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What Are Some Good Fantasy Books?

Clockwork by Philip Pullman
Illustrated by Leonid Gore  Scholastic, 1998  GRADES 4+

The folks at the White Horse tavern are ready for a splendid evening of terror when their local writer starts to read from his latest scary story. When the story suddenly comes to life right in the inn, Fritz bolts, a little girl named Gretl gives her heart to a prince made of silver, and a clockmaker’s apprentice forfeits his life to a magical figure named Sir Ironsoul.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone by J. K. Rowling
Illustrated by Mary Grandpre  Scholastic, 1999  GRADES 4+

Poor Harry is an orphan, living with his only remaining family, the horrible Dursleys. All his life he’s been told that his parents died in a car accident but the truth is, they were a witch and a wizard and quite famous in the magic world. He learns the truth on his eleventh birthday, the same day he learns he has been accepted to Hogwarts, the famous wizard academy. When school starts Harry finds himself immersed in a new world, where Quidditch is the sport of choice and classes in Charms, Potions, and the Dark Arts are taught. With the help of his friends Ron and Hermione he also battles the evil Lord Voldemort, who killed his parents.

Heavenward Path by Kara Dalkey
Harcourt, Brace, 1998  Grades 4–6

Fujiwara no Mitsuko only wants to be left alone to study the holy sutras, but a ghost demands that she fulfill a rashly made promise. She must repair a shrine in the mountains before her father can marry her off to the Crown Prince. In a world where the beings of folklore and mythology are real she turns to her friend Goraun, a member of the trickster class of
demons called tengu. Together with the priest Dento they fulfill her promise and make a bargain with the Lord of Death.

_The Imp That Ate My Homework_ by Laurence Yep  
Illustrated by Benrei Huang  
HarperCollins, 1998  
GRADES 3–5

The nasty green imp not only eats Jim’s homework, but gets him into all kinds of trouble at home and at school. Why is the imp bothering with him at all? As Jim learns, his cranky grandfather is the reincarnation of Chung Kuei, the legendary Chinese imp-fighter, and the imp has come to seek revenge. Jim’s grandfather joins him in a series of funny misadventures in an attempt to vanquish the imp once and for all.

_Iron Ring_ by Lloyd Alexander  
Dutton, 1997  
GRADES 4–6

Tamar, King of Sundari, shouldn’t have gambled with the stranger, but he did. Now he’s lost his kingdom and probably his life. As a member of the warrior caste it is beneath him to renege on a debt of honor, so he starts on a journey that will take him to his death. Along the way he befriends a troublesome monkey, a beautiful goatherd, and a forlorn eagle who is searching for the magical Fire Flower, a gem of unspeakable power.

_Jane on Her Own: A Catwings Tale_ by Ursula K. Le Guin  
Illustrated by S. D. Schindler  
Orchard, 1999  
GRADES 2–4

The cats with wings are back in this fourth story from noted fantasy writer Ursula Le Guin. In this installment, Jane is bored with life on the farm where things are the same day in and day out. She takes off for a big adventure in the city, ignoring the warnings of the other cats about letting humans see her fly. When Jane arrives in the city, she is lonely. She cannot find a friend anywhere. She dives into an open window only to be caged and displayed by a sweet but misunderstanding man. Jane soon escapes to find her mother and her new home.

_Moorchild_ by Eloise McGraw  
Margaret K. McElderry, 1996  
GRADES 5–7

Mogl is different. Even though she lives with the Folk, she doesn’t quite fit in. Her mother was Folk and her father was human. She is sent to the human world as a changeling, a Folk exchanged for a human child. Mogl is renamed Saaski and lives like a human. But her grandmother, Old Bess, knows that something is wrong. Being different is hard for Saaski as the
village children taunt and tease her. Saaski finds peace and happiness on the moor with her only friend, Tam. When illness and death of livestock occur in the village, Saaski is held responsible. With no hope of returning to her human family, she takes matters into her own hands.

*Outcast of Redwall* by Brian Jacques
Illustrated by Allan Curless  Philomel, 1996  GRADES 5–7

This installment of the history of Redwall Abbey finds the mousemaid, Bryony, fostering Veil, the ferret son of the evil warlord Swartt Sixclaw. Like any doting mother of a young monster, she is blind to his faults and insists that there is good in the young ferret. She is almost proven wrong when Swartt returns with his horde of evil beasts and Veil leaves to join him. After many battles and losses Bryony is able to confront Veil and offer him one last chance to do right.

*Perloo the Bold* by Avi
Scholastic, 1998  GRADES 4–8

Perloo would much rather curl up with his books of Montmer history and mythology, but when Lucabara arrives at his home and demands that he accompany her to the deathbed of his old friend Jolaine, Granter of the Montmers, he must obey. When Jolaine declares him the new Granter and then dies, his troubles begin. Jolaine’s son Berwig wants to be Granter and will stop at nothing to get his way. Perloo’s fight for his life turns into a fight for the Montmer way of life, and the lessons he learns cannot be found in his precious books.

*Searching for Dragons* by Patricia Wrede
Harcourt, Brace, 1991  GRADES 4–6

In the second installment of the Enchanted Forest Chronicles Princess Cimorene, now Chief Cook and Librarian to the Dragon King Kazul, is in trouble. Menedanbar, King of the Enchanted Forest, has come to Kazul for help and Cimorene must finally admit that Kazul is missing. They join together with Morwen the Witch and Telemain the Magician to battle the Society of Wizards, who are plotting to steal the magic of the Enchanted Forest and kill the Dragon King.

*The Secret of Platform 13* by Eva Ibbotson
Illustrated by Sue Porter  Dutton, 1998  GRADES 4–6

Under the old, unused Platform 13 of King’s Cross Railway Station there is a grassy bump called a gump and a hidden door that opens for exactly...
nine days every nine years. The door leads to an island where people live peacefully among ogres and hags and dragons. On the island live a king and queen with a beautiful baby boy. Thus begins the story of the young prince who is carried through the gump only to be kidnapped by a rich, childless woman in search of a baby to call her own. Nine days and nine years later, a rescue team is dispatched to bring the boy back.

*Skellig* by David Almond
Delacorte, 1999

GRADES 4–6

Michael, who is still reeling from the birth of a seriously ill sister and a move to a new house, makes an astonishing discovery while exploring the new property. What he finds isn’t a man, angel, or bird. He is simply Skellig, who is suffering from arthritis, but still relishes Chinese food and brown ale. As Michael and his new neighbor Mina, who has a passion for art, nature, and William Blake, nurse him back to health they realize there is something odd about Skellig’s shoulders. Skellig eventually moves on, leaving Michael and Mina to ponder the mystery of his existence.

*Thief* by Megan Whalen Turner
Greenwillow, 1996

GRADES 5–8

Gen stole the King of Sounis’s ring and is serving his sentence in prison. When the King’s magus offers him his freedom in exchange for stealing something else he accepts the offer. What they are stealing is Hamaithe’s Gift, a mythical stone of great power, created by the old gods. Gen doesn’t really believe the old stories, but he has ample motivation to succeed. Along with two apprentices and a soldier to guard Gen they make the long journey into the mountains. Things aren’t always what they seem, and the magus and his apprentices soon learn some lessons about judging people by their appearances.