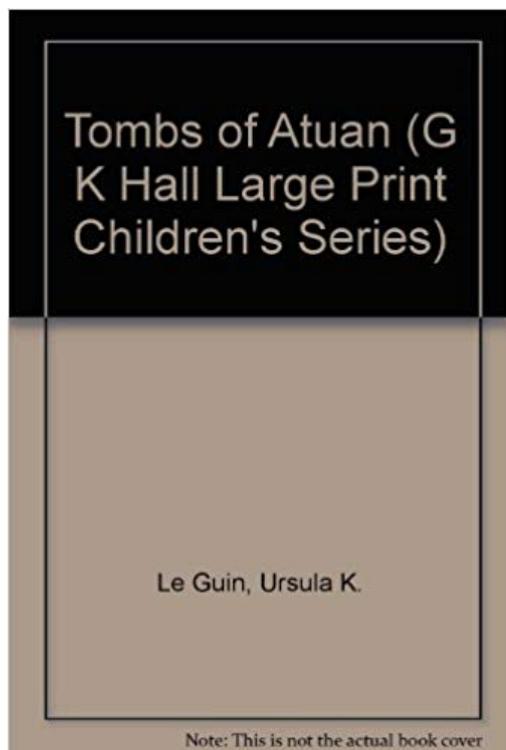


The Tombs of Atuan (The Earthsea Cycle, Book 2) by Gail Garraty, Ursula K. Le Guin



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Arha's isolated existence as high priestess in the tombs of Atuan is jarred by a thief who seeks a special treasure.



Reviews of the The Tombs of Atuan (The Earthsea Cycle, Book 2) by Gail Garraty, Ursula K. Le Guin

Legionstatic

I've been reading Ursula Le Guin's works since 1970. Forty-five years later, I decided to go back and reread "The EarthSea Trilogy," only to find there are six EarthSea books and many others I have not read. I went to Amazon in search of a specific translation of the Tao Teh Ching, required for a class I am taking, and found a translation by Ursula Le Guin. I ordered all the EarthSea books AND her Tao translation, as well as my required reading. I was stunned to find that EarthSea is filled with Tao, that much of way I've chosen to live my life has been guided by the very philosophy that forms the

foundation of much of her fantasy. Le Guin's commentaries at the end of the EarthSea novels, tells how she slipped characters of color into the book when we were passing constitutional amendments to allow AA to vote; strong women during an era we could not pass the Equal Rights Amendment, all so subtle and done with such craftsmanship, the reader enjoys the fantasy and misses the politics. Lightyears ahead of her times, she weaves a grand story of fantasy into a work that is relevant for all time. I highly recommend this book and all others I've read to date by this amazing author.

Tygralbine

I read and loved The Earthsea Trilogy when I was in my early twenties. I read it to my daughter when I was in my early thirties. I'm reading it to my grandchildren now. The ability of skilled storytelling to teach us about ourselves is seldom more powerful than when we find it in what the "literary world" looks down upon as "fantasy." But J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Elizabeth Moon, and Ursula Le Guin have learned from the best. They stand on the shoulders of every indigenous oral tradition around the world which has always taught young humans who they were with stories of animals and/or mythical beings not so much different than themselves. This series (now wonderfully expanded) is the perfect gift for young people of all ages. At 63, I am still swept away, joyously caught up in every page of Le Guin's magical way with words. She is a Master storyteller, and her enlightening lessons last because her readers cannot help passing them on.

Nikojas

But I suppose Le Guin wrote this right when the world really needed it. The Farthest Shore brings us to our protagonist's most difficult, yet clairvoyant journey. The book is written from the perspective of Arren, a young and impatient prince who comes to Sparrowhawk with troubling news. The world is changing -- people are becoming petty and bitter. The dragons are beginning to die. The shadows are drawing in on Ea and no one seems to know or care why.

This book is powerful because it was originally published as a young adult novel but it has very grown-up themes and concepts. As a younger reader it might be easier to relate to passionate Arren, but the wisdom represented by Ged (who is now in his middle ages), is not lost in Le Guin's writing. And, obviously, those readers who have followed Ged through The Wizard of Earthsea and The Tombs of Atuan have a deeper understanding of the decisions he makes in The Farthest Shore.

In any case -- don't let "young adult" put you off from reading this book. If anything the short length makes this a wonderful weekend read, and really sparked that imagination in me that I thought was lost with maturity.

Clever

The Wizard of Earthsea series is heavily influenced by nonwestern philosophy, so I wasn't expecting to see an existentialist novel by Le Guin. I enjoyed it.

The antagonist in this novel is the unwillingness of people to accept death. This also causes them to lose their passions in life: "To refuse death is to refuse life... You will die. You will not live forever. Nor will any man nor anything. Nothing is immortal. But only to us is it given to know that we must die. And that is a great gift: the gift of selfhood. For we have only what we know we must lose, what we are willing to lose... Would you give up the craft of your hands, and the passion of your heart, and the light of sunrise and sunset, to buy safety for yourself -- safety forever?"

When the archmage is asked why he is unaffected by the malaise going over the world, he responds that wants to do what he is doing: "Because I desire nothing beyond my art... And if I am soon to lose it, I shall make the best of it while it lasts." In the book, his art represents all of the meaningful crafts and endeavors that people engage in and that make people happy. Desiring nothing beyond his art evokes Camus' "Myth of Sisyphus" for me -- that even though Sisyphus is only pushing a rock up a hill, we should still imagine Sisyphus happy. And making the best of his art while it lasts is a

tight fitting analogy for making the most of a life that will end too soon.

He also accepts death: "Did you not understand that he, even he, is but a shadow and a name? His death did not diminish life"

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