

The Fantasy Genre: Cultural Fad or Personal Preference?

Back in the day, I bet if it came down to it my parents would have been willing to pay me to read a book. And I still might not have. Yet a specific memory of mine involves the book that changed everything: *Shiver*, by Maggie Stiefvater. I remember sitting on the beach reading, around the age of 12, and my mom saying something along the lines of the world having ended because I was reading a book. Thinking back, it is what started my love for fantasy books. While I loved the fantastical aspects of the book in general, I fell in love with the characters and the poetic style of writing in *Shiver*. As someone who has always tended to think too much, the book also offered a brief escape to a snowy world full of wolves and first kisses described as tasting like oranges. Aspiring to be an author myself someday, I can only hope to create one of these fictional worlds that will change someone's perspective just as *Shiver* did mine.

So for me, I guess you could say I am drawn to the fantasy genre for its form of escapism. But what has been drawing others? Over the past few years, fantasy books and movies seem to be a trend in both literature and cinema. From classics such as *Harry Potter* to newer stories including *Into the Woods*, it seems as though the fantasy genre is more prevalent in recent years than ever before. There are an infinite number of reasons possible for this trend, but a few seem the most probable:

- The draw of escapism: perhaps I am not the only one who takes refuge in the magical worlds created by fantasy writers. I think back to articles and general conversations I have had with people that suggest this generation's youth is under more stress and pressure in education than the preceding ones; perhaps the desire

to escape such pressure, as well as the general fast-paced ways of society, are reason for wanting to indulge in a fictional world.

- Snowball effect: it seems as though this trend has picked up speed as more and more books and films of the fantasy genre become popular. However, it could also be taken into account that a lot of today's fantasy movies are adapted from books, meaning that maybe the trend is in book writing, and due to the adaptation of the books into films, the trend is appearing in Hollywood as well.
- Nostalgia: one other possibility for the fantasy trend could be nostalgia. This idea stems from all of the remakes that seem to be coming out, whether it's another Cinderella story or a 3D Beauty and the Beast special. It could be argued that because the current generation grew up on these classic fairytales, these stories are being remade into new fantasy movies to lure the generation that is now young adults into the theater for a bit of childhood nostalgia.

While I do not know for certain why this burst of fantasy exists, or why it's present during this time, or whether it's a trend only in our culture or something global, I believe that no matter what, one overarching characteristic that attracts people to the fantasy genre is its distance from reality. I don't know if it is necessarily that people would get bored with reality, but it's lived everyday, and therefore some bit of a twist is intriguing. And when this twist is written out or produced in a book or film so vividly that it seems it could be real, people become so intrigued with the fictional world that they begin to see it as clearly as the one in which they live, and they desire to visit again and again.