

# **Off to Be the Wizard Study Guide**

**Off to Be the Wizard by Scott Meyer**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Off to Be the Wizard Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 – 6.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 – 12.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 12 – 18.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 19 – 24.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 25 – 29.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>



# Plot Summary

“Off to Be the Wizard” is a young adult science-fiction and fantasy new adult novel by Scott Meyer which follows the time-traveling Martin Banks as he uses a computer to send himself back to Medieval England. When the novel begins, 23-year-old Martin is messing around on the internet, hacking into websites. He hacks into the website of a cell phone company that made radios back in the 1930s, and discovers a large file called “Repository1-c.txt”. He scans for any information about himself as he does with all websites and finds data about himself. He decides to alter his height, and discovers that as he alters his height online, his height in reality is also altered.

Martin, having realized the repository file controls all of reality, realizes he can teleport himself including backwards through time. He also realizes he can adjust anything in his life, such as his bank account which he increases exponentially. He copies the Repository file onto his smartphone so that he can access it anywhere at any time. However, Martin’s manipulation of his bank account catches the attention of the Department of the Treasury, who, together with the Seattle police, go to arrest Martin. Martin escapes from jail by using the Repository file on his phone, shows up at his apartment, grabs a handful of things, and flees to his parents’ house to avoid the police. He tells his parents he is innocent of whatever the authorities will say, goes into his old bedroom, then transports himself back in time to the year 1150 in England.

A beautiful passing seamstress and tailor named Gwen gives Martin a lift in Leadchurch. There, at the Rotted Stump Inn, Martin announces he is a wizard. He is welcomed by Phillip, who also purports to be a wizard. Martin challenges Phillip to a duel, believing that Phillip is a fraud and that the Repository file will make victory possible. Phillip defeats Martin, but then takes Martin under his wing as an apprentice. Phillip reveals that there are dozens of people who have discovered the Repository, and have traveled back in time. Some twenty future people, posing as wizards, live across Europe. Most powerful is Jimmy, who works as an advisor wizard to King Arthur, and whom Phillip can’t stand for having too much influence and always taking credit for other people’s ideas. For example, Jimmy has convinced the King to change the name of London to Camelot, even though in the future, London is still called London. It makes Phillip believe that they are perhaps living in an alternate reality.

Phillip trains Martin, who then prepares for the trials. The trials will determine if Martin is allowed to stay in England or not. It all begins with the salutation, the welcoming banquet wherein all European wizards gather together to watch Martin’s introduction. Martin creates a massive statue of himself which does the robot. Everyone cheers and applauds. Phillip later reveals the trials are actually over: the welcoming and salutation, coupled with Phillip’s approval and trust of Martin, have earned Martin the right to stay. He reveals that wizards have three rules. They can only experiment on themselves. If they experiment on another, it must be consensual. If magic/the Repository are to be used as a weapon, it can only be in self-defense.



Gwen approaches Martin and his fellow local wizards to tell them that the families of Rickard's Bend have all been killed. With no apparent cause of death, Martin, Phillip, and the others believe magic to be the cause. It is then that Tyler, a fellow wizard, is summoned. He reveals he had been rendered invisible by Jimmy after learning that Jimmy was trying to turn the people of Ricard's Bend into Hobbits. Martin and the others then go to confront Jimmy. Jimmy reveals that he is merely trying to make life better for people by giving them a better, fantasy world. When Tyler discovered what he was up to, Jimmy lost focus and the people all died. Jimmy contends that they weren't actual people, and didn't matter. He says that they are no more real than he is. Jimmy and Martin then battle. Jimmy is subdued when Phillip smashes Jimmy in the face with his staff. Jimmy is exiled back to the future with new coding that prevents him from ever using another electronic again.

In the future, the police come into Martin's parents' house, but find nothing. Jimmy shows up a few hours later in a taxi, apologizes for everything, and then says he's headed home. An old man on a bike in ragged clothing takes notes, including the license plate number of the taxi. As he rides away, all nearby cars and electronics stop working for a moment. The old man is Jimmy.



# Chapters 1 – 6

## Summary

Chapter 1 – Martin Kenneth Banks loves science and getting into trouble on the internet by messing around with computers. Though much of what he does is illegal, he does not consider himself a hacker because he doesn't like the image of the label, and because it is exhausting to be rebellious all the time. Instead, Martin wants to do something important to be remembered for. Martin hacks into the website of a cell phone company that made AM radios in the 1930s. He looks at a file called "repository1-c.txt", running a search for his name as he always does. He finds information on himself, changes his height entry to make him six-foot-one, rather than five-eleven, and gets up to use the bathroom. He discovers he is suddenly taller. Shaken, Martin readjusts the entry on his height to five-eleven. Martin thinks about what has just happened. He believes reality to be like a giant computer program. He believes he has just proven it. He takes sleeping pills, bourbon, and goes to sleep.

Chapter 2 – Martin wakes up groggy and goes to work. It is Thursday. The entire day passes by in a haze. At home, Martin returns to repository1-c.txt. He is determined to figure out exactly what it is. Martin returns to the data entries about himself. He adjusts his bank account to give himself more money. After work on Friday, Martin returns home excited to try things out with the program file over the weekend.

Chapter 3 – Martin saves, encrypts, and stores the data on himself on his phone's storage card. He then gives himself more money. He then goes on to study the code as it relates to him, including his heartbeat and location. He changes his coordinates, and suddenly reappears on the other side of his room. He then teleports himself to Boston Market. He then returns home and downloads emulators to his phone to run the repository file from there, no longer having to rely on his computer. Suddenly, Martin appears to himself and urges Martin to try going back in time. A short time later, a second future Martin appears, asking if the present Martin wants to play heads-up poker.

Chapter 4 – The next morning, after drinks and poker, Martin has a hangover. Still, he is amazed with all he can do related to the repository file. He decides to travel back in time, but is very careful about where and when he will travel. He knows he will have to travel to a time when people believed magic existed. He settles on the year 1150 AD, with a target of Dover, England. He fashions an editing program for his phone so he can directly work on the file, and edits the data to make sure his phone always has 73-percent of its power. He fashions an app for the entering of a date, time, and location to travel to. The app also includes a compass, a button to instantly return him home, and a button labeled "Escape". While Martin doesn't believe what he is doing is illegal or immoral, he knows he'll be in big trouble if he is found out.



Chapter 5 – Heading to work, Martin wonders about creation and reality. Discovering the program explains some things, but not all things –such as who created the program itself in the first place. Martin wonders whether it is God or random chance that is responsible. At work, Martin is happy because he knows he can now live his life however he wants. By lunch, he has quit his job and then gives his apartment a makeover complete with a new computer and television. Returning home after shopping, Martin is confronted by two men in suits.

Chapter 6 – Special Agents Miller and Murphy, from the Department of the Treasury, arrest Martin, take away his phone, and put him into an interrogation room. The rapid addition of money to Martin’s account has attracted the attention of the Treasury. Miller and Murphy want to know how Martin made it possible. He asks them to bring him his smartphone. Murphy goes to retrieve it.

## Analysis

“Off to Be the Wizard” is a young adult science-fiction and fantasy novel by Scott Meyer which follows the time-traveling Martin Banks as he uses a computer to send himself back to Medieval England. When the novel begins, Martin quickly discovers the repository file which allows him to manipulate everything from his height and location to the amount of money in his bank account. In other words, the repository file allows Martin to manipulate reality itself. Immediately, the theme of reality becomes central to the novel.

Martin wonders about reality, and through reality, the theme of creation becomes important. Two primary theories in the novel are presented to the reader: that all of existence came into being by random chance, or through the work of God. The discovery of the repository file has not settled the question, but merely moved it back a step. Who or what is responsible for the repository itself in the first place? The question can be considered akin to the question of creation of the universe: for example, if the universe can be traced back to the Big Bang Theory, who or what gave the bang itself the impetus to begin? Nevertheless, with existence and reality being what they are, Martin knows he can work within those parameters according to the repository file.

However, Martin’s ability to manipulate reality also calls into question the theme of ethics. Just because Martin has the ability to manipulate reality around him, does it mean that he should? Likewise, is Martin justified in increasing the amount of money in his bank account if it seemingly hurts no one? Martin himself doesn’t believe what he is doing is immoral or illegal, but others believe differently. Martin’s pursuit of ethically questionable ends, such as increased financial resources, catches the attention of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the police. Martin becomes a wanted man, and is taken in custody.

For the Treasury agents, and for the police, what Martin has done is both illegal and immoral. Law enforcement considers getting to the bottom of what Martin is doing to be a matter of justice. Here, the theme of justice comes heavily into play. When something



immoral or illegal has been done, justice must be served on behalf of those who have been wronged, or as a consequence to what has been done that deserves punishment. The reader will have to determine for his or herself whether Martin's manipulation of his bank account is illegal, and/or immoral.

The appearance of Agent Murphy and Agent Miller signal the theme of adventure. The reader recognizes that the appearance of Treasury agents is a far cry from the norm for Martin, as is Martin's discovery of a truly unique file and situation during his recreational hacking. Martin's arrest results in agents asking how Martin was able to manipulate his bank account. Martin contends that all he needs is his phone to demonstrate this – and the reader easily surmises what Martin is going to do.

## Discussion Question 1

Do you believe the discovery of the repository file answers the question of creation? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Martin's decision to increase the money in his bank account is ethical? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

What does Martin intend to do with his discovery of the repository file? Why?

## Vocabulary

ambient, droned, stupefying, terminal emulator, egocentric, absentmindedly, subroutines, sophisticated, quantify, spontaneously, obligation, rudimentary, abattoir, equivalent



# Chapters 7 – 12

## Summary

Chapter 7 – Martin teleports to his apartment, where two more agents are searching through his possessions. He rushes into his car, and drives away as he is pursued by the police. He teleports himself from the car just as it crashes into a tree. Meanwhile, Walter and Margarita Banks, both retired and at home, can hear sirens. Martin suddenly bursts into the house, hugs his parents, and tells them he loves them. He also tells them that what they are about to hear isn't true. Martin runs into his old bedroom and presses the Escape button.

Chapter 8 – Martin appears on the cliffs of Dover, angry at himself for being so stupid with money. Wanted in his own time, Martin is now a stranger in Medieval England with no real means of survival. Among his bagged items he has taken from the police include a Draco Malfoy costume from the Harry Potter series. He decides to put this on.

Chapter 9 – Martin begins walking, and eventually comes across two ruts that serve as a road. Two men on horses ride past, with one bearing his teeth at Martin. A wagon approaches, spurred on by a beautiful girl who stops to speak with Martin. Martin asks if there is a nearby village. The girl, a seamstress and tailor named Gwen, says she will give him a ride to Leadchurch, where she is headed. She does not fear him because he is a magician, and everyone knows magicians are celibate. She drops him off at the Rotted Stump, an inn.

Chapter 10 – Martin announces to the room that he is a powerful wizard. The barkeeper, Pete, sends a boy to fetch Phillip, the local wizard. Martin asks for food and board in exchange for showing off some magic. Pete says no one except Big Gert gets free room and board. Gert, Pete explains, gets free room and board so she won't cause trouble. However, Pete is willing to grant Martin a tent if the magic performed is good enough. Until Phillip arrives, Martin demonstrates a plastic bag's properties to the stunned people of the inn. Pete wants several yards of plastic produced. Martin agrees. Phillip then arrives, and examines the plastic. Martin agrees to work privately to conjure more see-through plastic cloth. If he cannot, he will be smeared with dung, robbed, and chased out of town.

Martin teleports to his parents' house, grabs some heavy duty plastic saran wrap, then rushes back into his bedroom as knocking occurs at the front door. Back at the inn, Martin has the people pull the film from his sleeves, saying he is like a spider producing a web. Pete is unimpressed, while Phillip invites Martin to stay with him. Martin counters that Phillip has not shown his powers. They agree to a demonstration duel. Among those assembled to watch is Gwen, who seems to be on Phillip's side. Martin uses his phone to make himself hover. Phillip uses his staff to create a glowing blue light and to magnify his voice. Martin throws up. Phillip then uses the blue light ball to slam into Martin, throwing him out of town where he hits a tree and is knocked out.





Chapter 11 – When Martin awakens, he is in a guest room at Phillip’s house. Phillip gives him fresh stew to eat. Phillip explains that he and Gwen went to find him after the duel, and brought him in. Phillip had hoped to avoid Martin making a fool of himself. Phillip asks if Pink Floyd every got back together. Phillip reveals himself to be Phillip McCall, born in London in 1948, an immigrant to America in the 1970s, a graduate of MIT, and a previous discoverer of the repository file in 1983. Phillip explains that many people have found the file, but that the file discovered is merely a projection of the one true file. In Medieval England, there are some twenty or so known others who have accessed the file and set up shop as magic practitioners. There are others they don’t know about.

Phillip explains that most flee in their time because they get caught manipulating their bank accounts. Phillip himself fled because Pontiac got suspicious when Phillip’s car never needed to be repaired. Phillip explains to Martin that the wizards have a set of governing rules and principals which Martin must adhere to with training if he wants to stay. If he passes, he will be allowed to help with, and submit new powers to, the version of the repository file that Phillip and his fellows have been improved for over a decade. Martin agrees to be trained by Phillip. Martin is glad to learn that wizards don’t have to be celibate.

## Analysis

As the reader surmises, Martin uses his phone to make good his escape. Now actively being chased by the Seattle Police Department and the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Martin is in for the biggest adventure of his life. The theme of adventure remains strong as Martin transports himself back in time to 1150 England in order to escape. Here, Martin’s adventures will only increase in number and substance. The journey to Leadchurch, the duel with Phillip, and then the decision to train as an apprentice under Phillip all become adventures for Martin – adventures he has never before had.

The question of reality again comes to the fore through Phillip. Phillip reveals that innumerable other people have found the repository file, but not all have settled in medieval England or Europe. However, there are about twenty known wizards in England and Europe, all of whom are now altering reality to some extent. They have been forced into the past by having altered reality to some degree in their own times, with most people fleeing because they are caught manipulating their bank accounts.

Here, questions of morality, legality, and ethics again come into play. The manipulation of a bank account is illegal, and arguably immoral. If not, there would be no need for those who do it to have to flee into another time. Yet, those who have fled realize that some form of moral order and moral legal system is required for the conduct of those living in different times. Phillip explains that there is a set of governing rules and principals that Martin must adhere to if he wants to stay. Martin agrees to do so.



It is interesting to note that the wizards of England and Europe, not to mention the people who live in various other places and times, have seemingly unlimited power. They can, essentially, do anything they want. But rather than doing anything they want, they have self-regulated. In the future, Martin did not think twice about doing things like increasing the money in his bank account. But in the past, such unchecked exercises of power have themselves been checked by a system of laws in the pursuit of justice. Here, through the self-limited of unlimited power, the theme of justice becomes critical.

The reader should also note how creation comes into play in the novel. The medieval world of England in which Martin now exists has not been tampered with to any large degree. How things have turned out after the initial creation through the repository file have been left largely untouched. Martin and Phillip assimilate into things as they exist, and do not attempt to create anything new or unknown to the people of Leadchurch. There is an ethical quality to adhering to creation, rather than interrupting or altering creation in any significant way.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does Phillip announce to the townspeople of Leadchurch that he is a wizard in so public a fashion? What is the result?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why does Phillip decide to offer Martin an apprenticeship? Why does Martin accept?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why do the wizards, with unlimited power, self-regulate their use of their power? Do you agree or disagree with this concept? Why or why not?

## **Vocabulary**

bide, celibate, differentiated, charlatan, benevolently, prodigious, conjure, traipsed



# Chapters 12 – 18

## Summary

Chapter 12 – Phillip brings Martin to Gwen for a proper set of robes and clothing. He warns Martin about getting romantic toward Gwen, saying Gwen already has enough to deal with. Martin apologizes to Gwen for his behavior the previous evening. Gwen goes about taking measurements. Upon exiting the shop, Phillip reminds Martin to always think before he acts. He reminds Martin that a wizard's best asset is faith, and brings Martin to his shop. It is full of jars, vials, and containers. It also has a crystal ball on a table. Through the crystal ball, a Commodore 64 computer screen can be seen. Phillip explains they are to help people just enough to prove their power, but are to stay away long enough to make sure people don't become dependent on them or annoying. Computer-generated force fields allow Phillip to control who enters his shop. Martin asks Phillip what is upstairs. Phillip says nothing is upstairs. A man named Hubert comes for help in sifting dung. Phillip says he and Martin have other business to attend to, and fly away.

Chapter 13 – Phillip and Martin fly at 35-miles-per-hour to a small farm and stone hut owned by Miss Abigail. They are to move a goat from one pen to another. They succeed when the goat chases Martin. From there, Martin and Phillip seek out a staff for Martin. As they search, Phillip reveals the chairman of their time traveling group is named Jimmy, who goes by the name of Merlin and acts as an advisor to King Arthur. Phillip explains that nothing that they do – such as changing the name of London to Camelot – affects things back in the future. London is still London there. Something unknown always fixes reality. It is possible they are in an alternate reality. Martin flashes back to his own time, and learns from his mother that the capital of England is London.

Chapter 14 – Martin perfects his staff while Phillip adjusts things about Martin through the file, such as that Martin can now speak all languages. Phillip explains that one bad wizard, Todd, adjusted the file in ways no one liked, such as making people ghosts. Phillip also explains that, so long as Martin eats, drinks, sleeps, and is not killed, he will live as long as he wants. Phillip explains that if Martin wishes to experiment, it can only be on himself or on another consensual wizard. Martin is given to saying an incantation to make himself officially a part of training, and to give him access to powers through the shell of the file system. Martin begins by practicing the levitation of a coin.

Chapter 15 – Training continues as weeks pass. Phillip teaches Martin how to continue to levitate and duplicate objects. Phillip familiarizes Martin with Leadchurch and the locals. Phillip explains that powers may be used as weapons, but only ever in self-defense. Martin sets to putting the identifying markers of a wizard on his borrowed robes so people will recognize him for what he is. Martin is then brought by Phillip to meet the other wizards. Gary is tall and thin and from Minneapolis in 1992, Jeff is muscular and from Delaware in the year 2021, and Tyler, who is black, is from Montana in 2003. All have asked Gwen out and been rejected.



They all go to Gary's home, a cave called Skull Gullet Cave. Gary programs in pizza from Pizza Hut for dinner, and they play the game Risk. They never speak about the future because people who haven't experienced it will look like fools, and because it often causes fights and disagreements. Each bides their time in a different way. Tyler writes novels, Gary is a painter, and Jeff works on programming problems, such as importation, where he is trying to work video game elements into the world. Phillip refuses to answer questions about his second floor. After Phillip leaves to use the bathroom, Tyler, Jeff, and Gary explain to Martin to always let the locals know that he can defend himself, because there are some who mess with wizards and would like to catch one unaware. Martin must always be on guard.

Chapter 16 – Martin decides not to pursue Gwen romantically. Gwen is dealing with a customer from Rickard's Bend unhappy with her sleeve and legging lengths when Martin arrives for a rough robe fitting. His robes nearly fit, and will be ready in a week. Martin and Phillip then work through the evening. Martin heads into town for food. He ends up in a bad part of Leadchurch. A group of young thugs led by a large man named Kludge surround Martin. Through some miscast spells, Martin is able to knock back Kludge, and then uses pumpkins as missiles against the group. Kludge vows revenge. Martin then returns to Phillip's for some stew. The next day, Phillip teaches Martin how to make rays and bursts of light for effect when using spells. He also teaches Martin a spell to set things on fire.

Chapter 17 – Martin and Phillip next head to complete an exorcism. They will be working with Father Galbraith, Bishop of Leadchurch, a good man. Phillip explains that the Church has come to accept magicians as a part of God's creation, as have the people. Phillip says that science only gets people so far, such as both him and Martin. They know the file that controls existence, but who has created the file is unknown and an act of belief. Religion and science are no worse than each other, and all depend on upon who is using them, and how.

Donald and Jan Melick have four children, the youngest being a son of fifteen named Donald the Younger. The parents believe Donald is possessed by a demon because he has become withdrawn and secretive. Bishop Galbraith thinks it is merely teenage rebellion. Inside, Galbraith and Phillip question the Melicks about Donald the Younger. They believe he is possessed. Galbraith tells them he believes it to be so as well. Galbraith, Phillip, and Martin then meet with Donald the Younger. Galbraith tells Donald he isn't possessed, but merely dealing with the timeless problems of being a teenager. Donald responds by hugging and talking out his problems with Galbraith. He then agrees to pretend to be possessed and exorcised.

Chapter 18 – Martin orders a new laptop from Amazon to be delivered one week before he gets into trouble. His parents explain two boxes have arrived from Amazon. Martin only knows what one of them is, and believes the other must be another order from another time. Phillip then begins teaching Martin how to access the shell system through programming. Jimmy arrives to see how everything is going. It is clear to Martin that Phillip and Jimmy do not get along. Phillip dislikes Jimmy for changing the past, for pretending to be Merlin when there never was a Merlin, and for taking credit for the



simplified interface for the shell repository file that Phillip created. Phillip then takes Martin for his first real flight. Gary, Jeff, and Tyler join in. With some practice, Martin gets the hang of it, but then he collides with a duck set up by the others to see how far he'll fall. The others have placed bets on it.

## Analysis

As Martin's training gets underway, both Martin and the reader learn invaluable things about how future dwellers have come to assimilate into the past. Such things factor heavily into the theme of ethics, reality, and creation. For example, Martin reveals that as wizards, they are to help people, but not help them too much or the people will become dependent upon them to solve all their problems. In many ways, this is reflective of the relationship between God and Earth. God intervenes where necessary, but beyond that, people must be dependent upon themselves to get by. Dependence strips away humanity, and the removal of humanity is immoral. Phillip's position maintains that there is a difference between genuinely helping, and harming through help.

Everything that Phillip and the other wizards do never seems to affect the future. Here, the theme of reality becomes essential as Phillip explains that changes do not remain fixed over time. For example, Jimmy's insistence on renaming London as Camelot has no bearing in the future: London is still London. This makes Phillip believe that perhaps they are in another reality, an alternate dimension. They may not be changing things in their own time, but they are changing things in the past to small degrees. However, all changes made are keeping with the ethics of the rules system for the wizards. These rules are simple but important. Wizards may only experiment on themselves routinely. If they are to experiment on another, they must have full consent. Finally, wizards may never use magic as a weapon except in self-defense. This helps maintain order and harmony.

The rules of the wizarding world in medieval England are also given to the need for justice. An example is used to demonstrate the delivery of justice. A wizard named Todd had violated the rules, especially when he used magic as a weapon by ghosting another wizard. Todd was subsequently exiled in the name of justice and order. While the wizarding community appears largely laid back, they will not tolerate a breach of the honorary system of laws.

Reality and creation to which Martin and Phillip seek to assimilate becomes the topic of discussion as they meet with Bishop Galbraith. Galbraith is a faithful, kind, and to-the-point man whose common sense is as powerful as his faith. It is why he is able to determine easily that Donald the Younger is not possessed and does not actually require an exorcism. Galbraith believes that God has created all of existence – a matter of faith not at all inconsistent with the repository file. Phillip, like Martin, notes that the repository file might explain much or all of reality, but what explains the repository file itself? Here, God can be seen as the programmer, and those within the system are the ones using the reality as it has been set in motion.



Phillip takes his ideas one step further. He contends that what is responsible for the system is certainly an act of faith, of belief. Science can only go so far in offering explanations. Science and religion, Phillip explains, are no worse than one another, and only depend upon who is using them and for what purpose. Faith and science are complementary to one another if so used. Phillip sees no disconnect between reason and religion, between faith and science. They are compatible to him, with the evidence being reality – the repository file.

In this section of the novel, the reader should also pay attention to two strange occurrences. The first is that Phillip is reluctant to talk about what he is doing in his upstairs workshop. He wants no one to know what he is doing. This does not bode well for a wizarding community supposedly built on ethics, honesty and transparency. Secondly, the reader will note that Gwen has been having trouble with the sleeve and legging lengths for the people living in Rickard's Bend. It is strange that Gwen should so accurately measure the lengths, but then still discover they are wrong after delivery. Both of these situations – Phillip's secretive work and Gwen's perplexity at being unable to accurately measure the people in Rickard's Bend – will be telling in future chapters.

## Discussion Question 1

Although Jimmy has made some large changes to England – such as having London renamed “Camelot” – there seems to be no effect on the future. Why does Phillip believe this is? Do you agree or disagree with Phillip? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you agree or disagree with Phillip's contention that science and religion are no worse than one another, but that it merely depends upon who is using them and why? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Phillip not believe there is a disconnect between religion and science? Do you believe there is such a disconnect? Why?

## Vocabulary

nonchalant, devoutly, viscosity, emitted, sporadically, incantations, menacingly, waterlogged, necromancer, gratuitous, bludgeoned, prodigious, dissipating





# Chapters 19 – 24

## Summary

Chapter 19 – Phillip begins teaching Martin how to conjure using a hat. The shell system looks for a place from which to bring into existence anything preprogrammed, such as beef jerky. Phillip and Martin then go to pick up Martin's robes. They are silver and reflective. Martin tests them out by working spells. It works well. The next two days will be devoted to preparing for the trials. Nearly every wizard in Europe will be present for them. While studying, Martin notices that Phillip has removed his Commodore. Phillip explains there is no real reason. Phillip gives Martin the gift of a small wood coffin-like box with claws. They then go to the Rotted Stump for some drinks.

Chapter 20 – When Martin wakes up, he thinks he sees an invisible form moving near Phillip's bed. Martin falls out of bed, waking up Phillip. Phillip asks what is going on. Martin says he fell out of the bed. Phillip tells Martin not to worry about the trials. They then fly to Camelot Castle where there is a golden statue of Jimmy as Merlin, with human feces on the face. No one knows where it comes from. Martin realizes Phillip is the culprit. Martin explains that Jimmy gets all the credit for the castle, even though he had nothing to do with it apart from conjuring some materials. As they head into the castle, Martin can't stop thinking about Gwen. They meet up with Jimmy, who delights in his role as consultant to King Arthur. He shows them the round table. Phillip is annoyed that Jimmy holds too much power over the king and his court. Jimmy says he doesn't force anyone to do anything. Jimmy returns to his work. After he goes, Phillip comments that Jimmy is too smart not to be taken seriously.

Chapter 21 – The evening's feast is held in Martin's honor. All of the assembled eighteen wizards are between twenty and forty and appear as if they belong at Microsoft or Google. Only Tyler is absent. Martin is then made to give his salutation, in which he replicates his box with brick versions, ultimately coming together in a statue of Martin. It begins to do the Robot dance. The statue then pretends to fire a gun and falls apart. The wizards all cheer and applaud. Jimmy tells Martin he could use a man like Martin in Camelot, because Martin has showmanship. Martin is free to consider the offer as he chooses. The party gets underway. Martin wakes up with the worst hangover he has ever had. Martin gets himself in order, and does some last-minute studying before the trials.

Before the other wizards, Martin learns he has already passed the trials. His salutation was a demonstration of skill, coupled with Phillip's word that Martin can be trusted and relied upon. Martin happily accepts becoming one of the wizards. Jimmy is happy to learn that Martin will stay somewhere in Camelot for a while to see if Camelot is a good place to be. He quickly returns to his bedroom while the police are trying to get in, and grabs a bunch of his stuff to bring back.



Chapter 22 – Martin sets about making his new place a home, doing everything from decorating to setting up exclusionary spells to keep unwanted people out. Gary then requests Martin come to Skull Gullet Cave. Martin agrees. There, Gary and Jeff are also present with Gwen. Gwen is hysterical. Gwen explains a farmer has been complaining her garments get longer over time, and upon delivering newly adjusted garments, Gwen discovered the farm family all dead. Martin and the others teleport to Ricard's Bend. Corpses cover the ground, but there is no outward sign of violence. Their clothes are too long, and most appear to have died after taking off their shoes. It appears to be the work of a wizard. Suddenly, Martin and his group are attacked.

Chapter 23 – When Martin regains consciousness, he, Jeff, and Gary are tied to a tree. Bodies are being fed into a fire. Their guard is Donald the Younger, who apologetically explains that Kludge, upon seeing the bodies, immediately blamed the wizards and worked everyone up into anger against the wizards. Donald, under orders, must then inform Kludge the wizards are awake. Kludge intends to make the wizards talk by hurting Gwen. Gwen suddenly leaps to life, holding Kludge in midair with magic, forcing his gang to untie the wizards and leave them alone. They then teleport themselves to Leadchurch, to the Church, with Donald as a willing hostage. They meet with Bishop Galbraith and explain the situation. Galbraith also believes a wizard is responsible. Some don't believe Jimmy is responsible because he is too obvious a villain. Martin knows Phillip must be considered since he is an unlikely suspect. Gwen doesn't believe Phillip is responsible.

Chapter 24 – Martin, Gwen, Jeff, and Gary head out to confront Phillip. Galbraith remains behind. Martin and the others reveal the situation to Phillip. Martin wants to know what Phillip is doing upstairs. He reluctantly agrees to show them the Pontiac Fiero he has been assembling upstairs. Phillip is angry that his privacy has been invaded and that no one has trusted him. Phillip thinks they all need to tell Jimmy about what has happened. It is then that a growling dog can be heard from Rickard's Bend. Tyler is summoned by Phillip, given water, and disappears briefly for his bathroom. Tyler returns, and reveals himself to be the invisible being in Phillip's bedroom and the dog that is growling, trying to get their attention. He explains he has been doing novel research, and was in Rickard's Bend when he ran into Jimmy, and told Jimmy about his novel. Tyler then reveals that Jimmy is responsible for the deaths, having tried to turn the people into Hobbits. Tyler reveals he called Jimmy a monster, who then turned him into a ghost. Phillip declares Jimmy must be confronted.

## Analysis

As the novel continues, the reader will note how Martin believes he sees an invisible form moving beside Phillip's bed. While this does not make sense at first, the truth is later revealed through Tyler, the only wizard not present at the salutation and the trials. Tyler reveals that he himself was the invisible man, having been ghosted for discovering the secret plot of Jimmy. As it turns out, the reason why the clothes of the Rickard's Bend people appear to be increasing in size is because the people themselves are





decreasing in size. Jimmy has been turning them into Hobbits without their knowledge. They are now all dead.

Jimmy's willful mass manipulation of reality in startling ways is both unethical and illegal. Phillip lays out the charges: Jimmy has broken all the rules, including experimenting on other people without their consent, and using magic as a weapon offensively. Jimmy must face justice. Here, the themes of ethics and justice complement one another through the need to punish Jimmy for his unjust and unethical actions. All of the wizards of England and Europe agree to confront Jimmy. Justice must be done.

The willful manipulation of reality by Jimmy also calls into question the ethics not only of the deaths of countless innocent people, but of whether manipulating reality to such an extent – even when consensual – can be considered ethical. The manipulation of reality that Jimmy has embarked upon is not something minimal or even irrelevant to the greater scheme of things, but central to reality itself. He is transforming human beings into fantasy creatures. This is unacceptable to Phillip and the others. Reality is as it has been created, and it is not their place to so radically and fundamentally transform that reality.

The coming confrontation of Jimmy is just one more adventure in a series of adventures that Martin has had. His training, assisting of Phillip, salutation, and his acceptance into the wizarding community are all adventures. These are things he never would have done apart from having found the repository file. The adventure for Martin isn't merely just that of new experience, but of learning along the way. As the reader can see through Martin's consideration of deep subjects, such as reality, and through his conversations with people like Phillip, Martin has grown to possess better ethics and grounding in things relating to morality and law. He is changing into a better person through his adventures.

Trust is also something critical in this section of the novel, as Martin himself even suspects that the secretive Phillip might be responsible for the Rickard killings. The reader will remember how Phillip has neglected to respond to questions about what he does upstairs. Only when Martin and the others confront Phillip about what is going on upstairs does Phillip reluctantly show them that he is building a Pontiac Fiero. Phillip has done nothing immoral or illegal, but his secrecy about the matter leads to mistrust among the others.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is the clothing of all those living at Rickard's Bend consistently too large or too long? What information does this provide about the deaths of those living at the Bend?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Martin and the other wizards are right to suspect that Phillip might be responsible for the Rickard murders? Why or why not?



## Discussion Question 3

Who is responsible for the deaths at Rickard's Bend? Is it surprising that this individual is responsible? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

materialize, flagon, idealized, excrement, erudite, vandalism, impurities, vulgar, repugnant, intricate, surreptitiously, salutation, cacophony, disembodied, sullenly, furtively, tranquility, excruciating, acclimated



# Chapters 25 – 29

## Summary

Chapter 25 - Every wizard in Europe, except for Jimmy and his sidekick Eddie, are summoned. While waiting, Gwen reveals to Martin that she was born in 1992, and is from the year 2014. With the wizards assembled, Jimmy's cruelty is exposed in detail. Jimmy is found guilty on violating the only three rules the wizards have: altering a person's physique, doing so on others without their consent, and ghosting Tyler. Phillip says that Jimmy must be stopped, and what he has done cannot be allowed to stand. He will be given a chance to explain himself first. Everyone will be required to challenge Jimmy because Jimmy is so powerful. They all move on Camelot. Eddie invites them all in. When Jimmy appears, Tyler kicks him over and over again. Jimmy recovers, and seeks to explain what he has done.

Jimmy reveals he has brought enlightenment and stability to England, from the use of forks and knives to a secure government and better standard of living. He wants to give people the life they have always wanted, like a fantasy. He intends to recreate Middle Earth, hoping to alter the physical appearances and personal attributes of people slowly over time. Tyler's discovery of his plot threw him off, resulting in the deaths of the would-be Hobbits. He says he shouldn't be blamed for helping people. Phillip contends he hasn't given them a choice. Jimmy knows his days are numbered unless he can show the others what he is doing. He asks for the chance to show them, to defend himself. He teleports everyone to a standing army he is creating, an army meant to be Orcs. They are ten-percent changed and forced into obedience under threat of pain. Phillip calls it inhuman. Not even Eddie sides with Jimmy. When they attempt to subdue Jimmy, they realize their powers don't work. Jimmy reveals that all of Camelot is under an exclusionary field that prevents others from using magic. The shell has been disabled. He then says he will have to turn his army of Orcs on Phillip and the others.

Chapter 26 – Five hundred Orcs go after Martin, Gwen, Phillip, and the others, all of whom must run. Martin realizes that the file shell, not the file itself, has been disabled. He then pulls out his phone. Jeff summons the Barons of Hell from "Doom", scary demon soldiers who scare away the Orcs. Gwen pulls out a smartphone as well, and says she can transport people one at a time back into Camelot. Someone must distract Jimmy from using the shell to kill everyone long enough for everyone to get into the city. Martin agrees to serve as the distraction.

Chapter 27 – Martin flies over the city and calls out for Jimmy. He creates a thirty-foot tall version of himself from boxes, and draws Jimmy's attention. Jimmy creates a giant version of himself out of glowing orbs. He accuses Jimmy of being a no-talent hack who just copies ideas from other people. This enrages Jimmy. They battle. Jimmy declares he wants to change the future, from making sure the Inquisition never happens to having Hitler's parents killed, and Hitler adopted by a Jewish family. Martin will not be a part of it. Jimmy gains the upper hand over Martin. Jimmy says that Phillip's problems is



he's happy to come up with ideas, but takes no risks, letting others do dangerous things instead. Jimmy tells Martin that Martin has thrown his life away for nothing. Martin says Jimmy has killed too many people. Jimmy says the people are only lines of code. Martin counters that the people are just as real as Jimmy. Jimmy goes on to say he is not real, either, that nothing anybody does actually matters. Just as Jimmy is about to kill Martin, Phillip arrives with reinforcements. Phillip slams his staff into Jimmy's face, exploding Tabasco sauce everywhere and taking Jimmy down.

Chapter 28 – Within an hour, all of Jimmy's changes have been undone. Jimmy's fate is then discussed. He will be returned to normal human life, unable to use any electronic device. He will be teleported to South America where he will be imprisoned as an illegal immigrant. He is then sent on his way. Eddie brings Martin, Phillip, and Gwen to meet King Arthur. Martin and Eddie will be named as liaisons to the King, as go-betweens for the King and Phillip because Phillip has no desire to live in Camelot. Gwen announces she is going to Atlantis. An attempt to kiss Gwen automatically throws Martin into the air. They both end up laughing.

Chapter 29 – The police arrive at Martin's parents' house, rush into the bedroom, and find nothing. When they leave, Martin arrives for the second package. He assures his parents he is okay and that he has done nothing wrong. The police have taken the second package. Martin says he will order another one – a modern computer designed to look like a Commodore 64. An old man on a bike makes a note of Martin's arrive and taxi plate number. As he rides away, all the surrounding cars stop working. The old man is Jimmy.

## Analysis

As the novel comes to an end, the true extent and motivation of Jimmy's plans come to light. Reality and ethics, thematically, are critical to Jimmy's plot, and Martin's countering of that plot. It is clear that Jimmy is playing the part of a god. He wants to give people a better life, and endeavors to do so by transforming medieval England into Middle Earth. The people themselves are being turned into Hobbits, Elves, and Orcs – all against their will, and, on the part of the Hobbits and Elves, without their knowledge. People have always wanted a better life, Jimmy explains, so he is giving it to them.

Martin correctly argues that this is being done without their consent. Their reality is being warped without their knowledge, or, when it comes to the Orcs, under the threat of pain. Jimmy has assumed the role of a utilitarian, cruel, divine dictator. Jimmy says it doesn't matter if the free will of the people has been violated, because what is being done is being done to help them have better lives. Her further contends, quite sadistically, that the dead don't matter. Human lives are no more real than he is. As a result, their consent doesn't matter. They are merely expendable lines of code.

Martin contends that their consent is morally and ethically important, and that because they are no more real than Martin or Jimmy, they have natural rights that cannot be violated. The only thing that separates Jimmy and Martin from the locals is greater



knowledge and their traveling from a different time. God creates the world, but leaves it to the free will and discretion of the people He has created to live within it. Now, Jimmy is warping reality and taking away the rights and free will of those people. Jimmy's contention that nothing anyone does matters is at once both a comment of existentialist narcissism, and of man raising himself up in the place of God. Justice must then be carried out.

With Jimmy defeated and the adventure of Jimmy's downfall ended, Martin has some loose ends to tie up in the 2010s. Martin's adventures have led him to understand that the rights, free will, and feelings of other people are important whether they live in Medieval England or the present day. Most notable about Martin's return to his parents' house is the apology he gives them. The things he has done have affected his parents in ways he had not previously considered. Previously, he thought nothing of running to his parents' house and not caring what might become of them in everything unfolding, but only after dealing with Jimmy does Martin come to understand that his parents truly do matter as human beings.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Martin contend that the consent of those upon whom Jimmy is making changes is important? Do you believe Martin is correct in his assertion about consent? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you believe that Martin or Jimmy is correct in their consideration of the human beings living in Medieval England being a few lines of code, or actual living beings? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Jimmy ultimately return to apologize to his parents? What does this say about his character as a person?

## Vocabulary

lummock, askance, joviality, primitive, superstitious, delineated, mythological, inarticulately, insubstantial, deliberated, nonchalant



# Characters

## Martin

Martin Kenneth Banks is the principal protagonist of the novel “Off to Be the Wizard” by Scott Meyer. At 23 years of age, Martin is thin, careless and self-interested. Martin’s favorite thing to do in the world is to hack into websites and computers through use of the internet. Martin discovers the repository1 file hosted through a cell phone company server, and discovers he can manipulate reality – and his bank account – with it. His work earns the attention of the Department of the Treasury and the Seattle Police Department, and forces Martin to flee to his parents’ house, dragging his parents into the mess. From there, he uses the repository file to travel to medieval England to become a wizard. Martin is taken under the wing of Phillip, who trains Martin to properly use the repository program. Martin is also reminded to think before he acts, and comes to learn that just because he has immense power doesn’t mean he has the moral right, or the need, to use them.

By the end of the novel, Martin confronts Jimmy not merely in combat, but in moral and philosophical battle. Martin contends that the lives of people do matter, that free will and consent are crucial to human rights. He argues that Jimmy is no better than the people whom he is hurting, despite what Jimmy might think. When Jimmy is defeated and exiled back to the future, Jimmy himself returns to apologize to his parents for all that he has done. He now knows his parents are people too, and that what he does in his own life will affect them as well.

## Gwen

Gwen is the first person living in Medieval England that Phillip meets. A seamstress and tailor at 22 years of age or so, Gwen is also a wizard who doesn’t like to tell others about her talents and skills. She is originally from 2014. She has rejected the romantic advances of numerous men, including wizards, and including Martin. Gwen is frustrated by her seemingly constant inaccurate measurements of the people of Rickard’s Bend for clothing. Only upon delivering the latest re-measured clothing to the area does Gwen discover the bodies of hundreds. She reports this to the other wizards, and helps to organize the revolt against Jimmy. When Jimmy is taken down, Gwen decides to move on to Atlantis, despite her having developed marginally romantic feelings for Martin.

## Phillip

Phillip is the local wizard for Leadchurch, and helps train Martin to stay in medieval England. Phillip is patient, kind, and wise. He was born Phillip McCall in London in 1948. He immigrated to America in the 1970s, became a graduate of MIT, and came across the repository file in 1983. He believes that people should rely on wizards only when absolutely needed, and then rely on themselves the rest of the time. Phillip



immensely dislikes Jimmy for the power and influence Jimmy wields, but quickly comes to like Martin, whom he takes on as an apprentice. Phillip dodges questions from Martin about what he is doing upstairs in his shop – reassembling a Pontiac Fiero from the 1980s. Phillip later helps to bring Jimmy down when Jimmy’s plot to transform medieval England into Middle Earth is made known.

## Jimmy

Jimmy is the most powerful and influential wizard in Europe. He is the personal advisor and consultant of King Arthur, has had a golden statue of himself erected, and has had London renamed “Camelot”. Jimmy has secretly been working to transform medieval England into Middle Earth to make life better for people – whom themselves are being transformed into Orcs, Elves, and Hobbits without their consent. Jimmy has delusions of grandeur, and is intensely self-absorbed and narcissistic. He believes the people whom he is manipulating are worthless, and nothing more than a few lines of code. He genuinely believes violating the rights of people to make their lives better is a good thing. When Tyler objects to Jimmy’s plan, Jimmy ghosts Tyler. Jimmy’s shock leads to the death of the hundreds of people destined to become Hobbits. Jimmy is later taken down and exiled in punishment for what he has done. Over the next several decades of his life, he is able to track down Martin in the present day, and is seen as an old man taking notes at the end of the novel.

## Jeff

Jeff is one of Phillip’s three closest wizard friends near Leadchurch. Originally from Delaware in the year 2021, Jeff is a muscular young man who specializes in trying to incorporate aspects of video games into the medieval England.

## Tyler

Tyler is one of Phillip’s three closest wizard friends near Leadchurch. A black American originally from Montana in the year 2003, Tyler has become a novelist on the side. While researching a new novel, Tyler discovers Jimmy’s plot. Upon calling Jimmy inhuman, Tyler is rendered invisible by ghosting. He spends days trying to get the attention of Martin, Phillip, and the others until at last he is summoned and rendered whole again. At this point, Tyler reveals everything that has happened, and becomes part of the rebellion against Jimmy.

## Gary

Gary is one of Phillip’s three closest wizard friends near Leadchurch. He is a painter from the year 1992 in Minneapolis. He lives in a cavern known as Skull Gullet Cave, designed to look frightening but comfortable inside. His home becomes a hangout for many of the characters in the novel at various points.



## **Donnie**

Donald “Donnie” the Younger is a 15-year-old resident of Leadchurch. His family believes his moodiness as a teenager to be demonic possession, so Bishop Galbraith, Phillip, and Martin investigate. Galbraith knows that Donnie is merely going through being a teenager, but pretends to perform an exorcism with Donnie’s consent for the sake of his family. Donnie later tells Martin that the village has been drummed up by Kludge to hate wizards following the deaths of the people at Rickard’s Bend.

## **Miller**

Special Agent Miller is a member of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He is one of the leaders of a handful of agents that take on Martin’s case. They are alerted to Martin by the sudden appearance of massive funds in his bank account.

## **Murphy**

Special Agent Murphy is a member of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He is one of the leaders of a handful of agents that take on Martin’s case. They are alerted to Martin by the sudden appearance of massive funds in his bank account.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Repository1-c.txt

Repository1-c.txt is a program file discovered by Martin when hacking into a cell phone company that made radios back in the 1930s. Repository1 contains the parameters for reality, the past, and the present. Altering the file alters the world. Martin learns he can alter his height, manipulate his bank account, and transport himself anywhere or any time in history. Martin later learns that an innumerable number of people have discovered the file, and have placed themselves throughout history. Some twenty such people currently live in England and Europe. While Repository1 may explain existence, the creator of the file itself is unknown, but is believed by many to be God.

## Money

Money is kept in bank accounts in the novel. Martin's manipulation of his bank account to give himself hundreds of thousands of dollars catches the attention of the police and the Treasury Department. As a result, Martin must flee to medieval England. As Martin comes to learn, most of the people who have come back in time have left because of the exact same idea of increasing the amount of money in their accounts.

## Data

Data entries are found in Repository1-c.txt. Data entries create the parameters of reality and define everything in existence. The data entries can be altered to change reality. For example, Martin is able to alter his height and the amount of money in his bank account by altering the data entries in Repository1.

## Android

An Android smartphone is kept and used by Martin to operate a copy of the Repository file. Martin can therefore make changes and do things on the move and where needed. It is also his means of escape given a dangerous or difficult situation. For example, Martin uses his phone to escape from Treasury agents and the police early in the novel.

## Escape button

An escape button is programmed into the app which Martin has designed to use the Repository file on his smart phone. The escape button is fixed to a specific time, date, and place, and allows Greg to instantly get himself out of a dangerous situation. The first time Greg uses the escape button, it is to get away from Treasury agents and the



police early in the novel. The initial escape place is Greg's apartment, where he quickly gathers some assorted belongings and then flees.

## Clothing

Clothing is produced and tailored by Gwen in the novel. The clothing of the people who live in and near Rickard's Bend is constantly returned as being too large and too long. Gwen is confused by having to constantly alter the clothing because she is so precise in taking measurements. The clothing proves to be a mystery only later revealed as the work of Jimmy, who is shrinking the people of Rickard's Bend to become Hobbits.

## Staffs

Staffs are carried and wielded by wizards in the novel. The staffs are recognized by the shell of the Repository as a signal for the spoken generation of code. Each staff is personalized according to the individual wizard. For example, Phillip's staff contains a bottle of Tabasco sauce which is broken in Jimmy's face at the end of the novel. Martin's staff contains an image of El Santo, the masked luchador.

## Stew

Stew is a standard meal among the people of medieval England, often containing meat or fish and various vegetables and plants. It happens to be a favorite of Phillip, who eats it constantly. Martin quickly tires of stew, which leads him to seek out other food, during which time he has his first encounter with Kludge.

## Robes

Robes are worn by the wizards of medieval England and Europe. They are a symbol of status, an identifying form of clothing, and are highly personalized according to the wizard. For example, Martin's own robes are very flashy according to his love of showing off, and his love of El Santo, the masked wrestler. After Santo, Martin's robes are composed of highly-reflective silvery material.

## Pontiac Fiero

A Pontiac Fiero is owned and driven by Phillip in 1983. Phillip adjusts the car through the Repository1 file so the car will never need maintenance, gasoline, or break down. His Fiero ends up being the only car that never needs to be repaired, leading to Pontiac contacting him to see what was going on. Phillip must then flee to medieval England. Phillip has been bringing his Fiero to Leadchurch piece by piece to be reassembled, and is the secret project he is working on during much of the novel.



# Settings

## Seattle

Seattle is a city in Washington State. It is the home of Martin, his siblings, and his mother and father. Martin lives and works in Seattle, and it is in Seattle while hacking online that Martin discovers the existence of the Repository1 file. It is from Seattle that Martin must flee when the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Seattle Police Department realize he is manipulating his bank account and arrest him.

## Leadchurch

Leadchurch is a small, rural village in England to which Martin travels after meeting Gwen. Leadchurch is known for its church covered in silvery lead. It is a quiet community with a bad section where Kludge lives. Leadchurch is also where the Rotted Stump Inn and Gwen's tailoring and clothing business can be found. Leadchurch is the home and domain of Phillip, and is where Martin is trained by Phillip for the trials.

## Camelot

Camelot (London) is the capital of England, and is where King Arthur holds court with his advisor, Jimmy. Jimmy has a giant golden sculpture of himself erected in Camelot. At Jimmy's insistence, London has been renamed Camelot. It is where Jimmy bases his plans to turn England into Middle Earth, and is where Jimmy lives and holds domain as a wizard. It is in Camelot that Jimmy is later defeated, and all of his changes undone – including the name change of London.

## Rickard's Bend

Rickard's Bend is a beautiful, rural community near Leadchurch that is inhabited by several hundred people. Oddly, the clothing Gwen makes for these people is always too long or too large. While delivering a set of clothes to Rickard's Bend, Gwen discovers all of the inhabitants dead. As Tyler reveals, the dead have been killed by Jimmy in his attempt to turn them all into Hobbits. This explains why the clothing the people of the Bend wear is always too large or too long.

## Atlantis

Atlantis is a city and civilization whose exact location is a mystery, but is popular among the women who journey back in time. Most of the females who journey back in time go to Atlantis. When the novel ends, Gwen herself decides that Atlantis will be a

better place to live than medieval England. She wants to find a place to truly fit in, to be an equal in society. She hopes going further back in time will give her that equality.



# Themes and Motifs

## Adventure

Adventure is an important theme in the novel “Off to Be the Wizard” by Scott Meyer. Adventure – experiencing the unknown, and experiencing new things, often in conjunction with a journey – proves to be central to the plot of the novel. Indeed, much of the novel itself consists of one new adventure after another, revolving primarily around the character of Martin.

When the novel begins, Martin is a disinterested young man. He works and spends most of his free time hacking. He cares little for anyone beyond himself, and often acts without thinking. Martin’s subsequent discovery of the repository file will be consequential for two reasons. First, it will provide a catalyst for change in him, as who he is at the beginning of the novel is not who he is at the end of the novel. Second, it will be a launching point for adventure.

The first adventurous encounter that Martin has is using the file to increase his bank account and teleport himself. It is a break from the norm, and a new experience. Getting into trouble with the federal government and the local police is also a new experience, but not a very good adventure. Martin’s decision to flee to medieval England is an adventure in and of itself, as everything that happens therein qualifies as an adventure.

Martin’s initial challenging of, and then subsequent apprenticeship to Phillip, is an adventure as Martin trains not only to assimilate to medieval England, but to properly use the shell of the repository. He learns how to do everything from summoning and generating code by mouth, to flying. Martin becomes a full-fledged member of the wizarding circle of England and Europe, and becomes a part of the revolution against Jimmy’s inhumane conduct.

Arguably the greatest adventure that Martin undertakes is a journey of change. In literature, journeys are not always merely about getting from one place to another, but growing as a person along the way. By the end of the novel, Martin has come to care for more than just himself, and comes to recognize the fact that there is such a thing as right and wrong. This is seen in his philosophical confrontation of Jimmy, in which Martin argues for the rights, free will, and consent of people. It can also be seen in Martin’s apology to his parents for everything he had previously unthinkingly put them through. He recognizes that his parents are people who will have to deal with the consequences of his actions, and his apology is a testament to his growth as a person.

## Ethics

Ethics is an important theme in the novel “Off to Be the Wizard” by Scott Meyer. Ethics, thematically, includes understanding, discussing, or doing that which is morally right or



wrong, legal or illegal. In the novel, ethics becomes paramount in conjunction with the actions and activities of Martin, Jimmy, and the future-dwellers living in the past.

Early in the novel, upon discovery of the Repository<sup>1</sup> file, Martin realizes he can manipulate his bank account. He increases the amount of money he has into the hundreds-of-thousands of dollars. Martin considers the ethical ramifications of what he is doing as he does it. While he doesn't believe he is doing anything immoral or illegal, he does realize that what he is doing could get him into trouble. He is stealing money from no one, but merely creating it out of thin air – which still gets him into trouble.

In a roundabout sense, Martin's actions in increasing the amount of money in his bank account could have deleterious effects on the financial system by creating inflation through the creation of extra money – something the federal government only has legal power to do. Inflation negatively harms people who struggle to earn a living by making the value of the dollars they earn to be worth less. Martin's actions can arguably be considered immoral as a result.

What Martin has discovered through the file and through the manipulation of his bank account is what countless others have discovered: almost unlimited power. But as Martin learns among the wizarding community, though they have such power, they have exercised self-regulation by placing limits on their use of the file power. This is to keep order, stability, and security, for they are strangers in another time. Creating drastic changes in an age unused to such things would be ethically wrong, as well as disastrous.

Yet, Jimmy does not see things this way. Jimmy has no qualms about exceeding the legal limits the wizards have set up under the appearance of giving people a better life. He seeks to accomplish this through transforming Medieval England into Middle Earth, and people into Hobbits, Orcs, and Elves. He does this without consent on the part of any of them, and without even the knowledge of some. Tyler and Martin consider this behavior not only immoral and unethical, but inhuman.

Martin argues that, however the people in England exist, they have natural rights, free will, and must consent to anything done to them. Jimmy disagrees, saying what is ethical is to give them a better world – even if they don't want it or must die in its creation. Jimmy carelessly dismisses the people that have died as a “few lines of code”. Jimmy's cruel position is indefensible and is illustrated as wrong through Jimmy's defeat.

## Reality

Reality is an important theme in the novel “Off to Be the Wizard” by Scott Meyer. Reality – and by extension, existence, truth, faith, and belief – is utterly crucial in the formation of the plot. Reality lends itself heavily to the themes of ethics, justice, and creation in the novel, as well as to the actions and activities of Martin and Jimmy, and the wisdom of Phillip.



When the novel begins, Martin, a lover of science, believes reality is primarily all that which he can see, feel, or experience. Religiously agnostic, Martin has no real thoughts on the creation of reality – whether God or random chance is responsible. Even when Martin discovers the Repository1 file holding the parameters of reality – defining, informing, and shaping everything – he realizes the question of reality has only been pushed back a step. Here, Repository1 becomes synonymous with the Big Bang Theory. The question of who or what set Repository1 into motion is unclear.

Martin realizes that reality can be shifted through reworking the Repository1 file codes. However, the reworking of reality is a tremendous power that has had restrictions placed upon it by the people who use the system. Phillip and the others believe that unfettered access to such power is dangerous and backwards, so they self-regulate their use of it. Yet, the question of who created Repository1 still lingers.

Galbraith, as a bishop and a Christian, believes that God has created all of existence. Interestingly enough, it is a matter of faith not inconsistent with the repository file's existence. Phillip contends that, while the repository file might explain much or all of reality, what explains the repository file itself is unknown and is an act of faith. Here, God can be seen as the programmer of the file, and those within the system are the ones using the reality as it has been set in motion the way people live on and use the Earth.

Phillip takes his ideas one step further when he states that what is responsible for the system is certainly an act of faith, of belief. Science can only go so far in offering explanations for reality. Science and religion, Phillip argues, are no worse than one another. They only depend upon who is using them, and for what end. Faith and science are complementary to one another if so used in a positive and constructive fashion. They can actually even help one another. Phillip sees no disconnect between reason and religion, between faith and science. They are compatible to him, with the evidence being reality – the repository file.

This is crucial when Martin confronts Jimmy. Jimmy believes reality doesn't matter, that the people in reality are merely a "few lines of code". As such, they are not human and are expendable. Jimmy believes there is nothing beyond the repository, so that nothing they do matters in the end. Martin has come to believe that there are greater truths and a greater power that transcends the repository, but these are also very much a part of reality at large. They are a combination of belief in faith and reason. The people Jimmy is hurting are just as real as he is – and are entitled to their natural rights.

## Justice

Justice is an important theme in the novel "Off to Be the Wizard" by Scott Meyer. Justice is fitting punishment done to those who have wronged others, or have committed wrongful acts. These wrongful acts may be immoral, illegal, or immoral and illegal. Justice, and the need for justice, appears in several places in the novel, most notably with Martin and Jimmy. Justice thematically is rooted heavily in ethics and reality.



Early in the novel, Martin discovers he can manipulate his bank account through use of the repository file. Repository1 gives him the ability to exponentially increase the amount of money he has in his bank account. While Martin considers the morality and legality of doing this, it is clear that his actions have raised the concerns of law enforcement. They sweep in and seize Martin, wanting to know what Martin has done. There is justice that must be had, either in finding Martin innocent of any wrongdoing, or finding him guilty of wrongdoing – but the truth must first be established to deliver justice. Martin doesn't wait around, but flees for medieval England. In essence, he becomes a fugitive from justice. His desire to flee can understandably be construed as guilt.

In England, Martin discovers that the wizarding community of future-dwellers have established a set of laws and guidelines to govern behavior in the past. These laws that have been established are in order to keep stability and harmony among the wizards, and to be as unobtrusive and respectful as possible towards the resident locals. This in and of itself is a matter of justice whereby the virtually unlimited power of the powerful is limited by the powerful themselves.

However, Gwen, Martin, Phillip, and the other wizards discover that Jimmy has killed hundreds of innocent people in his quest to transform England into Middle Earth. He is keeping people under the penalty of pain and against their will in his efforts to transform them into Orcs, and is changing others into Elves without their knowledge. He has violated every wizarding law, and must be served justice. For his transgressions, Jimmy is exiled back to his own time period, and is programmed so that he will never be able to use another electronic device again.

## Creation

Creation is an important theme in the novel "Off to Be the Wizard" by Scott Meyer. Creation can be seen thematically as the act of bringing something into existence which did not exist before, or in general reference to all that which does exist. Creation goes hand-in-hand with the theme of reality, and also forms much of the philosophical underpinnings of the plot.

When the novel begins, the idea of creation itself – both the act and of existence – are contemplated by Martin. Thoughts on how the world came into existence differ. Many believe God is responsible for the creation of the world, while others believe that creation happened by random chance. Many attribute existence to the Big Bang, but the source of the Big Bang itself is subject to discussion – whether it is God or some other source.

When Martin discovers that all of existence is controlled and shaped by Repository1, he realizes he is no closer to the truth of the mystery of creation, but that it has been pushed back yet another step. The source of the repository file – the true creator – is still unknown. Many may argue that it is God or a divine intelligence ascribed as God, while others may contend the repository is the result of random chance. Phillip later





contends that faith and reason, religion and science, can complement one another, and do not have to be opposed to one another.

This becomes important when Martin confronts Jimmy. Jimmy contends that people don't matter, because they are merely lines of code. Nothing matters in existence, because there is nothing beyond the code. Martin disagrees. He argues there are higher truths and a higher power, something which transcends the codes. All of creation had to come from somewhere. Creation cannot be contained in itself. The people that have been created, no matter who is responsible for the repository file, have rights that cannot be violated. These rights are natural to their creation.

As Jimmy explains further, creation is not even the issue: it is what is done with creation. Phillip has long hated Jimmy for taking the credit for the ideas of others, from the Arthurian legend to manipulating the shell code. Jimmy contends that the person who uses the ideas, rather than the person who comes up with them, is more important and more influential. This underscores Jimmy's narcissism, utilitarian attitude, and disregard for the truth behind creation –whether it is an idea, or whether it is all of existence. Jimmy will do whatever he wants to achieve his ends, including manipulating created existence itself to do so.



# Styles

## Point of View

Scott Meyer tells his novel “Off to Be the Wizard” in the third-person limited-omniscient perspective. The third-person aspect of the narrative allows Martin’s story not only to be told, but for important contextual information to be provided about Martin and unfolding events as the story progresses. For example, when the novel begins, Martin’s sole focus is on hacking, while the narrator explains that Martin loves science, and dislikes being referred to as a hacker – important contextual information that will prove relevant later in the novel. The limited-omniscient aspect of the narration, however, adds a level of suspense and drama to the novel as the reader only learns about things as the characters learn about them. For example, the pursuit of the murderer of the people at Rickard’s Bend is something the reader only comes to the truth of as the characters do.

## Language and Meaning

Scott Meyer tells his novel “Off to Be the Wizard” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the target audience of the book consists of young and new adults in the 2010s. The language employed to tell the story is reflective of the times, and the age and level of education of the reading audience. Secondly, the story revolves around a number of young men between twenty and forty, most of whom originate from the 1980s through the present. The casual and straightforward language used by these individuals, especially Martin, Gwen, and Phillip, is reflective of the time from which they come and adds a sense of realism to the novel by adequately portraying their years of origin.

## Structure

Scott Meyer divides his novel “Off to Be the Wizard” into 29 numbered, linear, and chronological chapters. This simple and straightforward approach to structuring the novel is reflective of the language and target audience of the novel. It allows the reader to easily follow the events of the book without interruption or unusual structuring. Each chapter deals with a specific set of events or incidents. For example, Chapter 1 deals with the discovery of the Repository1 file, while Chapter 27 deals with Martin’s confrontation of Jimmy.



## Quotes

He was just a guy who really liked monkeying with computers.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** Martin Banks dislikes being referred to as a hacker, and does not consider himself one. He dislikes the image that the term “hacker” conjures up, and finds that being a hacker requires too much effort since it means he has to be rebellious all the time. Yet, Martin’s skills with computers are immense, and will prove to be instrumental to the plot of the novel.

He put a great deal of thought into all the things he should not do. Things that might be possible, using the file, but would probably lead to no good.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 12)

**Importance:** Having discovered he can alter reality through the repository1-c.txt file, Martin contemplates all that he can do. Many of them are things which he knows he should not do, but endeavors to try anyways. This attitude will ultimately come to get Martin into serious trouble and underscores the idea that just because something can be done, doesn’t mean it should be done.

Try going back in time, not forward.

-- Future Martin (Chapter 3 paragraph 33)

**Importance:** As Martin discovers that he can teleport and travel through time with the repository file, a future version of himself appears to his present self. The future version of Martin, whom Martin nicknames “Future Martin”, tells him to try going back in time instead of forward. This will have tremendous consequences in the coming chapters.

Martin was sure that nothing he’d done was immoral. He hadn’t hurt anybody. He’d just helped himself. He was also pretty sure he’d done nothing illegal. Who writes laws against bending space and time to your will?

-- Narrator (Chapter 4 paragraph 24)

**Importance:** As Martin develops a system for time travel, he considers the morality and legality of what he is doing. He believes nothing he is doing is immoral or illegal, but knows he could be in big trouble if he is found out. Martin’s second-guessing of what he is doing is a conscientious reminder that just because something isn’t seemingly immoral or illegal, doesn’t mean it is necessarily moral or legally acceptable.

He’d have to find some other way to fix the mess he’d left behind in the future, and since he had no idea what that would be, he’d have to bide his time here, in the past.

-- Narrator (Chapter 8 paragraph 18)

**Importance:** With the Department of the Treasury, and the Seattle police after Martin in the present, he rushes into Medieval England to escape. Although he has escaped, he



realizes he will have difficulty returning to the future, but also difficulty surviving in the past. Until he can figure out how to fix his problems in the future, he will be forced to stay in Medieval England.

Martin here is going to be my apprentice, for as long as he lasts.  
-- Phillip (Chapter 12 paragraph 30)

**Importance:** Phillip brings Martin to Gwen's tailoring shop for a proper set of robes and clothing. Phillip reveals to Gwen that Martin is to be his apprentice. Martin will have to train, and be successful in training, or he will be banished back to his own time. Martin has agreed to participate in training, wanting to be able to stay behind in Medieval England.

I could use a man like you.  
-- Jimmy (Chapter 21 paragraph 69)

**Importance:** Here, Jimmy, the wizard to King Arthur, tells Martin he could use a man like Martin in Camelot-London. Martin has talent, skill, and showmanship, and promises to be a very powerful wizard. Jimmy clearly both admires Martin's talents, and wants to use them to "make the world better." It is an offer laced with consequences.

Someone said that it didn't look like there was any fighting, so it must've been magic that killed everyone, and Kludge starts talking about how he's never liked wizards, or anybody else, but particularly wizards.  
-- Donald the Younger (Chapter 23 paragraph 18)

**Importance:** Donald the Younger explains to Martin, Jeff, and Gary why they have all been taken and tied up by the villagers. Upon discovering the bodies of the farming family, dead without apparent cause, Kludge took the opportunity to blame wizards, and to turn the town against them. Kludge has promised revenge against Martin, and now seems to have it.

So, we know what was done, and we know by whom. We can't let this stand. If we don't stop him, we're just as responsible as he is.  
-- Phillip (Chapter 25 paragraph 27)

**Importance:** At a meeting of wizards, the deaths of the family at Rickard's Bend is revealed as having been done by Jimmy. Jimmy has broken all three rules the wizards have: altering a person's physique, doing so on others without their consent, and ghosting Tyler. As a result, Jimmy must be punished for his violations.

But they weren't given a choice.  
-- Phillip (Chapter 25 paragraph 79)

**Importance:** When Jimmy explains his plans to give people the life they've always wanted by changing them into characters from Middle Earth in the novel "Lord of the Rings", Phillip is stunned. Jimmy believes he is being a benevolent person, helping



others out. Phillip counters that the people were never given a choice in the matter, and many died as a result. Phillip speaks to the issue of free will against Jimmy's ideas of a divine dictatorship.

In the end, nothing could be less important! It's who utilizes an idea that matters.

Inventing isn't nearly as important a thing.

-- Jimmy (Chapter 27 paragraph 48)

**Importance:** While battling Jimmy, Martin contends that Jimmy is a no-talent hack who takes credit for things that are not his. Jimmy says that ideas do not matter as much as those who put them into practice. This underscores not only Jimmy's lack of intellectual honesty, but his utilitarian worldview and his uncreativity. It will help prove to be his undoing.

Mom, I'm so sorry.

-- Martin (Chapter 29 paragraph 18)

**Importance:** After the Treasury agents and the police sweep the home of Martin's parents for Martin, Martin appears a short time later in a taxi. He apologizes to his mom for everything, recognizing that his parents are people, too. He knows he has put them in a bad spot and worried them, and so apologizes to them for what has gone on. He has learned from Jimmy how not to be towards people, especially those who love him.