

Warm-up

- Think about the title of this text. Which arguments do you think the author uses to argue that fantasy readers will save the world?

Fantasy Readers Will Save the World



A persuasive text by Norwegian fantasy author Siri Pettersen

I love fantasy. Always did. I'm proud to read it, proud to write it. So imagine my surprise when I discovered that not everyone shares my enthusiasm. I was far into adulthood when I realized that there are two kinds of people: Those who like fantasy, and those who are dead inside. Naah, but seriously – the fantasy haters exist! I have this from reliable sources. I've been told about parents in bookstores, popping in to pick something up for their teenagers. Frowning parents who proclaim with misplaced pride: "She should read proper books, not fantasy ..." (Cross my heart, this happens!) Apparently, fantasy is not proper literature. It is unrealistic escapism.

Clichéd rubbish, exaggerated and infantile, and certainly nothing for *their* child to numb their mind on.

Their attitude is so outdated they might as well be speaking Latin. It reeks of mold. Criticizing fantasy for being unrealistic is like criticizing the Himalayas for being steep. It's obvious, it's true, and it's an utterly meaningless point to make, serving only to demonstrate people's failure to grasp the fundamental purpose of stories, and the reason fantasy consumption is swelling like a sourdough on steroids.

But you have to forgive them. Most likely, they grew up at a slower pace, with suffering at a safe distance, in a world that would always endure. The '80s films they watched were eerily innocent (I know, I grew up with them, too). Even grim movies would be cute by today's standards. Today, we are drowning in dystopian dramaturgy. In blood-soaked severity. The difference is remarkable – a gaping generational gorge in storytelling. Today's youth are presented with a rawer reality. Often brutal, dark, corrupt and polluted. A world that needs saving. And they love it!

exaggerated – overdrevet
infantile – barnslig, umoden
numb – følelsesløs
outdated – utdatert
reeks of mold – lukter mugg
steep – bratt
obvious – opplagt
consumption – forbruk
sourdough – surdeig
endure – bestå
eerily – uhyggelig
dystopian dramaturgy
– her: depressive handlinger i film
gorge – juv, gap

enthusiasm – lidenskap
adulthood – voksen alder
reliable sources
– pålitelige kilder
frowning – rynket panne
proclaim – forkynne
misplaced pride
– mallassert stolthet
proper – skikkelig
unrealistic escapism
– urealistisk virkelighetsflukt



knockers – kritikere, “dissere”
antimicrobial resistance – resistente bakterier
surveillance – overvåking
epic – legendarisk
evolved – utviklet
fuelled by – drevet av
collective – felles
subconscious understanding – ubevisst forståelse
resonate – gjenlyder
vulnerable – sårbar
pitiful – ynkelig
inadequate – utilstrekkelig, inkompetent
gutter – rennestein
fostered on – oppvokst med
escapism – flukt
progress – framskritt
diversity – mangfold
gender – kjønn
insanely – vanvittig
inherit – arve
coming apart at the seams – går i oppløsning
zombie apocalypse – verdens undergang forårsaket av zombier



This seems to worry the fantasy knockers, but it absolutely shouldn't.

Here's why:

The challenges young people face today are far bigger than ever before: Antimicrobial resistance, surveillance, global warming, water shortage, take your pick ... It's huge. So enormous in fact, that *my* generation has failed to deal with it. So who's going to clear up this mess? Small thinkers? No. We need people who are intimately familiar with big problems. Yes, fantasy is big. It's epic. And surprisingly often it's about saving the world. But guess what? Saving the world is not a fictional problem anymore. It's harsh reality.

Stories have taught us to survive. That's why we love them. That's why we've been sharing them ever since we grunted around campfires. We have evolved, but stories evolve too. They change with us. So when certain stories gain popularity, my theory is that they are fuelled by a collective, subconscious understanding. They resonate because *these are the stories we need right now*. These are the new tools for survival. Fantasy is expanding, and it will keep expanding, because the genre prepares us to tackle our new problems. The really big ones.

Realism loves to tell us that mankind is vulnerable, pitiful, selfish and inadequate. Fantasy, however, pulls us out of the gutter, saying: "Yes, but this is our potential! This is what we are capable of! This is what we have in ourselves to become!" Fantasy gives us motivation and inspiration to stand on our own two feet. To live. To care.

So personally, I am extremely grateful that there's a new generation coming, fostered on so-called escapism. They have read enough dystopias to know that governments can lie. They have read enough science-fiction to know that not all technology is progress. They have read enough fantasy to believe that a single human being can make a difference. And with a growing awareness of diversity, they are learning something even more important: That we are all equal, regardless of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation, and *that was not common knowledge among their grandparents!*

Why is fantasy so insanely popular? It doesn't matter! Let's just be glad that it is! It's more than fine, it's necessary. Young people are reading, playing and binge-watching fantasy because they *have* to. Because they will inherit a world that's coming apart at the seams, and they will be forced to save our asses. Fantasy teaches them to be heroes, and we need heroes like never before. We need people with the courage and will to be larger than life. We need epic. We need hope.

So this is your time, dear fantasy lovers. You are the ones who will survive the zombie apocalypse.



Activities

24 Reading to understand.

- Make a list of the reasons why Siri Pettersen believes that fantasy readers will save the world.
- To what extent do you agree with the arguments that Siri Pettersen makes?
- Find examples in this text to prove that this is a persuasive text.

25 Speaking.

Borrow words, sentences or paragraphs from this text in order to make a speech. The purpose of the speech should be the same as the purpose of the text. **BS 145**

- Give the speech in groups.
- Give each other feedback on the way the speech was delivered.
- Suggest other words or sentences that could have been included in the speech.
- Give the speech once more in groups or record it and send it to your teacher.

26 Formal and informal language.

This is a fairly informal text. **BS 84**

- Find features in the text that identify it as informal. For example, use of exclamation marks (!).
- Choose one paragraph and rewrite it in a more formal style.
- How does this change the way the reader experiences the text?

27 Writing.

You have just read a text about how fantasy readers will save the world. Write a reply where you disagree with the author's points of view. Explain and give examples.

28 Writing.

Write the first paragraph of a fantasy story.

29 Pronunciation.

Practise saying these words with the sounds /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. Use an online dictionary to check pronunciation.

BS 62

imagine, teenagers, child, endure, genre, shortage, gorge, huge, generation, change, knowledge, courage, measure

30 Discussion.

Have a discussion about how fantasy can inspire teenagers.

- Take turns arguing for and against reading fantasy.
- Use as many of these phrases as possible in the discussion.

reliable sources – motivation and inspiration – proper literature – utterly meaningless – make a difference – growing awareness – gain popularity – common knowledge

31 Vocabulary.

Match the expressions from the text with a description of their meaning:

Escapism	Made animal-like noises when sitting together
Reeks of mold	Falling apart
Eerily innocent	Choose
Take your pick	Getting away from everyday life
Harsh reality	Equipment you need for living
Grunted around campfires	Smells rotten
Tools for survival	Watching a whole TV series at one go
Binge-watching	Strangely naïve
Coming apart at the seams	Hard facts