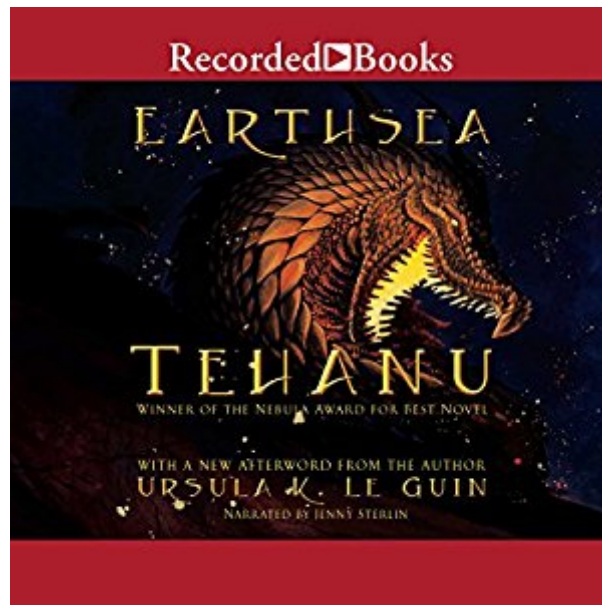


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Tehanu: The Earthsea Cycle, Book Four



Synopsis

Years before, they had escaped together from the sinister Tombs of Atuan - she an isolated young priestess, he a powerful wizard. Now she is a farmer's widow, having chosen for herself the simple pleasures of an ordinary life. And he is a broken old man, mourning the powers lost to him not by choice. A lifetime ago they helped each other at a time of darkness and danger. Now they must join forces again to help another - the physically and emotionally scarred child whose own destiny remains to be revealed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This story is so hard to rate, because it is excellent - the writing is so much more personal and deep than in the previous books in the trilogy. If you are looking at the technical parts of the story, Tehanu is much better than the beginning stories, and you will go back to the first trilogy, read it and wonder why she couldn't have made the style more like it. It is an good starting point for people who are not accustomed to fantasy, or who like reality to have a place in a fairy tale. The problem that everyone has with this book, in my opinion, is how harsh it is, how human the characters. We who loved the first book will be shocked and dismayed at how frail and... and real our heroes have become. Ged without magic, and utterly without power really hurts to read about. Reading these characters, after having loved who they were, is like having your dreams shattered. The magic is torn brutally out of the fairy tale, and what we have left isn't pleasant. I kept reading the story only because I was certain Le Guin wouldn't let what was once a beloved story for adults and children alike become such a hard, ugly story about life and pain and hope. She just couldn't, but she did. Reading a

fantasy in which your heroes are broken and humbled is almost as frightening as watching your parents cry, or seeing what was once a beloved place be torn down to make something like a freeway, black and ugly and full of smog. I kept wishing for the dream that was clear and innocent and beautiful in the first books to come back, but it never did.

This book is a betrayal of all that came before. It should never have been written. The first three were works of wonder, touching on universal themes: sublime, compelling, cogent and inspiring. They asked large questions and arrived at honest answers, but they did so gently and gracefully. The quiet unhurried voice is one that this author has honed to perfection. Her world of Earthsea ranks among the very classics, alongside Middle Earth, Narnia and Avalon. Here, everything that made Earthsea so inspiring and evocative is sacrificed to make a point. Le Guin has decided that the fourth book of the series shall be a polemic - an undisguised and prolonged treatise directed at female empowerment and decrying child abuse. Are these worthy moral pursuits? Of course they are. Do they belong in the world of Earthsea? Not even remotely. This book was one of the most excruciating and disappointing reads I have ever undertaken. It's not the writing or the skill - the author's proficiency remains unparalleled - but the desecration of what was magnificent. The skill with which this work is written actually adds to the anguish; we remember what this skill was harnessed to build and cannot help but contrast it to what it is now being used to destroy. Reading this book, one is struck by how fragile a fantasy world like Earthsea really is. Earthsea works because, like all myth, it is founded in a successful illusion. When an author creates such a world, she makes a pact with the reader: "Accept this illusion, and we will journey to a place more vital than any you have known." If the author ever forgets this promise, if she ever turns from the myth to the commonplace, the illusion collapses and the world disintegrates. In this novel, Earthsea suffers precisely such a fate.

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