

Prison Reading Groups (PRG) was created in 1999 to set up, support and fund informal reading groups in prisons. We now support more than 60 groups in over 45 prisons nationwide. PRG is part of Give a Book.



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Finding a Good Read: Fantasy

A regular column to help you find a good read even if you can't get to the library yet

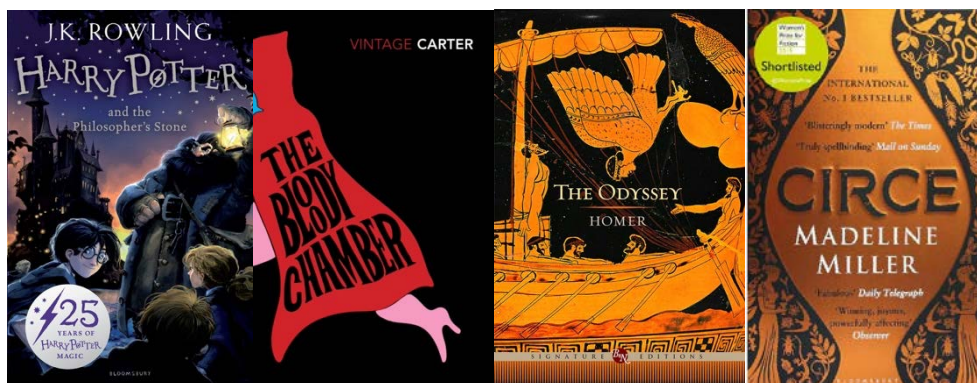
Need an escape? Fantasy books are a great way to transport yourself to a different world. And there's great variety, from dungeons and dragons to wizards and witches, magic, the supernatural, and super-human forces of good and evil.

Two of the classics - JRR Tolkien's **Lord of the Rings** and George RR Martin's **Game of Thrones** are about to wage a ratings super-war between Amazon and HBO. So, it's a good time to get stuck into the original books if you haven't already read them.



Starting early

Fantasy is probably the oldest genre of storytelling and it's the one most of us encounter first, through fairy tales and collections like *The Arabian Nights*. Lewis Carroll's **The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland** is a truly wacky ride and a great read for grown-ups as well. In fact, a lot of fantasy books and series originally marketed for kids are now read equally avidly by adults: JK Rowling's **Harry Potter**, Philip Pullman's **Dark Materials**, Ursula LeGuin's **Earthsea** trilogy. And if you want a really unsettling take on classic fairy tales, have a look at Angela Carter's **The Bloody Chamber**.



Gods on the prowl

Fantasy goes back at least as far as Homer's **Odyssey**, a 2,500 year old account of a hero's journey home amid gods and monsters. Recent re-tellings include Neil Gaiman's **American Gods**, Madeline Miller's **Circe** and Natalie Haynes' **Stone Blind**, about the snake-headed Gorgon Medusa.

Feeding the Habit

There are lots of fantasy series that will leave you reaching for the next book as soon as you finish the one before.

Try Garth Nix's **The Old Kingdom**:

'In the old kingdom, a land of ancient and terrible magics, the orphan Terciel learns the art of necromancy. Not to raise the dead but to make sure the dead do not return to life.'

Or David Gemmell's **The Drenai** series:

'He is Druss, the Legend. His skill in battle has earned him a fearsome reputation throughout the world. But the grizzled veteran has retreated to his lair to await his old enemy, Death.'

Other series:

Stephen King, **The Dark Tower**

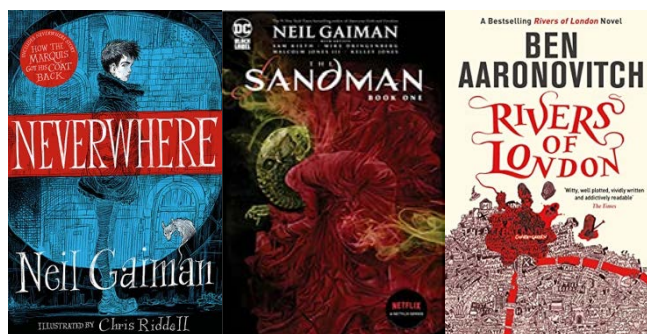
C F Iggulden, **Empire of Salt**

N K Jemisin, **The Broken Earth**



Fantasy cities

Fantasy writers are often attracted to the dark undersides of the city, not least London. Neil Gaiman's **Neverwhere** creates a weird and wonderful alternative version called London Below where all manner of strange things go on. V E Schwab and Ben Aaronovitch go one further and have written whole series about parallel Londons - Schwab's **Shades of Magic** and Aaronovitch's **Rivers of London**.



Graphic fantasy

One of the best-known is Neil Gaiman's **Sandman** series that started life on tv but became much more popular when Gaiman turned the scripts into graphic novels. The cover of the first edition warned: 'I will show you terror in a handful of dust.'

Others to look out for include Alan Moore's **Watchmen** series and Christopher Paolini's **Eragon**.

*If you've read a good book recently send a review in no more than 100 words and mark it '**Finding a Good Read**'. We'll print the best ones. And if you have suggestions for other city settings, let us know and we'll search out some titles.*

