

Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea Study Guide

**Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea by Ursula K. Le
Guin**

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Plot Summary

Tehanu is a novel by the award-winning science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin. This novel, the fourth in the Earthsea Cycle, finds Tenar, the young priestess from The Tombs of Atuan, as a recently widowed adult. Tenar adopts a young girl who was burned by tramps. Shortly after taking custody of the young girl, Tenar is called to Ogion's bedside where she watches over her beloved guardian until his death. Not long after this, Ged, the Archmage of Roke, arrives, sick and depressed. Tenar cares for him but is forced to send him away when the new king's men come searching for him. Tehanu is a novel that wraps up some of the loose ends from the other novels in this series and revisits beloved characters, bringing them together in a way that will please long time readers.

Tenar is called to the home of a friend after a child was found raped, beaten, and burned. Tenar cannot heal the child but she offers a home in which the child can live. Shortly after adopting the small child, Tenar gets news that Ogion, her former teacher, is dying and requests her presence. Tenar and Therru make the walk to Ogion's home, caring for him in the final days of his life. In fact, Tenar Ogion says his true name moments before his death.

A few days later, Tenar is sitting on a ledge overlooking the valley and she sees a dragon coming toward her. The dragon brings with it Ged, the Archmage of Roke. Ged is desperately ill and Tenar cares for him. When Ged begins to recover, he reveals to Tenar that he lost his power in his quest to help bring the new king to Havnor. After a few weeks, a group of men come from Havnor to look for Ged. The new king wants Ged to present his crown to him at his coronation. However, Ged is embarrassed by his lack of powers and does not want to face these people. Tenar sends Ged to her farm in the Middle Valley and tells the king's men that Ged is not available to them. A short time later, Tenar has a run in with Aspen, the mage living at the home of the Lord of Re Albi. Aspen curses Tenar, forcing her to leave the Overfell.

At Gont Port, Tenar sees one of the men who harmed Therru, causing her to seek refuge aboard a ship that has just arrived from Havnor. This ship carries the king as he continues the quest to find Ged. Therru tells him the truth about Ged's depression and the king vows to leave Ged alone as he wishes. The king then transports Therru and Tenar to the coastal city near Tenar's farm. Back home, Tenar learns that Ged has been in the mountains herding goats, but that he is expected to return when winter begins.

One night in early winter, Tenar hears men attempting to break into her house. Tenar is able to hold them off for a short time. Finally, Tenar opens the door to confront the men, only to discover that Ged has followed them out of the mountains and injured one of the men with a pitchfork. This has caused the other men to run away. The following day, they learn the men were wanted for killing a woman who lived among them. The three men are arrested and later executed for their crimes.



Tenar and Ged become lovers and settle down to life on the farm. However, Tenar's son returns to claim the farm as his own. About that same time, Tenar gets word that Moss, the witch on the Overfell, is ill and asking for her. Tenar, Ged, and Therru return to the Overfell where the curse that was placed on Tenar takes affect once more. Both Tenar and Ged find themselves under Aspen's control. Therru manages to escape and she calls to the dragons. A dragon appears just in time to save Tenar and Ged. It is then that they learn that Therru is a dragon in human form.



A Bad Thing and Going to the Falcon's Nest

A Bad Thing and Going to the Falcon's Nest Summary

Tehanu is the final novel in the Earthsea Cycle, a series of books by science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin that began with *The Wizard of Earthsea*. This novel wraps up the stories begun in *The Wizard of Earthsea*, resolving the relationship between Ged and Tenar that began in *The Tombs of Atuan*.

Tenar, who is now known as Goha the widow of Flint, is called to the home of a neighbor. A child has been found raped, beaten, and burned in the camp of some tramps who has been living near the river. Tenar helps care for the child whose burns are so bad her chances of surviving are questioned in the first hours after her rescue. Tenar feels an instant bond to the small child.

More than a year later, Tenar receives word that Ogion, her old teacher, is dying and needs her. Tenar and Therru, the child she has now adopted, make the journey on foot. As they walk, Tenar tells Therru many stories, including one about a fisherwoman Ogion once met who could change into a dragon. This fisherwoman told Ogion a story of how the dragons divided into two groups, one group who fell in love with the ability to fly and remain wild and the other group who wanted to learn, who became more human, becoming wizards.

During their walk, Tenar worries about their safety because things have changed in Gont, creating more crime. In fact, Tenar and Therru run into a group of men on the road to Re Albi that seem menacing, but they are able to walk past them unharrassed.

A Bad Thing and Going to the Falcon's Nest Analysis

The first chapter of this novel introduces Therru, a young child who has been badly abused, burned, and left for dead. This child is rescued by a couple of farmers' wives and healed by the town witch and a local wizard. This child's situation is an example of the growing sense of menace that is beginning to overcome Gont. At the same time, the reader meets Goha, who turns out to be a beloved character from another novel in this series, Tenar. Tenar is now the widow of a farmer, Flint, with two grown children. Tenar has adopted young Therru whom she felt an immediate connection and takes her to Overfell when Ogion becomes ill. Important to note in these chapters is the danger that Tenar feels in a country that was once a safe and happy place to live. This sense of danger will later become a theme of the novel.



Ogion and Kalessin

Ogion and Kalessin Summary

Tenar and Therru arrive at the home of Ogion. Ogion is alone and clearly in the final days of life. Tenar asks about Ged, Ogion's student before Tenar, and learns that he has gone off on a quest and most likely does not know Ogion is so sick. Over the next few days, many of the villagers come to pay their respects to the dying mage, but Ogion asks Tenar to send them away. Ogion comments on Therru, telling Tenar to teach her well, but to not send her to Roke, the island where wizards are trained. Then Ogion asks Tenar to take him into the forest. Tenar resists at first, but finally agrees. As Ogion takes his final breaths, he tells Tenar his true name, Aihal. When the wizard of Re Albi and the wizard of Gont Port arrive, they both want the honor of burying Ogion in the respective towns. However Tenar uses the fact that Ogion told her his true name to force them to honor Ogion's final wishes by burying him where he died.

After Ogion's death, Tenar finds herself reluctant to leave his home. In fact, Tenar begins to wonder what might have happened had she remained his student rather than leaving to have a man and children. One afternoon, after helping Therru bury a peach pit, Tenar watches her go off with Moss, the local witch. Tenar recalls how Moss was standoffish toward Tenar when she lived here before because of her unusual abilities. This is in part what led Tenar to crave a normal life with her farmer in Middle Valley. However Tenar and Moss are now becoming friends. Tenar and Therru have also befriended Heather, the simpleminded goat tender.

One afternoon, Tenar goes off on her own to a cliff that overlooks the valley. As Tenar sits there, she sees a dragon flying toward her. The dragon arrives and tries to rouse the man on its back but he will not wake up. The dragon urges Tenar to climb up on her back and help the man down. When she does, Tenar discovers the man is her old friend Ged. Tenar gently lies Ged on the ground. The dragon tells Tenar that its name is Kalessin. Then it flies away. Tenar quickly runs to get help, using Moss and Heather to help her move Ged to the house. Moss looks Ged over and tells Tenar that he cannot possibly be Sparrowhawk, Ogion's former prentice.

Ogion and Kalessin Analysis

Tenar and Therru arrives just in time to be with Ogion as he dies. Ogion says several things to Tenar before his death that leave her confused. The first thing Ogion tells Tenar is about Therru. Ogion urges her to teach the girl, but not at Roke. This is a statement that will confuse Tenar for several months after Ogion's death. Second, Ogion tells Tenar that things are changing, that it is a good change. Tenar does not understand this either, but she will remember it throughout the novel. Finally, Ogion gives Tenar his true name, a statement that honors her position as his former prentice, elevating her in the eyes of those around her from farmer's widow to respected mage prentice.



Tenar and Therru then settle down to a quiet life on the Overfell. Tenar is reluctant to return to her farm, but does not know why she should stay in Ogion's home. In the meantime, Tenar thinks about the past and about Therru's future. Tenar is deeply concerned for Therru because of her scars and the likelihood that she will never have a normal life. At the same time, Therru and Tenar forge strong friendships with Heather and Moss. Finally, Ged comes to the Overfell on the back of a dragon, bringing back to Tenar a good friend she has not seen since her decision to leave Ogion. The reader who is familiar with the other novels in this series will know about the prior relationship between Tenar and Ged and will see his arrival as a foreshadowing of the future of their relationship.



Bettering and Worsening

Bettering and Worsening Summary

Ged is in bad shape and does not wake the first few days at Ogion's house. Moss treats him for starvation, warning Tenar that he might not survive. Moss also tells Tenar that Ged is not the same, that his magic is gone. Tenar asks Moss how someone might know that another person has power upon meeting them. Moss gives Tenar an explanation that is difficult to understand, but boils down to one knows another. Moss also tells Tenar that men are selfish and only see themselves and what is best for themselves. Ged wakes a few days later. Tenar talks to him and tries to learn how he came to be so sick, but Ged refuses to answer many of her questions. However, Tenar does tell her that there is a new king at Havnor. This reminds Tenar of the day she and Ged walked into the great throne room at Havnor, with she wearing the Ring of Erethe-Akbe.

Ged has begun taking long walks alone and Therru spends long afternoons with Heather or Moss. One afternoon Tenar takes a walk while Ged watches the sleeping Therru. When she returns, Tenar and Ged talk about the past, their childhoods, and the future of Gont. The conversation turns to Therru. Ged asks why Tenar bothered to save the child when she knows what her life will be like. A few days later, Ged attempts to speak to a bird as he has done many times before, the bird ignores his speech.

Bettering and Worsening Analysis

In these two chapters, Ged wakes to find himself alive in a body that he no longer wants. Ged is unhappy that he has lost his powers. Ged is no longer the Archmage of Roke. This should be a good thing in light of the fact that a new king has finally taken the throne at Havnor, ending many years of chaos and crime in Earthsea. However, Ged can only focus on the fact that he has lost the powers he has spent his whole life building and using. Moss, the simple witch, puts this in easy terms by explaining to Tenar that he is an empty shell without his powers.

Therru has become a deeply important person in Tenar's life. Tenar has begun to question the path she chose to follow in her own life and she worries about the path Tenar will be forced to take in her own life. Ged adds to this worry by suggesting that Therru has nothing to look forward to in life and should have been allowed to die. This not only explores the lack of choices Therru has for her own future, but underscores the lack of humanity and empathy Ged has now that he has lost his powers.



Mice and Hawks

Mice and Hawks Summary

Townsend, the sheep buyer, comes to visit Tenar with a request to buy Ogion's sheep and with news that a ship has come to Gont Port from Havnor. Townsend says that the men on the ship are interested in Ged. Tenar shows him the sheep, but sends him away without allowing him to buy them. When Ged returns, Tenar tells him about the men and sends him to hide out at Moss's when he expresses his reluctance to speak to these men. The men from Havnor then come to Ogion's house and speak to Tenar, telling her that they have come to take Ged back to Havnor so that he can place the crown on the king's head during the coronation. Tenar refuses to tell them where Ged is, instead insisting that she be allowed to give him the message and receive a response in return. Tenar sends Ged a note instructing him to go to her farm in Middle Valley and tell her overseer to give him a job.

When Moss comes to tell Tenar that Ged has gone, they discuss men and the relationships between women and men. Moss tells Tenar that Ged has reverted to how he was at the age of fifteen, before he went to Roke to learn magic. Tenar finds this believable. The following day, Tenar walks into town and visits the weaver with whom she stayed during her time at Ogion's prentice. The weaver shows Tenar the back of a famous fan he has in his home with a picture of a happy village on the front. The back has dragons. When held up to the light, the dragons and the people blend into a totally different picture. As Tenar walks home, she wonders if maybe she should prentice Therru to a weaver in order to give her a way to care for herself when she is older. When Tenar returns home, she finds Therru missing. When a panicked Tenar finally finds Therru hiding in the house, she learns that one of the men who burned her has been to the house. Tenar is angry with this breach of security and vows to not allow Therru out of her sight again.

Mice and Hawks Analysis

The king's men come in search of Ged and he hides because he is afraid to face the world without his powers. Tenar, who is deeply in love with him, helps Ged hide even though she believes his fear is a little selfish and self-centered. Tenar sends Ged to her farm in Middle Valley, suggesting to the reader that it will not be long before Tenar and Therru follow.

Tenar sees a picture that has dragons on it, bringing into the plot another reference to dragons. This is the third reference to dragons thus far, the first being the story Tenar told Therru on their journey, and the second being the appearance of Kalessin, the dragon who brought Ged to Tenar. This suggests to the reader that dragons will play an important part in the continuing development of the plot.



Tenar returns home from visiting the weaver to find Therru missing. Tenar has just been thinking about Therru and despairing for her future, therefore finding her missing is very difficult for Tenar. Then to learn one of the men who burned Therru was in Ogion's house angers Tenar, causing her to become overprotective, but to also seek some way to protect her child and her home in the future.



Finding Words and The Dolphin

Finding Words and The Dolphin Summary

Tenar walks up to the Lord of Re Albi's home to ask after the man called Handy who came to Ogion's house in search of Therru. While she is there, Aspen comes out of the house. Tenar and Aspen have words after Aspen offers Tenar a job and she explains her reason for being there. Aspen begins to curse Tenar, but the men from Havnor come out to speak to her. Tenar tells these men that Ged has gone and that he does not wish to return to Havnor. A few days later, Moss tells Tenar a rumor of how Aspen has been using the life of the Lord's young son to prolong the Lord's life. Then later yet Tenar attempts to teach Therru about the Language of Making that wizards use, but feels it is wrong after she speaks the first word.

Tenar and Therru go into the village to ask the weaver to make cloth for them. When they return to Ogion's, Tenar comes to believe that Aspen has come and cursed her. Tenar quickly packs up her things, including Ogion's ancient spell books, and takes the path down to Gont Port. In Gont Port, Tenar and Therru see the man called Handy who burned Therru. Tenar climbs up the plank of a boat from Havnor and asks for asylum. A young man comes out and Tenar mistakes him for her son. The man allows Tenar and Therru on the ship.

Therru becomes sick and must be taken to a bed immediately. The following day Tenar will notice that Handy touched her and left a mark on her arm. Tenar learns that the young man who helped them is Lebannen, the new king. Lebannen has come to find Ged. Tenar tells him about Ged's fears and Lebannen vows to leave Ged alone until he is ready to return to Havnor on his own. Tenar also learns that the mage on board, Master Windkey of Roke Island, was an old teacher of Ged's. The mage is also on the council that is to choose a new Archmage of Roke. However, the council has been unable to do so. When asked to name names, one of the masters on the council had a vision that caused him to say 'a woman of Gont.' However, no one knows what this means.

Finding Words and The Dolphin Analysis

Tenar has words with Aspen, the Lord of Re Albi's wizard, and finds herself nearly cursed. However, she is saved by the king's men. However, Aspen waits and finds a moment when he can curse her again. This curse takes and Tenar is forced to leave Re Albi and The Overfell before the curse can take all her wits away. On the way home, however, Tenar and Therru run into the man they had been trying to avoid, Handy. This man makes an overture to them, insisting that he only wants to see that the child is alright. However, Tenar is instinctively frightened of him and manages to board a ship, The Dolphin, that is carrying the king of Havnor. This voyage will answer many



questions for Tenar, helping her to understand why Ged lost his powers and what will happen in the future.

While speaking to Master Windkey, Tenar not only notices the lack of respect for women by men of the old ways, but notices the high regard for women in the new king. Tenar also learns that the council searching to replace Ged as Archmage of Roke has had little luck. A woman of Gont is all they have come up with, which confuses these men because a woman could never become a wizard, let alone the Archmage of Roke. This phrase will stick with Tenar for a long time as well, making her wonder just who it is the council is to search for.



Home and Winter

Home and Winter Summary

Tenar and Therru are greeted at the docks of Valmouth by Tenar's grown daughter, Apple. They spend a night in Apple's home and then make the trip home to Oak Springs, Tenar's farm. The neighbors and the two couples who live on the farm are excited to have Tenar back and it is not long before she settles into a regular routine. Therru, too, seems to blossom upon her return to the farm, playing with the neighbor children and helping on the farm. Again Tenar worries about Therru's future. The wizard from Valmouth suggests that Tenar apprentice her to Ivy, the local witch. However Ivy refuses to take her on, claiming to be afraid of her.

One night as winter approaches, Tenar hears men's voices outside the house. Tenar locks the doors and begins closing the shutters. The men, however, find the unguarded window in the kitchen and begin to threaten to enter there. Tenar throws open the front door and confronts these men. As she does, Ged comes out of the shadows and stabs one with a pitchfork. The other two men run away. Tenar and Ged take the injured man into the house and dress his wounds. The next morning, Ged plans to take the man into town to hide his presence from Therru.

Ged returns from taking the injured man to Ivy and tells Tenar that all three were sought for the murder of a woman traveling with them. All three have been arrested and will be taken to Gont Port for trial. Everyone in the small community is impressed with Ged's actions. The following night, Tenar takes Ged into her bed and tells the others that while he is her lover, her son Spark remains the true master of the farm. Over the next few months, the small family falls into a routine. Ged begins to teach Therru the old stories of Earthsea to prepare her for the various holidays they will observe. Ged and Tenar discuss the things that have taken place, having one enthusiastic discussion about the role of women on Earthsea. This leads them nowhere, however, except to the understanding that a woman is inferior to a man and therefore cannot be a mage.

Home and Winter Analysis

Tenar returns home to much fanfare but quickly settles into her simple life. One night the men who burned Therru try to get into the house, but Ged, returning from herding goats, manages to injure one and scare the others away. Ged has returned just in the nick of time, convincing Tenar there is something of his magic left even though he denies it. At any rate, Ged returns in plenty of time to become Tenar's lover and to complete a promise that was implied to readers in a previous novel, but never fulfilled.

Tenar continues to think about Therru's future and worry what will happen to her if she never finds a lover, makes a marriage, or finds a trade. Therru thinks about apprenticing her to a witch but this is taken out of her hands when the witch refuses to take the child



on. Ivy believes the child is too powerful, too scary. This suggests to the reader that both Ivy and Ogion saw something in the child that Tenar herself cannot see. However, the idea that Therru might one day become something powerful is denied by Ged when he continually insists that a woman cannot be an archmage. This discrimination has appeared in the novel before, but it seems to be changing with the more open-mindedness of the new king. Perhaps things will change.



The Master and Tehanu

The Master and Tehanu Summary

Spark, Tenar's son, returns to the farm after a six-year absence. Spark learns of his father's death and shows little reaction. Tenar informs him of all that has happened at the farm and makes a bed for him in the attic. For the first few days, Spark makes the rounds of the farm and learns how it has been cared for in his absence. Spark forces his mother to wait on him, causing her to feel embarrassment at his behavior. One afternoon, Townsend the sheep buyer comes to Oak Spring and tells Tenar that Moss is sick and asking for her. Tenar, seeing this as a way to escape the position her son's return has placed her in, immediately makes plans to return to Re Albi with Ged and Therru. The small family leaves the following day and finds the trip to be uneventful. However, when they arrive in Re Albi, the curse once again overcomes Tenar. Aspen arrives and takes Tenar and Ged under his control, forcing Tenar to crawl and Ged to follow his every command.

Therru runs to the Overfell and calls for Kalessin, the dragon. Therru then goes to Moss, who has been afflicted with a terrible disease designed to bring Tenar to Aspen. The next morning, Aspen and five or six men walk Tenar and Ged outside where they plan to execute them. However, Kalessin arrives and kills these evil men. It is then that Tenar and Ged learn that Therru is a dragon born into human form to learn from the humans. Therru's real name is Tehanu, which is a star Tenar has often made wishes upon. Ged and Tenar decide to settle in Ogion's cabin and teach Tehanu to the best of their ability.

The Master and Tehanu Analysis

The Master is Spark, Tenar's grown son who has desired to live a life at sea, but who has come home after his ship was disbanded by the new king. Spark is legally the owner of Oak Springs and he has come back to claim it, forcing his mother to become subservient to him. Although this is the way of Gont, Tenar is not happy with the situation and embarrassed by her son. Therefore, when news of Moss's illness comes to her, Tenar is all too happy to rush up to Re Albi to care for her friend.

The power of Aspen's curse on Tenar becomes obvious when she returns and Aspen is able not only to humiliate Tenar, but Ged as well. It seems they are destined to die together and allow an evil to grow untethered. However, the novel then changes point of view for the first time and shows Therru calling the dragon Kalessin. This child has the power to call a dragon and have it respond to her needs. In the end, the reader learns that Kalessin is Therru's rightful mother and that Therru is really Tehanu or a dragon living in human form to learn. The story Tenar told in the second chapter suddenly comes back to the reader, revealing that there are still dragons living as humans in order to help make a better world. Therru is suddenly so much more than an injured

child, suggesting to the reader that her mere presence could change everything that Tenar has argued against since the opening chapter of this novel.



Characters

Tenar or Goha

Goha is the widow of the farmer, Flint. Goha once had another name but Flint could not pronounce it and so he renamed her Goha for a delicate flower. Before she became Goha, however, this woman was a prentice of Ogion, the great Mage of Gont. Goha's true name is Tenar. Not many people in Earthsea go by their true names. However, Tenar has used her true name with Ogion and Ged since she and Ged returned the Ring of Erreth-Akbe to Havnor.

Tenar has become a middle-aged woman in this book and adopted a young tramp child who was raped, beaten, and burned by her parents and their friends. This young child has given Tenar a kind of purpose to her life. Added to this, Tenar learns that Ogion, her old teacher and adopted father, is dying. Tenar goes to Ogion and is present when he dies. Later, Tenar takes in Ged and cares for him in illness, eventually protecting him from a group of men sent from the new king of Havnor to return Ged to Havnor.

Tenar is a strong woman who was once more than any other woman in Earthsea has ever been. In Earthsea, a woman is considered inferior to men and therefore they are not allowed to become wizards. Once Tenar chose to walk away from that power and that possibility in order to become a normal woman who would be treated with the same respect and perhaps, indifference as other women. However, Tenar now wonders if she made a mistake making this choice in her youth. Now Tenar would like to change what she might have once been able to change by learning with Ogion.

Ged or Sparrowhawk

Sparrowhawk was once a young man who was a prentice of Ogion, the Mage of Gont. Sparrowhawk was taken to Roke where he was trained to become a mage like Ogion. Eventually, after many adventures, Sparrowhawk became the Archmage of Roke.

Sparrowhawk's true name is Ged. When he was younger, Ged went on an adventure with Tenar in which they brought the Ring of Erreth-Akbe back to Havnor. Ged then took Tenar to Ogion to become his prentice. Tenar turned her back on that life. Now Ged comes to Tenar sick and depressed. Ged lost his powers during a fight to bring a king back to Havnor. The king now reigns and will change life in their world for the better. However, Ged does not know how to define himself without his powers.

Ged goes off alone, to herd goats, in order to make peace with his new life. When Ged returns to Tenar, they become lovers. This affair creates a family where there was only fear, making a new life for all three, Ged, Tenar, and Therru. When Tenar and Ged find out what Therru really is, it gives Ged new purpose in his life, assuring the reader that Ged will go on with his life, perhaps even in happiness.



Therru or Tehanu

Therru is a young child who was found burned by a group of tramps. Tenar is called to help heal the child, but finds she can do little but keep the child comfortable. In time, Therru heals, although there are terrible scars that leave her an outcast among other children. Tenar adopts Therru and takes her with her when she goes to be with Ogion in the final moments of his life.

Though Therru is a sympathetic character that gives Tenar a great deal of joy and a great deal of pain, she appears to be an incidental character to the plot. However, when Tenar and Ged are taken under the control of the wizard, Aspen, Therru proves to be their only salvation. In fact, Therru has the power to call a dragon who comes to save Tenar and Ged. In the end, the reader learns that Therru is one of a rare group of people who are dragons who live as humans in order to learn all they can.

Ogion

Ogion is the Mage of Gont. Ogion lives isolated on top of a mountain known as the Overfell. Ogion was once teacher to both Ged and Tenar, but neither stayed with him long. In this novel, Ogion has gotten quite old and is dying. Tenar comes to stay with him in his final moments and it is to Tenar that Ogion speaks his true name, which is a great honor that establishes Tenar's honored position in the eyes of the Mage of Gont.

Moss

Moss is the witch of Re Albi, the village near Ogion's home. Moss was once standoffish and unkind to Tenar when she was a student of Ogion. However, now that they are both adults and not in competition with one another, Moss befriends Tenar. In fact, it is with Moss that Tenar turns for advice on the relationships between men and women and on the depression that has taken over Ged's personality. Moss becomes almost a mother-figure to Tenar. Later, it is because of Moss and the friendship that Tenar deeply misses that Tenar and Ged return to the Overfell at the end of the novel, leading to their capture by Aspen.

Heather

Heather is the simple-minded girl who tends the sheep at Ogion's home. Heather and Therru become very good friends during Therru and Tenar's stay at Ogion's. In fact, Heather often takes Therru on walks through the meadows and teaches her many different things. Heather also allows Therru to watch the goats with her. One goat in particular causes Heather a great deal of trouble and Therru is often having to chase after the goat on Heather's behalf.



Aspen

Aspen is the wizard who lives in the Lord of Re Albi's house. It is rumored that Aspen was brought to Re Albi to help the old man live forever. In fact, the rumor in the village says that Aspen is using the life force of the old man's son to keep the old man alive. Tenar has two confrontations with Aspen that led to a curse. The curse causes Tenar to lose her ability to think for herself. Tenar leaves Ogion's home to escape this curse, but later comes back to see to Moss's health. It is then that Aspen reveals his true evil side and takes Tenar under his control. Aspen wants to rid the world of the good wizards and people, in order to make it easier for him to rise up and take control. This scheme ends however when Aspen and his friends are killed by Kalessin.

Apple

Apple is Tenar's daughter. Apple is a bright, kind, and caring girl. Apple married a merchant in the coastal town a few miles from Tenar's farm, Oak Springs. When Tenar returns from the Overfell, it is Apple who meets her and takes her home. Tenar and Apple spend several days together and Tenar tells her daughter all that happened in the Overfell. However, after the telling, Tenar seems to forget about the curse because she never tells Ged about it.

Spark

Spark is Tenar's son. Spark was a sickly child that everyone thought would die and so Tenar spoiled him when he was young. As Spark grew, he became a disagreeable child who refused to remain on the farm, but instead longed to be a seaman. Spark left the farm and did not return for a long time. In fact, when Spark finally returns it is because his ship was disbanded by the king's men for piracy. Spark has come to Oak Springs to escape from trouble and because he has nowhere else to go. However, because of the laws of Gont, Spark is the rightful owner of the farm and Tenar loses her position as the head of the farm upon his arrival. Spark is cold, mean, and expects his mother to wait on him hand and foot upon his return. Tenar is embarrassed by her son and jumps at the chance to leave the farm once more when she learns Moss is sick.

Lark

Lark is Tenar's neighbor in Middle Valley. Lark is a kindly woman who has many children of her own. When Therru is burned, it is to Lark's home someone comes to tell her of the injured child. Lark collects the child and runs to Tenar to ask for help. It is also in Lark's home that Therru recovers from her wounds before she is finally adopted by Tenar. Lark is a good friend to Tenar.



Objects/Places

Ogion's Books

Ogion has three books from which he would teach his pupils the Language of the Making and stories of Earthsea.

Peach Pit

Therru buries a peach pit with the hope of growing a new peach tree in Ogion's yard.

Red Dress

Tenar makes Therru a red dress from material the weaver of Re Albi gave her. Therru feels this dress does not hide the hideousness of her scars.

Pitchfork

Ged uses a pitchfork to injure one of the tramps who have come to kidnap Therru and finish what they started the day she was burned.

Ogion's Shaft

Ogion had a great shaft he used in the making of spells that was left behind in his home after his death and Tenar's decision to return to her farm.

Sheep

Ogion had six sheep when he died. Tenar keeps them with the help of the sheep tender, Heather.

Oak Springs

Oak Springs is the name of the farm on which Tenar lived with her husband, Flint.

The Overfell

The Overfell is an area above the village of Re Albi where Ogion makes his home.



Re Albi

Re Albi is a village in the mountains above Gont Port.

Gont Port

Gont Port is the largest port in all of Gont. Many merchant ships sail there. In this novel, two ships from Havnor dock at Gont Port, both carrying men from the new king, one with the king himself.

Middle Valley

Middle Valley is a section of Gont that is toward the center of the country.

Gont

Gont is the country on Earthsea where Ged came from originally and where Tenar lived with her farmer husband, Flint.



Themes

Discrimination Against Women

This novel discusses many topics that were quite common in America in the sixties and seventies. Tenar feels that men and women are equal, finding it difficult to understand why a woman can only be a witch while a man can be archmage. When Ged comes to Ogion's, this opens a whole new bunch of questions for Tenar. Moss tells Tenar that a man is like a nut and that he is nothing but what is inside the shell. Ged seems to underscore this assessment when he wakes by becoming angry and withdrawn because his powers are gone. Moss councils Tenar to use men, but not to allow them to take control over her life. Tenar listens by entering into a relationship with Ged that is not committed in any way. Tenar and Ged become a small family with the addition of Therru, but neither expects marriage or anything formal to be made of their relationship.

Tenar runs into discrimination with wizards on several occasions in this novel. After Ogion dies, Tenar insists that he be buried where he requested, under the tree where he died. The wizard from Re Albi insists on burying him on his master's property while the wizard from Gont Port insists on taking him down to his village. In the end, the fact that Ogion told Tenar his true name allows her to have her will, causing Ogion to be buried where he wished.

Later, Tenar is on a ship with the new king where the Master Windkey of Roke is traveling with him. Master Windkey is often rude to Tenar while speaking about the search for a new Archmage of Roke, ignoring her opinion or refusing to speak of specific things due to her sex. Tenar again overcomes this attitude by proving her worth with the use of the name of the dragon. However, it once again showcases the discrimination against women by the mages of Earthsea.

Finally, Tenar and Ged get into a discussion about the role of women on Earthsea. Ged makes it clear that he too believes that women are inferior to men and cannot rule in any capacity because of their inferiority. However, the reader is left with the opinion that Ged might one day change his mind when the reader learns that Therru is a dragon in human form.

Evil

Therru comes into the novel a victim of the cruelty of fellow human beings. Therru is raped, beaten, burned, and left to die at the young age of six or seven. Therru is just a small child, incapable of hurting anyone but these tramps have intended to kill her in the most evil of ways, burning her alive. Tenar adopts her and takes her into her heart but even the kindness of a mother's heart cannot save Therru from the ridicule and pain she will face all her life.



Aspen is a wizard from Roke whom Ged recognizes when they come face to face. Aspen is a cruel and unkind man who does not appreciate Tenar's great position in the world of wizards. Aspen creates a curse meant to force Tenar to become his feebleminded slave. Tenar escapes the curse, but later forgets its power, allowing Aspen to get her under his control when she returns to Re Albi, bringing with her Ged.

Evil abounds throughout Earthsea as this novel begins. The trouble grows worse with robbers on the highway and thieves in the night. People like Tenar fear for their personal safety. When a king comes to Havnor, it seems to be the salvation of the world. However, Aspen still exists and there is fear that others like him do as well. Aspen is killed at the end of the novel, but the reader must wonder what other evil still lurks, even with the knowledge that Therru can summon the dragons.

Love

Tenar takes Therru to her heart the moment she meets her. Tenar has always wanted to be normal and to have a man and children. Tenar achieved that with her husband Flint and children Apple and Spark. Now Tenar finds herself drawn to the small child Therru, a child who has been badly disfigured and will lead a life that is bound to be sad and lonely. Tenar cannot help but see herself in this child and to love her like her own.

Tenar once had a father figure in Ogion. Tenar loved Ogion but she could not stay and learn from him as he desired. Upon his death, Tenar realizes she has never gotten kisses from Ogion or he from her. However, Tenar knows that he loved her as she did him.

Ged returns to Tenar's life after Ogion's death. Once they faced certain death together and survived. Now, Tenar realizes her deep love for Ged, but finds him wrapped in selfishness in his depression regarding his lost powers. However, Ged eventually returns to Tenar and they begin an affair that was promised many years ago but never fulfilled. Now Tenar has found the love and the family she always desired.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is the third-person and omniscient perspective. The main narrator of this novel is Tenar, a farmer's widow who once was a priestess from Atuan. Tenar tells the story from her point of view in such a way that the reader can only see what Tenar sees, can only feel what Tenar feels. Tenar spends a great deal of time in this novel alone, thinking about the past and the struggles she faces in her present life. This leads to a great deal of internal dialogue that allows the reader to receive some backstory about Tenar and the other characters in the novel as well as her motives for acting as she does in the plot. At the end of the novel, there is a brief moment when the narration moves to Therru, Tenar's adopted daughter, but this change is brief and has a singular purpose.

The point of view of this novel is a common point of view in the modern novel. This point of view offers enough intimacy that the reader is allowed to see and feel Tenar's thoughts and emotions, but not so intimate that the reader can only see the plot from Tenar's eyes. The reader, though restricted to Tenar's narration, can also see the other characters as Tenar sees them, understanding their motives in a way that perhaps Tenar does not. In the end, the point of view switches to Therru but only long enough for Therru to save Tenar and Ged by calling the dragon Kalessin.

Setting

The novel is set in the fictional world of Earthsea and specifically in the country of Gont. Earthsea is a world where wizards exist and are in fact an important part of the society. There are also witches but these are not as powerful as wizard nor as deeply respected and they are most often restricted to healing potions and finding spells. In Gont, there was once the Mage Ogion but in this novel he dies. Gont is a lot like England, an island country that relies on sea ports as much as its own agricultural industry.

The setting of this novel is important for many reasons. First, this novel is the final installment in a group of books about Earthsea. The novel is the result of three other novels that have built up to this point, creating a final climax that ends the story that follows two particular characters. Second, the setting of this novel goes back into the history of the main characters, exploring the past as the author brings them to their climax. Finally, the setting of this novel is important because it is a world that has changed and needs a hero. The two characters of this novel were once heroes but it is an unexpected character who harkens back to the long ago past to become the hero in this novel.



Language and Meaning

This novel is written in simple English, creating a novel that is simple enough for young readers but enjoyable for older readers. The novel contains some words that are of a foreign language, one that exists only in the setting of this novel. These words are easily explained in the text and do not make comprehension of this novel difficult.

The novel's language fits with the plot, using both a more formal tone in the dialogue and a relaxed tone in the exposition that allows readers of all ages to understand the overall purpose of the plot. The novel's language is appropriate to the plot as well because it fits with the characters and lends some authenticity to both the genre and the characters.

Structure

The novel is divided into fourteen chapters. Each chapter has a title and not a number. The title of each chapter refers to something that will happen in the following pages of the chapter. The novel is written in both dialogue and exposition, including a large amount of internal dialogue as the main character works through her past and worries about her future.

The novel contains a single plot with a few subplots. The main plot follows Tenar, the widow of farmer Flint, as she returns to the Overfell to be with her adopted father as he dies. By going back to the Overfell, Tenar reveals that she was once a pupil of the great mage, a fact that is very rare and unheard of in Earthsea. One subplot follows the discovery of the injured child Therru and her prospects for her future. Another subplot follows Tenar's reunion with old friend Ged and their subsequent love affair. All the subplots come to a satisfactory end when the main plot is concluded.



Quotes

"The child stared at her or at nothing, trying to breathe, and trying again to breathe, and trying again to breathe" (A Bad Thing, pg. 6.)

"So those who had been both dragon and human changed, becoming two peoples—the dragons, always fewer and wilder, scattered by their endless, mindless greed and anger, in the far islands of the Western Reach; and the human folk, always more numerous in their rich towns and cities, filling up the Inner Isles and all the south and east" (Going to the Falcon's Nest, pg. 15.)

"He laid his hand on hers; she bent down to him; he spoke his name to her, so that after his death he might be truly known" (Ogion, pg. 28.)

"The dragon turned its immense head and in a completely animal gesture nosed and sniffed at the man's body" (Kalessin, pg. 48.)

"Sparrowhawk disappointed Aunty Moss. He stayed alive" (Bettering, pg. 69.)

"Knowing what her life must be" (Worsening, pg. 91.)

"She thought about how it was to have been a woman in the prime of her life, with children and a man, and then to lose all that, becoming old and widow, powerless. But even so she did not feel she understood his shame, his agony of humiliation. Perhaps only a man could feel so. A woman got use to shame" (Mice, pg. 105.)

"She did so, and saw the two sides, the two paintings, made one by the light flowing through the silk, so that the clouds and peaks were the towers of the city, and the men and women were winged, and the dragons looked with human eyes" (Hawks, pgs. 128-129.)

"To be a woman was her fault. Nothing could worsen or amend it, in his eyes; no punishment was enough. He had looked at what had been done to Therru, and approved" (Finding Words, pg. 143.)

"Tenar had told her, had promised her that he would never touch her again. The promise had been broken. Her word meant nothing. What word meant anything, against deaf violence?" (The Dolphin, pg. 169.)

"My son. My son I did not bring up to be a man. I failed. I failed him" (The Master, pg. 257-258.)

"She has been Tehanu since the beginning. Always, she has been Tehanu" (Tehanu, pg. 279.)



Topics for Discussion

Who is Tenar? Why is she called Goha at the beginning of the novel? Who was Goha once upon a time? How did Goha become the wife of a farmer? Who was she when she was Tenar? What happened to Goha when she was Tenar? Why does Goha begin to refer to herself as Tenar again as she sits with Ogion at his death bed? How does this change of identity lead Tenar to an identity crisis of sorts? How does Tenar work this out for herself?

Who is Sparrowhawk? How does he come to the Overfell? What name does Tenar use with Sparrowhawk? For what reason? How do they know each other? Why does Tenar fear for Sparrowhawk's life? What does Sparrowhawk reveal about himself when he wakes? Why does this revelation cause Sparrowhawk to become depressed? How does he overcome this depression?

Discuss Therru. What happened to Therru? For what reason? Why do men keep trying to get to Therru? What do they plan to do to her? Is Handy trying to hurt Therru? Why is Tenar so afraid of Handy? Why does Handy and his friends come to Tenar's farm? What is their intention? What does the murder of Therru's biological mother say about Handy and his friends' intentions?

Why does Tenar go to Ogion when he is dying? Why is Ogion alone when she arrives? What does Ogion say about Therru? Why do these words bother Tenar for the remainder of the book? What do they come to mean in the revelations at the end of the book? Why does Ogion tell Tenar his true name? What does that suggest Ogion thought of Tenar? Why do the other wizard reluctantly take Tenar's word for what Ogion has said? What does this say about the treatment of women in Gont?

Who is Moss? Why did she not like Tenar as a child? Why do they forge a friendship now? What does this say about their position in society? What does Moss do for a living? How does this compare to the male version of her profession? Why are women not as well respected in this profession? Compare Moss to Ivy. How are they alike? How are they different? How do their differences affect the development of the plot and their relationship with Tenar?

Who is Heather? What role does she play in Therru's life? Why is Heather an important character in this novel? How might the plot have been changed if Heather were not feeble-minded or if she was a man? What impact does the friendship with Heather have on Therru? Does this friendship benefit Therru?

What is Earthsea? What is Gont? What does the reader learn about the characters in this novel and their actions in previous Earthsea Cycle novels? How does this novel bring the cycle to a climax of sorts? Is it necessary for the reader to have read the previous novels to understand this one? Why or why not? Discuss series novels. How do different authors handle these novels?