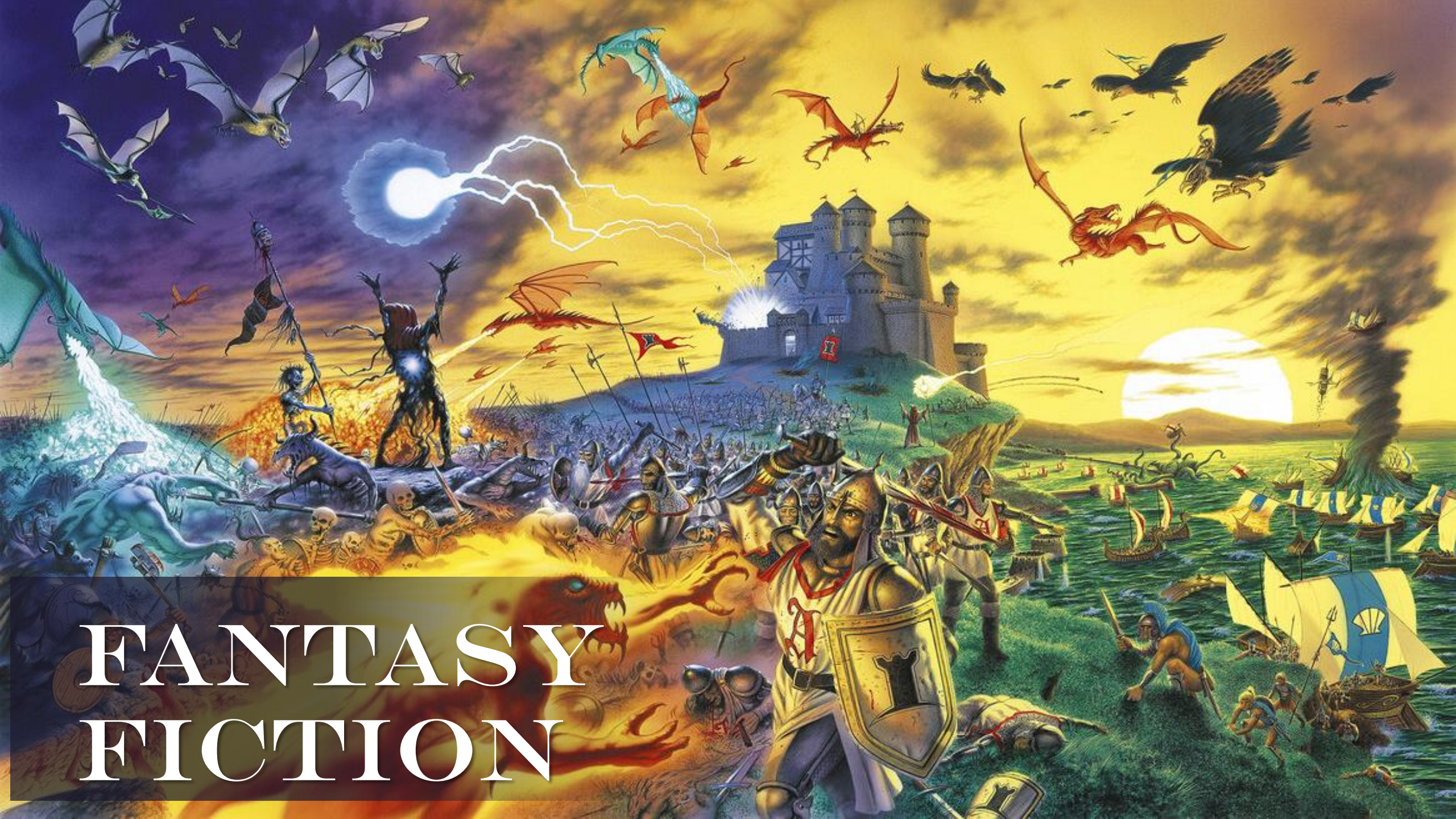




FANTASY FICTION



**All that we have here
Is all that we've always had.**

**We have jealousy,
tenderness,
curses and gifts.**

**But the plight of a people who
have forgotten their myths
and imagine that somehow
now is all that there is –
is a sorry plight**

Extract from ***Brand New Ancients*** by Kae Tempest
(London: Picador, 2013)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLWIB3ib7ZM>

FANTASTICAL TROPES



- Universal themes: life, death, love, battle, jealousy, greed, revenge...
- Magic, magicians and a world beyond our own
- Gods and goddesses
- Fantastical beasts, giants and shape-shifters
- Archetypal figures: fair maiden, wise sage, brave warrior
- Quests and journeys



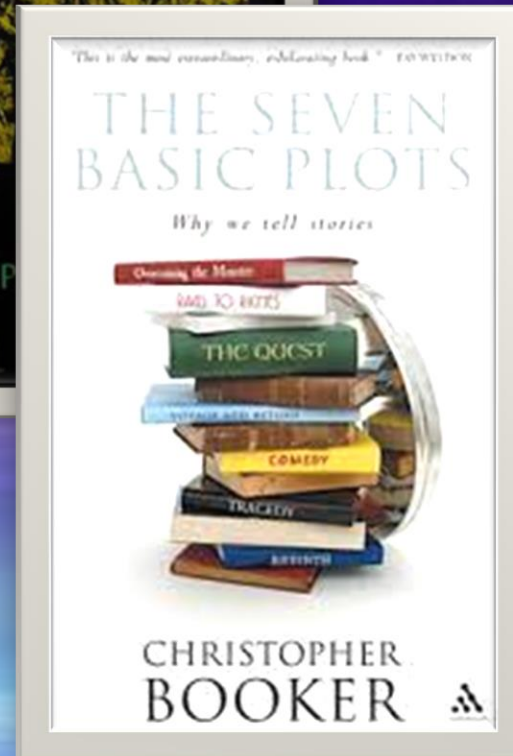
MYTHIC TROPE



- **The magic number 3**
 - Three brothers (Greek myth: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades)
 - The three graces (Roman myth: followers of Venus)
 - Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach will return to the fairy kingdom if her human husband strikes her thrice
- **The MacGuffin**
 - The holy grail of Arthurian legends
 - The elixir of life (Gilgamesh)
- **The dream vision**
 - When Sir Galahad arrives at King Arthur's court, there is a clap of thunder and the knights in the hall experience a vision of the Grail.
 - Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has a nightmare vision that the city in which he lives will be burned with fire from heaven.
 - Fiver in *Watership Down* has a similar vision about the warren that he calls home.
- **A child of noble birth raised by humble foster parents**
 - Perdita in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*
 - Culhwch in *The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*
 - Harry Potter!



THE MYTH OF THE MONOMYTH?

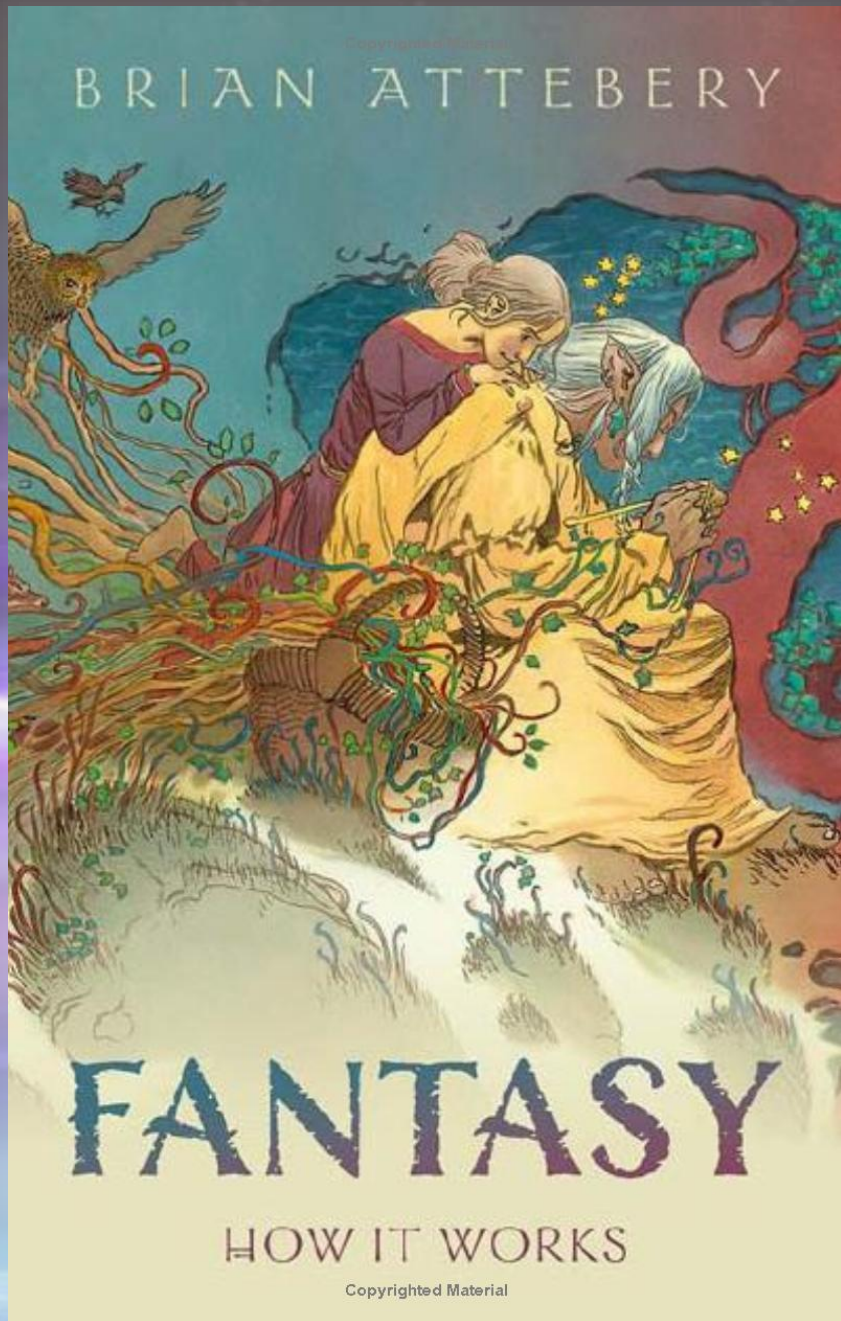


THE SEVEN BASIC PLOTS



- Overcoming the monster
- Rags to riches
- The Quest
- Voyage and return
- Comedy
- Tragedy
- Rebirth





“Fantasy asks its heroes to do something about the three great fears... to penetrate the mysteries of the unknown, to recognize the Other as potential ally rather than enemy, and to use the inevitability of death as a spur toward compassion and courage rather than despair.”

Brian Attebery, *Fantasy: How it Works* (Oxford: OUP, 2022) p.174



SUGGESTED READING...

George MacDonald (1824 – 1905)

William Morris (1834 - 1896)

JRR Tolkien (1892 – 1973)

Diana Wynne Jones (1924- 2011)

Philip Pullman (1946 -)

Terry Pratchett (1948 – 2015)

George R R Martin (1948 -)

Terry Practchett (1948 – 2015)

Ben Okri (1959 -)

Neil Gaiman (1960 -)

J K Rowling (1965 -)

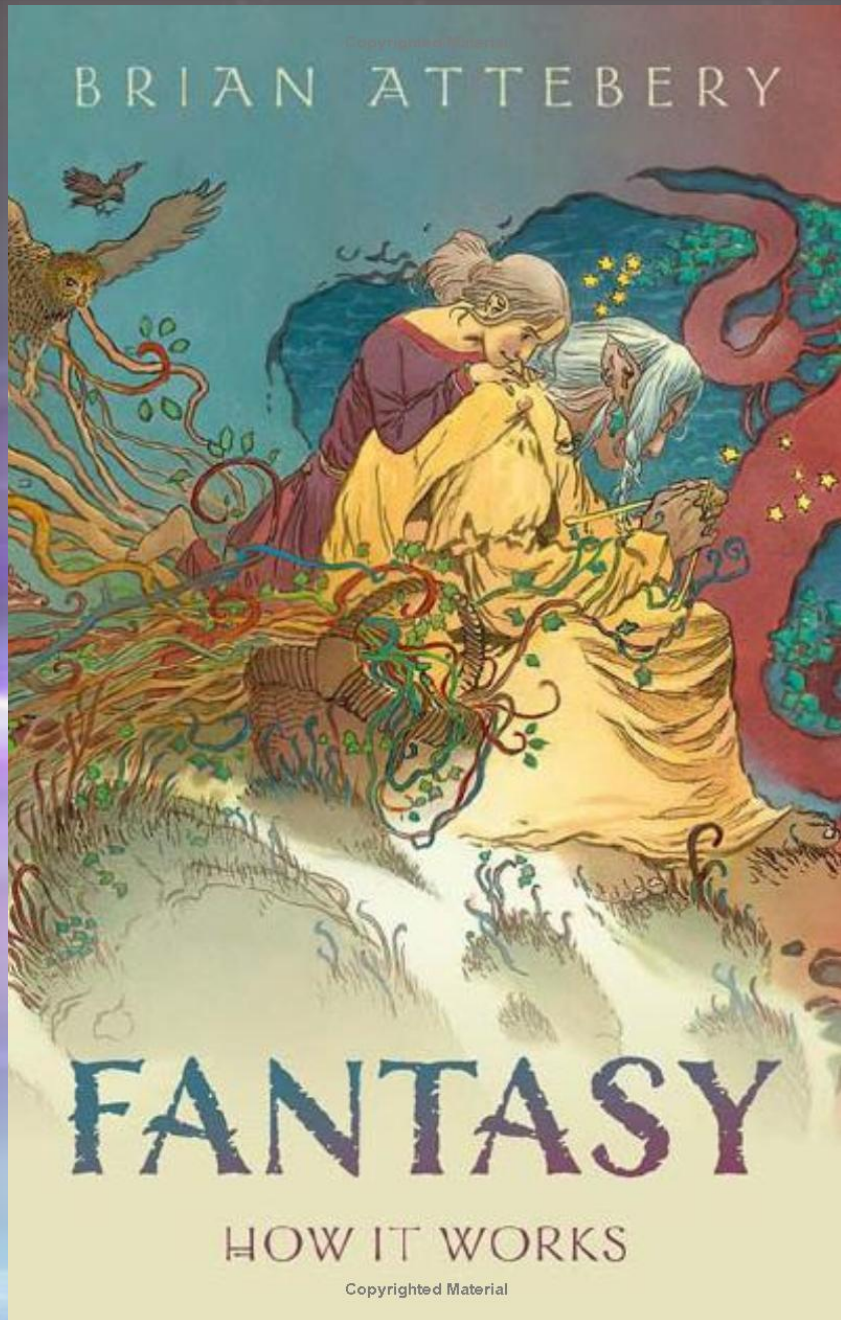
Marlon James (1970 -)

Ken Liu (1976 -)

Aliette de Bodard (1982 -)

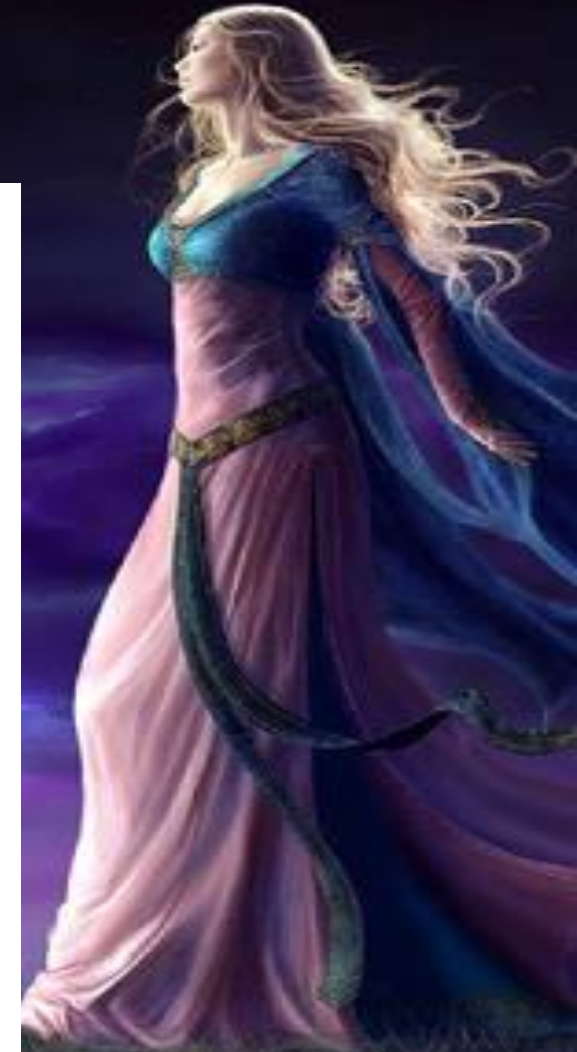
Nnedi Okorafor (1974 -)

Tomi Adeyemi (1993 -)



“...texts are cells deriving their energy from other organisms that they have taken in and incorporated into their metabolisms: mitochondria.”

Brian Attebery, *Fantasy: How it Works* (Oxford: OUP, 2022) p.2





Read the extracts from *Who Fears Death* and discuss the following topics with your group / partner:

- What clues do we have as to what is actually happening in the first extract?
- How does the text interact with the 'primary world'?
- What do we learn about the magic system of this world, and how do we learn it?
- What do we learn about Onyesonwu's character from the two scenes?
- How would you describe the narrative voice in the extracts?
- How does Okorafor keep the reader hooked?
- Underline examples of effective writing craft.

S DEATH

a novel

Okorafor

THE HOOK



“The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not.”

***The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern**

“Nyx sold her womb somewhere between Punjai and Faleen, on the edge of the desert.”

***God's War*, by Kameron L.**

“LET’S START WITH THE END of the world, why don’t we? Get it over with and move on to more interesting things.”

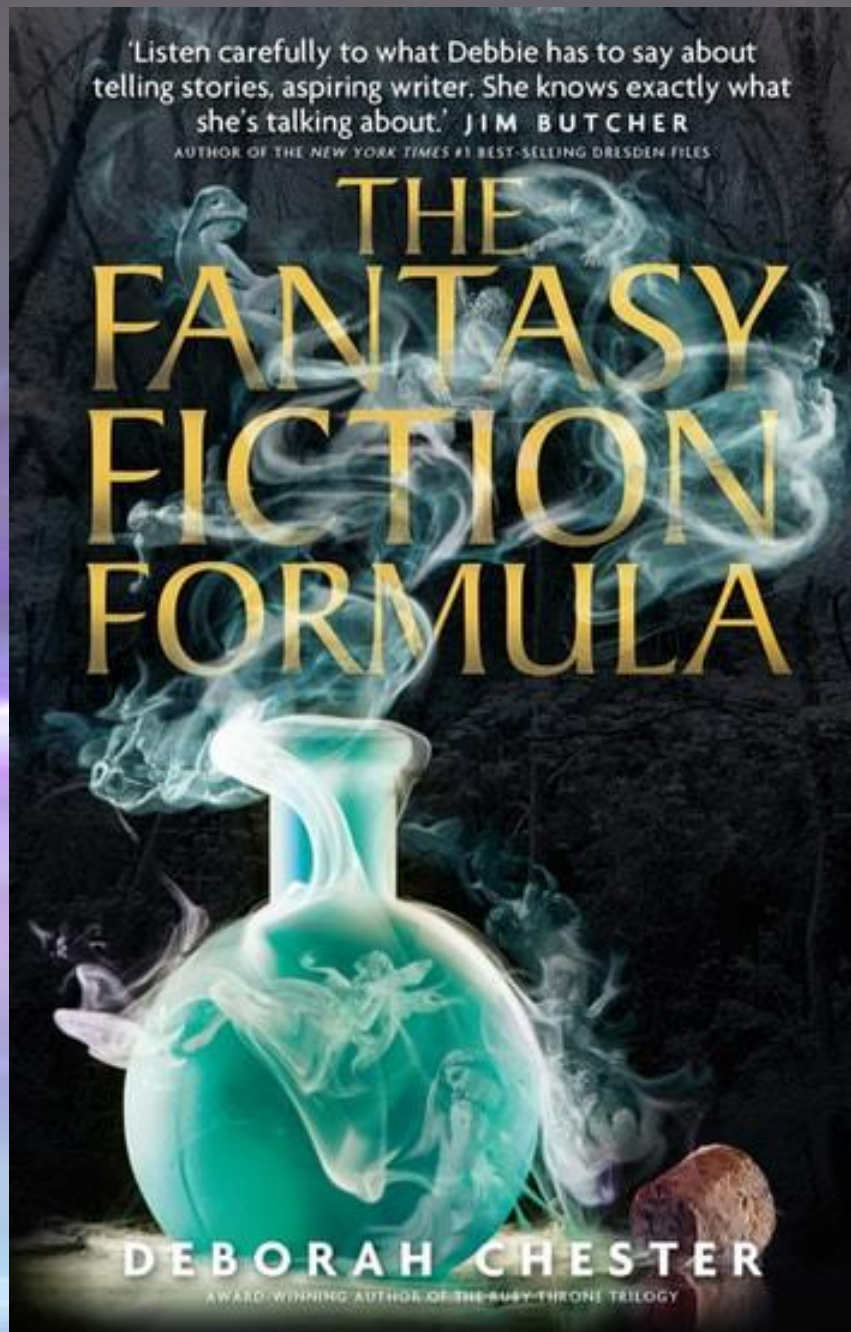
***The Fifth Season*, by N. K. Jemisin**

“The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed.”

***The Gunslinger*, by Stephen King**

“When you're tired of life, come to Haven. And someone will kill you.”

***The Guards of Haven* by Simon R. Green**



“One of the worst mistakes I see among inexperienced fantasy writers is the desire to teach their readers. This impulse manifests as the dreaded fifty-page explanation, background summary, and info-dump opening whereby said writer informs his readers of his world’s terrain, climate, history for the past nine thousand years, mythology and magic system. Snore.”

Deborah Chester, *The Fantasy Fiction Formula*: (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) pp. 3-4.



THE QUEST

1 The call

Life in some 'City of Destruction' has become oppressive and intolerable, and the hero recognises that they can only fix the situation by making a long, difficult journey. A supernatural vision gives our hero visionary direction.

2 The journey

Our hero and their faithful companions set out across hostile terrain, encountering a series of life-threatening ordeals (monsters, temptations, for example) from which they make a series of 'thrilling escapes'. They will often encounter stock characters at this point in the story – the 'wise old man' or the 'beautiful young woman.'

3 The Arrival and frustration

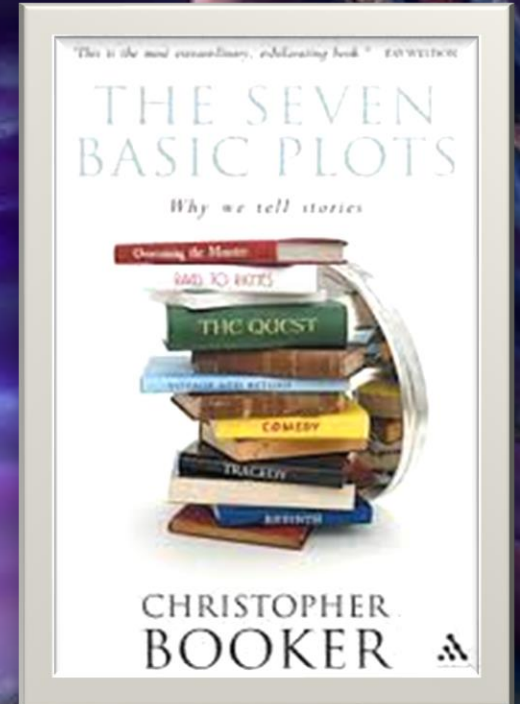
The hero is in sight of their goal but now, on the edge of victory, a terrible series of new obstacles stand in the way.

4 The final ordeals

The hero must endure a last series of tests – often 3 – to prove their worthiness. This culminates in a final battle which may be the most threatening at all.

5 The Goal

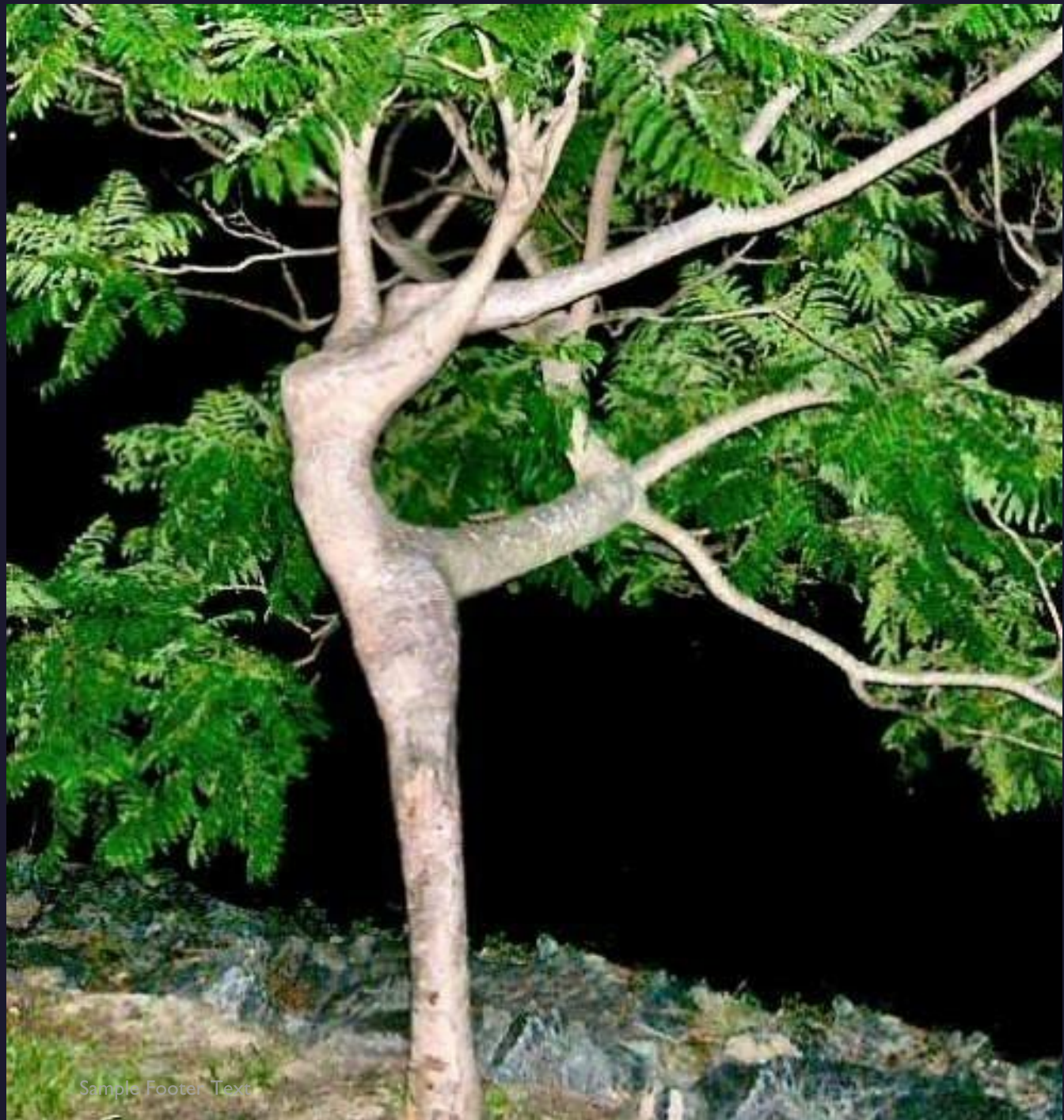
After a last thrilling escape from death, the prize is won: with an assurance of renewed life stretching indefinitely into the future.



Part 3: Creative Exercise

Write the first page of a fantasy story or novel. Make sure that...

- The opening line contains a great hook
- It is clear whose story you are telling
- You establish the narrative viewpoint (i.e. who is telling the story)
- You establish time and place
- You suggest a story goal
- You introduce conflict.

































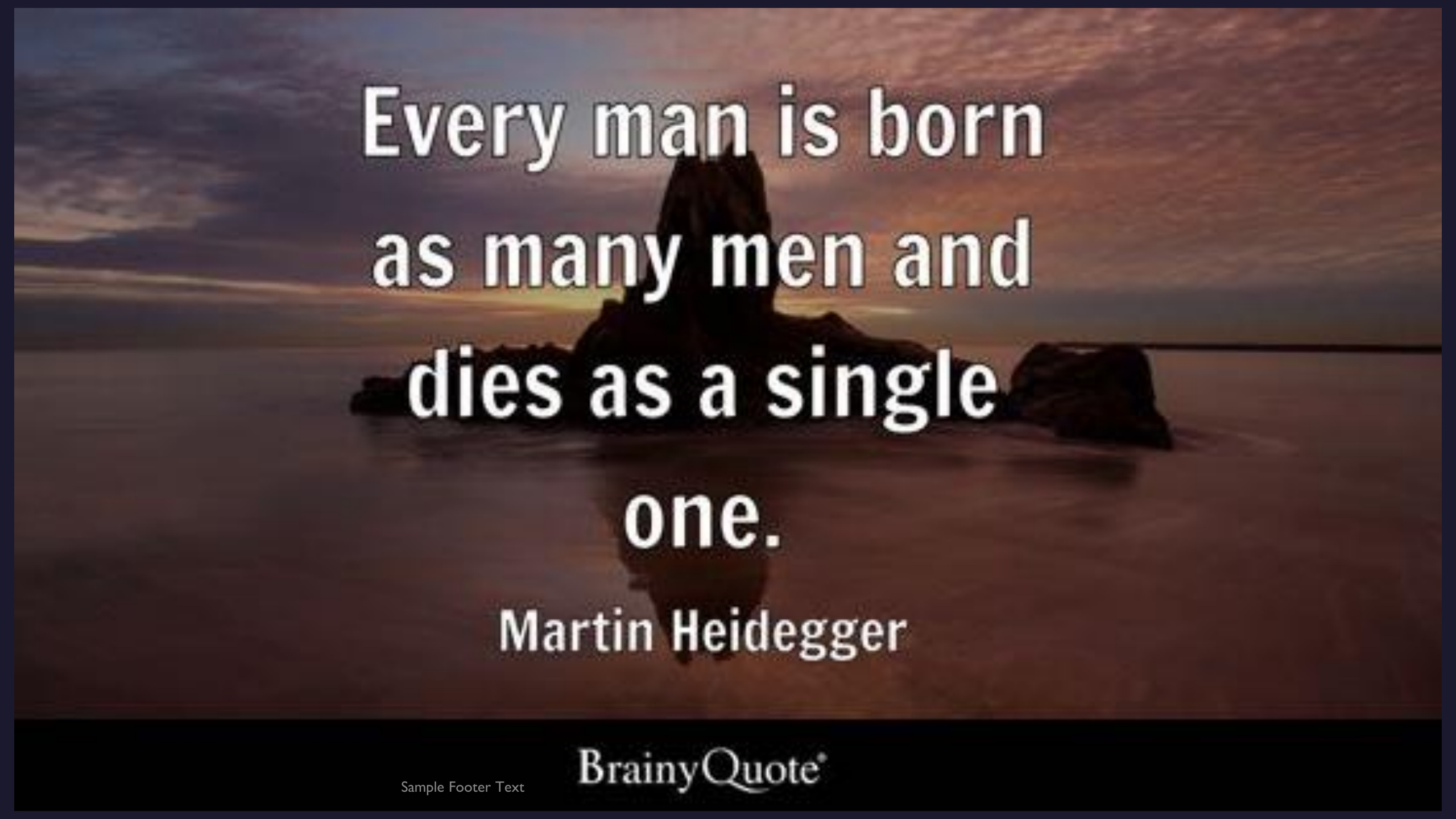












Every man is born
as many men and
dies as a single
one.

Martin Heidegger

A vibrant field of yellow poppies in full bloom, set against a clear, bright blue sky. The flowers are in various stages of opening, with some fully unfurled and others as buds. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the sharp details of the flowers in the foreground.

**We are not human beings
having a spiritual
experience. We are
spiritual beings having a
human experience.**

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

BrainyQuote®

“Freedom is secured not by the fulfilling of one’s desires, but by the removal of desire.”

Epictetus

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

“Time is a game played
beautifully by children.”

Heracclitus

“If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things.”

René Descartes