Studies in Literature: Monsters and Magic through the Ages
Summer Reading

Pick One! (Or More!)
All students entering Monsters and Magic should read at least one book from the following list before school begins in the fall. Please make annotations that will help you be prepared for discussion and/or writing related to the book.

NOTE: A number of these books have movie and/or television series versions. You are welcome to watch any film or tv version AFTER you have read the original text. If you do watch a version, make a few notes about how the director adapts/changes the text.

Choose ONE of the following titles:

- The Last Unicorn by Peter S. Beagle
- The Magicians by Lev Grossman
- Dragonflight by Anne McCaffrey
- The Once and Future King by T. H. White
- The Crystal Cave by Mary Stewart
- A Game of Thrones by George R. R. Martin
- The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss
- The Color of Magic (Discworld) by Terry Pratchett
- The Lies of Locke Lamora by Scott Lynch
- The Grace of Kings by Ken Liu
- Eragon by Christopher Paolini
- Assassin’s Apprentice by Robin Hobbs
- The City of Brass by S. A. Chakraborty
- A Darker Shade of Magic by V. E. Schwab

- The Eye of the World by Robert Jordan
- Lord Foul’s Bane by Stephen Donaldson
- Dune by Frank Herbert
- Black Leopard Red Wolf by Marlin James
- The Fifth Season by N. K. Jemisin
- Earthsea by Ursula K. LeGuin
- The Way of Kings by Brian Sanderson
- The Sword of Shannara by Terry Brooks
- Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke
- The King of Elfland’s Daughter by Lord Dunsany
- The Dreaming Tree by C. J. Cherryh
- The Dragonbone Chair by Tad Williams
- Magician: Apprentice by Raymond E. Feist
During the course, we will explore these essential questions:

- Why and how do humans create monsters?
- What purpose do monsters serve in literature, film, art, and in life?
- What is an anti-hero, and how does an anti-hero function in a work of literature?
- How are cultural values (heroic ideals) expressed in literature through monsters and their relationships with humans?
- How are words "magic"?
- How do we "monstracize" (or make into a monster--VJB coined a word!) the "other"?
- What is the purpose of one's existence?
- How does perspective shape our idea of reality? How do the perspectives of others shape us?
- How does mankind decide what is "good"/"right"/"human" versus "evil"/"wrong"/"monstrous"?
- What do monsters and magic teach us about being ourselves, about being human?

As you read, consider how the above essential questions are relevant to the text you select. Annotate for these big ideas as you read.

Our required texts for the course will be


Be sure you have the CORRECT ISBN for each text. We strongly recommend purchasing texts from Wordsworth Books on R Street in the Heights (https://www.wordsworthbookstore.com/). You can order online, and they will ship.

Questions: Contact Ms. Blair: vblair@episcopalcollegiate.org