



Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons from a Writing Life

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.

Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons from a Writing Life Details

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From Reader Review Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons from a Writing Life for online ebook

Sabine Reed says

A must read for all writers of any genre. Fascinating. Fantastic. Great Advice by a veteran author.

Glen Stott says

This is an autobiographical description of Brooks's life as an author. He grew up in the same time period as I. His creativity was challenged and honed by the lifestyle he lived growing up in the 50s & 60s. He always wanted to be able to make a living through his writing. I always wanted to write, but in those early years, I never thought of writing as a career. Mixed in with his writing, he gives good advice about things a good novel should have. I have a mini library of books on writing that give deeper detail than what he presents, but this book is useful to me because it summarizes many of the points that are in my library. It makes a great reference that I will refer back to often. His experiences of what it is to be a writer and how that impacts life are very well put. It is a great book for writers, people who want to write, or people who are interested in writers.

Alexander Draganov says

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<http://citadelata.com/sometimes-the-m...>

Robynn says

Recommended to me by a non-writer, and I bought a used copy off Amazon. Really enjoyed reading about a long-term writer's views on the journey, and get a little history on the publishing industry. No earth-shattering surprises on the advice front, but a very upbeat yet practical look at one man's love-affair with writing fiction. I closed the book feeling good about the world. Always appreciate when that happens.

Eric says

Everybody likes to gang up on Terry Brooks. I don't know all the reasons except the biggest, that "he's a Tolkien copycat." (He addresses this in the book.) I don't really have an opinion on that because I haven't

read Brooks since I was twelve or so, and I read his stuff before Tolkien's. But I'll always have a foot in Brooks' camp because I spent years staring at his book covers on our shelf before I was finally old enough to read them, and *SWORD* and *ELFSTONES* were some of the first adult books I read.

Anyway, I liked this book on writing. It's a relaxing, easy read. He had some interesting things to say, particularly about the publishing business.

James says

A nice, friendly, inviting read. The author conveys a warm message of encouragement and camaraderie to aspiring writers; a bestselling author, with this book he shows that he is also an effective tutor and mentor. For any aspiring writer, this is a good book to read and re-read.

Rachel Marks says

This book was huge encouragement to my work early on in my path toward publication. An honest and forthwith look into the creative process. It was an encouragement and a reminder that I'm not alone in this wicked journey of crafting worlds. Highly recumbent. I still find myself returning to it.

Bob Mayer says

I taught with Terry at the Maui Writers Conference for seven straight years and we still keep in touch. This book is a great insight into his process as a writer and his career arc. I like it simply for the title, because he acknowledges that there is an element to successful fiction writing that is magical. But you have to work to get to the magic.

Steve says

Brooks confirms about writing what I have long suspected is true about most careers: some people are born with a passion that will guide them into their vocation, and others aren't. It's like knowing wizards exist but being fully aware that you are a Muggle.

I am a Muggle. I so wanted to be a wizard, and I believed I would be if my Dumbledore would just show up. I've written before about this and blamed it on reading fantasies like those of Terry Brooks, and I still do. So it was very validating for me to read him verifying what I believed. He pointed out in the final chapter that to be a writer you need determination, passion, and instinct. I believe I have the first and last, because it shows up in every job I've had, but I'm not passionate about anything, and I never have been.

I am not saying this to put myself down, just to make a declaration that is okay to be a Muggle, and it's nice to know that at least one wizard believes that, too.

Ashley Newell says

Firstly, I have never read anything by Terry Brooks. Yes, I know, I am not worthy. Now that that's been cleared up, I need to say how empowering, validating, and almost spiritual reading this book has been for me. I self-identify as a writer, and though I have yet to be traditionally published, I felt so much relief hearing (or I guess reading) someone put into words things that I have felt about being "not all there". I do not come from a family of writers. I did not have a model for what it is that I do. I had an imagination, one that could get me into trouble from time to time, and one that makes me sound like a crazy person if I try to explain how things work in my head even today.

And while I don't imagine that I'll be working with the greatest founding editors and publishers, or be hand-picked by a famous creative mind like George Lukas to stretch my creative wings, I see my future in these pages as all being the balance of the choices I make and the opportunities I may or may not shut the door to.

I could not put this book down. I walked through Brooks' journey with him, like Dante and Virgil, all the while comparing my process, my craft, my hopes, my fears, and knowing that I have no idea where any of this is going. I can dream, and as Brooks' says, that's the first step to getting anywhere.

So, not so much a review as a "Thank you." I didn't even know how badly I needed to see someone else's journey. I have a lot to think about now.

Ryan says

I wonder at what point a writer is asked to write a book about writing? Obviously after they are successful by some standard, and that is probably after they've been doing their thing for awhile. The title of this grabbed me - I'm a big believer in magic, and I seem to be reading about writing just now.

I liked the quotes that framed each chapter - "I am incomplete without my work. I am so closely bound to it , so much identified by it, that without it I think I would crumble into dust and drift away" (a bit close to home, that one); "I cannot imagine life without books anymore than I can imagine life without breathing" (reminded me of Scout's discovery that she did not love to read until it might be taken away)

And this sentence was especially worth noting: "Everything begins in the middle of something else" - very nice. And true. Fits in with Agatha Christie's idea in *Toward Zero*.

It was interesting to compare the writing approaches of Brooks and King. They are different, but really only in how they manifest themselves. Both believe in some type of organization - Brooks focuses on organizing the content; King, on organizing the space within which the writing of the content happens. Brooks believes one needs to be available when the muse decides to arrive; King believes he needs to be in the same place at the same time - the muse will arrive as it will, but will always know where to find him. Not so different really. Woolf tends to be of the King School (or perhaps he is of the Woolf school - place of one's own, where you can go and shut the door). I suspect I lean in the Woolf school direction - there is a sense of tidiness and control to that approach that appeals to me. On the other hand, my best thoughts occur when I'm driving or in the shower...most of those never make it to paper. My guess is both authors are used to being compared - perhaps Done being compared. Woolf probably doesn't care so much anymore.

There was a sense that the questions he answered were those he was asked most often. I don't know that I would have asked those - not sure I would know what to ask, actually...I'm more interested in the product than the producer, I guess. As with King, there was a personal touch - the stories of Hunter. I love that he needed to include stories of this child who is obviously so important to him.

Nicky Nicholson-Klingerman says

Definitely made me feel a lot better about my writing process and the fact that my head is always in the clouds and I'm always, always thinking about writing. But on the whole, this is a white man in publishing, not a queer black woman so his journey is way different than it will be for me so a lot of it wasn't helpful. His advice, as most white male authors' advice usually is, does not take into account gender, race and sexuality barriers for other people.

Ellie says

I'm not a fantasy reader. I've never read Terry Brooks. But I love reading artists and writers describe their art and their process, which is what drew me to Brooks' book on writing, *Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons from a Writing Life*.

And it's wonderful. I found myself copying quotes like crazy. I found myself getting excited about *outlining*, for heavens' sakes! I loved his stories from a writer's life and I found some of his ideas so compelling I had to stop reading and go write.

Or go, as Brooks puts it, and "dream."

James Joyce says

A few chapters on his approach to writing. Basically, a minimalist version of his how-to guide, but not the real focus of this book. This is primarily a memoir of various highs and lows in his life.

Light and fluffy, but of interest to any fans of Terry Brooks, in particular, or author's memoirs, in general.

Jeff says

Terry Brooks offers an honest report of his writing life and things he has learned. He offers counsel to would-be and current writers, but I especially liked the distillation of what he has learned through his writing life. He reports the things he learned from failures and wrong turns. I especially liked the revelations he received from his Grandson Hunter. I will be referring to this book repeatedly.
