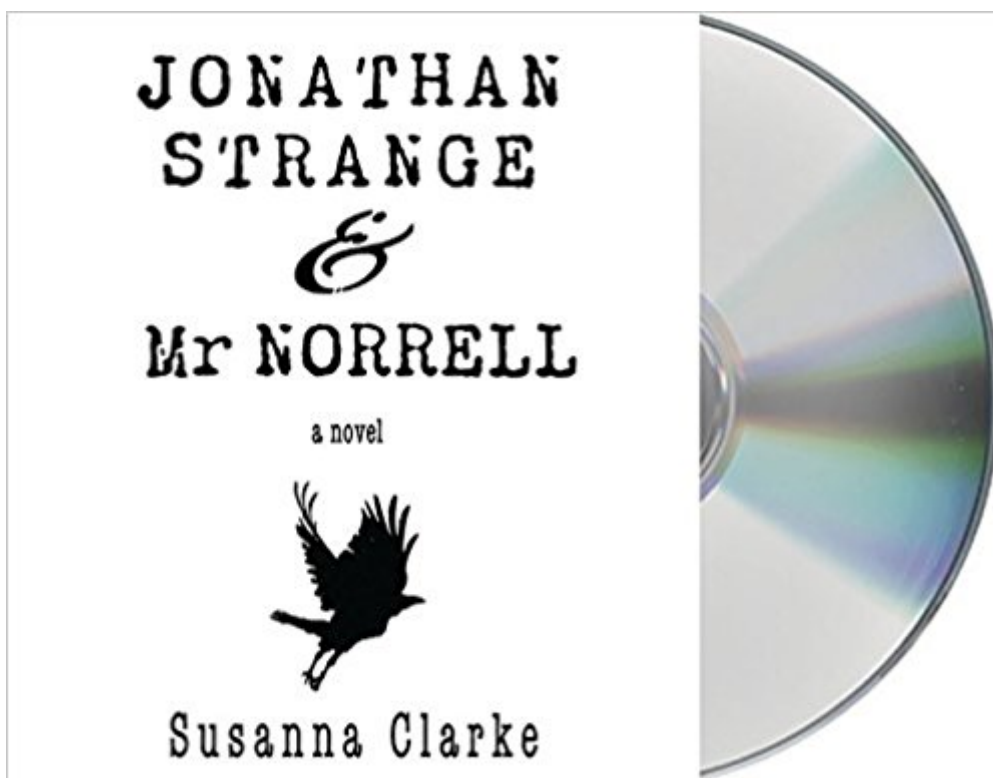


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# Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell: A Novel



## Synopsis

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, two very different magicians emerge to change England's history. In the year 1806, with the Napoleonic Wars raging on land and sea, most people believe magic to be long dead in England-until the reclusive Mr Norrell reveals his powers, and becomes a celebrity overnight. Soon, another practicing magician comes forth: the young, handsome, and daring Jonathan Strange. He becomes Norrell's student, and they join forces in the war against France. But Strange is increasingly drawn to the wildest, most perilous forms of magic, straining his partnership with Norrell, and putting at risk everything else he holds dear.

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## Customer Reviews

It's 1808 and that Corsican upstart Napoleon is battering the English army and navy. Enter Mr.

Norrell, a fusty but ambitious scholar from the Yorkshire countryside and the first practical magician in hundreds of years. What better way to demonstrate his revival of British magic than to change the course of the Napoleonic wars? Susanna Clarke's ingenious first novel, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, has the cleverness and lightness of touch of the Harry Potter series, but is less a fairy tale of good versus evil than a fantastic comedy of manners, complete with elaborate false footnotes, occasional period spellings, and a dense, lively mythology teeming beneath the narrative. Mr. Norrell moves to London to establish his influence in government circles, devising such powerful illusions as an 11-day blockade of French ports by English ships fabricated from rainwater. But however skillful his magic, his vanity provides an Achilles heel, and the differing ambitions of his more glamorous apprentice, Jonathan Strange, threaten to topple all that Mr. Norrell has achieved. A sparkling debut from Susanna Clarke--and it's not all fairy dust. --Regina Marler --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Starred Review. There may be no better marriage of talents than that of Clarke and Prebble. The former spins an enchanting, epic tale of English magic in the age of Napoleon, and the latter brings it to life--with a full-bodied voice, skill and aplomb that rivals that of noted narrator Jim Dale. Set in a world where the study of theoretical magic is common, but the practice of it is unheard of, this sweeping narrative follows the exploits of England's only two practical magicians, the bookish Mr. Norrell and the affable Jonathan Strange, as they struggle to revive the country's magic in very different ways. Mr. Norrell is content to publish opaque, opinionated pieces on magic's uses and misuses, but Strange is fascinated by the legend and lore of the Raven King, the so-called father of English magic. The voices Prebble lends these two disparate characters nicely reflects their personalities--Norrell's voice is brittle and sometimes shrill, but Strange's is pleasant and ironic. As the two magicians labor together to defeat Napoleon and then separately to pursue their own ends, an elusive faerie known only as the "gentleman with the Thistledown hair" watches and schemes. Clarke's novel likely contains close to 100, if not more, characters, and Prebble juggles them all with ease. Although the heavy price of this audiobook may deter some listeners, there's no better way to experience the material than to hear it performed by such a consummate actor. Based on the Bloomsbury hardcover Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

In 1806 magic is believed to be dead in England until a society of theoretical magicians uncovers

Mr. Norrell, the first practicing magician of hundreds of years. Mr. Norrell is firmly in the public eye when another magician, Mr. Strange, emerges to become his student. Together, these very different magicians are tasked with returning magic to England. That is a very rough description of a 1000 page book. Truthfully, there's a whole lot more going on but to say too much would be leading me into giving away spoilers. As already mentioned, this is a very long book. In fact, it's divided into three books, each named after the important magicians in the story (Strange, Norrell, and the long ago Raven King). A warning here: Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell is slowly paced and slow burning. The action and pace don't pick up until the climax in the last hundred pages or so. So why, might you ask, would I read a book with 900 pages of build up? Because that build up is so enjoyable. Susanna Clarke is an excellent writer (she's using the style of classic nineteenth century authors), and her writing is not without humor. I was not at all expecting it, but often I would laugh out loud upon reading a line. Take this quote for instance: "Houses, like people, are apt to become rather eccentric if left too much on their own; this house was the architectural equivalent of an old gentleman in a worn dressing-gown and torn slippers, who got up and went to bed at odd times of day, and who kept up a continual conversation with friends no one else could see." I love the footnotes as well. Sometimes they're just explaining a reference to a magical text, but often they are stories within a story, like the fairy tale about the Master of Nottingham's daughter and her quest to retrieve the magic ring. Other times she uses footnotes (as well as in text commentary) to skewer the prejudices of the age. There's a certain irony in that Strange and Norrell are acceptable magicians because they are gentlemen, even though others such as Childermass would probably make just as good or better magicians. If you pick this one up, you've got to have at least some interest in history or a liking of classic English writing like Jane Austen. If you're looking for the usual action adventure, medieval world type fantasy, Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell is not for you. If you're looking for something different, an original fantasy book, than this is the book for you.

This is a great book. This is a great story. I was surprised by how this book turned out, because it was oddly - a love story. I concede I cheated reading this book. I looked up spoilers, because I was so intrigued. I love the writing. The writing was so smooth. It was descriptive, simple, and rarely was it critical. It was absolutely delightful. Not complicated at all. Story is of two magicians. It's eighteenth century England, and magic once did exist. But after so many years, magic is nearly regulated to

myth. But there is the titular Mr. Norrell, who is stuffy, insecure, lonely, and socially inept. He is a magician. He is vulnerable, allowing morally bankrupt Christopher Drawlight to influence him, and Mr. Norrell is further weakened by Henry Lascelles, who basks in cruelty. There is also a reason why the pompous Mr. Norrell is so smitten with Jonathon Strange, because he finds a colleague. Strange was idle, but he was born with immense magical talent. He is in love with the pert Arabella Woodhope, whom he eventually marries. But magic falls into upon him, and magic becomes his passion. Rather than remaining jealous, Mr. Norrell becomes smitten with Jonathon Strange. But Jonathon Strange will not follow Mr. Norrell, and Mr. Norrell is afraid. I adore the writing. I love the story. I just wish there was equal care given to the final subplots. Two things: I wanted to know how Henry Lascelles felt at the end (his tongue betrayed him), and I love how Strange showed his devotion at the end. Great book. I can't say enough.

It is just the beginning of the nineteenth century. Magic has been gone from England for hundreds of years. The stories of the Raven King are as alive as ever, but it seems that, magic having faded, the only occupation for the modern gentleman-magicians is to study what has once been. The magical society of York meets upon the third Wednesday of every month, its members reading each other "long, dull papers upon the history of English magic". One winter, however, something unexpected happens. It appears that, despite nobody having seen a practical magician for centuries, one can be found -- and in England, too! In the face of obvious skepticism, this magician is going to prove his claim to be able to do magic. He is also going to try and make sure that he is and will remain the only practicing magician in England. His name is Mr. Norrell. Given that the title lists his name second (oh, how vehemently he would object), you can guess that he isn't going to be the only one after all. This is a quirky story, with characters at times almost Dickensian, and it is dark (tinged with bitterness, I would say), but not too much so. It tells of madness and fairy roads and of the (sometimes questionable) use a magician could be in a war with Napoleon. There is in it that time when "all hours become midnight" and there is also all the time spent in libraries, reading books on and of magic (a world of difference between the two). I cannot say it has the strongest of plots, but its plot is not simple or plain or filled with platitudes. It has footnotes, though, and those make it particularly quaint. They reference dozens of books on magic (as well as periodicals and folktales) that do not in fact exist, and through these notes, one can learn quite a lot about the history of English magic and the personages who have been involved in it over the years.

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