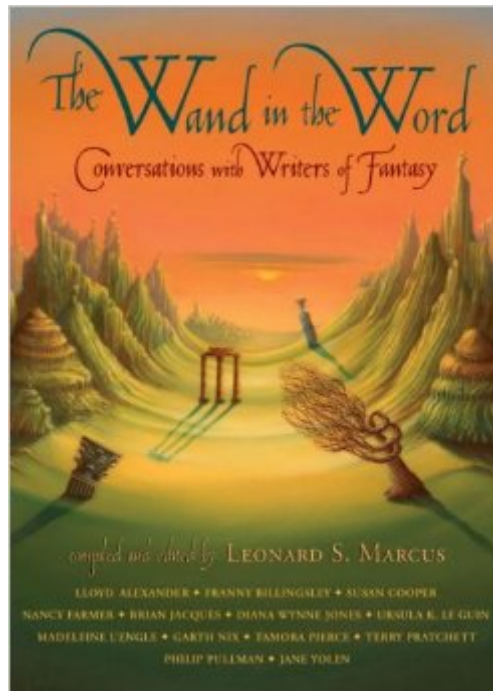


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# The Wand In The Word: Conversations With Writers Of Fantasy



## Synopsis

"Each lively and highly readable interview ends with advice to would-be writers. . . .An essential volume for fantasy readers of all ages." — BOOKLIST (starred review)"Fantasy," writes Leonard S. Marcus, "is storytelling with the beguiling power to transform the impossible into the imaginable, and to reveal our own "real" world in a fresh and truth-bearing light." Few have harnessed this power with the artistry, verve, and imagination of the authors encountered in this compelling book. How do they work their magic? Leonard S. Marcus's incisive interviews range over questions of literary craft and moral vision as he asks thirteen noted fantasy authors about their pivotal life experiences, their literary influences and work routines, and their beliefs about the place of fantasy in literature and in our lives. Includes interviews with: Lloyd Alexander — Franny Billingsley — Susan Cooper — Nancy Farmer — Brian Jacques — Diana Wynne Jones — Ursula K. Le Guin — Madeleine L'Engle — Garth Nix — Tamora Pierce — Terry Pratchett — Philip Pullman — Jane Yolen

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 940L (What's this?)

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Candlewick; Reprint edition (October 13, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0763645567

ISBN-13: 978-0763645564

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #126,919 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Science Fiction & Fantasy #17 in Books > Teens > Biographies > Literary #28 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > Language Arts > Composition & Creative Writing

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

I was into Leonard S. Marcus before it was cool. Really! Okay, fine. I wasn't. In fact, until I read his collection of the letters of Ursula Nordstrom ("Dear Genius") and heard about his Margaret Wise

Brown bio ("Margaret Wise Brown: Awakened By the Moon") I didn't know just what a great editor and writer he could be. But now that he's come out with "The Wand In the Word: Conversations With Writers of Fantasy", I have a feeling his star is going to rise pretty high. Anyone could write a book with an interview by Jane Yolen. You might even be able to squeeze out some interest if you included a talk with Garth Nix. But a glance at the people included in this book and it begins to get a little silly. Lloyd Alexander? He's still alive? And Nancy Farmer? How did he get her? Susan Cooper!! Omigod I LOVE Susan Cooper! There are only thirteen fantasy writers contained in this volume, but with the notable exception of J.K. Rowling, they are undoubtedly the greatest living fantasy writers working today. Most of the interviews were done in-person or over the phone. Two were done via e-mail as well. It's a testament to Marcus's skills (and the verbal gymnastics of his subjects) that the casual reader is unable to distinguish between the live and written. In fact, the eloquence of each of these fantasy writers is the most startling similarity they have between one another. The interviews are presented in alphabetical order with Lloyd Alexander first and Jane Yolen last. In between, Marcus includes photographs of each author's early drafts, pictures of them as children, and the occasional shot of what their workspace looks like. Who knew they even made Terry Pratchett figurines? Marcus asks a sets number of questions of each author. What did they read as children?

Did you know that Lloyd Alexander used his experiences as a soldier in World War II to describe battle scenes in THE HIGH KING? Did you know that Diana Wynne Jones is dyslexic? Were you aware that Madeleine L'Engle plays the piano when she feels writers' block coming on? These glimpses into fantasy writers' lives and works are just a few of the insights gleaned from the interviews collected in THE WAND IN THE WORD. Leonard Marcus, perhaps the preeminent children's book critic, engages 13 authors of fantasies for young people in wide-ranging conversations. Not surprisingly, many of the questions center on the writers' own childhoods, as Marcus asks almost all of them to describe their childhood, their early exposure to books and libraries, their contact with other storytellers, favorite teachers, or other mentors. One common element is the authors' early engagement with J. R. R. Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS; many authors, such as Susan Cooper, mention the books as major influences on their own works, while others, such as Tamora Pierce and Philip Pullman, note that their books run counter to Tolkien's goals. Although Marcus poses many of the same questions to several of the authors, these are merely starting places for what become real conversations, not simply interviews. Like good conversations, these are comfortable, dynamic, and sometimes surprising, as new questions grow

from authors' answers and lead the discussion in new directions. Most interesting to older readers (even to the many adults who relish the works of these fantasy masters) and to aspiring writers will be the authors' discussions of their philosophies of writing fantasy, their writing rituals, and their decision-making processes.

The *Wand in the Word* is a wonderful compilation of interviews with some of the major voices in fantasy literature today. Leonard Marcus begins his introduction by telling us that fantasy writers have not enjoyed the spotlight until recently. This is surprising because fantasy has been in existence for a very long time, not the least of which was Alice's Adventures in Wonderland published in 1865. It is only in more recent years that the Fantasy genre has enjoyed greater popularity and acceptance. Marcus has provided a high interest book that will capture the attention of readers with his one on one interviews with Nancy Farmer, Brian Jacques and Diana Wynne Jones to name a few. Marcus himself conducted all of the interviews included in the book, either in person or over the phone. He includes some access features such as a table of contents, index and most importantly a bibliography for each author he interviews. Of special interest are the pictures of the authors and often a picture of a manuscript page from the author with editing marks and corrections. This allows the reader to see into the author's real life and work process. Marcus begins each section with a short profile of the author he will be interviewing. This is especially helpful because you may not be familiar with the author, their work or details about them. From this he progresses into the interview. Each interview begins with the question, "What kind of child were you?" From this answer he builds upon their experiences to show how it may have influenced their writing, opinions and ideas. He also asks many of the authors if they took advantage of the public library or if they had other readers or writers in their lives.

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