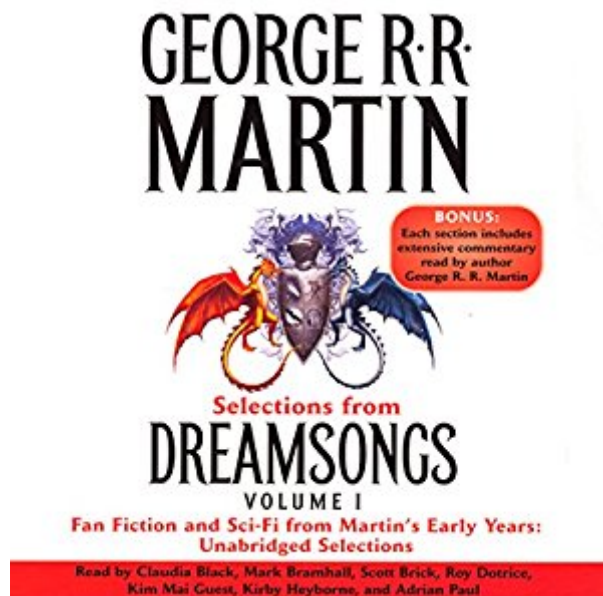


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Dreamsongs, Volume I (Unabridged Selections)



Synopsis

Dubbed "the American Tolkien" by Time magazine, number-one New York Times best-selling author George R. R. Martin is a giant in the field of fantasy literature and one of the most exciting storytellers of our time. Now he delivers a rare treat for listeners: a compendium of his shorter works, collected into three stunning volumes, that offers fascinating insight into his journey from young writer to award-winning master. **BONUS:** Each selection includes extensive commentary by author George R. R. Martin.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Two things before I start the review: I am a big fan of Mr. Martin's 'Song of Ice & Fire' saga (like many fans, I'm eagerly awaiting the release of 'A Dance With Dragons'). The second point is that I have never been a fan of short stories. Well, up until now. When I first heard about the release of *Dreamsongs*, I wasn't too thrilled. I knew Martin as a brilliant epic storyteller, but I was not sure whether his talents in creating complex, deep characters, exciting storylines, and magnificent settings could fit into the small world of short stories. Suffice to say that my worries about *Dreamsongs* almost kept me from being exposed to some of the best stories that I have read. *Dreamsongs* is a collection of short stories written by Martin throughout his career as a writer. These tales cover a spectrum of genres including fantasy, science fiction, and even horror. I would like to emphasize one point: Every signature element that brought Martin to the pinnacle of fame that he has today is present in this collection of his earlier works. **Stories:** Original, deep, and

engaging are the words that come to mind when describing the tales in *Dreamsongs*. What I found surprising was how personal some of these stories were. From the fight for honor and country in 'The Fortress' to the very depths of human needs and emotions in the touching 'A Song for Lya'; From socio-political issues in 'And Death His Legacy' to war and propaganda in 'The Hero', I was hooked and pulled into the story every time. The tone of these tales can be commonly described as dark. I found myself thinking about these stories afterwards the way I thought about some of the *Twilight Zone* episodes: The stories are fiction, but there is always an underlying message in every story that rattles the reader a bit.

Settings: as Mr. Martin takes you away on a journey through planets, deep space, ancient temples, alien cities, lost highways, and mysterious jungles, he masterfully places you right in the middle of events. Fans of 'Song of Ice & Fire' will immediately recognize Martin's skill (which he apparently possessed from even his earliest of stories as a teenager) in making the settings come to life in the reader's mind.

Characters: Vulnerable, introspective, possessive, cowardly, mad, illogical, heroic, tired, fearful, lonely, and brave. You will come to know the characters in these stories as if they were real people. One thing that I found absolutely amazing was how the author could masterfully develop these characters in a few pages in a way that he did with the amazing cast of 'Song of Ice & Fire' within volumes of books. I would easily recommend *Dreamsongs* to any fan of George R.R. Martin or any fantasy/sci-fi reader who has been so unfortunate in life as to have never read any of his books. Ladies and gents, you are in for a treat.

This collection, whether in its 2003 limited-edition single-book format or in this new two-book one, showcases the career of a true master. Most fantasy novelists can't write prose well enough to succeed at the short form, and most fantasy short fiction stars can't write plots entertaining enough to attract fans to their novels. Perhaps it's Martin's cross-genre skill, equally adept at fantasy, science fantasy, and horror, that enables him to master both the short and novel formats, or perhaps it's the writerly training of that bygone era when short fiction was more common and more populist. Regardless, his classic award-winners like "Sandkings" still shine opposite early works like "The Fortress" and recent ones like "The Hedge Knight."

The other bounty in this collection is Martin's introductions to each chronological section, describing where he was at that point in his life and career, then detailing the genesis of all the stories. These commentaries offer insight into the man and the evolution of his craft. Perhaps after he finishes his current saga, he'll dip back into short fiction, or write shorter pieces in between his longer projects like Stephen King does. That would surely offer great reads, and it might bring some fan attention back to the forgotten short fiction

format.

This review is of the Audible version of volume 1 of George R.R. Martin's Dreamsongs. I want to make that clear, because in this case the version severely impacts my review. I bought this as a Whispesync-for-Voice upgrade option. I did see that it was listed as "Unabridged Selections," nevertheless, I was still extremely disappointed when, only 3/5 through the book, the audio ends. What?? This can't be right! Oh yes, yes it is. Rather than recording selections throughout the entire book, they decided to record only the first 3 sections. Why? I have no idea. This choice was especially upsetting, since I paid what to me is a premium for this book - twice as expensive than the longer, unabridged recorded versions of The Outlander series, for instance. And of course this price is on top of the cost of the ebook version. The choice to stop 3/5 of the way through means, for instance, that the trumpeted "Sandkings" story is NOT amongst those that are recorded. For those of us who do have eyes that work, and who purchased the book version as well, then yes, it's possible to read the story that way. But if you purchased the audiobook because you absolutely cannot read with your eyes, then you are going to be VERY disappointed. What's actually presented in the recording, however, is excellent. The readers are all good, including Martin himself. The production values are good. And of course the stories are by and large excellent. My favorite of the ones that are recorded is Song for Lya, though there are many good ones. For me, as a person preferring fantasy over SF, the choice to truncate the book where they did meant that the stories I am MOST likely to enjoy are left out. But even so, the largely SF selections at the beginning were fascinating and satisfying. Surprisingly so, in some cases, since like other reviewers, I am usually less fond of short fiction than the sprawling multi-volume sagas for which he's become more well known in recent years. But it was fascinating to hear these tales written when he was very young, and to hear the personal backstory in his own voice. If your choice is this Audible recording, or not getting to read his work at all, then yes, I guess you should go ahead and purchase it. Martin is certainly a master at prose, and his skill and humor shows up throughout. But if there is another way for you to read this book, so you get the entire thing, then I highly recommend you do that instead, and save yourself the frustration. If I had the option here, I'd give this 5 stars for the material, and only 2 for the truncated recording. Since I don't, the whole thing gets averaged to a 3 star rating. Buyer beware!

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