



# Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction: How to Create Out-Of-This-World Novels and Short Stories

*Orson Scott Card , Philip Athans , Jay Lake , Writer's Digest Books*

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Do you envision celestial cities in distant, fantastic worlds? Do you dream of mythical beasts and gallant quests in exotic kingdoms? If you have ever wanted to write the next great fantasy or science fiction story, this all-in-one comprehensive book will show you how. Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction is full of advice from master authors offering definitive instructions on world building, character creation, and storytelling in the many styles and possibilities available to writers of speculative fiction.

Combining two Writer's Digest classics, Orson Scott Card's How to Write Science Fiction & Fantasy and The Writer's Complete Fantasy Reference, along with two new selections from award-winning science fiction and fantasy authors Philip Athans and Jay Lake, this new book provides the best of all worlds. You'll discover:

- How to build, populate, and dramatize fantastic new worlds.
- How to develop dynamic and meaningful themes that will expand the cannon of sci-fi and fantasy storytelling.
- Exciting subgenres such as steampunk, as well as new developments in the sci-fi and fantasy genres.
- How to imbue your tales with historically accurate information about world cultures, legends, folklore, and religions.
- Detailed descriptions of magic rituals, fantastic weapons of war, clothing and armor, and otherworldly beasts such as orcs, giants, elves, and more.
- How societies, villages, and castles were constructed and operate on a day-to-day basis.
- Astounding methods of interstellar travel, the rules of starflight, and the realities and myths of scientific exploration.
- How to generate new ideas and graft them to the most popular themes and plot devices in sci-fi and fantasy writing.

The boundaries of your imagination are infinite, but to create credible and thrilling fiction, you must ground your stories in rules, facts, and accurate ideas. Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction will guide you through the complex and compelling universe of fantasy and science fiction writing and help you unleash your stories on the next generation of readers and fans.

## Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction: How to Create Out-Of-This-World Novels and Short Stories Details


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## From Reader Review Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction: How to Create Out-Of-This-World Novels and Short Stories for online ebook

### Aurora Morales says

I found the initial section by Orson Scott Card excellent, but the reference section was offensively Eurocentric. According to the World Cultures chapter, Africa consists of Egypt, the Americas are the Aztecs, Incas and Olmecs, and Asia is China. Instead of endless escapades based on English, Celtic and Norse royalty and mythology, I would really love to see a flood of fantasy and SF novels and short stories set in worlds based on the rich and deep cultures of indigenous America, Asia, Oceania and Africa--the fantasy equivalents of Tony Hillerman's Navajo mysteries, magical worlds based on the Yoruba tradition of Ifá or Maori myth, or the Mapuche of Tierra del Fuego, or Amazonian Yanomami, Laotian, Masai, Inuit, Garifuna, Kurdish, or Basque cultures. How about medieval stories set in the Islamic world, or India? As a Caribbean woman of many heritages, I loved Olivia Butler's *Wild Seed* for having special powers rooted in an African past. Seriously, a "Complete Reference" for fantasy writers has got to do better than this.

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### Michael says

Full disclosure: I didn't actually finish the book.

Let me explain. The first section is a copy of Orson Scott Card's *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*. The remainder is a series of essays/chapters discussing different aspects of speculative fiction, from characters archetypes to creatures to races.

Naturally, I'm using the last sections of the book as reference/occasional reading as it becomes necessary, but the structure of the chapters (often categories and lists of definitions) don't lend themselves to page to page reading.

All in all, I enjoyed the book. Card's section is focused more on Science Fiction than Fantasy, but there are useful tips for all speculative writing and I'm sure I'll reread dog-eared pages in the future.

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### Siobhan says

A thorough discussion on writing fantasy, sci-fi and related genres. A good book will make you think and this one did. There are some common sense words of advice that perhaps some people do need to hear and that those who know it already need to be reminded of. It did come out in 2013 so the discussion about authors publishing their own works in the realm of e-books is likely a little outdated by now but I don't see that it has changed very much. The discussions around naming genres and how in different times and places the naming of genres has been different I found to be interesting. I appreciated the section which talked about the term "urban fantasy". Perhaps some people would rather not anchor their works to any specific genre hoping to get more readers but there are differences within them. For example, I don't consider vampires to be sci-fi at all but the tv shows, movies and books of vampires are often lumped in with the label of sci-fi. To me the name "urban fantasy" makes perfect sense. I also liked the interesting discussion about an opening line in a modern book of why it works so well. There is a glossary of terms as well as a section with short

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descriptions of various cultures which is very helpful if you plan on writing a story that would involve those terms or histories. They can be an interesting spin off point as well to coming up with ideas for writing. But if you like me, your attention span changes when you read a book or sections of a book that include glossaries or small studies of many cultures. So you might do better leafing through this section and reading the entries that pull your eye.

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### **Travis Cottreau says**

This was ok, but felt like almost an afterthought.

I enjoy lots of Orson Scott Card's books, but felt this should have been better.

There are a few ideas to take from it, but I didn't think an entire book was necessary to convey it.

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### **Daniel B-G says**

Disappointing. There were a number of useful reference tables in here, much of which was stuff I was quite comfortable with, but this is very light on practical advice, which isn't really acceptable for a book that claims to tell you how to write great SF&F. It's worth addressing it section by section.

- 1) Orson Scott Card - This section was written in the 90s and it shows. There were a few interesting insights, but this was a direct reprint of another book.
- 2) Phillip Athans - This industry update was insightful, but I don't know why it was included at this point in the book. I get the impression sequencing was done in order of prestige.
- 3) Jay Lake - Steampunk is now quite clichéd, not something exciting and new so I feel this section is a little out of date.
- 4) Michael Varhola - This is where things really started going downhill. Not enough information to be interesting or informative, too much detail to be a summary. This would be better with a brief description followed by recommended reading for independent research.
- 5) Alla Maurer and Renee Wright - Dire, I don't know what this wanted to achieve, don't really care. I think it wanted to survey real world magical beliefs, but again, it struggled to hold interest or give anything specific of help.

I skimmed from here on out. I may use the tables in future, but the rest was fairly dire.

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### **Joel Flank says**

This is essentially three separate books merged together to create a useful reference on writing fantasy and science fiction. The first part, written by Orson Scott Card, is the only part explicitly about writing, and is also by far the best part of the book. He talks about the market, what makes a story science fiction or fantasy or not, and creating a different world. Lots of great advice here, as well as specific examples, from both his career and from other authors. This section is 5-star.

The next section is an overview on the "modern" market for SF and Fantasy - with modern being 2012 when it was written. This is a bit dated already in 2018 with lots of the advice about self publishing and publishing on line having turned from a nascent new thing into a well established part of the publishing world. There's also an overview of steam punk, which also is not as new and different as it was in 2012.

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The third, and largest part of the book is a variety of reference chapters, covering topics such as medieval government, society, actual real world magic beliefs, military, weapons and armor, anatomy of a castle, etc. Super useful for those who aren't as familiar with these topics, and also a great primer and reference even for those who know about the basics - it makes a good place to start - find what you're looking for, and then research further when you've narrowed in on what you might want to use to inform your own writing. Parts 2 and 3 of the book are less groundbreaking and insightful than part 1, and I'd give a 3-star rating to. Useful, but nothing earth shattering. Combine the ratings to get the 4-star review I'm giving the book as a whole.

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## **Douglas Owen says**

Really? Are you sure you have the title correct?

The reason I say this is because this book started by explaining the different genres of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Not bad for the layman who is just exploring it, but for the avid reader and budding writer it is not needed. Heck, I know what Steam Punk is, so why did you find it necessary to try and explain it for 10 pages?

From there it went down hill.

The next section started to explain the hierarchy of society, the basic types of tribes of man around the world, and the different types of magic. Really? When do you start talking about writing? I skipped a lot of pages since I've been reading Science Fiction and Fantasy for around... Oh, 40 years. They missed very little except how to incorporate their information into a story. This book should be titled "Basic information on what should go into your book: Warning, very dry. Dryer than your 5th grade text book!"

So, it is a reference book, and that is it. Nothing more, nothing less.

What a waste for me.

I could have told them a few things they missed about magic and its usage, as well as building different races and more.

Sorry, got it as a gift and did decide to read it. Just an info dump of a book that most writers really don't need to look at.

Hope that saves you the \$20 odd bucks it costs.

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## **Matthew Cirilli says**

In addition to the 100 pages or so by Card, there are also two essays by other authors. I think that the many glossaries of various fantasy related terms is really one of the most valuable parts.

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## **Fernanda Brady says**

Took me a while to finish as I re-read sections and took notes. Great resource. Highly recommended to those

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interested in writing or understanding this genre!

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### **Dan Guajars says**

Es un libro interesante, en el que aprendí la estrategia del M.I.C.E. que utilizo frecuentemente para destrabar mis arcos argumentales. Tiene buenos ejemplos y da buenos consejos.

El único problema es que el autor es uno de esos homofóbicos furiosos que buscan pasar leyes discriminatorias. Así que si no te molesta que el tipo sea un pelmazo y un boludo, entonces este manual te va a servir un montón para enfocar tu escritura de fantasía y ciencia ficción.

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### **Kathleen Flynn says**

I found parts of this guide very interesting, like the sections about structure and the different types of stories. The steampunk and magic chapters were also fascinating. Since I am not planning to set a fantasy novel in medieval Europe, among the Incas, or involving elves, etc., I skimmed many sections, but others may find them useful. This book was marred for me by some strange lapses and clearly could have used more careful editing, for example when Orson Scott Card makes a Jane Austen reference but seems to conflate the plots of Emma and Persuasion.

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### **Alex says**

I found this book leaned much more towards fantasy than sci-fi, so buyer beware if sci-fi is your writing genre of choice. For those interested in writing fantasy, this has a good glossary of terms related to medieval castles, clothing, weapons, and a surprisingly deep exploration of the beliefs and functions of magic throughout history. The beginning also gives a nice reference list of magazines and publishers you may want to subscribe to in order to know what's currently on the market. (Most are still relevant today)

If you own more than one fantasy/sci-fi writing book, this should probably be one of them.

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### **James says**

Not bad, but I have one serious problem with this book - over 100 pages of it, Orson Scott Card's section starting the book, is reprinted word-for-word from Card's earlier (1990) book titled How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy. There is nothing in the online listings or on the cover indicating that this content, over a quarter of the book, is not original - no way to see it without buying the new book. I don't know whether this was Card's decision or that of the editors or publisher, and I don't know whether any of the other authors' content is also reprinted (I have an earlier book by Athans and his material here is new relative to that book, although I don't know about other earlier work of his.) But I feel that whoever made the call on the Card content is being less than honest with their readers.

I must admit that the recent revelations of Card's racist and homophobic politics leaves a sour taste in my mouth anyway, and I won't be buying any more of his work - while the personal failings of artists do not necessarily make their work less in quality, I'm one of those readers/listeners/film-goers that can't get past

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the issue - same reason I can't enjoy films or music by artists who I've learned are abusive human beings.

The rest of this book is indeed excellent, and it's a shame that such outstanding and useful content by such excellent authors is at least somewhat overshadowed by this business with Card's section. The whole middle and much of the latter part of my copy is a forest of little post-it flags, and I'll be going back through it over and over, taking notes wherever they apply to things I'm working on. If it was just the Card part, I'd give it maybe two stars, but I'm giving it four for the sake of the other contributors.

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## **Chrissy says**

Mostly enjoyable and useful.

Orson Scott Card's advice for important works of fantasy and sci-fi has made my reading list so much bigger and I think several books will be his.

The biggest problems with the book on the whole were that several of the contributing writers would make sweeping statements about history that need sourcing (I had always been under the impression that writers should be careful with their accuracy for fear of their readers losing trust in them) there were several occasions where the writers made brow raising statements about historical facts.... Off the top of my head Michael J. Varhola defines a Jannissary as "A Christian child raised to be a soldier by the Ottoman Empire. Jannissaries were fierce, dedicated soldiers and often used as shock troops." see from Wikipedia "They began as an elite corps of slaves made up of kidnapped young Christian boys who were converted to Islam, and became famed for internal cohesion cemented by strict discipline and order. Unlike typical slaves, they were paid regular salaries. Forbidden to marry or engage in trade, their complete loyalty to the Sultan was expected."

Other than that the book temporarily came to a screeching halt when I reached Philip Athans' section and oh god did he feel the need to pander to women, so strong was his need to find SOME in fact ANY woman writer to praise that he shill for Stephanie damn Meyer. Yeah that makes you credible.

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## **Kristy says**

If a little dry in places, this makes an excellent reference work for anyone thinking to write a fantasy or sci-fi novel. Most of the resources and lists seem geared toward fantasy, offering terminology and ideas that way, while the sci-fi section is more to get you to think creatively about your new world. It's something to have on the shelf for when you're not sure about what a cuisse is and if your character needs one.

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