The Role of Fantasy Literature in Providing Psychological Escapism and its Impact on Teenage Readers' Mental Health in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: This extended essay explores how fantasy literature affects the mental health of teenage readers in Sri Lanka and how it serves as a psychological escapism. Using Freud's theory of defense mechanisms, specifically escapism, the study investigates how fantasy literature allows teenagers to escape from the challenges and obstacles of their daily life. The study, which used a mixed-methods approach including surveys and interviews, found that fantasy literature plays an important role in helping Sri Lankan teenagers manage stress, improve their mood and provide emotional relief. However, the study also reveals potential negative consequences of extreme escapism, such as social isolation, academic negligence and loss of reality. The findings highlight the importance of taking a balanced approach to fantasy literature, incorporating real-world obligations and social interactions to promote overall well-being. The study concludes with recommendations for encouraging balanced reading habits, establishing support structures for teenagers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Fantasy literature has a special place in readers' hearts because it provides an escape from the mundane realities of life into fantastical worlds led by magic, enigmatic creatures and epic adventures. Teenage readers find the experience enticing, because they are going through a crucial developmental period and struggle with identity, stress and complicated emotions. Fantasy literature acts as a refuge for teenagers, allowing them to negotiate their internal and external issues in a world other than their own. Fantasy literature is also quite popular in Sri Lanka, a nation renowned for its diverse and rich cultural background. Teenagers in Sri Lanka, who deal with a lot of pressures including social dynamics, academic pressure and the difficulties encountered as they grow up, use fantasy fiction as a form of psychological escape. There is little information on how fantasy literature directly affects the mental health of teenage readers in Sri Lanka, despite the genre's broad appeal. In order to fill this knowledge gap, this study looks at how fantasy literature helps Sri Lankan teenagers escape psychologically and how that affects their mental health. The objectives of this study include looking into the ways that fantasy literature can be used as a psychological diversion, assess how it affects readers' mental health, investigate the specific aspects that make it so escapist, look into the differences in reader demographics who use it, and find possible therapeutic uses in mental health settings. This research is significant because it has the ability to shed light on the mental health issues that Sri Lankan teenagers

encounter and examine an approachable coping strategy. This study aims to provide educators, parents and mental health professionals in Sri Lanka with the knowledge to better support teenagers in managing their mental health by understanding how fantasy literature can act as a mode of psychological escapism. Additionally, by emphasizing the advantages of fantasy literature for teenage readers in Sri Lanka, this study advances the area of bibliotherapy and provides insight into the therapeutic potential of this genre in fostering mental health.

➢ *Problem Statement*

Despite the increasing popularity of fantasy literature among teenagers in Sri Lanka, there is a significant lack of research exploring its direct impact on the mental health of this demographic. As teenagers navigate the complexities of identity formation, academic pressures and social dynamics, understanding how fantasy literature serves as a psychological escape is crucial. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the therapeutic potential of fantasy literature as a coping mechanism for Sri Lankan teenagers dealing with mental health challenges.

➢ *Research Questions*
- How does fantasy literature provide psychological escapism for Sri Lankan teenagers?
- How does engagement with fantasy literature affect the mental health of teenage readers in Sri Lanka?

- What potential therapeutic applications can be identified for fantasy literature in mental health settings for teenagers?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The genre of fantasy literature combines with fiction to bring readers to an entirely new setting with a wide range of narrative styles. "A type of story or literature that is set in a magical world, often involving traditional myths and magical creatures and sometimes ideas or events from the real world, especially from the mediaeval period of history," (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022) is how the Cambridge Dictionary describes fantasy literature. Thus, fantasy literature is any work of fiction that is the result of the author's imagination rather than an actual event.

Fantasy literature is a popular genre that offers readers an escape from the everyday world through fantastical realms. It delves into themes of bravery, good vs evil and human development, as seen in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings* and J.K. Rowling's Hogwarts in *Harry Potter*. These realms deviate from reality in terms of logic and norms, allowing readers to reflect on their own lives through allegorical lenses. Fantasy literature continues to inspire readers from various cultures and generations by fusing aspects of myth, folklore and imagination. For example, readers are transported to Hogwarts, a magical school where magical adventures replace typical teenage life worries. This experience allows readers to forget their difficulties and enter a new world full of possibilities.

In addition, fantasy literature can help teenagers feel more self-assured and empowered by portraying them as heroes who overcome obstacles. C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* features characters like Lucy and Edmund Pevensie who play significant roles in the conflict between good and evil. Fantasy fiction also provides a safe space for readers to explore their identities, mirroring their own journeys of self-discovery. Immersion in a different world can be a form of relaxation, as Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* offers a blend of adventure and humor that provides a break from academic and social pressures. Teenagers can learn coping strategies and problem-solving techniques by following the challenges and victories of fictional characters, such as Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. Fantasy literature also offers validation and empowerment, as Meg Murry's voyage in Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* helps overcome fears and self-doubt. Overall, fantasy literature helps teenagers feel more in control of their lives and that their feelings and experiences are valid.

Fantasy literature, rooted in myth and folklore, has become a significant genre in Sri Lanka, a nation known for its rich literary legacy and diverse culture. Emerging in the second half of the 20th century, the genre was influenced by Western literature, particularly the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, which encouraged Sri Lankan writers to examine their traditions through a fantastical lens. Folklore in Sri Lanka also played a significant role in fantasy writing,

with numerous tales of ghosts, devils, and gods interacting with humanity in both good and bad ways. These tales serve as parables for contemporary issues such as social justice, environmental degradation, and identity formation (Lawton & Cain, 2022). Teenagers in Sri Lanka enjoy a wide range of fantasy literature, including *Ran Kewita* (2007), *Hathpana (The Seven Lives), Heenseraya* by Kumarathunga Munidasa and writings of Sibil Wettasinghe and international literature such as J.K. Rowling's "*Harry Potter*," Lewis Carroll's "*Alice in Wonderland*," and J.R.R. Tolkien's "*The Lord of the Rings*." These works introduce Sri Lankan readers to new concepts and help them feel part of a wider, international fantasy fandom.

Escapism is a defense mechanism where individuals withdraw into a fantastical world to avoid the harsh realities of life. It involves using fantasy or creative activities to manage emotional pain and stress (Freud, 1923). Escapism is linked to Sigmund Freud's defense mechanism theory, which explains how the ego shields itself from anxiety and emotional distress. Freud discovered various defense mechanisms that the ego uses to handle stress and internal conflicts, including escapism. Through escapism, individuals can temporarily escape reality and find comfort in a controlled and appealing setting, allowing them to manage their emotions and cope with the challenges of daily life (Tess, 2023).

Freud's concept of repression is relevant to understanding escapism, which is the process of erasing upsetting memories and thoughts from conscious awareness. Escapist activities offer mental diversion from facing these repressed ideas, allowing people to avoid emotional disturbance (Uychoco, 2023). Projections, another defense strategy, involve blaming others for inappropriate emotions or ideas. While not the same, they can function together. Escapists may project their troubles onto others, escaping into a fantasy world. Sublimation, a concept related to escapism, involves redirecting undesirable impulses into acceptable societal pursuits. Escapists can sometimes be a form of sublimation, using constructive outlets like writing or painting to express frustrations or fears (Freud, 1923).

Escapism is a crucial aspect of readers' interaction with fantastical realms in literature, offering psychological escape and problem solving. It can provide solace from everyday life pressures, aid emotion processing, and inspire optimism and creativity. However, overindulging in escapism can hinder personal development and problem solving, as it may lead to avoiding real-life obligations and difficulties, as suggested by Freud (Mikko Meriläinen, 2012).

Fantasy literature is a popular genre for readers of all ages, offering a unique form of psychological escapism. Its intricate worlds and multifaceted characters provide a temporary escape from daily life's stresses. Studies show that reading fantasy literature can lower stress levels, elevate mood, and strengthen mental health. Its absorbing nature helps those feeling stressed or anxious by allowing them to escape from their current surroundings and immerse themselves in other worlds (Mazour, 2018).

Moreover, fantasy literature has shown potential in bibliotherapy, the therapeutic use of books, as it helps people process their feelings and experiences safely (Johnson, 2021). It provides relatable characters and events, especially for teenagers who are under stress due to social and academic pressures. Fantasy literature provides escapism and relief from difficulties, helping them cope with their emotional and psychological growth. It also allows readers to engage with the narrative as active players, allowing them to relate to the characters and identify the effects of different choices. This active participation in the narrative results in a secure, non-threatening setting, making it a valuable tool for mental health practices (Edwards, 2020).

Fantasy literature in Sri Lanka is influential due to the strong social expectations placed on young people. These expectations are based on academic performance (Wani & Hanim Ismail, 2024) and cultural norms, and reading fantasy literature allows them to temporarily escape these expectations, allowing them to experiment with different ways of thinking (Shoib et al., 2022).

Reading has been found to have a significant impact on mental health, particularly in adolescence. Literary works with psychological undertones provide a space for readers to process their feelings and understand the world. Fantasy literature, which focuses on character-driven growth, ethical issues and complex issues, is well suited for this purpose. Teenage readers can learn about their own lives by following characters as they face challenges, overcome setbacks and progress towards self-discovery (Hicks, 2023).

Furthermore, fantasy literature is a powerful tool for teenagers to explore themes of identity, belonging, and the quest for their place in the world (Klimstra & van Doeselaar, 2017). It allows them to understand themselves and their emotions through fictional settings. However, not all fantasy literature is beneficial for mental health, as some may trigger easily offended readers. Excessive reading of fantasy literature can lead to avoidance behavior, disconnection from reality, and difficulty dealing with daily challenges. Parents, teachers, and mental health specialists should help teens make informed reading choices and encourage a healthy perspective on escapism (Steiner & Wirtz, 2013). Adults can host open conversations on the messages found in fantasy literature to promote young people's engagement with the genre in a fun and beneficial way for their mental health.

Sigmund Freud's defense mechanisms theory offers insight into how individuals cope with anxiety, stress and internal conflicts. These unconscious strategies, including escapism, involve mental withdrawal from distressing realities by engaging in fantasies or activities that provide stress relief. Freud's concept is particularly relevant to teenagers, who often experience emotional and psychological turmoil during adolescence (Briggs, 2009). By engaging with fantasy literature, teenagers can channel their anxieties into a safe, structured environment, reducing the psychological pressure they feel from their real-life circumstances (Hillis, 2016). This defense mechanism helps teenagers cope with anxiety and stress in a structured and safe environment.

Fantasy literature is a therapeutic tool for teenagers, offering psychological and emotional benefits, stress reduction, and social skills (Anderson, 2000). It provides an emotionally safe refuge for readers to explore complex feelings and situations without real-life dangers. Fantasy fiction also inspires optimism as heroes often succeed in their missions, demonstrating perseverance in their ability to overcome obstacles (Self, 2021). However, excessive use of fantasy literature can lead to avoidance behavior and neglect of underlying problems, which is crucial for teenage mental health.

Addiction to fantasy literature can lead to a disconnection from reality, blurring the lines between the fictional and real world. Teenagers who spend excessive time on fantasy narratives may lose touch with their own lives, experiencing difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality, unrealistic expectations, and diminished engagement with the real world meaningfully (Hussain, 2014). This isolation can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression, as fantasy literature cannot replace genuine human connections necessary for healthy emotional development. Excessive engagement with fantasy literature can negatively affect academic performance, as teenagers who spend too much time reading may neglect their studies, leading to poor grades and academic underachievement (Allen, 2006). The immersive nature of fantasy worlds may make it challenging for readers to transition back to more structured and less stimulating demands of academic work. Emotional dependency can result from addiction to fantasy literature, where the reader becomes reliant on the escapism provided by fantasy narratives to manage their emotions, preventing them from developing healthy coping mechanisms and emotional resilience. Understanding the multifaceted role of fantasy literature in providing psychological escapism and its impact on mental health can help tailor therapeutic interventions that are effective for diverse populations.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a qualitative and quantitative mixed-method approach to understand the role of fantasy literature in providing psychological escapism and its impact on teenage readers' mental health in Sri Lanka. A survey was chosen as the primary tool for data collection, allowing for the gathering of large amounts of data from teenage readers across the country. Additionally, the survey approach provides flexibility in reaching respondents online and efficiently gathering both numeric data and subjective perspectives.

The study focuses on teenage readers aged 13-19 from Sri Lanka. The target group was chosen based on their developmental stage, where identity formation and emotional regulation are crucial, and fantasy literature, could play a significant role in shaping these aspects. The

participants were selected through convenience sampling, utilizing online platforms such as social media groups, educational forums, and literature clubs to distribute Google Forms survey.

A. Data Collection Instrument

The data was collected via an online survey using Google Forms, which was distributed across various online platforms frequented by the target demographic. The survey consisted of 25 closed-ended and open-ended questions designed to assess: Demographic information (age, gender, educational background), Reading habits (frequency of reading, preferred genres, favorite fantasy novels), Psychological escapism (level of immersion in fantasy literature, use of literature to cope with stress), Mental health impact (self-reported stress, anxiety, and depression levels before and after reading fantasy literature), Cultural context (perception of fantasy literature's representation in Sri Lanka and accessibility).

The questions combined Likert-scale responses, multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions, ensuring a diverse range of data from quantitative analysis to in-depth qualitative insights.

B. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using both descriptive and thematic analysis:

- Descriptive statistics: Responses to quantitative questions (e.g., reading frequency, level of escapism) were analyzed using percentages and frequency distributions to identify trends and patterns.
- Thematic analysis: Open-ended responses were examined to identify common themes regarding the psychological and emotional impact of fantasy literature, providing qualitative insights into the experiences of teenage readers.

This research ensured confidentiality and anonymity by not collecting any personally identifiable information from respondents. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of the questions. Informed consent was obtained by providing participants with a brief introduction explaining the research and their rights before they began answering the survey.

One limitation of the methodology is the use of convenience sampling, which may not be fully representative of the wider teenage population in Sri Lanka. Additionally, as the survey was distributed online, it may have limited access to teens without reliable internet access. Despite these limitations, the research aimed to gather a comprehensive dataset within the available resources.

In this study, there are main two hypotheses constructed.

- H1- Teenagers who frequently engage with fantasy literature are more likely to use it as a form of psychological escapism, leading to improved emotional well-being and reduced stress levels.

- H0- There is no significant relationship between the frequency of engagement with fantasy literature and the use of psychological escapism, nor does it lead to improved emotional well-being or reduced stress levels in teenage readers.

- H1- Fantasy literature provides an effective coping mechanism for teenage readers dealing with anxiety and depression, by allowing them to mentally detach from real-life problems.

- H0- Fantasy literature does not provide a significant coping mechanism for teenage readers dealing with anxiety and depression, nor does it allow them to mentally detach from real-life problems.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Fantasy books are essential for fostering psychological well-being in Sri Lanka, where access to mental health facilities is limited. The stigma associated with mental health issues, such as lack of availability, cultural differences, remote living prevent many teenagers from receiving counselling or treatment. Under these circumstances, reading can act as "bibliotherapy," giving readers the chance to face their feelings, come up with coping mechanisms, and recognize they are not the only ones going through difficult times. The findings of the survey suggest that fantasy literature holds a unique place in contemporary world, particularly for young adults. It offers more than entertainment; serves as a tool for creativity, personal growth and emotional well-being. The data indicates that while some individuals engage deeply with fantasy literature, using it as a way to explore their own imaginations and sense of self, others approach it more casually, seeking only momentary escapism.

The preference for visual media over traditional books signals a broader shift in how younger generations consume content. Visual adaptations of fantasy stories have made the genre more accessible to a wider audience, allowing those who do not consider themselves avid readers to engage with its themes and narratives. The versatility of fantasy literature, its ability to provide deep immersion and light entertainment makes it a powerful tool for personal development for teenagers navigating the complexities of early adulthood. This analysis highlights the importance of fantasy literature in fostering creativity, imagination and critical thinking in its audience.

A. Demographic Breakdown

The survey respondents are primarily from the age group of 13-19, which forms a critical demographic often engaged with fantasy literature during early adulthood. This stage of life is typically marked by explorations of identity, imagination and creativity, making fantasy literature an appealing genre for this group. Furthermore, this is a time when individuals are often in educational environments, exposed to literature and media that shape their perspectives on the world.

Gender also plays an interesting role in how fantasy literature is consumed. The majority of respondents identified as female. This gender imbalance may suggest that women in this age group are more inclined towards fantasy literature, perhaps due to the evolving nature of fantasy narratives that increasingly highlight strong female characters and more inclusive storylines. Fantasy literature, with its capacity to explore diverse characters and worlds, may appeal to women as it resonates with themes of empowerment, escapism and emotional growth.

B. Frequency of Reading Fantasy Literature

The data reveals varied levels of engagement with fantasy literature. Respondents who indicated they read fantasy literature weekly represent a dedicated readership. These frequent readers are likely to be deeply immersed in the fantasy genre, using it as a continuous source of entertainment, intellectual stimulation and perhaps even emotional comfort. Weekly readers may also be drawn to long-running series in either books or visual media, which require consistent attention and emotional investment.

In contrast, respondents who reported reading fantasy literature monthly or rarely demonstrate more casual engagement with the genre. These readers may turn to fantasy literature as an occasional diversion rather than a primary form of entertainment or personal reflection. The diverse frequency patterns suggest that fantasy literature serves different roles for different people, from a routine part of life to a more sporadic escape.

C. Preferred Method of Consuming Fantasy Literature

The survey responses highlight that a significant portion of respondents prefers to engage with fantasy literature through visual media such as movies, films, and TV series rather than books. This shift towards screen-based consumption reflects broader trends in media habits, where younger generations increasingly favor visual and multimedia formats over traditional reading. With blockbuster franchises like *Harry Potter*, *Game of Thrones* and *The Lord of the Rings* dominating the screen, it is clear that fantasy's visual storytelling has gained massive traction.

However, there remains a segment of respondents, who prefer books or book series as their medium of choice. For these individuals, the depth and complexity offered by written fantasy literature may provide a richer and more immersive experience than visual media. Books allow readers to explore intricate world building and character development at their own pace, often leading to a deeper emotional and intellectual connection with the material.

D. Engagement with Fantasy Themes

One intriguing area of the survey explores the extent to which respondents consider themselves to be immersed in fantasy worlds. A substantial number of respondents identified themselves as highly engaged, regularly envisioning themselves in fantasy scenarios or dreaming of alternative realities. This finding suggests that fantasy literature serves not just as entertainment but also as a vehicle for active imagination, where readers or viewers can

participate mentally in the worlds they consume. The allure of being transported to different realms, where rules of reality are altered and new possibilities exist, allows individuals to explore aspects of their own identity and desires in a fictional context. This kind of imaginative immersion can be potent during periods of personal growth as seen in the 13- 19 age demographic.

On the other hand, some respondents claimed minimal engagement with fantasy worlds. For these individuals, fantasy literature may serve as a temporary escape rather than an immersive experience. This contrast between high and low engagement levels highlights the versatility of fantasy literature in catering to both deeply immersive experiences and more superficial engagements, depending on individual preferences and psychological needs.

E. Fantasy Literature and Escapism

The survey data reveals that escapism is one of the primary motivations for engaging with fantasy literature among respondents. A significant number of participants reported that they turn to fantasy literature as a means to relax, unwind, and temporarily escape from the challenges of everyday life. This aligns with the broader understanding of fantasy literature as a genre that offers an immersive, otherworldly experience, allowing readers or viewers to disconnect from the real world and immerse themselves in imaginative settings.

The preference for escapism is evident in the consumption patterns observed in the survey. Respondents who engage with fantasy literature regularly, especially those who read or watch it weekly, seem to use it as a tool for emotional relief. Fantasy worlds, with their often magical, surreal and unbounded nature, provide a stark contrast to the structured realities of the real world. For instance, respondents who favored visual media such as movies, films, and TV series indicated that these mediums offer a quicker and often more accessible form of escapism compared to reading books, which requires a more prolonged engagement.

One respondent noted that fantasy literature helped them "relax their mind," illustrating how fantasy worlds serve as a mental escape. This concept of fantasy as a refuge from reality aligns with psychological theories of escapism, where individuals use fictional environments to avoid stress, anxiety or dissatisfaction with their current circumstances. In contrast, some respondents described fantasy as stimulating their creativity, indicating that escapism in this context does not necessarily involve passive consumption but can also engage the mind actively in imaginative exploration.

Moreover, respondents who read fantasy literature more infrequently (monthly or rarely) also mentioned escapism as a reason for their engagement. However, for these individuals, fantasy literature seemed to offer a more episodic form of escape rather than a habitual retreat. This irregular engagement suggests that for some, fantasy serves as a temporary escape during moments of intensified stress

or boredom, rather than being a constant presence in their lives.

The fantasy genre, with its potential for boundless world-building, intricate plotlines, and diverse characters, offers readers the ability to experience narratives that are far removed from their everyday lives. In addition to the fantastical elements, these worlds often present challenges and adventures that are different from those in reality, which make the escape more profound for readers or viewers.

At the same time, it is important to note that not all forms of escapism are equal. While fantasy literature can provide a healthy, creative outlet for managing stress, there is also the potential for over-reliance on escapism as a way to avoid real-world problems. This raises questions for future research on the balance between using fantasy literature as a temporary escape and ensuring it does not lead to a detachment from reality.

In conclusion, the survey data highlights that escapism is a central theme in how individuals engage with fantasy literature. Whether through books or visual media, fantasy offers a mental space for readers and viewers to detach from the pressures of the real world and explore realms of imagination and creativity. However, future research should consider the implications of this form of escapism, both in terms of its benefits and potential drawbacks.

F. Fantasy Literature and Personal Growth

The survey data reveals a wide range of responses when it comes to the impact of fantasy literature on personal development and world understanding. A common theme is that fantasy literature fosters creativity offering readers and viewers new ways to think about problems and envision solutions. Several respondents mentioned that fantasy helped enhance their creative thinking, allowing them to explore alternate possibilities and push the boundaries of conventional thought.

In addition to creativity, fantasy literature also appears to play a significant role in emotional and psychological development. For some respondents, fantasy stories provide comfort and relaxation, offering a mental escape from the stresses of everyday life. The idea of escapism is central to the fantasy genre, where readers can step outside the constraints of the real world and lose themselves in fantastical environments. Moreover, fantasy literature also offers a platform for readers to grapple with moral, ethical and philosophical questions in a safe fictional setting. Many fantasy novels explore themes of good versus evil, power and responsibility, and the complexities of human nature. By engaging with these themes, readers can reflect on their own values and beliefs, which may contribute to their understanding of the world and their place within it.

Remarkably, a few respondents noted that fantasy literature had influenced their worldview in practical ways, helping them understand societal structures, political dynamics and even personal relationships. This suggests that the genre, while rooted in fictional worlds, can still provide valuable insights into real-world issues, offering readers tools to navigate their own lives more effectively.

V. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that Sri Lankan teenagers engage with fantasy literature for its escapist qualities, finding it beneficial for managing stress and enhancing their mood. This aligns with Freud's concept of escapism, where fantasy literature functions as a defense mechanism to shield individuals from psychological discomfort. The imaginative nature of fantasy worlds allows readers to navigate their emotions indirectly, offering temporary emotional solace. However, the study also highlights the potential negative impacts of over-reliance on fantasy literature. Excessive engagement with fantasy worlds can lead to social isolation, academic neglect and a disconnection from reality. These negative outcomes highlight the importance of reading habits and ensuring a balanced approach to fantasy literature. While it serves as a valuable escape, it is crucial to integrate this form of escapism with real-world responsibilities and social interactions to maintain overall well-being.

The cultural and socio-economic context of Sri Lanka plays a significant role in shaping how teenagers engage with and are impacted by fantasy literature. The availability of such literature, cultural attitudes towards reading, and societal pressures all contribute to the experiences of Sri Lankan readers. Understanding these factors is essential for developing strategies that support healthy engagement with fantasy literature and address potential challenges.

In conclusion, while fantasy literature provides significant psychological benefits by offering a form of escapism, it is important for teenagers to navigate their reading habits thoughtfully. Encouraging a balanced approach, supporting mental health, and fostering real-world connections are vital for maximizing the positive aspects of fantasy literature while mitigating potential drawbacks. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of fantasy literature on mental health and to develop comprehensive strategies for supporting teenage readers in Sri Lanka and beyond.

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