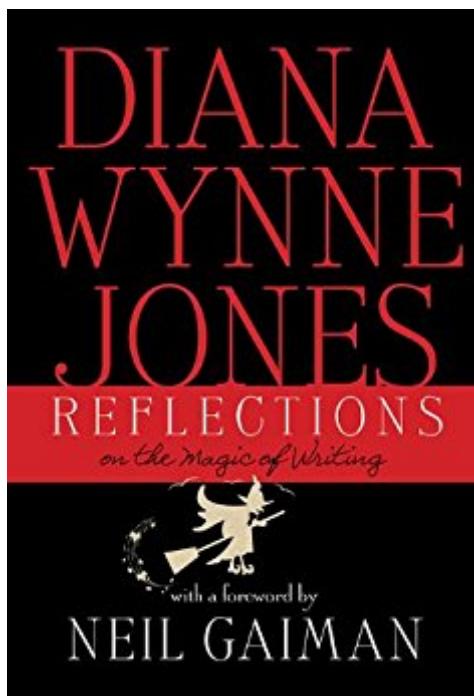


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# Reflections: On The Magic Of Writing: On The Magic Of Writing



## **Synopsis**

This collection of more than twenty-five critical essays, speeches, and biographical pieces chosen by Diana Wynne Jones before her death in 2011 is essential reading for the author's many fans and for students and teachers of the fantasy genre and creative writing in general. The volume includes insightful literary criticism alongside autobiographical anecdotes, revelations about the origins of the author's books, and reflections about the life of an author and the value of writing for young people. Reflections features the author's final interview, a foreword by award-winning author Neil Gaiman, and an introduction by Charlie Butler, a senior lecturer in English at the University of West England in Bristol.

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## **Customer Reviews**

This collection of speeches, essays, and bits and bobs from Diana Wynne Jones is wonderful, and you simply must have it if you're a DWJ person. It's arranged chronologically, so that the earliest piece (a reflection on the nature of childhood and imagination) is from 1981, and the last pieces are a final interview from a few weeks before her death in 2011 and posthumous thoughts from her

sons. Some of the essays and speeches have been easily available from the official Diana Wynne Jones website, so I was just happy to have them in a more easily readable format because I've already read them twice. "Heroes" and "Inventing the Middle Ages" are both really interesting, for example. The majority of the pieces, though, were not easy to get at all. Many were new to me. There are wonderful essays on narrative, literary fashions, childhood, and fantasy. (I really appreciated her perspective on problem novels; when DWJ first started trying to get published, virtually every story had to be about a child with a Problem, and I remember those books very well.) I was especially happy to see a long essay on the process of writing called "Some Truths About Writing." That piece showed up on the Horn Book website soon after her death, and I thought it was great, but then it disappeared after a few months and I was very sorry I hadn't saved it. I can't list everything I liked, that would be very boring, but I did especially like "Why Don't You Write Real Books?" and "The Halloween Worms" (which is a story about DWJ's well-known tendency to have her books come true at her).

I first came to Diana Wynne-Jones through Hayao Miyazaki's movie, "Howl's Moving Castle." Its story was so casually well-imagined that it seemed too "big" for a movie. The movie mined what must have been an exceptionally well-imagined world. Reading "Reflections" confirms the depth and intensity of Ms. Wynne-Jones's imagination. And, like Neil Gaiman's introduction to "Dogsbody," it makes me want to read everything she's ever written. Both the movie and the single fiction by Ms. Wynne-Jones that I have read, "Archer's Goon," intertwine many of the themes she discusses or alludes to in the interviews, occasional speeches, and articles collected in "Reflections":- the abandoned child- the child adrift in a world of adults hapless or bamboozled or ruthlessly cunning (and sometimes all three at once) and at any rate unreliable and unable to sort out their problems by themselves- the child, left to its wits, profiting by them- the rescue of the corrupted adult world by -- and this is important -- not some sugary magical innocence calling forth an easy rescue from the reassuring hand of fate, but by the moral intelligence, sheer pragmatic sense, and willingness of the child to immediately and directly engage the world to solve her problems. Wynne-Jones brings the heroic cycle down from its traditionally secure reserve in the adult world to the world of children and teenagers, turning them into active and important players in life rather than mere spectators who should listen to their elders and may be confident that will solve their problems. In so doing, she honors the incredible stress and intensity of childhood and adolescence, when so many things have dire consequences while so few are under one's control. She also honors children themselves.

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