



Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons from a Writing Life

By Terry Brooks

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In *Sometimes the Magic Works*, *New York Times* bestselling author Terry Brooks shares his secrets for creating unusual, memorable fiction. Spanning topics from the importance of daydreaming to the necessity of writing an outline, from the fine art of *showing* instead of merely *telling* to creating believable characters who make readers care what happens to them, Brooks draws upon his own experiences, hard lessons learned, and delightful discoveries made in creating the beloved Shannara and Magic Kingdom of Landover series, *The Word and The Void* trilogy, and the bestselling *Star Wars* novel *The Phantom Menace*.

In addition to being a writing guide, *Sometimes the Magic Works* is Terry Brooks's self-portrait of the artist. "If you don't think there is magic in writing, you probably won't write anything magical," says Brooks. This book offers a rare opportunity to peer into the mind of (and learn a trick or two from) one of fantasy fiction's preeminent magicians.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In *Sometimes the Magic Works*, author Terry Brooks mixes advice on writing with stories from his personal experience in publishing. A seasoned fantasy writer with 19 books under his belt, including the *New York Times* bestseller *The Sword of Shannara*, Brooks began his second career in middle age when he gave up his law practice to pursue writing full time. His move was fueled by an obsession with writing, ("If I don't write, I become restless and ill-tempered"), inspiration from J.R.R. Tolkien, and constant encouragement from publisher Lester del Rey. Some of Brooks's advice is specific and useful, such as the chapter he dedicates to the importance of outlining. However, the lessons he tries to tell through his own adventures tend to be self-serving. Still, Brooks's experiences could be particularly interesting and valuable to fans of his fantasy novels--and aspiring authors of their own. --Lacey Fain

From Publishers Weekly

"If you don't think there is magic in writing, you probably won't write anything magical," Brooks asserts in this succinct and warmhearted autobiographical meditation on the writing life. He views his success as a miracle and credits editor Lester del Rey ("What he had given me was the kind of education young writers can only dream about") for his discovery and Tolkien for the inspiration that drove him to choose fantasy adventure as his medium. Brooks, who practiced law before becoming a full-time author, stills finds himself amazed that his *The Sword of Shannara* "sold in record numbers and changed the face of publishing," becoming the first fiction title to land on the *New York Times* trade paperback bestseller list. He still marvels that del Rey chose his first novel to prove that post-Tolkien epic fantasy could sell in vast numbers and that it launched a new generation of fantasy authors. Brooks often refers to his old mentor's sage advice ("Thinking about a book before you wrote it was as important as the writing itself") and promotes outlines ("You can either do the hard work up front or do it at the end"). He also discusses the disappointments encountered in a 30-plus-year career that has seen struggles with a novelization (*Hook*) and less than stellar sales for some works not connected to the Shannara empire; yet he keeps a positive attitude about the writer's never-ending quest, which requires "determination, instinct, and passion."

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From Library Journal

Brooks tells us everything he has learned about writing after giving up lawyering to write sf hits like *The Sword of Shannara*.

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