Hello fellow readers! This week's column is another by Lily Collins, a staff member at the Kirkland Town Library and a rising senior at Clinton Central School.

Fantasy is my favorite genre of books. I truly believe that the closest we can get to magic in real life lives in the pages of books. When it all boils down, I believe it's because of world-building. When I read, I'm able to be transported to an entirely different world than the one I'm living in. And I understand that's not for everyone- and it doesn't have to be! Nonetheless, I think there are some misconceptions about that genre that stop people from being able to delve into these stories.

One major misconception about fantasy is that it is only high fantasy, a world where there are dragons and magic and heroes. However, there are a lot of different possible fantasy settings. There's the urban fantasy setting, where the world we know is changed by a few details. There are dark fantasy settings, which can be more typical horror. The one thread that ties all the different fantasy settings together is something happening that would be impossible or magical in our world.

Another barrier may be the length of some fantasy novels. It can be hard to find fantasy that operates in a stand alone scenario. However, most of the stories told can be self contained to one book or trilogy. The world that is created in fantasy, however, cannot be. The reason that some series have so many books in them is because there are so many stories to tell! When an author builds an entire universe from the ground up, there are parts of the world that can't be discovered in one book (or two or five.) As such, readers want to explore other parts of the world.

In some settings, that's not necessary. A book I read recently, *They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera, set up a fascinating world where 24 hours before you die, you get a call informing you of your demise. Readers never learn exactly how the world works, but by exploring it through the last day of the characters, it is a satisfying experience. However, there are some settings where the world the author has thought up is so vast, there are tons of stories to explore.

For example, take Cassandra Clare's *The Shadowhunter's Chronicles.* There are five different series within the universe. In the first, *The Mortal Instruments*, Clare establishes the reality of the world in a modern urban setting. She then explores different parts of the world in the same era in two other series. In *The Infernal Devices,* readers travel back to the late 1800s to explore both a different geographic region and a different time period. The world-building of *The Shadowhunter's Chronicles* is vast, and there is a lot of lore to be discovered. However, they're also very well written books that tell an interesting story.

Looking at a series with over 20(!) books can be intimidating, but with many of these series, instead of a single story in which you need to read every book to understand what happens, it is just many different stories taking place in the same world. A lot of what the fantasy genre is, especially in books where world-building is a major component, is exploring the world

that the author creates by seeing how the characters interact with it, and how they interact with each other.

Although I love the genre, there are also several flaws embedded into it. The majority of hallmark fantasy novels are written by male authors, and very few feature women in a positive light, if at all. However, as a woman, I don't think that should be a barrier to the Fantasy genre. I got into fantasy by reading more contemporary books that had female protagonists- then I went back and read others that didn't have as much female representation, because I wanted to know more about the sources of the genre that I loved.

I think that being able to be transported to another world is a superpower that only fiction can give us. I love the genre because of its transportive abilities and also because it's fun to read about dragons! I encourage you to give this genre a try!