changes of setting can occur to a place itself. Such changes are often noticeably symbolic in fantasy. For instance, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the land of Narnia is trapped in an eternal winter until Aslan reappears, recognizing how a spiritual renewal can bring new life and vitality to one's surroundings. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo decorates his hobbit-hole with the trappings of his fantastical adventure; "[h]is sword he hung over the mantelpiece. His coat of mail was arranged on a stand in the hall…. His magic ring he kept a great secret, for he chiefly used it when unpleasant callers came" (Hobbit 316). These magical additions illustrate that Bilbo has grown. His seamless incorporation of these items into his home shows that he appreciates his comfortable world while still enjoying the memories of his past adventures. When Harry returns to Hogwarts to battle Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the school is a magical battlefield in chaos. Rowling writes, "The flagstones of the deserted entrance hall were stained with blood. Emeralds were still scattered all over the floor, along with pieces of marble and splintered wood. Part of the banisters [were] blown away….The dead lay in a row in the middle of the Hall" (Deathly 661). This violent alteration caused by the devastating effects of a magical war signals to readers that no place is safe. Every part of Harry's world is now in peril. In turn, the safety of Hogwarts guarantees the safety of the world and one's home. Whether a setting is altered through magical means, whether magical objects are brought into a safe environment, or whether a setting remains a static symbol, fantasy has the unique ability to enhance significance through setting. In this way, setting can have an even larger impact on fantasy literature than on realistic fiction.

Setting is also often carefully plotted in works of fantasy. Through world-building, or the ways in which an author creates a fantastic setting that is believable to readers, authors carefully establish the rules and values of their fantasy worlds. Laurie Cubbison, writing for the

Conference on College Composition and Communication, defines world-building as “the construction of a setting with its own history, geography, literature, and sciences” (Cubbison). Such a setting requires careful development, but many works of fantasy incorporate these details without slowing down the action of the narrative. For instance, in *The Hunger Games* series, readers learn the essential rules of the Hunger Games without a lengthy description of the intricacies of Capitol politics. Readers are only told that “[i]n punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins” (Hunger 18). In the sequel, readers learn that some citizens of Panem viewed Katniss’ threat to eat poisonous berries rather than kill her fellow tribute, Peeta, as an act of rebellion against the totalitarian state (Catching 21). President Snow passes on this information with a threat of his own, telling Katniss, “This, of course, you don’t know. You have no access to information about the mood in other districts” (21). Since Katniss is the first-person narrator of the series, readers share only her knowledge; this relay of information represents the first time readers’ knowledge of the fantasy world of Panem is widened to include ideas of dissent among the subservient districts. This information appears when it is necessary to develop the plot of the series, maintaining the fast pace. World-building also entails that readers understand how each fantasy world operates. O’Keefe notes that “[r]eading these books, we are freed from normal confining rules and can gradually figure out new rules that apply in these fantasy circumstances—all of which hints that our firmly held assumptions about the world may be too rigid” (83). World-building thus encourages introspection on the limits of our own world and societal rules. Through world-building, students and teachers can also explore the concept of willing suspension of disbelief, or what a reader accepts as true within the limits of a particular work, by testing the limits of what readers find plausible. If the rules of a magical place, item, or group of people do not make sense, readers will doubt the plausibility of a magical story. The best works of fantasy make the impossible plausible through skilled world-building. In an interview included in the back of *The Goose Girl*, Shannon Hale explains her logic in creating the magic system in the world of Bayern: "As a reader, I've never been very interested in the kind of magic where someone waves a wand, leaving me ignorant of why it works or how it's done. As a writer, it was important to me to create a magic system that I believed might be possible and that I could get inside of and understand" (Conversation 388). This careful construction of setting and believability is unnecessary in realistic fiction, but essential for a well-written work of fantasy. Because of this heavy stress on setting in fantasy, examining world-building in a class can be useful to enlighten student thinking about carefully described setting in any work.

Of course, some fantasy authors more skillfully create believable worlds than others. Tolkien believes that the most successful world-building occurs when "the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'" and "makes a Secondary World which [a reader's] mind can enter" (Fairy 36). When a "moment of disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed," and the reader is reminded of her own world and the author's effort to create a secondary world (36-37). Tolkien recognizes the great skill authors must employ to make world-building seem effortless and to create the most enjoyable reading experience for readers. In an almost parenthetical thought to her analysis and review of children's fantasy, O'Keefe notes, "It would be interesting to compare specific passages—battles with supernatural creatures, for instance—in various fantasy writers to see why some seem artificial and others compel belief" (190-191);

however, this would be a fascinating study for middle and high school classrooms. In completing such an assignment, students, much like Tolkien, would have to explain how they determine literary merit and what aids or hinders world-building. The critical thinking entailed in such a task, as well as the unique opportunity for students to voice their own opinions and formulate their own beliefs about literature would be incredibly valuable as students develop their own critical voices and select the books that they might enjoy as lifelong readers. The exploration of these ideas could also lead students to become lifelong writers. In an English elective course called "Swords & Spaceships," students participated in a writing project called "Building Worlds" in which the students collaborated to create their own fantasy world, complete with maps and drawings, historical accounts, characters, creatures, deities, and a system of magic, as a class (Rish and Caton 21). The creation of maps and a well-developed setting accesses students' multiple literacies. Before they imagined their own creations, students first read excerpts from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* and Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* and the foreword to *Tales from Earthsea* as mentor-texts to study how authors successfully implement world-building in their own work (21). Throughout the "Building Worlds" project, "students authored individual works coordinated with the work of others, read and commented on each other's work, and coauthored shared works with fellow students" (21). This collaborative nature of a shared world which must possess continuity introduces students to peer feedback and editing for a common goal (21). An environment of collaboration encourages student aid, which can help students to develop beyond their Zone of Proximal Development, or "a bridge between the skills a learner has at the moment and the skills he or she will need" (Flair). Through projects such as "Building Worlds" students can receive advice and feedback from others, expanding beyond their Zone of Proximal Development.

Students who are more skilled and give advice to others must also analyze the particular features of their writing that are effective and which strategies they find most helpful. Using fantasy as a vehicle for such collaboration can thus engage students of various skill levels. Although Rish acknowledges that his students had some conflicts when sharing ideas (Rish and Caton 25-26), resolving these conflicts through compromise is relevant to skills students will need in many careers. Rish, teaching the elective class, also used Wikispaces to foster collaboration with ease (21). This use of technology facilitates student learning and is a worthwhile goal on its own. The English Language Arts Common Core State Standards "College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing" advocate such use of technology in the sixth standard, "Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others" (Common Core State Standards Initiative 41). When technology and collaboration meet through the study and creation of fantasy, students can become engaged with the material and understand how setting functions in various works of literature and across literary genres.

Beyond allusions, allegory, metaphor, symbolism, character foils, tropes, and setting, fantasy also contains a common structure. Thomas observes that fantasy "is a metaphor for the human condition— ripe with mythic structures, heroic cycles, and social and religious commentary" (60). Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* details commonalities among myths from various cultures, including the concept of the hero's journey. Campbell identifies "[t]he standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero" as a cycle of separation, initiation, and return (Campbell 23). Within each of these three stages, Campbell then identifies steps heroes complete; during separation or departure, the hero undergoes "the call to adventure," "refusal of the call," "supernatural aid," "the crossing of the first threshold," and "the belly of the whale;" during "the trials and victories of initiation" the hero completes "the road of trials," "the meeting with the goddess," "woman as temptress," "atonement with the father," "apotheosis," and "the ultimate boon;" lastly during the return stage the hero experiences "refusal of the return," "magic flight," "rescue from without," "the crossing of the return threshold," "master of two worlds," and "freedom to live" (28-29). These structures are common to world myths of diverse cultures and to literature in various genres, time periods, and cultures. For instance the call to adventure, "or the signs of the vocation of the hero" (28), occurs in the western fairy tale of the Frog Prince, when a talking frog appears and "reveals an unsuspected world" to a princess (42), as well as in a Native American myth from the Arapaho tribe when a girl follows a porcupine up a tree to the sky (45). Each step in this universal journey can also be found in modern literature and diverse media. A straightforward call to adventure is Effie Trinket announcing the name of Katniss' sister in *The Hunger Games* (Hunger 20). The refusal of the call to adventure can either end a tale, as in the case of Daphne chased by Apollo (Campbell 51-52), or can lead to a development which makes the hero change her mind, "a providential revelation of some unsuspected principle of release" (53). In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins' refusal of the call is blunt and readily apparent. When Gandalf invites him on an adventure, Bilbo responds, "Sorry! I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today. Good morning! But please come to tea…" (Hobbit 36). This invitation to tea creates the next development, which in fact propels Bilbo on his own hero's journey. Gandalf takes the opportunity to mark Bilbo's door, and the party of dwarves seeking to reclaim their ancestral homeland then appears. When the dwarves question Bilbo's bravery, he decides to join their adventure, telling them, "Tell me what you want done, and I will try it, if I have to walk from here to the East of East and fight the wild Were-worms in the Last Desert" (49). Fantasy exhibits the steps and stages in the hero's journey in a clear manner because these steps can be portrayed literally, although each step may have larger significance. For instance, while supernatural aid in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* may take the form of vast fortune, in a work of fantasy, supernatural aid can be a fairy godmother, a helpful wizard, a benevolent genie, or any other magical being. The only requirement is that the figure "represents…the benign, protecting power of destiny" (Campbell 59). Crossing the first threshold, the moment when the hero enters "a new zone of experience" (67) or "the zone of magnified power," a strange, magical, and dangerous place (64), appears not only in myth but frequently in literature. In fantasy, this moment, like supernatural aid, is easily identifiable because of its literal representation. Harry Potter begins his journey to Hogwarts by crossing through platform nine and three-quarters, Lucy brushes past coats in the wardrobe in the spare room to gain entrance to Narnia, Bilbo and Frodo leave behind the safety of the Shire, and Alice falls down the rabbit hole. When the hero is in the belly of the whale, he "is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died" (74). A literal example is Jonah, swallowed by a whale. But this metaphorical moment signifies the hero's journey inward and a rebirth (77). When the hero is completely immersed in his strange new world, he can change inwardly. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo finds himself in the belly of the whale when he is deep inside the goblin mountain. The sense of the unknown is communicated by the darkness surrounding Bilbo; "When Bilbo open[s] his eyes, he wonder[s] if he had; for it [i]s just as dark as with them shut….He c[an] hear nothing, see nothing, and he c[an] feel nothing except the stone of the floor" (Hobbit 115). This act of being subsumed by the unknown then leads to "a turning point in [Bilbo's] career" (115), as Bilbo defeats Gollum in a series of riddles. Fantasy thus makes the separation stage of the hero's journey tangible and accessible.

Fantasy is also uniquely suited to representing the road of trials, or the "miraculous tests and ordeals" which occur during the hero's initiation (Campbell 81). In fantasy, these tests can be literal events with symbolic ramifications. The hero may have to complete a series of difficult tasks, obtaining items from the underworld, like Psyche (81), answer riddles, like Bilbo, or fight through a brutal system, like Katniss. During a meeting with a goddess, the hero encounters a goddess, princess (91), or motherly figure (94) who functions as a "controlled pedagogical utilization of this archetypal image for the purpose of the purging, balancing, and initiation of the mind into the nature of the visible world" (94). Clearly, the fairy godmother in *Cinderella* serves this function, as does Glinda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. While Campbell identifies woman as the temptress, writing, "No longer can the hero rest in innocence with the goddess of the flesh; for she is become the queen of sin" (102), the temptation he describes a hero battling is far more universal than a sensual attraction. Campbell's idea that "the world, the body, and woman…become the symbols no longer of victory but of defeat" (102) can apply to any sort of temptation. Voldemort tempts Harry to give him the sorcerer's stone, telling him, "Better save your own life and join me" (Sorcerer's 294) and the White Witch tempts Edmund Pevensie with power and Turkish Delight. Through atonement with the father, or a fatherly deity, the hero "turns to face the world of specialized adult action" and "passes, spiritually, into the sphere of the father" (Campbell 115). The hero also "beholds the face of the father" and "understands" (125). Again, in fantasy, this is frequently a literal event. In *The Golden Compass*, Lyra learns that her father wants to "find the source of Dust [or original sin] and destroy it" (Pullman 349). Realizing that the sinister Oblation Board also seeks to destroy the effects of Dust by violently separating children from their dæmons, a physical manifestation of their souls, Lyra and her dæmon, Pantalaimon, come to the conclusion that "if *they* all think Dust is bad, it must be good"

(349). Seeing her father's true intentions, she literally follows in his path, but instead of accomplishing his destructive mission, Lyra seeks to find the source of Dust before he does, knowing that Dust could be "welcomed and cherished" instead of annihilated (350). Although Lyra is not reconciled to her father's actions or views, she follows his independent search, reaching her own atonement with her father. Apotheosis, "the divine state to which the human hero attains" and "the release potential within us all, and which anyone can attain—through herohood" (Campbell 127), is likewise tangible in fantasy. In the Brother's Grimm version of "Cinderella," apotheosis is realized when Cinderella changes from her rags into "a dress, the like of which had never been seen for splendor and brilliancy, and slippers that were of gold" (Grimm 84). In Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," this occurs when the little mermaid chooses death for herself instead of killing the prince. She "hurl[s] herself over the bulwarks into the sea, and fe[els] her body dissolve in foam," but she realizes that her act of sacrifice enables her to become one of "the daughters of the air," floating, "fair ethereal beings" with voices that are "sheer music, but so spirit-like that no human ear could detect the sound, just as no eye on earth could see their forms" (Andersen 65). In this way, the little mermaid's "suffering and…loyalty…raise… [her] up into the realm of airy spirits" where she can "earn by [her] good deeds a soul that will never die" (65). The ultimate boon that a hero seeks can be an actual treasure in fantasy, but such a reward also has a symbolic dimension. In Levine's *Ella Enchanted*, Ella breaks her curse and marries Prince Char, but in doing so she also gains freedom. Ella "feel[s] different: larger, fuller more complete, no longer divided against [her]self" (Levine 228). These are spiritual rewards to the breaking of a curse and attainment of a happy ending; the heroine is "made anew" and is certain that she is "[her]self unto [her]self" (228). Likewise, Bilbo returns from his journey with treasure, including the One Ring, but he has also become more adventurous and daring. These items are not only objects but "the power of [gods'] sustaining substance" or "the Imperishable" (Campbell 155). There is a spiritual dimension to Ella's selfless refusal since she feels whole and true to herself, just as there is a spiritual growth in Bilbo's successful adventure and return to the Shire.

Lastly, fantasy compellingly depicts the last steps of the hero's journey through the hero's return home. Often the hero is tempted to refuse his return home and dwell "forever in the blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being (Campbell 167). At the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the Pevensies unwittingly leave Narnia, having forgotten their ordinary past and "remember[ing] their life in this world…only as one remembers a dream" (Lewis 195). When they pass Lantern Waste, close by the magical wardrobe which will take them back to their ordinary lives, they sense that "if [they] pass this post and lantern either [they] shall find strange adventures or else some great change of [their] fortunes" and they feel "foreboding" (195). They only continue on to hunt a white stag, and they unknowingly leave their positions as Kings and Queens of Narnia and return to their ordinary lives. Bilbo experiences magic flight, the hero's return to his world, often while he is pursued, "complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion" (Campbell 170), when the Eagles rescue Bilbo, Gandalf, and the dwarves from Wargs and goblins. Tolkien writes, "Just at that moment the Lord of the Eagles swept down from above, seized him in his talons, and was gone" (Hobbit 152). Rescue from without, when the hero is "brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance" (Campbell 178), likewise occurs in a literal manner. In *The Hobbit*, Bard, who is not among Bilbo's party travelling together, kills the dragon Smaug (Hobbit 307-308). In *Catching Fire*, Katniss is rescued from the Hunger Games arena by a hovercraft piloted by those rebelling against the Capitol. From outside the bloodshed of the arena, "[t]he claw [of the hovercraft] drops from the underside until it's directly overhead" and removes Katniss from danger (Catching 381). Crossing return threshold, "coming back out of that yonder zone" of the unknown and strange (Campbell 188), is apparent when Bilbo returns to the Shire, when Katniss returns to live in District 12 after her help bringing down the sadistic state of Panem, and every year when Harry returns to the Muggle King's Cross station via the secret entrance at platform nine and three-quarters. In fantasy, protagonists also become master of two worlds, or those who possess the "[f]reedom to pass back and forth across the world division" between the supernatural and ordinary (Campbell 196), in a literal way. The characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* return to the magical lands from their mundane lives, as Bilbo brings back items from his journey into his comfortably domestic hobbit-hole. Often characters in fantasy demonstrate their mastery of two worlds through a domestic peace and the memory of a successful adventure. After revolutionizing the world of Panem and eradicating the brutal Hunger Games, Katniss rebuilds her home and falls in love with Peeta. Like many other people of District 12, they "return because, whatever has happened, this is [their] home" (Mockingjay 388). Fantasy can also represent the last stage of the hero's journey, freedom to live, in which the hero is at peace, realizing that "the Imperishable…lives in him" (Campbell 209). In this final stage the hero knows that he is not invincible but that he should also not be "fearful of the next moment (or of the 'other thing'), as destroying the permanent with its change" (209). For this reason, after a sacrificial death and magical resurrection, Harry Potter can end his story with the knowledge that his "scar had not pained [him] for nineteen years. All was well" (Deathly 759). Similarly, Hale's *The Goose Girl* is divided into three sections, "Crown Princess," describing when Ani is a sheltered, introverted girl, "Goose Girl" (Goose 83), when she works as a goose girl in the palace and struggles to find her place, and "Yellow Lady" (273), when she works to stop an impending war and reclaim her identity as princess through her newfound courage, friends, and ability to speak with the wind. This last section proves that Ani is at peace with her new abilities and identity. The outward peace of Ani's world mirrors her inner security. As her fiancée introduces her, she is "Princess Anidori…she who ended our war before the javelin was thrown" (380). A monument is created "of a colt and a girl seemingly too young for such adventures so far from home," but "[t]here [i]s no hurry" to rush off into a new adventure (382). Thus throughout each step in the three stages of the hero's journey, fantasy provides an example that is both literal and clearly symbolic.

Applications of the hero's journey are limitless. Campbell notes that these steps are as applicable to life as they are to literature, writing, "The whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women, wherever they may stand along the scale….The individual has only to discover his own position with reference to this general human formula, and let it then assist him past his restricting walls" (101). While Campbell points to a unity in mythological steps and tropes among the narratives of different cultures and religions, the hero's journey can also be found in literature of all varieties and in all media. In the creation of *Star Wars*, George Lucas was informed by Campbell's ideas (Bancks 32). Many other films also follow this format, and "many [Hollywood] execs look... for hallmarks of the hero's journey in all scripts that passed their desks" (32). In *Finding Nemo*, Marlin and Dory are literally swallowed by a whale. Even in instances of unconscious influence, these same steps appear. In Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic children's book *The Secret Garden*, published in 1911, before Campbell's first publication of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* in 1949, sickly, disagreeable Mary Lennox crosses the first threshold into the magical world of the locked and walled garden in clear terms. Searching under leaves and ivy, Mary finds “the lock of the door which had been closed ten years and she put her hand in her pocket, drew out the key and found it fitted the keyhole….and she…pushed back the door which opened slowly…. Then she slipped through it…looking about her and breathing quite fast with excitement, and wonder and delight. She was standing *inside* the secret garden” (Burnett 92). Many works invert, reverse, and otherwise alter these different steps of the hero’s journey. For instance, what should be magic flight in *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy and Gatsby’s drive back to Long Island from a tumultuous day in New York City, results in the death of Myrtle Wilson, a relationship-shattering catastrophe for Gatsby and Tom Buchanan. However, the commonality of these features and heroic steps across diverse works of literature can enable students to have thoughtful discussions “across books and reading levels” (Cruz and Pollock 191). While a more skilled student could apply this interpretation to a more advanced text, a student who reads below grade level could apply these same concepts to a different text. Especially if the hero’s journey is taught in an elective class where students from different grade levels are taught together, this may be an especially useful strategy. *ReadWriteThink* even provides a unit plan in which “[s]tudents can use the tool [providing background on the hero’s journey] to record examples from a hero's journey they have read or viewed or to plan out a hero’s journey of their own” (International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English). However, even if students are reading the same text in an English class with only one grade level, this can still be a useful application. Since “[t]he hero’s journey is an ancient story pattern that can be found in texts from thousands of years ago or in newly released Hollywood blockbusters” (International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English), such a lesson or unit would also access students’ multiple literacies. For instance, students could compare a classroom text, such as *The Odyssey* to any work of literature or film that interests them. Moreover, noting the omissions or alterations to the hero's journey in a particular work can speak to the values of the time period and author. For instance, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the hero Frodo must selflessly destroy the One Ring, instead of returning with an ultimate boon that he can claim for himself. Moreover, Frodo only completes his task through the intervention of his friend Sam. Excerpts from Campbell could be read in the classroom as pieces of nonfiction, exposing students to literary criticism. This would also give students useful practice reading nonfiction texts, which would certainly fit the recommendation of the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading that "Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images" (Common Core State Standards Initiative 35). Other works of criticism about fantasy, such as the critical essays of Tolkien, Le Guin, and Lewis, would also be a useful and relevant way to incorporate nonfiction texts in the classroom and fulfill this same standard. As Cruz and Pollock note, citing Clute & Grant and Krupat, in their article about a genre study of fantasy literature with their fourth grade students, observations and insights their students had "transcend the somewhat populist genre, and are present in such classics as Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which our students will probably encounter in their later reading life" (190). In this way, fantasy can illustrate and be used to explain concepts and structures found in all genres of literature.

In addition to these universal features, like etymology, allusion, metaphor and symbol, allegory, foil, tropes, setting, and Campbell's hero's journey, many canonical works of literature contain elements of fantasy and clear connections to fantasy. If these fantastic elements are not addressed, teachers and students lack important information and may fail to comprehend levels of meaning. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* utilizes fantasy to explore the nature of love. Within the city of Athens, Helena questions the unpredictable nature of love, saying "Things base and vile, holding no quantity,/ Love can transpose to form and dignity,/ Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind,/ And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind./ Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste" (Midsummer 1.1.232-236). Lysander also questions what constitutes one's individual worth when Hermia's father forbids her from marrying anyone but Demetrius. Lysander states his case, saying, "I am, my lord, as well derived as [Demetrius],/ As well possessed…And, which is more than all these boasts can be,/ I am beloved of beauteous Hermia" (1.1.99-104). The only differentiating factor between one's worth and another's is the feelings another has for him. In the forest, these questions about the nature of love are enacted when the fairies put the juice of a magic flower on the eyes of these humans. These reversals in love occur purely because of the fairies' whims or mistakes. Lysander falls in love with Helena, irrationally abandoning Hermia, until the fairies reverse the effects of the magic. Demetrius remains in an enchanted state, marrying Helena after the magic in the forest is undone. Helena's idea that love is blind is literally enacted when the fairy queen Titania, after receiving the effects of the magical flower, falls in love with Bottom, a rustic tradesman whose head is transformed into that of an ass. Titania is "enthralled to [his] shape" (3.1.140), although the audience recognizes his form as grotesque. Titania also praises him for being "as wise as [he is] beautiful" (3.1.149), as the audience realizes the ironic truth that Bottom is neither. Without the magic of the flower and the fantastical setting of the forest, none of these explorations of love as an irrational and changeable notion would be possible. The tangible effect of these abstractions, such as blind love and uncertain estimates of self-worth, play out because of fantasy. The witches in *Macbeth* serve this same magical function. Their prophecy that Macbeth "shalt be king hereafter" (Macbeth 1.3.53), spurs the action of the plot and leads to the bloody fulfillment of Macbeth's ambitions. Although Macbeth's "thought[s]" contain "murder yet…fantastical" (1.3.152) after this initial "supernatural soliciting" (1.3.143), his violence soon takes a very real shape as he commits murder to gain power and become king. Likewise, the warnings of the apparitions, which seem so fantastical that Macbeth fails to treat them as real threats, become his undoing. He believes that he is invulnerable since "none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.91-92) and because he "shall never vanquished be until/ Great Birnam Wood to high Dusinane Hill/ Shall come against him" (4.1.105-107). He fails to consider the possibilities that Malcolm's army will hold the boughs of trees to hide their number or that Macduff could kill him because he "was from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripped" (5.8.19-20). In *Macbeth*, these fantastic prophecies come to fruition, begin Macbeth's chain of violence, and ultimately result in his demise. Fantasy cannot be ignored by the characters within the play, and classes must question the role of the witches and Macbeth's preordained fate to form a well-developed analysis of the play. In fact, because of the presence of witches in *Macbeth* and fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both works could be considered fantasy.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is another canonical text frequently included in the high school curriculum which, although not classified as fantasy, does contain many fantastical elements. Fairy tales and myths create a gothic atmosphere, shape the plot, and lead to thematic revelations. Brontë establishes a fairy tale structure into the plot. Jane's childhood circumstances, living in the house of her cruel aunt Mrs. Reed with her bullying cousins, parallels Cinderella's abused and neglected circumstances, with the notable difference that Jane is plain. As a governess, Jane falls in love with her wealthy and noble employer, Mr. Rochester, further paralleling Cinderella's relationship to her prince. Brontë points towards this fairy tale as Jane leaves a gathering of Mr. Rochester and his friends early. While escaping, Jane has to stop to tie her loose sandal, and Mr. Rochester halts her to talk, just as the prince chases after Cinderella, who loses her slipper as she leaves the ball early. Jane's life with Mr. Rochester is also reminiscent of other myths and fairy tales. When Jane first meets him, his horse and dog remind her of a gytrash, a spirit "which in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunt[s] solitary ways and sometimes c[omes] upon belated travelers" (Brontë 159). From the outset, an air of legendary mystery surrounds Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester calls himself "cursed" (185) and describes his house as an "accursed place" (360), reminding readers of "Beauty and the Beast." Significantly, Jane also mentions that the hallway on the third story reminds her of "a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle" (153). In the fairy tale of "Bluebeard," the titular character is "a murderous husband" who locks the bodies of his murdered wives in his house (Bluebeard). Jane later discovers that Mr. Rochester is also hiding his wife Bertha, who is insane, in the third story attic. This deliberate piece of foreshadowing brings with it connotations of dark and dangerous fairy tales and hints at Mr. Rochester's initial moral ambiguity. Mr. Rochester's secrets and Jane's curiosity also connects to the tale of Cupid and Psyche, particularly when one considers that Bertha attempts to burn Mr. Rochester in his bed, just as Psyche accidentally burns Cupid with hot wax from her candle when she looks at his true form. The ending of *Jane Eyre* is also fantastical. Miles away, Jane hears Mr. Rochester's voice calling for her, and when she answers aloud, he hears her response. This miraculous occurrence is a supernatural, fantastical impetus for a fairy tale reunion which ties together the fairy tale motifs and Jane's happy ending and sense of empowerment and fulfillment at the novel's conclusion. Exploring such fantastical connections and motifs in any work of literature helps form an understanding of the continuity of ideas and the power of plots, motifs, and themes that appear across literature.

One such motif is the idea of the injured right hand. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus warns, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away….And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (*New American Bible*, Matthew 5.29-30). In *Jane Eyre*, when Jane is tempted to run away with Mr. Rochester although Bertha’s existence and status as Mr. Rochester’s wife has been revealed, she thinks to herself, “No; you shall tear yourself away; none shall help you: you shall yourself pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand…” (Brontë 357). When Jane is later reunited with Mr. Rochester, she finds that he has been injured in the fire that Bertha set which destroys his home, Thornfield Hall. He is blind since “one eye was knocked out, and one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon, had to amputate it directly” (500). It would seem that this is a judgment on Mr. Rochester’s attempted bigamy. This motif also appears in fantastical contexts. In J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, the villainous Captain Hook “has an iron hook instead of a right hand, and he claws with it” because Peter cut it off (Barrie 63). The same fate befalls Luke Skywalker and his father, Darth Vader, in the *Star Wars* films. *In Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort’s underling Wormtail cuts off his right hand to make a powerful potion and restore his master to power, saying “Flesh—of the servant—w-willingly given—you will—revive—your master” (Goblet 641). After tampering with the resurrection stone, tempted by the opportunity to bring his deceased family members back from the dead, Dumbledore is cursed and “his hand [is] blackened and shriveled; it look[s] as though his flesh ha[s] been burned away” (Half-Blood 48). This Biblical allusion, repeated in diverse figures, links these various works of literature and would also give students an understanding of dialogism. Dialogism is the theory “that *all* language is produced as response to other language” and suggests that “*all* text, whether spoken or written… works to respond to something, and therefore works to make meaning” (Hallman

44). This theory appears in works of literature and in authentic writing, such as crafting a letter to the editor (43). In her article defending the use of fantasy in English classes, Thomas likewise points out that fantasy can helpfully illustrate connections between canonical works. For instance, C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia,* particularly, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, could be used in a course which studies the Bible's influence on literature, because of the series' clear parallels between Biblical events, people, and motifs (Thomas 61). One could even establish a connection between temptation and eating, which appears in the Genesis narrative when Adam and Eve eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Milton's interpretation of this event in *Paradise Lost*, and Edmund's consumption of Turkish Delight in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Fantasy is thus a clear vehicle to demonstrate how motifs such as temptation through food create dialogism between works and genres.

Works of fantasy literature, or excerpts from these novels, could also be used in the classroom as companion novels to canonical texts. Young Adult literature can often function in this same fashion. While "some literature is difficult for young readers because they cannot easily relate the literary experience to their own lives," a companion novel "can help readers make that leap of understanding" and "can further clarify for young readers the meaning of more difficult selections" (Nelms et al. 82). Fantasy novels can function in this manner; they can enlighten meanings and challenge ideas in a canonical text. For instance, one could pair *The Hunger Games* or Veronica Roth's *Divergent* with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *1984* and compare these dystopias. It may be easier for students to relate to sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen than the middle-aged Winston, "who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle" (Orwell 20) of Orwell's *1984*. Students could also read Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* along with Jennifer Donnelly's young adult novel

Revolution. *Revolution* alternates between the perspective of Andi Alpers, a modern-day high school student from Brooklyn and the diary of Alexandrine Paradis, a seventeen-year-old girl living in Paris in 1795, who acts as a caretaker to Louis-Charles, the dauphin, before and during the French Revolution. The initial historical fiction narrative connects Andi, a gifted musician grieving for her young brother Truman, and Alex, who "live[s] in the palace and become[s] the dauphin's companion" (Donnelly 147) and later becomes "The Green Man, a street name for the outlaw who has been terrorizing the citizens of Paris with destructive firework displays" to entertain Louis-Charles and give him hope through his imprisonment in the Temple prison (110). Andi, blaming her distraction for Truman's death, becomes fascinated with Alex's diary and the fate of Louis-Charles. The sacrifices Alex makes to set off the fireworks, which result in her death, are akin to Sydney Carton's sacrifice in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Both these characters have an inward transformation, and Alex's thought, "I think it was then that the revolution began. Not for Paris or for the French. But for me" (183), is relevant to Sydney Carton's fate as well. Yet it is the fantastical twist in the novel's climax which creates a poignant connection between past and present, as Andi is literally transported back to revolutionary France when in the catacombs. This fits into the fantasy subgenre which involves time travel and, consequently, various "changes and contrasts" (O'Keefe 83). Taking Alex's place as the Green Man after her death, Andi risks her life to set off fireworks one last time. This magical shift in time illustrates continuity between unjust regimes, violent upheavals, and inward revolutions. For instance, when a guard demands that Andi stop playing guitar outside the Temple prison, Andi recalls images of revolution and violence throughout history, thinking that individuals like the harsh, blindly obedient guard are "always here" and "always will be" (Donnelly 419). The same continuity, although in a more redeeming tone, is true of Andi's final words in the past. She says, “The world goes on stupid and brutal, but I do not” (456). This utterance is comparable to Sydney Carton’s final thought, “It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known” (Dickens 372). Both characters experience personal growth towards selflessness and an affirmation of self-worth which contrasts with the turmoil and violence of the French Revolution. With Donnelly’s fantastical time shift, readers are able to fully comprehend the similarities between past and present. *Revolution* therefore explicitly points to the significance of companion novels with its paired, intertwining stories. Parallels such as this make fantasy literature valuable companion novels for canonical classroom literature whether teachers allow students to read them as an independent reading project, read these texts as a class, or choose key excerpts to illuminate meaning.

Fantasy literature can also be used as a gateway to the discussion of different critical theories. New criticism entails “a close examination of the literary text” and an analysis of the features a text executes particularly well (Cambridge). The features of fantasy, such as symbolism, allusion, setting, and theme examine fantasy novels from a new critical approach. Student reactions and emotions towards a work of fantasy support the use of reader response theory. Some works of fantasy even capture reader response theory through magical means. Cornelia Funke’s *Inkheart*, and its two sequels *Inkspell*, and *Inkdeath* achieve this. In *Inkheart*, the protagonist Meggie discovers that her father Mo has the ability to read characters out of books and replace them with something from their own world. Mo tells Meggie, “My voice had brought them slipping out of their story like a bookmark forgotten by some reader between the pages” (Funke 139). These interactions between characters and the books they read can be both wonderful, as when Mo reads treasure out of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, and terrifying, as when the villain Capricorn escapes from the fictitious novel *Inkheart* and Mo comments, “Fear tastes quite different when you’re not just reading about it” (141). Mo’s magical reading ability embodies what occurs when a reader interacts with a book: “Everything disappeared…. There was nothing but Mo’s voice and the pictures forming in their minds from the letters on the page, like the pattern of a carpet taking shape on a loom…. To think of the magic that he could have worked in [Meggie’s] room with his voice, a voice that gave a different flavor to every word, made every sentence a melody!” (175). When the characters Mo reads out of the fictional *Inkheart* encounter Fenoglio, the author who controls their destiny and, in some instances, kills his characters, Funke further complicates the relationship between the reader and a text by including the author. Indirectly, this causes readers to question authorial intent and weigh the importance of an individual reader’s interpretation of a text as opposed to an author’s intention in writing a work of literature. Moreover, the novel itself is in dialogue with other works of literature. Each chapter begins with a relevant epigraph, often from another work of literature, such as William Goldman’s *The Princess Bride*; J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, and *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*; Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*; Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*; Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Charles’ Dickens’ *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*; and Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. Each quote illustrates that Funke’s output as a writer, namely *Inkheart*, is a product of reader response. These epigraphs and the characters’ interactions within the novel could create a compelling classroom discussion of reader response theory.

Fantasy literature can also offer unique insights into a biographical approach to reading, which focuses on how an author’s life impacts her writing. In fantasy, biographical influences often take a symbolic shape. In an interview with Oprah, J.K. Rowling discusses how her experience with depression led to the creation of the dementors, saying that since depression is nearly indescribable to those who have not experienced it, she thinks of it as "that cold absence of feeling—that really hollowed-out feeling. That's what Dementors are" (Brilliant 9). These magical creatures cause "[a]n intense cold" which penetrates "deeper than [one's] skin….inside [one's] chest…inside [one's] very heart" (Prisoner 83), and make one feel "[l]ike [one] would never be cheerful again" (85). This is the same inescapable despair an individual with depression would experience. Harry relives the memory of his parents' murder under the dementors' influence. The Dementor's Kiss, which sucks out a person's soul, does permanent damage and leaves its victims "[a]s an empty shell" with "no sense of self…no memory" (247). Much like an individual with depression might, Harry considers remaining in the cold, miserable effect of the dementors because he can hear his parents' voices. However, he masters this symbolic form of depression by conjuring a Patronus, "a guardian that acts as a shield between [a wizard] and the dementor" which can only be created by "concentrating…on a single, very happy memory" (237). There are clear parallels between Rowling's description of depression and her own experiences, which could usefully illustrate a biographical approach to reading literature.

Yet the study of fantasy literature in classrooms is not limited to a new critical approach, a biographical approach, or reader response theory. Concepts in fantasy can be a wonderful bridge into discussion of gender, culture, and spirituality. Among their list of topics students explored during their genre study of fantasy, Cruz and Pollock list topics as diverse as "Religion and spirituality," "History of cultures," "Roles of men and women," "Societal norms," "Feminism," and "Ethnocentrism" (193). Thomas likewise points out that fantasy literature lends itself to an examination of topics as diverse as "Religious Commentary," "History in

Fantasy," and "Gender Roles" (61-62). Cruz and Pollock's fourth grade students perceived a difference between malicious, avaricious dragons in Western literature and kind, helpful dragons in Eastern literature (193). They also examined the changing role of women, noticing that in recent works of fantasy female characters are independent and have broken free of the role of damsel in distress (194). These are keen observations found at an elementary school level. With middle school and high school students, these discussions could be expanded even further. Fantasy could be an accessible way to introduce students to multiple literary theories of reading texts.

Studying and discussing concepts like cultural history and ethnocentrism relate to a post-colonial approach to literature. The literary theory of post-colonialism examines the role culture plays in literature through the study of literature of colonial powers, colonized nations, and the interactions of such civilizations (Mercadal). In fantasy, the study of cultures often appears as an indirect commentary on fictional civilizations, but the same strategies for analyzing the responses of various cultures are also present in realistic fiction, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Through the guise of fantastical transformations, civilizations, or different magical beings, fantasy frequently comments on prejudice and racial and ethnic tensions which exist in reality. For instance, in Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, the protagonist Jin, who is bullied and struggles to fit in because of his identity as a Chinese American, is magically transformed into a white American boy. This fantastical transformation enables Jin to reexamine his own identity and his feelings about his culture. Moreover, fantasy often connects various cultures and can counteract prejudice. Elements of the hero's journey are universally applicable to works of literature and myths from all world cultures. Noting the commonalities between myths and tales of diverse cultures and religions, Campbell writes, "[L]ooking back at what had promised to be our own unique…adventure, all we find in the end is such a series of standard metamorphoses as men and women have undergone in every quarter of the world, in all recorded centuries, and under every odd disguise of civilization" (Campbell 8). The aspects of fantasy which comment on culture are valuable to the study of literature in the classroom and to an understanding of culture in students' lives.

Feminism appears in many recent works of fantasy literature and can aid in student application of feminist theory to any work of literature. Cruz and Polluck discuss "the changing roles of female characters in fantasy" with their students, who note that "older fantasies have women in supporting roles" while recent novels "show women and girls in more active roles, and often they are the heroes" (194). Many young adult fairy tale retellings fit the latter description. For instance, in Levine's retelling of Cinderella, *Ella Enchanted*, Ella must obey the orders of her cruel and vain stepfamily, and anyone else who issues a command, because she is cursed with obedience. In spite of this curse, Ella actively rebels against the curse, finding ways to frustrate others' orders. When her cook Mandy tells her to hold a bowl, Ella, "move[s her] feet so she would have to follow [her] around the kitchen" (Levine 5). Ella is not a passive Cinderella who listens to others without defending herself. To secure her happy ending, Ella must break this curse of obedience, so that she will not endanger her love Prince Char or cause harm to her kingdom. Her feminist defiance, paradoxically through refusing to marry Char, breaks the curse. This ending signifies a reversal of traditional fairy tale gender roles because Ella "rescue[s] [her]self when [she] rescue[s] the prince" (228). Similar reversals occur in Hale's *The Goose Girl*, as Ani saves her prince and the kingdom of Bayern, and Edith Pattou's *East*, a retelling of the fairy tale "East of the Sun and West of the Moon." In *The Goose Girl*, Ani matures from an introverted and somewhat helpless princess into a leader who can defend herself and others. Others perceive her weaknesses, even telling her, “I had heard that all you were fit for was to be married off and produce princelings” (Goose 27). In the novel’s climax, Ani reclaims her identity as princess, prevents a war, and saves her prince, Geric, from marrying Selia. During the battle that breaks out when Ani reveals her identity, she plays an active role, using her power to control the wind; “Wrapped around her hand and wrist were every breeze and draft, every movement of air that had touched her…and she begged of it now a new course, quick and sure. A bolt of wind like a dull arrow thumped Ungolad [one of Selia’s soldiers] in his chest” (362). While this illustrates the progress of any Bildungsroman, it is especially feminist because Ani takes an active role in rescuing herself and others, unlike the more passive princess in the original tale. Similarly, in *East*, the protagonist Rose stays in a castle with the mysterious White Bear, who is actually an enchanted prince in disguise. When she spies on him by the light of a magic candle, much like Psyche, the selfish Troll Queen takes him away to a place “[e]ast of the sun and west of the moon” (Pattou 249). Adventurous Rose travels “to this impossible land…to make right the terrible wrong [she] had done him” (256). She succeeds and saves him with her courage and resourcefulness. Pattou’s retelling follows the original in that the female heroine rescues her prince, but she also elaborates on character motivations and portrays a strong, independent female protagonist. Each of these works advocates a feminist approach to traditional fairy tales through their retelling. Because many students are familiar with fairy tale features, and the story of Cinderella in particular, these novels, or excerpts of these novels, would be a succinct way to examine feminist literary theory.

Fantasy can also shed light on a Disability Studies perspective to reading literature. Disability Studies examines literature by and about individuals with disabilities and how society views individuals with disabilities. Those writing from a Disability Studies perspective advocate for a more accurate representation of individuals with disabilities and greater inclusion of texts with characters with disabilities. Fantasy literature, like Disability Studies, causes readers to reexamine what "normal" means and leads to a redefinition. Often, fantasy encourages the same acceptance for disability that Disability Studies advocates. O'Keefe quotes Eva Ibbotson's children's novel *The Secret of Platform 13* and notes the variety of people and magical creatures who populate this fantastical island: "SENSIBLE PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTOOD THAT EVERYONE DID NOT HAVE EXACTLY TWO ARMS AND LEGS BUT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT IN SHAPE AND IN THE WAY THEY THOUGHT. SO THEY LIVED PEACEFULLY WITH OGRES WHO HAD ONE EYE, OR DRAGONS. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT ELLERWOMEN HAD HOLLOW BACKS AND HATED TO BE LOOKED AT ON A SATURDAY…" (Ibbotson qtd. in O'Keefe 71). Some novels also address disability directly. Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* series is about a protagonist, the eponymous Percy, who has dyslexia and ADD. The *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* series diversifies the characters students encounter by including characters with disabilities and those without. Riordan writes with authority on the subject of disability, as his son, Haley, who also has dyslexia and ADHD, is the inspiration for this character (Williams). The idea for the series began as a bedtime story for Haley, who, as an individual with disabilities, expresses the importance of representing characters with disability in literature (Williams). He says, "You read a lot of books and none of them have a hero who is dyslexic or has ADHD – it's always perfect people in a perfect world doing perfect things. Percy is, in fact, very flawed and he has to fight against that and at the same time fight monsters" (Williams). Percy also realistically encounters many other characters with disabilities. His friend Grover, who is actually a satyr, "ha[s] a note excusing him from PE for the rest of his life because he ha[s] some kind of muscular disease in his legs" (Riordan 3). His Latin teacher, Mr. Brunner, is "this middle-aged guy in a motorized wheelchair" (2). Percy continually expresses admiration for Mr. Brunner, and appreciates his disability as simply an interesting difference. On a class trip, "[a] red umbrella stuck up from the back of his chair, making it look like a motorized café table" (9). This description illustrates an unabashed individual who is confident and comfortable with his disability. Riordan also describes Mr. Brunner's actions with active verbs and phrases such as "wheeled his chair into the doorway," "shouted," and "tossed" (13), suggesting that the stereotypical view of passive, inactive individuals with disabilities is flawed. Although he does not directly state it, Percy, who is still uncomfortable with the way others view his disability and is not yet as confident, can learn a lot from this mentor figure. Riordan sugarcoats little about societal views of disability through these interactions. Percy refers to Grover as "crippled" (3), an antiquated term which nonetheless reflects the unfortunate reality of terminology still used by those who are not aware of the Disability Studies perspective. When Mr. Brunner tries to explain his views about disability, Percy angrily storms off when Mr. Brunner fumblingly tells him, "[Y]ou're not normal, Percy" (22). Realistically, Percy feels embarrassed by his disability and frustrated with himself. However, the incorporation of multiple characters with disabilities, such as the confident and self-sufficient Mr. Brunner, encourages readers to question views about disability, along with the still-growing Percy. Through Grover's character, Riordan also reverses reader expectations about disability. When Grover confesses that he must protect Percy, Percy is skeptical and thinks, "All year long, I'd gotten in fights, keeping bullies away from him. I'd lost sleep worrying that he'd get beaten up next year without me. And here he was acting like he was the one who defended *me*" (25). What Riordan leaves unwritten is that Percy believes that because Grover "walk[s] funny" (3) he feels the need to protect him. This idea of patronizingly protecting those with disability is completely upended when Riordan reveals that Percy is a demigod, and that protection has nothing whatsoever to do with disability. Readers have responded positively to Riordan's depiction of characters with disabilities. Riordan says, "I get an enormous number of emails and letters from families who have children who are ADHD or dyslexic. One of my favourites is a young girl who wrote to me and said she used to be ashamed that she had dyslexia, but now she has read the Percy Jackson books she wears that as a badge of honour. And that means the world to me" (Williams). Riordan's inclusion of a protagonist and other characters with disabilities in his fantasy series thus gives readers a range of perspectives on disability while leading towards a view that empowers individuals with disabilities.

Beyond this much needed diversification of characters, *The Lightning Thief* reverses stereotypes about disability through fantasy. Percy could easily be misconstrued as a "supercrip," or an individual with disabilities who "overcome[s] the obstacles of disability through a positive attitude and perseverance" or because he has special abilities because of his disability (Kennedy and Menten 66). In her article about the series and Riordan's influences, Williams even uses language which suggests that Percy is such a character. She writes, "At the start of his adventures, Percy discovers that his difficulties are not a weakness after all, but a sure sign of greatness: when he sees words jumbled on the page, it's because his mind is hard-wired for ancient Greek, and when the ADHD makes it hard to sit still in the classroom, it's just hyper-awareness that will keep him alive on the battlefield" (Williams). While it is true that Percy can miraculously read ancient Greek and his "senses are better than a regular mortal's" (Riordan 88), Riordan's views align with the Disability Studies perspective. He says that "other children…like [his] son… are struggling with these issues and feel there is something wrong with them, and there's not. It's simply a different way of processing information" (Williams). Riordan's depiction of disability in *The Lightning Thief* captures the complexity of a Disability Studies perspective, in which disability is neither an obstacle to be overcome nor a sentimental model of inspiration for others.

Percy begins the novel by espousing condescending societal views about disability. He recalls that "Mr. Brunner expect[s him] to be as good as everybody else, despite the fact that [he has] dyslexia and attention deficit disorder and [he has] never made above a C- in [his] life" (Riordan 7). He also wonders, "What [is] so great about me? A dyslexic, hyperactive boy with a D+ report card…" (38). Percy initially buys into a predominant view that being "normal" is superior to individual differences, especially those manifest in disability. As he progresses on his own journey, however, he sees that his disability can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Neither Percy's disabilities nor his status as the son of a god erase the "more pedestrian struggles that ordinary people with disabilities face regularly" which the supercrip stereotype diminishes (Kennedy and Menten 66). Although Percy can read ancient Greek, it is "[a]t least, no harder than English" (Riordan 107). When he reads a news story about his and his mother's disappearance after he discovers that he is the son of Poseidon, "[t]he article t[akes him] almost an hour to read, because the angrier [he gets], the more the words float…around on the page" (128). On his quest, Percy has trouble reading neon signs and needs Grover's help to change the writing from "ATNYU MES GDERAN GOMEN MEPROUIM" to "Aunty Em's Garden Gnome Emporium" (171). Percy's struggles with reading do not magically evaporate, but his status as a half-blood, the son of a god and mortal woman, does give him a new, less-defeatist perspective. When Percy, Grover, and his friend Annabeth, the daughter of Athena, are attacked by Furies on a bus, Percy acts on the impulsivity that many individuals with ADHD possess. He grabs the wheel to prevent an attack, and while he recognizes that this action is necessary to his and his friends' survival, he also notes, "What I did next was so impulsive and dangerous I should've been named ADHD poster child of the year" (164). Similarly, because Percy "ha[s] a really hard time sitting still" on the train ride, he looks out the windows and glimpses a family of centaurs and an enormous lion (198). Percy "notice[s] every little detail" when he fights Ares, and appreciates this aspect of his ADHD (328). While he still recognizes that his everyday struggles persist, even with a supernatural twist, Percy feels more secure and is accepting of all aspects of his disabilities. The same is true when Mr. Brunner is revealed as a centaur and Grover is revealed as a satyr. Grover can "run …fast and still limp when he walk[s]" because he has "cloven hooves" (43). This does not make Grover weaker than other characters, it only differentiates his motion. His supernatural answer to Mr. Brunner's proudly decorated wheelchair is a pair of winged sneakers, which he likewise uses to travel in style. In Riordan's fantastical view, disability does not strengthen or weaken his characters. It is not erased in light of supernatural occurrences. Disability is simply something that makes characters individuals. It is a part of every character, but not his only defining trait. Riordan's fantasy opens new, more positive, and empowering perspectives on disability for his readers, but it is never an escapist negation of real issues that individuals with disabilities face. Therefore fantasy can be used to helpfully illustrate a variety of critical perspectives, including new critical, biographical, reader response, post-colonial, feminist, and disability studies, in a succinct manner.

Perhaps the most important and compelling argument for the use of fantasy literature in the classroom is fantasy's ability to represent and extend the universal themes, fears, concerns, and dreams of fairy tales and myths. Authors and critics have long pointed out that fantasy has this capability. Campbell writes, “It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward…. In fact, it may well be that the very high incidence of neuroticism among ourselves follows from the decline among us of such effective spiritual aid” (Campbell 7). Le Guin similarly notes that fantasy helps readers understand themselves, others, and the world (Why 43). When she writes that fantasy “[i]sn’t factual, but it is true” (44), Le Guin suggests that fantasy figuratively and imaginatively reflects reality. In his essay “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien notes that fantasy can help readers attain a moral education; he writes, “[I]t is one of the lessons of fairy-stories (if we can speak of the lessons of things that do not lecture) that on callow, lumpish, and selfish youth peril, sorrow, and the shadow of death can bestow dignity, and even sometimes wisdom” (Fairy 42). Students can learn a great deal from reading and discussing themes in fantasy. Arguing that children cannot be sheltered from all knowledge of violence and evil, O’Keefe writes, “Apparently it helps children and does not traumatize them when they confront fears and violent emotions in fiction, indirectly; but adult attempts to explain rationally to children that such fears and emotions are normal can be enormously upsetting. Externalizing inner processes through play and fantasy gives a child mastery rather than terror” (O’Keefe 45). Fantasy therefore not only comments on universal truths, but also provides a positive, healthy outlet for examining various topics. Metaphors and symbols in fantasy often mirror real-life situations, allowing for discussion of difficult and abstract concepts. Themes can be more dramatically and symbolically represented in fantasy literature, while still creating a safe distance to examine internal emotions from. Works of fantasy offer insightful and often poignant commentary on prejudice, coming of age, death and grief, healing, sacrifice, and love.

Through the use of magical beings and creatures, fantasy often comments on human experiences of prejudice. Even the inclusion of such magical beings can encourage more accepting attitudes. O'Keefe quotes fantasy author Jane Yolen's perspective about fantasy and prejudice: "A child who can love the oddities of a fantasy book cannot possibly be xenophobic as an adult. What is a different color, a different culture, a different tongue for a child who has already mastered Elvish, or respected Puddleglums?" (Yolen qtd. in O'Keefe 60). Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief* often describes such odd beings with a nonchalant humor. For instance, when the protagonist Percy recovers from an injury, he notices that a man watching over him "had blue eyes—at least a dozen of them—on his cheeks, his forehead, the backs of his hands" (Riordan 57). These different features are noted, but are not dwelt upon excessively. The fast pacing of the novel encourages an appreciation of differences without lengthy meditation. Such matter-of-fact treatment helps to eliminate prejudice about disability within the novel itself and subtly encourages readers to do the same in their own lives. Discussing these decisions in fantasy literature would prove valuable for students and may help them locate and counteract prejudice in novels or their own lives. Many fantasy novels also deal explicitly with prejudice among characters.

O'Keefe writes of Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*, a novel about an American girl, Hannah, who travels back in time from the 1980s to a concentration camp (O'Keefe 149). Through this fantastical time travel, Hannah sacrifices herself to save her Aunt Eva, creating a happy ending despite the impossibility of the story (151); "The fantasy element makes it possible for reader and writer to stand back and still to witness the story of love and evil, as it happened to those who were there, the real witnesses" (151). This emotional distance of fantasy allows readers to examine the devastation of prejudice while still understanding hope, sacrifice, and love. In *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy, and the *Harry Potter* series, prejudice is examined through this same lens. While these conflicts of prejudice are not real-world situations which readers relive through a fantastical experience, these prejudices do reflect real-world conflicts which students will recognize.

In *The Hobbit*, the dwarves and the elves take part in old prejudices against each other. During their journey through the woods, the dwarf leader Thorin is “bound” and “carried away” by Wood-elves (Hobbit 218). The Wood-elves capture Thorin and the rest of the dwarves, imprisoning them because “they d[o] not love dwarves, and th[ink they are] enem[ies]” (219). While imprisoned, Thorin refuses to tell the Elvenking about his quest because he is “determined that no word of gold or jewels should be dragged out of him” (220). Tolkien’s narrator reveals an underlying pettiness to the dwarves’ and elves’ present argument, writing, “In ancient days [the elves] had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure. It is only fair to say that the dwarves gave a different account, and said that they only took what was their due, for the elf-king had bargained with them to shape his raw gold and silver, and had afterwards refused to give them their pay” (220). Their conflict is thus founded on an ancient prejudice in which both parties were remiss. Moreover, “Thorin’s family had had nothing to do with the old quarrel” (220), making the Elvenking’s judgment a prejudice which extends even beyond a demographic with which his ancestors fought. Men from the lake-town Esgaroth become entangled in the conflict between the dwarves and elves as well. When the dwarves’ actions result in the dragon Smaug destroying their village, the men hope to get a share of the dragon’s treasure, in part stolen from their own town, to rebuild their lives. The elves help the humans amidst the destruction of their town. Although a wise raven tells Thorin that there should be “peace once more among dwarves and men and elves after the long desolation” despite the “cost…in gold,” Thorin stubbornly refuses to share and instead calls for reinforcements (318). The disinterested and impartial Bilbo ties to negotiate a peace between the elves, men, and dwarves by giving the Arkenstone, an object of great significance to the dwarves, to the elves and men as a bartering tool. Ultimately, a common enemy, wargs and goblins, unites men, elves, and dwarves. Without commenting directly on human prejudices, Tolkien illustrates the violence and devastation that can result from prejudices which are left to fester, and the heroic accomplishments which result from amity and cooperation. Although this prejudice between dwarves and elves persists into *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy, Tolkien suggests redemption in the end of *The Hobbit* when the Elvenking attends Thorin’s funeral. This depiction of bitter strife is this not without hope for the future. As prejudice results in war and understanding ends strife in *The Hobbit*, teachers can also examine these patterns in history or other works of literature.

Like *The Hobbit*, the *Harry Potter* series also depicts prejudice among wizards as a reflection of human prejudices. In addition to prejudices between magical beings, wizards in Rowling’s universe are often concerned with whether others are “purebloods,” meaning that both parents are wizards, or how long a wizarding family has been established. As Tolkien does, Rowling adds a dangerous dimension to such prejudices. When the bullying Draco Malfoy calls Hermione a “filthy little Mudblood,” the equivalent of a racial slur for a witch whose parents are Muggles, Ron reacts angrily (Chamber 112). He casts a spell which is meant to make Malfoy spit out slugs. Teachers and students could discuss how real-world derogatory terms have a similarly powerful effect, metaphorically as ugly and vile as spouting slugs from one’s mouth. Ron’s explanation of such words is simple and accessible for students of all levels: “Mudblood’s a really foul name for someone who is Muggle-born—you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards…who think they're better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood" (115-116). Rowling also illustrates that such ideas have more menacing power outside of bullying. One of the Hogwarts founders, Salazar Slytherin "believed that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families" and thought of Muggle-born students as "untrustworthy" (150). This ideology then turns to violence when the heir of Slytherin, Voldemort, opens the titular Chamber of Secrets and "unleash[es] the horror within…to purge the school of all who [are] unworthy to study magic" (151). In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, disaster is averted and Muggle-borns are only turned to stone until Harry defeats Voldemort. However, Voldemort persists in this twisted goal throughout the series, leading to murder and war. Grindelwald, the dark wizard Dumbledore ultimately defeated in his youth, espouses similar genocidal ambitions. Rowling connects these dark wizards and their cruel prejudices to Hitler. Significantly the battle between Dumbledore and Grindelwald occurred in 1945 (Deathly 20), coinciding with the end of World War II. Other parallels between these wizards and Hitler include the use of an equivalent of a swastika symbol, whether it is Grindelwald's use of the deathly hallows or Voldemort's use of the Dark Mark, "a colossal skull comprised of what looked like emerald stars, with a serpent protruding from its mouth like a tongue" (Goblet 128). These clear historical parallels make Rowling's use of magical prejudice an accessible way to discuss modern-day prejudice with students.

Fantasy can also depict coming-of-age in a uniquely symbolic way. For instance, in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Wendy comes of age through her contact with the eternally youthful Peter Pan. Neverland itself is symbolic of the bittersweet necessity of growing up. Barrie describes "the Neverland" as a region in one's mind which "is always more or less an island," populated with fantastical creatures and fairy tale stock characters, like "princes with six elder brothers" "and one very small old lady with a hooked nose" (Barrie 36). While "[o]n these magic shores children are forever beaching their coracles," adults "can still hear the sound of the surf, though [they] shall land no more" (36). Taken in this light, the name of the place itself suggests that one can never land, or set up a permanent establishment, as a child. Growing up is inevitable. It is also positive. Neverland can be a brutal world. Barrie's narrator nonchalantly informs his readers, "The boys on the island vary, of course, in numbers, according as they get killed and so on" (66). Peter is similarly irresponsible in a harsh way. "[T]o him make-believe and true were exactly the same thing," which proves harmful when the lost boys, Wendy, and her brothers have "to make-believe that they had had their dinners" (79). This magical depiction of a boy who never grows up and a fleeting magical land only for children illustrates that growing up is vital for survival and a deeper sense of compassion for others. Peter is also deeply flawed because while he is "tingling with life," he is "also top-heavy with conceit" (93), like most children who have not yet learned caution or modesty. In Barrie's view, "children are gay and innocent and heartless (161). Even the adults in Neverland are childish. During a battle with Peter, Captain Hook "bit[es] him" (96). Without these impossibilities of Neverland and a child who never grows up, eternal childhood, along with Peter's thoughtless lack of sympathy and irresponsibility, could not be depicted.

Fantasy can also use a journey to symbolize a Bildungsroman, as in Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Ged, the protagonist, summons a shadow in order to prove himself to his peers and to satisfy his own pride. At first this shadow seems like a simple antagonist, but Ged uncovers deeper meaning in the shadow as he matures. Ged initially flees the shadow because he thinks of his shadow as something distinct from himself, not something within himself; he calls it "the evil" (Wizard 71), and believes it "came out of the spell and cleaved to [him]" (72). At this point in the novel, Ged has not yet recognized his own fallibility. As his journey progresses, he begins to admit his imperfections. The proud Ged returns to Ogion, the mage whom he was apprenticed to, and tells him, “I have come back to you as I left: a fool” (137). Humbled, Ged takes Ogion’s advice and pursues the shadow instead of running from it. Ged must realize that the shadow is a part of him. Ged finally comes to see that the shadow is entwined with him, that “[i]t is the shadow of [his] arrogance, the shadow of [his] ignorance, the shadow [he] cast[s]” (72). When he at last confronts the shadow, Ged “nam[es] the shadow of his death with his own name, [and makes] himself whole: a man: who, knowing his whole true self, cannot be used or possessed by any power other than himself” (196). This ultimate act of self-awareness completes Ged’s coming of age. Ged has recognized his own faults, his pride and isolation, and since he understands that these negative traits are an inseparable part of him, Ged can work to overcome his failings instead of ignoring them. Without the magical manifestation of Ged’s dark side, this clear illustration of coming-of-age would be impossible to achieve. As all students are undergoing their own coming-of-age, the process of coming to maturity in *Peter Pan* and *A Wizard of Earthsea* would be pertinent and fruitful topics of classroom discussion.

The imaginative and dramatic dimensions of fantasy literature make it a particularly potent way to examine difficult abstract concepts, especially for children and young adults. One of the most difficult human experiences for adults and children to respond to and understand is death. Fantasy also depicts and addresses death, grief, and healing with powerful symbols and stories. While realistic fiction often tackles the difficult subjects of “sadness and loss,” “a good fantasy story may offer a wider view, perhaps including wonder, and reconciliation or transcendence” (O’Keefe 46). In his essay “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien writes of a *Eucatastrophe*, or “the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous ‘turn’” (Fairy 60). Eucatastrophe is not an escapist concept since it acknowledges “sorrow and failure” because “the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance” (60). When fantasy does not always depict a wonderfully happy turn of events, fantastical commentary on death, loss, grief, and healing enables readers to explore these concepts in a way that is not immediate or stark, but which is often positive and life affirming.

Among many other works of literature, two notable works of children’s and young adult fantasy literature address this subject with unique insight because they can transcend the limitations of realistic fiction. Natalie Babbitt’s *Tuck Everlasting* and Patrick Ness’s *A Monster Calls* treat death with insight and sensitivity. In *Tuck Everlasting*, the protagonist, Winnie Foster, discovers that a family in her town, the Tucks, has become immortal after unwittingly drinking from a magic spring. With this unique use of fantasy to transcend typical perceptions of death as something inevitable and to be feared and avoided, Babbitt enables her readers, predominantly children and young adults, to explore the consequences of immortality along with her characters. In this unique reversal of emotion, Tuck, the patriarch of the family, dreams of going to heaven, viewing this event with wistful longing instead of impending dread. Miles, Tuck’s older son, was once married and had two children, but his wife left him believing that he had “sold [his] soul to the Devil” (Babbitt 39). The other members of the Tuck family face this same apprehension and fear, and so they leave home “just wandering….like gypsies” (39). They each express a wistful sadness for the spring water’s ability to “stop… you right where you are” (41). In Babbitt’s reversal of reality, lingering without change, the absence of death and not its occurrence, is the tragedy. When Jesse Tuck gives Winnie a bottle of water from the spring, asking that she drink it when she is seventeen so that they can spend eternity together at the same age, she instead pours the water onto a toad. At the end of the novel, the Tucks visit her grave and read the epitaph, "*In Loving Memory*[,] *Winifred Foster Jackson*[,] *Dear Wife*[,] *Dear Mother*[,] *1870-1948*" (138). Instead of a morbid defeat, Winnie's tombstone reflects a life well lived. She has changed and grown through having a family of her own instead of remaining unchangeable. Realizing that Winnie chose to move on and face death, Tuck salutes her grave and says, "Good girl" (138). This unique perspective enables readers to view death as a natural and necessary part of life, though not without grief and pain. Without the fantastic spring which grants immortality, this exploration would be impossible and far too abstract, especially for young readers. However, this magical invention allows a realistic and important exploration of human attitudes towards death, and, moreover, a cathartic understanding of grief.

Similarly, Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls* uses fantasy to explore and understand death in a concrete, but nonetheless emotionally powerful manner. The benevolent yew tree monster tells Conor three stories which subvert Conor's and readers' expectations in order to reveal uncomfortable but essential truths. Conor initially thinks of these stories as "cheating stor[ies]" which "sound like it's going to be one way and then it's a total other way" (Ness 98). The monster responds, "Many things that are true feel like a cheat. Kingdoms get the princes they deserve, farmers' daughters die for no reason, and sometimes witches merit saving" (64). In his third tale, the monster blends his storytelling with reality, relating the story of any invisible man who is only invisible because "*people had become used to not seeing him*" (146). Conor, ignored by his classmates, takes on the actions of this mythic character and forces his peers to notice him by "*call[ing]…for a* ***monster***," and fighting the bullying Harry (147). Ness's blend of fantasy and reality powerfully depicts the anger a grieving individual feels, and could even help create understanding between students who are experiencing grief and their peers. Conor tells the yew tree his fourth tale, and in doing so, subverts his own beliefs. In this tale, the recurring nightmare he has had since the onset of his mother's illness, Conor dreams that when another monster, a more sinister being "formed of cloud and ash and dark flames, but with real muscle, real strength, real red eyes…that would eat his mother alive" (179), pulls his mother off a cliff, he struggles to hold on but ultimately lets her go. Conor initially refuses to confront this fact, but he finally admits that the he let his mother go because it was too painful and isolating holding on throughout the laborious process. While Conor blames himself for this act, and wonders if this will cause his mother's death, the yew tree comforts him and tells him that his emotions are "*human*" and understandable (191). This symbolic representation of Conor's desire to move past the uncertainty of his mother's drawn-out treatment prepares him to deal with his grief in a healthy way. Because of this fantastical acceptance of death, when Conor speaks to his mother for the last time, he is able to "h[o]ld tightly on to his mother. And by doing so, he c[an] finally let her go" (205). With this magical aid of the yew tree, Conor goes through the stages of grief, arrives at catharsis, and comes to terms with his mother's death. The fantastical depiction of Conor's sadness, alienation, anger, and fear of loss make this novel relatable for students who have lost a loved one and accessible for students who have not had experience with grief. Ness' use of fantasy is notable because it poignantly depicts the emotions of a grieving individual and thus encourages empathy in all students.

This dual nature of fantastical depictions of death is illustrated by thestrals in the *Harry Potter* series. These creatures first appear in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, when Harry rides in a stagecoach which he assumes is pulled "by an invisible horse" (Prisoner 87), but they are first seen by Harry in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, after Harry has witnessed the death of Cedric Diggory. Thestrals, skeletal black horses with wings and dragon-like heads, are only visible to those who have "seen death" (Order 446). To those unfamiliar with this experience, they are simply invisible and attract no attention. This symbol is an acutely eloquent way of depicting the understanding and empathy grief can sometimes create. When one has known the horror of losing someone one loves, one is able to see more darkness in the world, such as the “horrible horses” Rowling creates (197), but one is also able to connect with others in a way that may have been impossible beforehand. All students can likewise observe this symbolism, but it may have particular resonance for those who have lost a loved one. However, the uninitiated reader, who does not analyze the significance behind these creatures, will not fully understand the thestral and will think of these creatures as nothing more than another magical curiosity. This is emblematic of the way fantasy literature creates a safe distance between the reader and the story while still reflecting the realities, often the harsh realities, of real life. The grief shown by the thestral is distanced from the reader or student who needs an escape, while at the same time it is powerfully poignant to the reader who has known loss.

Fantasy also depicts love, friendship, and sacrifice through uniquely symbolic images and events. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss selflessly “volunteer[s] as tribute” to save Prim because she loves her and cares more about protecting her sister than being safe herself (Hunger 22). Since Harry’s mother sacrificed herself to save him, her love “leaves its own mark” and “give[s him] some protection forever” (Sorcerer’s 299). This love prevents Voldemort from killing Harry as an infant and is a powerful manifestation of protective, motherly love which lasts even beyond death. The initially timid Bilbo rescues his friends from giant spiders and daringly steals the Arkenstone to prevent war because he cares for their well-being. When Percy Jackson and his friends Annabeth and Grover are trapped in the underworld, Annabeth and Grover each volunteer to sacrifice themselves so that Percy can return with his mother. Instead of allowing either of his stalwart companions to remain in the underworld, Percy leaves his mother and vows to return. In many young adult fairy tales the characters must undergo a challenge or journey of self-discovery before they can attain a romantic union. For instance, in *Ella Enchanted*, when Ella breaks her curse, and prevents anyone from manipulating her to harm Char, she tells him, "When you asked for my hand a few minutes ago, I was still too young to marry….I'm older now, so much older that not only can I marry, but I can beg you to marry me" (Levine 229). Likewise, Ani in *The Goose Girl* must gain confidence before she marries Geric. Rose in *East* must undertake an arduous journey to make amends for her curiosity and reunite with "the man who had been a white bear" (Pattou 264). When Rose helps him escape from the vain Troll Queen, the man who was once a white bear also searches for his lost identity before he feels that he can reunite with Rose. He feels unworthy, thinking, "I have nothing to offer her. I do not even have a name" (470). Only once he regains his name does this man, Charles, marry Rose. Each of these examples illustrates the foundation of a healthy relationship of love, in which both individuals are sure of themselves and willing to sacrifice for each other. While the struggles and sacrifices characters make for friendship and love in fantasy are often grand and involve a great degree of magical obstacles, these are no less real and important than the sacrifices students, their families, and their friends might make in their lives. These symbolic difficulties and realistic rewards are a powerful mirror for students' lives.

Thus fantasy literature has value and deserves a place in the classroom, as it circumvents rules of reality which cannot be ignored in realistic fiction. Moreover, fantasy can depict everyday occurrences with a new sense of wonder and add additional power to universal human struggles and truths. Students can easily relate to the dramatized and magical struggles in fantasy. The widespread popularity of fantasy series is a testament to its relatable features. Concepts essential for classroom discussion and analysis of any work of literature are also found in fantasy. The direct and concrete nature of etymology, allusions, symbolism, metaphor, setting, character foils, parallels, allegory, tropes, archetypes, conflict, and theme in fantasy make it an excellent genre to use when introducing students to these concepts. Whether students trace the trope of a moral compass between *The Golden Compass* and *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, compare the characters of Harry and Voldemort, examine the various allusions throughout *The Hunger Games* trilogy, or apply the hero's journey to *The Hobbit*, teachers and students can apply these same principles of analysis to any work of literature, as well as works in other media. The many works of canonical literature which share fantastic elements, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, and *Jane Eyre*, are as worthy of analysis as their purely fantastical counterparts. When students are aware of the connections between these works, they will become more critical and sensitive readers. Again, the concrete nature of fantasy enables classroom exploration of various critical perspectives on literature in an accessible manner. Whether the magical ability to interact with characters from a book by reading them out of a novel in *Inkheart* dramatizes reader response theory, the modern feminist twists on fairy tales as in *Ella Enchanted* show a contrast between traditional fairy tales and feminist theory, or magical quests involve a hero who comes to recognize the help ADHD provides in battles against gods as well as the struggles it causes, as in *The Lightning Thief*, fantasy has the unique ability to very clearly outline critical theories for students. Lastly, because fantasy makes the impossible literal, it can give students clear understandings and powerful illustrations of universal themes, such as love and death. Through looking at strange worlds, magical characters, and fantastic occurrences, students and teachers can see their own world in a different way and grow in empathy and understanding towards others. When a classroom incorporates fantasy into the curriculum, it is thus helpful, engaging, and enlightening.

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