

# TEACHING FANTASY

A resource by Tracey Baptiste

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- 1) Identify what makes a story “fantasy”
  - a. The inclusion of magical systems
  - b. Character(s) with abilities outside of the norm (either magical, supernatural, technological, or superhero)
  - c. A world imbued with fantastic elements, set in the future, or an alternate past
  - d. A world with future technology
- 2) Understand the motifs of fantasy worlds
  - a. Magic
  - b. Other worlds
  - c. Universal themes
  - d. Heroism
  - e. Special character types
  - f. Talking animals
  - g. Fantastic objects
- 3) Compare/Contrast fantasy
  - a. Examination of magical systems
    - i. How are the magical systems different in the Akata series and in Hoodoo?
    - ii. How do magical worlds in the Akata and Jumbies series weave into the “regular” world?
  - b. Examination of different fantasy worlds
    - i. How are cryptids featured in Bayou Magic and the Jumbies series?
    - ii. Compare the cryptids in these books to cryptids in Greek mythology and European folklore (e.g. vampires, medusa, werewolves, etc.)
- 4) Evaluate fantasy
  - a. How do fantasy worlds serve as a metaphor for the human experience?
  - b. How does fantasy critique contemporary or historical political/social systems?
    - i. What social commentary does the Jumbies series make about indigenous vs. dominant cultures, and slavery?
    - ii. How does the 1930s setting of Hoodoo help the reader to examine the socio-political policies of the time?
    - iii. What commentary does the Akata series make about power structures?
- 5) Evaluate the genre
  - a. How have stories about Black superheroes traditionally fit into the comic book genre?
  - b. Examine the heroic cycles of a particular work of fantasy
  - c. How have popular fantasies included or dismissed people from all over the world? (e.g. Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Dr. Who, Star Trek)
  - d. What is your opinion of the place of fantasy in literature?
  - e. What is the role of race and/or culture in fantasy?

## Further Resources:

- Information on Jumbies/Reader’s Guides: <https://traceybaptiste.wordpress.com/teacher-materials/>
- Yale National Initiative: “Fantasy Books: There’s a Whole Other World Out There”  
[http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative\\_06.03.08\\_u](http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_06.03.08_u)