

BARTON

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Dare to Know

Magic Realist Fiction

Fiction in which fantastic or mythical elements are included in a narrative that is otherwise realistic.

A genre that presents a world in which the mundane and the impossible coexist, which blurs the distinctions between the real world and the supernatural realm. Magical realism has its roots in a visual arts movement of the early twentieth century, and the literary equivalent began in Latin America in the 1930s and 1940s. These books do not feature magical creatures such as vampires or sorcerers, but rather focus on supernatural happenings within the normal world. This presence of magic underpins the reality of the plot and is easily accepted by the characters. Authors often employ a substantial amount of realistic detail, which separates these stories from **fantasy fiction**. Alternately, some works present the supernatural as the possible delusions, fantasies, or imaginings of the protagonist; whether this is true is often kept deliberately unresolved. Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1928), Jorge Luis Borges's *A Universal History of Infamy* (1935), Miguel Ángel Asturias's *El Señor Presidente* (1946), Nick Joaquin's *May Day Eve* (1947), Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of this World* (1949), Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955), Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959), and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Characters trying to escape the harsh realities of the real world
Political criticism
Cruel authority figures
Mental asylums
Quirky imaginative characters
Important historical events

Authorial reticence
Amplified air of mystery
Subtle ambiguity
Levitation
Telepathy
Telekinesis

Benefits of Reading

Offers readers an alternative vision of the real world that remains believable
Allows readers to suspend disbelief and accept the story's structure
Encourages readers to be open to magic in real life

Inspires readers to ponder transitions and crossed boundaries in life (e.g., past to present, ignorance to understanding, life to death)
Urges readers to consider the consequences of actions, both theirs and others

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Beasts of Extraordinary Circumstance</i> (2017) by Ruth Emmie Lang
<i>Beyond the Islands</i> (1980) by Alicia Yáñez Cossio
<i>The Book of Laughter and Forgetting</i> (1979) by Milan Kundera
<i>The Carnivale of Curiosities</i> (2023) by Amiee Gibbs
<i>The Curator</i> (2023) by Owen King
<i>Daughter of Fortune</i> (1999) by Isabel Allende
<i>Gold Diggers</i> (2021) by Sanjena Sathian
<i>The Immortals of Tehran</i> (2020) by Ali Araghi
<i>Midnight's Children</i> (1981) by Salman Rushdie

<i>La muerte definitiva de Pedro el Largo</i> (1998) by Mireya Robles
<i>The Oar of Odysseus</i> (2021) by Richard M. Banks
<i>Octavio's Journey</i> (2017) by Miguel Bonnefoy
<i>The Other Valley</i> (2024) by Scott Alexander Howard
<i>The Strawberry Thief</i> (2019) by Joanne Harris
<i>The Sturgeon's Heart</i> (2022) by Amy E. Casey
<i>Things in Jars</i> (2020) by Jess Kidd
<i>Tomb of Sand</i> (2023) by Geetanjali Shree
<i>The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis</i> (1984) by José Saramago