

MAGICAL REALISM

Magical Realism is a literary movement that jumbles together the **fantastic** and the **mundane**. The fantastic is anything that bends the rules of reality as we know it. The mundane is the opposite. It's the everyday stuff: sleeping, eating, family, work. The authors love to depict the mundane, everyday world we know all too well—but then they inject it with some fantasy as if fantasy were the most normal thing in the world.

In a Magical Realist novel, you'll find lots of descriptions of regular people doing regular things. But turn the page, and these same people might grow wings and fly, or move between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Magical Realism is defined by contradiction. On the one hand, it draws on the Realist tradition in literature, which was all about depicting the world as we see it, with all its everyday details and all its many problems. But on the other hand, Magical Realism fills this Realist world with the fantastic, the extraordinary, and the supernatural.

The authors often turn to myths for inspiration and make use of the fantastic elements of myths in their own works.

If there's one author who's a superstar within Magic Realism, it's Gabriel García Márquez. He made Magic Realism into a global phenomenon with the publication of his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In fact, he won the Nobel Prize in 1982 largely because of his role in the development of Magic Realism.

In Márquez's works, anything can happen. People fly when they drink hot chocolate, an old man with enormous wings lands in someone's backyard, a baby is born with a pig's tail. Márquez is famous for his narrative style, which treats these magical events like regular, everyday occurrences.

Adapted from: www.shmoop.com

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes" a man finds an angel with "huge buzzard wings, dirty and half-plucked" in his courtyard after a rainstorm. Still, the extraordinary is firmly rooted in the ordinary. The story is filled with human characters, such as the man's feverish newborn and the local priest. And the story is anchored in details the reader recognizes from his or her own reality: rain, sea and sky, a chicken coop.

In Garcia Marquez's "Cien años de soledad", Mauricio Babilonia is always followed by a fluttering of yellow butterflies. This is a fantastic detail, yet it is based in reality. In an interview Garcia Marquez shared this anecdote:

When I was about five, one day an electrician came to our house in Aracataca to change the meter . . . On one of these occasions, I found my grandmother trying to shoo away a butterfly with a duster, saying, 'Whenever this man comes to the house, that yellow butterfly follows him.' That was Mauricio Babilonia in embryo.

Garcia Marquez exaggerates this occurrence in "Cien años de soledad", but he's also highlighting the very real kind of magic that exists in our daily lives.

Fantasy is very different. While magical realism situates readers in a predominantly realistic world, fantasy takes place in an unreal world with unreal characters. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is a popular example of fantasy. The trilogy's characters include Hobbits, who are little people with big feet, as well as Elves, Dwarves, Fairies, Ents, and Wizards. It also features a ring that bestows power but corrupts those who possess it. Fantasy creates different places and species, ones that exist outside of our world. While magical realism stays grounded in our own reality, fantasy breaks free of it.

Adapted from: www.writingclasses.com

Magical realism is often associated with Latin American literature.

Consider this: fantasy tends to come from Western writers, who live in nations where "peace, order, and good government" more or less rule. Oh, there are wars and depressions and tragedies, but by and large, the phones work, the roads are smooth, and you're not likely to be massacred without warning.

Magical Realism comes from more troubled lands. *The Famished Road* in Nigeria; *Casa de los espíritus* about a family living through turbulent times in Chile; *Cien años de soledad* in Colombia. Perhaps their magic is random, surreal and arbitrary because their worlds are more random, surreal and arbitrary.

Take Colombia in Garcia Marquez's time. It's a place where strange things happen. Once the mayor of Bogota hired 420 mimes to control the city's rush-hour traffic by mocking jaywalkers and reckless drivers. Garcia Marquez's friend once rode to their local bar on an elephant to convince the owner to open early.

Amusing stories ... but lurking behind and fuelling all this charmingly erratic behaviour is the story that no one wants to talk about: La Violencia, Colombia's endless and ongoing history of terror and civil war that has killed hundreds of thousands and rendered millions homeless. When you live amid papered-over blood-soaked horror, the surreal can become normal and the insane can become rational. That's the well that magic realism draws from.

Adapted from: www.tor.com