

Title of Session: Epic Fantasy
Creator: Janet Beasley
Curriculum: ADVANCED

Definition: The fantasy genre in general is considered fiction. In general fantasy will include magic and other experiences that are NOT subject to the laws of physics, and in most cases serve as the prominent element of the story and plot. Imaginative worlds and fantastical/mystical/enchanted flora and fauna, created by the author, are common throughout the genre. Fantasy distinctly separates itself from science fiction by steering clear of a scientific theme.

Epic refers to a large series. When completed the epic story will be at least a trilogy if not several volumes. High fantasy and sword and sorcery fantasy are most commonly thought of when referring to epic fantasy.

Epic fantasy normally takes the reader through years of back story, a quest, or both.

As in high fantasy, exposition will be a key in presenting details when it comes to worlds, universes, and creatures.

Characters will have the opportunity to develop over time. Often times in Epic fantasy you will be introduced to more characters than usual.

The most popular epic fantasies run around 150,000+ to over 300,000 words

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Some say that “epic” does not refer to size, but rather the “epic-ness” of the ambition to reach the end of a quest, usually one that has to do with the “meaning of life.”

The take described in this curriculum will show that both can be interpreted as a epic fantasy, as it is obvious the most popular and successful epic fantasies have been found to combine both “epic” in size AND in ambitions on the quest to the “meaning of life.”

Goals: By the end of the session enthusiasts will be able to identify the features and components that make up Epic Fantasy.

Tools:

If you do not already have them on hand, you will need to borrow from your library the trilogies or first three books from two of the series the list below:

- 1) The Chronicles of Narnia – C.S. Lewis
 - 2) Lord of the Rings Trilogy – R.R. Tolkien
 - 3) Harry Potter – J.K. Rowling
 - 4) Hunger Games Trilogy – Suzanne Collins
 - 5) The Monarchies of God – Paul Kearney
 - 6) Hidden Earth Series: Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy – Janet Beasley
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Ice Breaker:

Divide enthusiasts into two groups

Give each group one of the two series you selected from the above list

Have enthusiasts inspect the novels and compare similarities of each series: story, characters, locations, etc.

Activity:

- **Play video - Fantasy Genre Meet Author Janet Beasley**
- **Does epic fantasy have to stick to elves and wizards?**

No. Epic is a term used to define the size of the series and ambitions. Fantasy refers to the style of fiction.

 - Other popular types of Fantasy which can be written in epic form include but are not limited to:
 - Sword and Sorcery
 - High
 - Urban
 - Dark
- **How many characters should an epic fantasy have?**

In epic fantasy an author normally creates a smaller circle of main characters, but rest assured there will be plenty of other characters along the way to carry the story. The sheer length of an epic fantasy lends itself to such.

 - The main thing to watch is your use of Point of View among all of them. Certainly if no one from your main circle of characters is not present in a chapter your Point of View will shift to whoever is perceived as the main character.
- **Characters will have ample time to develop throughout the series.**
 - Because of the actual length of an epic fantasy series the author will most likely create a multitude of characters. The biggest obstacles in creating and using several characters throughout the series takes discipline. A

suggestion would be to keep an intensive outline as to who was introduced when, when or if they exit, or if they hold any certain magical powers (good or bad).

- **Writing what are referred to as stand-alone books in a series takes discipline in several areas.**
 - The first discipline to discuss will be that of continuity. An example would be that of the law put in place by Janet Beasley in her Hidden Earth Series Volume 1 Maycly the Trilogy, that being Wiskee, a small dog, can only talk on the world of Maycly. In the other volumes in the Hidden Earth Series if Wiskee travels away from the world of Maycly he will not be able to talk, and adjustments in exposition will have to be written to carry the continuity throughout the entire **epic series** with such a law in place.
 - The second discipline would be that of writing a preface. This is where your blurbs from your previous books in the series will come in handy. Take the blurbs from volumes 1-3 and rework the text to fall in line as a story to reveal things such as past history, events, and important elements, and use this as a preface.
 - A preface in additional volumes is a must when building an epic fantasy series.
 - A reader should be able to pick up any book in your series and understand what has been going on from the beginning.
- **Epic fantasy normally takes the reader through years of back story, a quest, or both.**
 - Back story is ever so important in an epic fantasy. In the back story the author can elaborate on places, events, other characters past lives, ancestors history, and more to set the story for the present time.
 - The quest is normally the cruxes of the series
 - At times the back story can also reveal what will happen in the future if certain criteria does or does not come to pass...a prophecy if you will.
 - A quest can also reveal the history, the future, or other important material from a back story.
 - Back story and quests can both be written using exposition and/or dialogue.
 - The back story and quest must have excellent continuity to be believable
- **Do the books in my epic fantasy series need to be considered “stand alones?”**

Yes. A reader should be able to pick up any book in your series and understand what has been going on from the beginning.

- **If the books in my series are supposed to stand alone, how do I present information to let my readers know what happened in the previous book or books in the series if they pick up volume 4 first?**

There are a couple of ways to handle this.

1) This is where your blurbs from your previous books in the series will come in handy. Take the blurbs from volumes 1-3 and rework the text to fall in line as a story being told, and use this as a preface.

2) Though the preface is still a necessary tool however you do not have to delve into spoiler alerts in the preface. You can give the facts, but deliver the details throughout the story using exposition and/or dialogue.

Example of a preface taken from Volume 3 Planet Water Draugar of the Abyss – Janet Beasley:

Maycly was a world everyone longed to experience.

A young, spry Iona lived on Earth in Midland Terrain. She had a wonderful childhood. In her early 20's she was happily married and had become very successful in life. But life took a major turn and she became stricken with stacking chronic illnesses. In addition, her family mysteriously disappeared, she lost everything, and she was left homeless. After years of endless searching for them, she had all but given up hope.

But the Grand Wizard, SUL, had a plan.

At Earth's fiery end SUL was drained of most of his magical power which led to having to devise an alternate plan to bring about His New Earth which would restore and preserve Good and the balance of nature throughout the universe. With what little power SUL had left He asked for Mother Nature's help, once again, this time to create four very small planets to be hidden beneath Maycly. Each planet would be home to a special element that would have to be carried by a chosen individual, known as The Carrier, to a designated place, and position the Element at the right moment for SUL's alternate plan to work.

SUL presented the challenges of the quest to Iona, now Queen of Maycly, and her long time friends. He then asked if they were up to the massive task, and all accepted their duties with honor, and pride for their world of Maycly.

Iona's duty was to travel to all four planets one by one and deliver something special to each Carrier before they placed their elements. Her friends were assigned one planet each where they were to go and protect The Carrier of the Element on that planet throughout their journey.

Time was pressing, so no one lingered.

Iona boarded her mandibleron gyphon, Thassalon and off they soared to the first planet, Planet Land. Iona arrived safe and sound, and she joined her Maycly friends The Man Behind the Dumpster and Artie. In a rootin' tootin' rough-neck fantasy world, Iona and her friends managed to find The Carrier Cub, and Iona delivered the special token.

Iona had confidence that Cub would complete his quest, but there was no guarantee. Torn emotionally, knowing what was at stake if Cub did not get the Element in place on time, she had no choice but to trust her gut feeling and she headed for Planet Water.

This is where our story begins.

Example of exposing needed information, from previous volumes, within the story itself - taken from Hidden Earth Series Volume 4 Planet Sky Search for the Winged Carrier

Through the air at an incredible rate of speed the Queen of Maycly, Iona, along with her dog Wiskee and his icataras Spike, rode on the back of the impressive mandibleron gryphon, Thassalon, straight to Planet Sky. The pleated tails of Iona's green velvet and brown leather long-coat flapped behind her. The living flowers that were normally woven within her auburn braids while on Maycly had all but disappeared. She wiped a few strands of hair from her eyes and tucked them behind her ear. She could feel that her once soft face now shown weathered, and assumed the culprits were the extreme heat of Dry Bone Desert on Planet Land, and the freezing, salty mists of Planet Water. She could not stop thinking about her missing son, Jonji. *All he had to do was stay on Maycly with Cole and await my return. I can't imagine where he's gone. Oh, if only Wiskee could actually talk like he does on Maycly.* She tightened her grip on Thassalon's reins and used the symbolic gesture to pull herself back together.

Shivering from the icy air she had left mere moments ago, Iona nudged Thassalon to pick up speed when the small, welcomed sun of Planet Sky graced her face. As she got closer to Planet Sky she smiled and basked in the serene, warm moment with her eyes closed, reminiscing about all she had been through since living on Earth, and how much more she now not only loved, but trusted SUL, the Grand Wizard, the Creator.

But the serenity of her peaceful thoughts did not last. She heard a commotion from behind. When she turned and opened her eyes she could see flames shooting towards her from the distance, reminding her of the frightening day she and Wiskee left Earth on their way to Maycly, and were stalled over Targrum while riding on her bed. Iona figured Wiskee must have seen the flames too because he howled a wretched cry. Iona hoped she had strapped Wiskee in his saddle good and tight. She coaxed Thassalon to pick up more speed. She felt Thassalon cringe, assuming Spike had dug in deep with his claws at the thrust.

The racket increased steadily. Bracing herself at the rapidly encroaching mayhem Iona

drew her sword. She gave a battle cry out of instinct when the flight of dragons divided and rushed around her with immense force.

Encircled by the flying, scaled beasts who were now matching Thassalon's speed, Iona screamed. The dragons released flames, lightning bolts, frost, and acid that raced toward her from both sides. Quicker than the approaching demises she commanded Thassalon to dive, narrowly escaping. Though on the way down she heard Thassalon screech then felt him jerk and gyrate back to his normal position, assuming some type of dragon breath had made contact on his tail. She immediately pulled on the reins giving Thassalon the signal to fly straight up, and he did.

Iona despised anything that came close to resembling FAZ in any way - looks or actions. But even as despicable and evil as FAZ had been in his days of ruling Maycly, he had done one good thing for Iona, that being giving her the courage to take on any evil.

Discussion:

- Are you planning on writing a trilogy or bigger series?
- Which style epic fantasy are you most interested in, and why?
- Describe your protagonist, story location, or quest.

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No. Epic is a term used to define the size of the novel or series. An epic fantasy can be a sub genre of fantasy such as high, urban, or dark with high being the most popular. Another sub genre that is highly recognized in epic fantasy is sword and sorcery.

How many characters should I have?

In epic fantasy an author normally creates a smaller circle of main characters, but rest assured there will be plenty of other characters along the way to carry the story. The sheer length of an epic fantasy lends itself to such.

What about point of view?

The main thing to watch with so many characters is your use of Point of View among all of them. Certainly if no one from your main circle of characters is not present in a chapter your Point of View will shift to whoever is perceived as the main character.

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