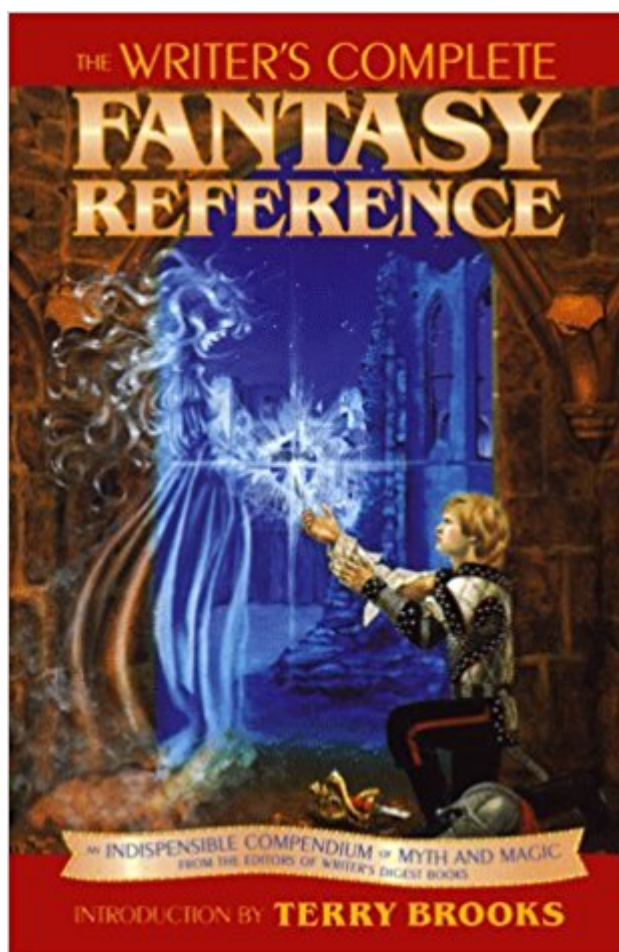


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Writer's Complete Fantasy Reference: An Indispensible Compendium Of Myth And Magic



Synopsis

Featuring an introduction by author Terry Brooks, *The Writer's Complete Fantasy Reference* reveals the facts behind the fantasy, giving you the details you need to make your fiction vibrant, captivating and original. From classic medieval witchcraft to ancient mesoamerican civilizations, every chapter will spark your creativity as it helps you fill your writing with inventive new ideas rooted in accurate descriptions of the world's most intriguing legends, folklore and mysticism.

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Customer Reviews

The fantasy writer has a lot to keep track of: fantasy cultures and races, magic, mythological creatures, unusual punishments, castles and fortifications, and more. Plus, though fantasy writing "must be grounded in both truth and life experience if it is to work," says Terry Brooks (*A Knight of the Word*) in his introduction here, it must also be "as inventive and creative as the writer can make it." Find your groundedness elsewhere. This is the place to turn for all the other stuff. Need a refresher on the difference between aleuromancy (fortune cookies) and alomancy (fortune-telling by salt)? Can't remember the term for starting a new witches' coven (hiving off)? Need a glossary of particularly gruesome punishments from the Middle Ages? It's all here, and more. With illustrations of architectural structures, Maori weapons, and various types of dress and armor; and references to many more sources, should you crave even greater detail. --Jane Steinberg

The title exaggerates considerably, but this handbook does live up to its claim to be "an

indispensable compendium of myth and magic," introducing basic concepts in both areas, drawing on Western and selected non-Western cultures, and bringing the evolution of some of the concepts down to the present, as in the capsule account of wicca, offered for the aspiring urban fantasist. There is also enough illustrated material on the relevant basic historical aspects, with emphasis on northern Europe, to help the would-be fantasist needing help in telling a serf from a fief and a castle from a chattel. Considering the number of published fantasy writers who have run into difficulties at that level, the book certainly deserves wide use, though it would be more helpful above the basic level if it had a reading list. At the level it attains, though, the editors and authors have done a singularly good job. Roland Green

If you have ever thought of writing a great fantasy novel, but were intimidated because you did not know the difference between a cape and a cowl, or an axe and a mace, this book is for you. The authors have superbly listed descriptions of everything from types of dress, typical lifestyles, and governing systems for your medieval settings. Not only is this a great reference tool, but when I am looking to just write for fun (or practice), I often use this book to create a minor scenario that I can build on. I suggest you get this book while it is still available.

I have yet to be disappointed with the books from Writer's Digest, and this is no exception. The chapters are laid out for easy reference for any writer of fantasy fiction.

As a writer working on my first fantasy novel, I found the book to be pretty informative - especially the parts about the various magic systems that could be used in a story. One of my pet peeves about the fantasy genre is a writer who uses a "point and click" style of magic, as though all the wizard has to do is point a finger at a foe and say PRESTO! I feel that the best magic systems in fantasy novels are the ones that involve preparation and cause and effect, and don't just involve making something out of nothing. One of the things that this book does is help the writer map out a believable system of magic, drawing on forms in our world such as witchcraft, voodoo, etc. The sections on using alternate cultures to base your fantasy worlds on (instead of the tired old Tolkien-esque European one) and weapons and armor were also very helpful. While I do agree with those reviewers that said some of the information in this book was nothing new to serious fantasy readers, I still found it to be very useful.

If you're looking for a complete encyclopedia of every fantasy race that ever existed or will ever exist

- this isn't the book for you. Such a book would be impossible to write. If the main character of your story is a whaler and you're looking for minute information about whaleboats and the whale oil industry, you're better off reading "Moby Dick." In-depth information on myriads of historical skills and occupations are beyond the scope of any book. But, if your intent is to write a good fantasy short story, and you need a piece of skeleton to drape the meat of your yarn around, or a spark of context that has the ring of "what's so" to it that will add color to your story, then this book can be a real help to you. That's all it's meant to be. "Fantasy Reference" is rich with hundreds of small "idea catchers" and "concept smoothers" which are the life blood of fantasy story writers. I'm not saying it will replace the research you need to do to write a long novel, but it will surely fill some potholes along the way. What good is giving complete information about a fantasy race that's already been written about? If you read enough fantasy material you know that one person's concept of an elf is quite different from another's. We don't even know what King Arthur or Sir Lancelot were like other than through the eyes of Mallory or Tennyson. The point of fantasy writing is to create your own race. Go find a good book on anthropology and develop your race from reality if your story needs that kind of source information to burn with the fire of reality. Fantasy isn't historical fiction. That's why there's no bibliography at the back of fantasy novels. Good fantasy provides the "feel" of reality without the need for the support of historical accuracy. This book provokes the use of your imagination. It sets the table for you to provide the main course. If you are new to fantasy writing, that can be indispensable. If you're an old hand at fantasy fiction, it is at least a useful reference tool in a field where such tools are often very dated or difficult to come by. A useful tool is what "Fantasy Reference" was meant to be and for that reason I keep a copy on my shelf.

An excellent Reference, I bought this book looking for information like: How many men in a legion? How far does a longbow shoot? And what is a plinth? I was not disappointed. Pro's: Easy to read, covers a lot of ground, including sections on: Arms, Armor and Armies, Creatures of Myth and Legend, and Magic. Well organized, with a complete 14-page index, and a nice cover. Cons: This book is a Fantasy reference, so if you're looking for solid historical fact, look elsewhere. It covers a lot of info, but doesn't tell you how, where, or when to use it. As a Reference I give it 5 stars, and I highly recommend it to beginning Writers and Fantasy Fans alike. If you are looking for a book on how to write Fantasy, check out: How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy, by Orson Scott Card. Another Great book.

A very good book, but also very incomplete. It could easily be twice as large (very small for a

hardback) It also needed various other segments, telling about more mystical races, and what mythologies they come from. Not to mention, segments about the races and magical systems created for fiction (such as something about the races in Wheel of Time, or Sword of Truth). All in all, a good idea, but not enough.

This has some great information on Medieval society, mythology, and many other topics. I did get some ideas while reading it. BUT it needed more information on the things fantasy writers often get wrong. For example, it could have used a whole chapter on HORSES. We all know writers often get the facts about horses wrong. (As Diane Wynn Jones mentioned in "The Tough Guide to Fantasyland," some fantasy writers treat horses like bicycles.) More information about sieges, Medieval villages, wilderness survival tips, and so forth would have been nice, too. (How often have you read a fantasy novel where characters who are supposed to be hiding from their enemies light a huge campfire?) This book also needs a detailed bibliography

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