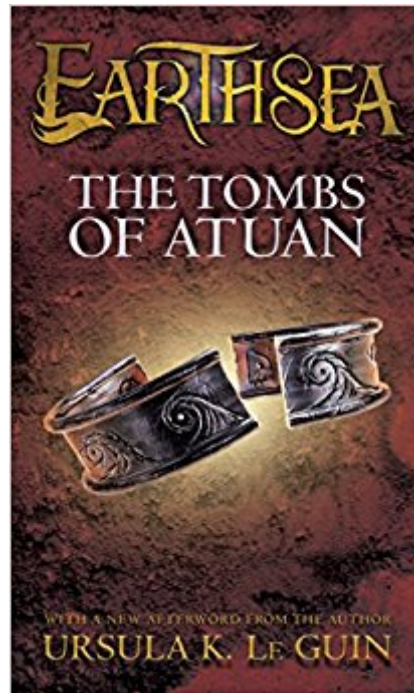




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The Tombs Of Atuan (The Earthsea Cycle, Book 2)



Synopsis

WHEN YOUNG TENAR is chosen as high priestess to the ancient and nameless Powers of the Earth, everything is taken away -- home, family, possessions, even her name. For she is now Arha, the Eaten One, guardian of the ominous Tombs of Atuan. While she is learning her way through the dark labyrinth, a young wizard, Ged, comes to steal the Tombs' greatest hidden treasure, the Ring of Erreth-Akbe. But Ged also brings with him the light of magic, and together, he and Tenar escape from the darkness that has become her domain. With millions of copies sold, Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle has earned a treasured place on the shelves of fantasy lovers everywhere. Complex, innovative, and deeply moral, this quintessential fantasy sequence has been compared with the work of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, and has helped make Le Guin one of the most distinguished fantasy and science fiction writers of all time. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 840 (What's this?)

Series: Earthsea Cycle (Book 2)

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Often compared to Tolkien's Middle-earth or Lewis's Narnia, Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea is a stunning fantasy world that grabs quickly at our hearts, pulling us deeply into its imaginary realms. Four books (A Wizard of Earthsea, The Tombs of Atuan, The Farthest Shore, and Tehanu) tell the whole Earthsea cycle--a tale about a reckless, awkward boy named Sparrowhawk who becomes a

wizard's apprentice after the wizard reveals Sparrowhawk's true name. The boy comes to realize that his fate may be far more important than he ever dreamed possible. Le Guin challenges her readers to think about the power of language, how in the act of naming the world around us we actually create that world. Teens, especially, will be inspired by the way Le Guin allows her characters to evolve and grow into their own powers. In this second book of Le Guin's Earthsea series, readers will meet Tenar, a priestess to the "Nameless Ones" who guard the catacombs of the Tombs of Atuan. Only Tenar knows the passageways of this dark labyrinth, and only she can lead the young wizard Sparrowhawk, who stumbles into its maze, to the greatest treasure of all. Will she? --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"New and longtime Earthsea fans will be drawn to these impressive new editions."

I've been reading Ursula Le Guin's works since 1970. Forty-five years later, I decided to go back and reread "The EarthSea Trilogy," only to find there are six EarthSea books and many others I have not read. I went to in search of a specific translation of the Tao Teh Ching, required for a class I am taking, and found a translation by Ursula Le Guin. I ordered all the EarthSea books AND her Tao translation, as well as my required reading. I was stunned to find that EarthSea is filled with Tao, that much of way I've chosen to live my life has been guided by the very philosophy that forms the foundation of much of her fantasy. Le Guin's commentaries at the end of the EarthSea novels, tells how she slipped characters of color into the book when we were passing constitutional amendments to allow AA to vote; strong women during an era we could not pass the Equal Rights Amendment, all so subtle and done with such craftsmanship, the reader enjoys the fantasy and misses the politics. Lightyears ahead of her times, she weaves a grand story of fantasy into a work that is relevant for all time. I highly recommend this book and all others I've read to date by this amazing author.

I read and loved The Earthsea Trilogy when I was in my early twenties. I read it to my daughter when I was in my early thirties. I'm reading it to my grandchildren now. The ability of skilled storytelling to teach us about ourselves is seldom more powerful than when we find it in what the "literary world" looks down upon as "fantasy." But J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Elizabeth Moon, and Ursula Le Guin have learned from the best. They stand on the shoulders of every indigenous oral tradition around the world which has always taught young humans who they were with stories of animals and/or mythical beings not so much different than themselves. This series (now wonderfully

expanded) is the perfect gift for young people of all ages. At 63, I am still swept away, joyously caught up in every page of Le Guin's magical way with words. She is a Master storyteller, and her enlightening lessons last because her readers cannot help passing them on.

The third Book of Earthsea is well-written, which is something that we come to expect from Ursula Le Guin. It's not my favorite of the series (and the later books were totally unnecessary in my opinion, though I do like *The Other Wind*). But it is beautiful, and makes its very Taoist points well without beating you over the head with them.

Earthsea: The Farthest Shore, Ursula K. LeGuin, 1972. Another perfectly beautiful fantasy tale. It looks so simple when you examine the style, but every word is poetically chosen to evoke the intended emotions of the reader. Some of the images will stay with me for a long time. I was struck by the total opposition of the philosophy of this book to another I read recently, *The Transhumanist Wager*, by Zoltan Istvan. Istvan is seeking immortality through recent scientific breakthroughs. LeGuin puts it plainly in her afterword, "The idea of individual immortality, an endless ego-existence, is more dreadful to me than the idea of letting go the self in death to rejoin shared, eternal being." Her fantasy writing puts that point of view even more clearly in the reader's mind. I read *The Farthest Shore* as a break from Philip K. Dick's 900 page *Exegesis*, but when I returned to that I immediately found this comment by Dick, "... the two modes of interpretation (of his strange experience) which I hover between are S-F and theology, which surely tells us something about S-F we otherwise might not know. The two must be related in some important way." Of course, you can't think of LeGuin without dragons, so here is one of my favorite parts. "It did not move. It might have been crouching there for hours, or for years, or for centuries. It was carved of iron, shaped from rock but the eyes, the eyes he dared no look into, the eyes like oil coiling on water, like yellow smoke behind glass, the opaque, profound, yellow eyes watched Arren."

There's something almost archetypal about this novel, and like other books in the series, it has a definite dreamlike quality to it. I found the imagery to be very powerful and very original. This is not your average sword and board fantasy by any means. Le Guin strikes me as a "top-down" writer, in that the philosophical and spiritual heart of the book is dead-on and clear of vision. However, the actual characters themselves are not the deepest, nor is the plot all that intriguing. That being said,

her prose is extremely skilled and there is no doubt this is a canonical work of fantasy. You really just have to appreciate the story for what it is and not expect it to be like other books you've read.

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