

# THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

URSULA K. LeGUIN

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

## SYNOPSIS

### A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA

Duny is a young goatherd in the village of Ten Alders on the island of Gont. He develops his magical skills with the help of his mother's sister, a witch. Called Sparrowhawk, the boy distinguishes himself by foiling a Kargish invasion with a simple act of fogweaving. He comes under the tutelage of the Mage of Re Albi, Ogion the Silent, and is renamed Ged.

From there he advances to Roke, the island school where young mages perfect their natural talents. During a power struggle with Jasper, a fellow student, Ged succumbs to the challenge to summon the dead. He rashly calls forth the spirit of Elfarran. As a result, his face is clawed and permanently scarred by a headless monster. To save the boy's life, Archmage Nemmerle expends his power and dies.

Horribly maimed, Ged recovers his health slowly, yet suffers remorse for his immature actions. He receives support from his loyal friend Vetch. Upon his completion of studies, Ged becomes a wanderer. He accepts the post of town wizard of Low Torning, heals the sick, and manages the weather. While trying to save the dying son of Pechvarry, Ged wanders too far into the land of the dead. A shadow pursues him. He flees toward the lair of Yevaud, the Dragon of Pendor, and kills six infant worms. He strikes a bargain with Yevaud that the dragon will never invade the Archipelago.

The shadow doggedly follows Ged's path. After assuming the shape of a shipman, Skiorh, it overcomes him. Ged awakens in the palace of Serret, the Lady of O, called the Court of the Terrenon. Ged realizes that the palace conceals great evil in the form of its foundation stone. He resists the lady and her lord, takes the shape of a Pilgrim Falcon, and eludes his pursuers.

Again with his master Ogion, Ged learns that he must stop running. He must chase the shadow to end the ceaseless harassment. He takes to the sea and beaches his boat on a lonely island, where he builds a new boat of driftwood and planks. A woman gives him a humble gift—half of a ring. In thanks for her family's hospitality, Ged charms their spring to give only sweet water. He builds a more seaworthy boat and names it *Lookfar*.

Ged encounters his old schoolmate, Vetch, and enjoys a brief respite with his sister and brother. Supplied with food, he and Vetch venture on to the southwest. Ged confronts the shadow, which alters its form to look like

his father, a schoolmate, Pechvarry, a winged being, Skiorh, and finally a writhing monster. Ged discovers that by calling out his own name, he defeats his fears and makes himself whole—a man who no longer needs to run from evil.

### THE TOMBS OF ATUAN

Tenar is elected Priestess of the Tombs of Atuan at age six. She becomes the "Eaten One," a holy being who dwells apart and whom all revere. Renamed Arha and guarded by the eunuch Manan, she lives among the priestesses. At fifteen, boredom and her natural curiosity lead her to explore the underground passageways that are her domain. They honeycomb the area under the official temple. Following Kossil, High Priestess of the Godking, she learns much of the tradition of the place, including the manner in which trespassers are executed, how to traverse the dark chambers without a light, and where the stronghold's treasure is kept.

Arha enjoys the friendship of Penthe, another young priestess. Penthe makes Arha realize the widespread disbelief in the superstitions connected with the worship of Awabath, the Godking. Still, Arha finds her greatest satisfaction in exploring the undertomb area and the Labyrinth, which becomes her secret domain. Above ground, Arha avoids confrontation with Kossil, a power-mad priestess.

Arha runs afoul of Kossil after the discovery of an interloper—a man who searches the undertomb for the treasury. Arha examines him through secret spy holes. At first she wants only his death, but she comes to trust him and relents. She feigns his death and burial while keeping him alive in the treasury. Drawn by his power and humanity, she befriends him. He claims to be the dragonlord.

Manan urges Arha to kill the trespasser because he fears that the man has bewitched her. Arha, trusting her own instincts, evades both Manan and Kossil and joins the dragonlord in the treasury. There he locates the treasure—half of the ring of Erreth-Akbe, which matches the half that he gives Arha to wear on a chain. Once worn by Elfarran, the ring is capable of restoring peace to the world.

The pair—Arha and Ged, the dragonlord—escape. During their flight, Manan falls to his death in the pit. As they emerge into the light, the shaking of the undertomb turns into an earthquake, which destroys the buildings, crushing the priestess Kossil. Restored to her identity

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

as Tenar, the girl exults in their mountain hideaway; however, Ged explains that he journeys on alone. He takes her to Havnor and then to the home of his master, Ogion.

### *The Farthest Shore*

In the Great House of Roke, Arren, the young Prince of Enlad, visits the Archmage Ged. It seems that magic has been failing and the world shows signs of losing faith in wizardry. Ged takes Arren with him on a long journey aboard *Lookfar* to halt further weakening of the powers. Arren, who is untried, fears that he will fail the master, whom he respects. Ged, however, puts his trust in the boy and teaches him how to sail.

Disguising himself and his Gontish accent, Ged pretends to search for emmelstone in the company of his "nephew." At Hort Town, they encounter a dying community where inhabitants immerse themselves in the drug hazia. Ged takes an interest in a deposed wizard named Hare, whose hand was lopped off by Captain Egre, a pirate turned slaver. During Arren and Ged's late-night visit to Hare's hovel, slavers knock Ged unconscious and apprehend Arren, whom they chain to their slave vessel. Ged rescues the boy, who feels he has failed his master.

They continue their journey into the South Reach. At Lorbanery, all silk commerce has ended because the people have lost faith. Sopli, a dyer of Lorbanery and Akaren's son, asks to accompany the pair aboard *Lookfar*. Crazed and fearful of drowning, he terrorizes Arren. Near the shoals of Obehol, the trio is attacked by spear-wielding natives. Sopli falls overboard and drowns. A spear pierces Ged's shoulder.

Arren maneuvers the craft away from danger. Ged lies severely wounded and unconscious. Expecting to die on the open sea, Arren falls into despair and thinks of nothing—drifting aimlessly. The raft-folk lend assistance and restore Ged to health. Again, Arren mourns his lack of strength. Ged reassures the boy that he is strong enough to face the ultimate challenge—death.

They continue on their odyssey, led by Orm Embar, a great dragon. Soon they arrive at the Keep of Kalessin, the eldest dragon. A white-haired man called Cob confronts Ged. Claiming to be King, Master, and the cause of the world's despair, he lures Ged into the land of the dead. Ged summons his enemy on the last shore of the world. Just as the man stretches out his blade toward Ged, Orm Embar leaps upon Cob and crushes him while sacrificing himself on the weapon, which pierces his heart.

Ged defeats the undying one. In his final challenge, he expends all his power. Against terrible odds and by sheer endurance, Arren carries his master to safety. Past the remains of Orm Embar they trudge back toward the land of the living and finally arrive at the sea. Kalessin flies them on his great back to Roke Knoll, where the masters wait to welcome the Archmage. He introduces Arren as the young king and leaves him behind to rule over a more hopeful world.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Daughter of anthropologist Alfred Louis Kroeber and writer Theodora Kroeber, Ursula Kroeber Le Guin (1929-) married historian Charles Alfred Le Guin in 1953 following her graduation from Radcliffe College and Columbia University. A resident of Portland, Oregon, she is the mother of three children. In addition to her writing career, Le Guin has taught French at Mercer University and the University of Idaho and has led writing workshops at the University of Washington, Portland State University, University of California, University of Reading (England), as well as Australia.

Le Guin served as Creative consultant for the PBS adaptation of *Lathe of Heaven* in 1979. A strong voice for individual liberties, she is a member of the Writers Guild, P.E.N., Science Fiction Research Association, Science Fiction Poetry Association, N.O.W., National Abortion Rights Action League, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Phi Beta Kappa.

A prolific writer, Le Guin has written novels, essays, poems, and stories as well as edited collections and contributed to anthologies, magazines, and scholarly journals, including *Galaxy*, *Playboy*, *Harper's*, *Best Science Fiction Stories of the Year*, *Omni*, *Western Humanities Review*, *New Yorker*, *Redbook*, *New Republic*, and *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. Best known as a science fiction author, she produced *Rocannon's World* (1966), *City of Illusions* (1967), *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971), *The Wind's Twelve Quarters* (1975), and *Orsinian Tales* (1976).

## CRITIC'S CORNER

Critics praise Ursula Le Guin's unique combination of science fiction trappings with sensitive humanistic themes and compare her favorably with C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. The Earthsea Trilogy receives particular comment for its balance of individual and environment and for its emphasis on the journey motif. Accused by feminists of perpetuating male-female stereotypes, Le Guin denies the charge. She maintains that her work is writing, not sociology, politics, or activism.

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the technical elements of science fiction, particularly reliance on fantastic beings, spells, staff, and names
2. To analyze how suspense is created
3. To summarize individual weaknesses of the major characters
4. To create an overview of the microcosm of Earthsea
5. To comment on the theme of independence and self-actualization as revealed by the major characters
6. To consider the value of compassion and kindness

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

7. To map out the geographic locations described in the novel
8. To characterize the journey motif
9. To discuss self-reliance as a survival skill
10. To analyze the nature and importance of friendship

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To contrast Ged's life before and after he becomes a mage
2. To discuss the philosophy which Ged learns at Roke Knoll
3. To contrast the point of view of Ogion with that of Nemmerle and Kossil
4. To explain why Ged chooses Vetch, Tenar, and Arren as companions
5. To describe the lifestyle of the priestess Arha after her investiture
6. To contrast the raft-folk with islanders
7. To narrate the last adventure and to explain the role played by dragons
8. To discuss how Ged suffers for one foolish act
9. To contrast the spirit of the people of Earthsea before and after Cob enslaves them
10. To discuss the theme of power as it applies to Ged, Orm Embar, Ogion, Nemmerle, Jasper, Vetch, Arha, and Serret
11. To explain how *Lookfar* aids Ged on his voyages
12. To account for Ged's decision to leave Arren and withdraw from Roke Knoll

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the trilogy. Explain the meaning of each. Book and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. Three days went by and four days went by and still Ogion had not spoken a single charm in Ged's hearing, and had not taught him a single name or rune or spell. (Book I, p. 16)  
*(Ged expects to learn magical words and signs, particularly runes, the alphabetic characters used by Teutonic tribes. These pictographic symbols were employed in the performance of magic rituals, especially those connected with Druid worship. Originally, the word rune meant secret; runa meant magician. Only the priestly class could understand and interpret written symbols, since*

*most of the remaining citizens were illiterate. Philologists have not determined whether runes evolved from the Latin alphabet or whether they were invented by the Goths.)*

2. A gong had been rung while they were upstairs, and they came down to eat the noon meal at the Long Table of the refectory, along with a hundred or more boys and young men. (Book I, p. 38)  
*(In the school at Roke Knoll, the novices eat dormitory style at long trestle tables in the dining hall. They serve themselves from steaming bowls of food deposited on the windowsills of the room.)*
3. The women all stayed in the wattle huts, peering out the door, hiding their children behind their skirts, drawing back fearfully from the darkness of the huts as the strangers came up from the beach . . . Their boats were coracles woven of reed, and it was a brave sailor who would go as far as Gosk or Kornay in such a craft. (Book I, p. 172)  
*(The homes of the villagers of Astowell are composed of poles interwoven with branches, twigs, and reeds. For maximum warmth and protection from cold wind, these woven structures were plastered with a mixture of mud and dung called daub. In similar fashion, the villagers' primitive boats are built of poles and covered over in hides or strips of leather.)*
4. The child must be sound of body and of mind, and as it grows it must not suffer from rickets nor the smallpox nor any deformity, nor become blind. (Book II, p. 10)  
*(Rickets was at one time a common disease among children of the world which caused permanent disfigurement. A bowing or deformity of the skeleton during the growing years, rickets is brought on by a deficiency in the diet which is offset by vitamin D.)*
5. Twice a year, at the full moon nearest the equinox of spring and of autumn, there was a sacrifice before the Throne and she came out from the low back door of the Hall carrying a great brass basin full of smoking goat's blood; this she must pour out, half at the foot of the standing black stone, half over one of the fallen stones which lay embedded in the rocky dirt, stained by the blood-offering of centuries. (Book II, pp. 15-16)  
*(The celebration of equinox is common among primitive religions, particularly sun worshippers. The specific day—whether in the third week of March or September—is chosen because it marks one of two days during the calendar year when day and night are equal in length. It was associated in ancient times with the resurrection of Attis, a god who is connected with death and regeneration and shares some characteristics with Christ.)*

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

6. Though the ways and turnings to the various rooms and regions were firm in Arha's memory, even she had taken with her on her longer explorations a ball of fine yarn, and let it unravel behind her, and rewound it as she followed it returning. (Book II, p. 68)  
*(This passage reflects the influence of the Greek myth of Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, who assisted Theseus in escaping the labyrinth, the home of Minotaur. Ariadne supplied Theseus with a ball of yarn along with the directions of Daedalus, builder of the labyrinth. With these aids, Theseus slew the Minotaur and escaped unharmed.)*
7. "Now the petal of the flower of moly hath a name, which is *iebera*, and so also the sepal, which is *partonath*; and stem and leaf and root hath each his name . . ." (Book III, p. 12)  
*(In Greek literature, Hermes gives Odysseus a sprig of moly, a magic herb with black root and milky-white flower, to protect him from Circe's enchantment. A modern counterpart has never been identified, although moly is often associated with mandrake, garlic, and rue.)*
8. They make it into charms against rheums, sprains, stiff necks, and slip of the tongue. (Book III, p. 33)  
*(The application of emmelstone is believed to cure rheum, the mucous discharge of eyes and nose.)*
9. All night long, the shortest night of the year, torches burned on the rafts, which lay gathered in a great circle under the thick-starred sky, so that a ring of fires flickered on the sea. (Book III, p. 126)  
*(The raft-folk celebrate midsummer, the summer solstice of June 21, an important day among ancient Celtic peoples. Allied with the birth of John the Baptist, the holiday evolved into an amalgam of pagan and Christian lore. Bonfires all over Europe were lit to bolster the weakening sun and to drive off evil. The night after midsummer's day was traditionally a time for meeting of witches. Watchers outside church doors claimed to see apparitions. Young girls were said to dream of their future mates. Other mythical phenomena connected with midsummer's eve include invisibility and the location of treasure.)*
10. For first we two must stand upon the balance-point, the very fulcrum of the world. (Book III, p. 156)  
*(Ged interprets the coming kingship of Arren as a test of the eternal equilibrium or balance—the fulcrum upon which the lever turns. By offsetting his magical powers with Arren's earthly skills in governance, Ged foresees delicate passing of power from the wizards of former times to the governors of the future. To symbolize the completion of the balance, Ged offers the ring which he and Tenar created from two separated halves.)*

## COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgement is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the trilogy.

### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe the layout of Atuan.  
*(Atuan is a forbidding stronghold, a repository of ancient powers that terrorize suppliants. Its more mundane quarters encompass lodgings for several hundred people. There are three temples, Big House and Small House, quarters of eunuch wardens, guards' barracks, slaves' huts, storehouses, sheep and goat pens, and farm buildings.*  
*The temples sharply contrast each other. The Temple of the Twin Gods is cubic in shape with white plaster, no windows, a porch, and a door. More impressive is the Temple of the Godking, with a high portico and showy columns made of cedar and topped with painted capitals. Oldest of the three buildings is the Hall of the Throne, with patched walls and crumbing dome.*  
*Behind this area lies a loop of rock surrounding nine huge black stones. Encrusted and covered with moss, they comprise the Tombs of Atuan and have stood like fingers since early times. They honor the corpses of the earliest rulers. It is in this area that Arha makes blood sacrifices on the day of the equinox.*  
*Beneath the tombs runs a warren of passageways, dark and dank beneath the stone floors of the upper buildings. The Undertomb lies off the trapdoor of the Hall of the Throne. Through an iron door extend the unfathomable turns of the Labyrinth. In its midst is the painted room. To the west is the treasury and beyond, the pit. Members of the household of Atuan can glimpse selected segments of the underground passageways through spy holes.)*
2. Explain how Duny's powers come to the attention of his elders.  
*(Duny, tall son of the village bronze-smith of Ten Alders on the island of Gont, is a proud, temperamental child who herds goats and assists his father at the forge. In babyhood he is attended by his mother's sister, but she loses interest in him until he begins to display interest in her magical incantations. Following a mishap in which he calls the goats by a magic spell, his aunt decides to teach him the secrets of witchcraft.*  
*Much of her lore is of no consequence, especially trivial love potions and curses. Yet, at age twelve, Duny distinguishes himself during a raid on Ten Alders by the Kargs. As the invaders*

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

approach Ten Alders, Duny remains with his father and sixteen other village males, who work all night to arm themselves against a hundred enemies. Duny sees wisps of fog on the path and, resorting to fogweaving, calls up a thicker fog, which envelops the Kargs in impenetrable mist.

Duny lures the Kargs with a mix of indistinct voices, which many follow over a cliff to their death. Baffled and terrified by the experience, the remaining Kargs regroup and retreat. At the shore they find their ships burnt. Every Karg is killed. As a result of the effort, Duny is struck dumb.

A wizard comes to heal the boy. Identified as Ogion the Silent, Mage of Re Albi, the old man promises to return for the boy on his rite of passage day when he reaches age thirteen. Then the mage plans to keep him as an apprentice.)

3. How is Arren selected to serve the Archmage?  
(Near the end of the period during which Earthsea has no king, despair stalks the land, reducing the powers of wizards and driving the people away from productivity and belief in themselves. A prophecy implies that the next king will be a mage, yet the state of the world suggests that the island lands may have become ungovernable. Everywhere is an unnatural fear of death.

Arren, a young prince of the lineage of Morred sent as emissary to Roke Knoll, stands in awe of the Archmage and follows him like an adoring disciple. A meeting of the council of wizards decides that, in order to restore peace to Earthsea, the Archmage must take action and restore power to the rightful hands.

To Arren's surprise, Ged, the Archmage, offers to take him, an untried boy with no more training than sailing, dancing, singing, fencing, lute and netball playing, and other court-learned skills. The boy willingly accepts the quest, yet his heart is filled with doubts that he can serve so strong and noble a master.

The Summoner questions why Ged, a perpetual loner, suddenly decides that he needs a companion. Ged replies that he has need of a fit companion, who is readily available. As a wiseman notes, the boy would not be at Roke Knoll if he were not needed.)

4. Explain how the lifestyle of the raft-folk differs from most Earthsea inhabitants.

(The Children of the Open Sea live on a flotilla of rafts and pole and gaff their way into tight configuration, harvest fresh fish and seaweed, and flourish apart from the land dwellers of Earthsea. Because their life is self-sustaining, the people survive on the surface of the sea except for an annual journey each autumn to the Long Dune, where they cut wood and refit their rafts.

In winter, the rafts move apart. In spring, they rendezvous at Balatran to conduct marriages and celebrate Midsummer with the Long Dance. In summer they drift south and cross the path of the great grey whales. From there they journey back northward and begin the odyssey again.

Life for the sea-borne city is easy and functional. Children play on tethers until they are old enough to sustain themselves in the water. Bad weather sometimes results in the loss of several rafts. Still, the people persevere, marrying young and gathering nilgu to weave into fibers for rope and nets. All members of the community work as one at the tasks of fishing, drying fish, and shaping whale ivory into tools.)

5. Explain how Orm Embar saves Ged from an attack by Cob.

(After Ged's recovery from a shoulder wound, Orm Embar, a ninety-foot dragon, flies over the assembled body of raft-folk and summons him to Dragons' Run. There he instructs Ged to seek an enemy who is and is not on Selidor. The enemy, Cob, who refers to himself as King and Master, menaces Ged with visitations of the dead.

On the last shore of the world, the enemy advances with a long rod or blade of steel. Ged stands riveted to the spot. Orm Embar, however, is quick to leap upon the challenger and fall full-force upon him. The enemy's blade pierces the dragon's heart. Orm Embar, who sacrifices himself for Ged, bleeds out his black blood and dies on the sand.)

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. How does Arren come to believe in himself?  
(From the beginning, Arren doubts that he is man enough to be of any use to a great mage like Ged. He clenches his hands and bows over his master's hand, crying "I will fail you again and fail myself. I have not strength enough!" Ged, never hesitating to lend comfort and support to his chosen companion, insists, "What you love, you will love. What you undertake, you will complete. You are a fulfiller of hope; you are to be relied on. But seventeen years give little armor against despair . . ."

Later, Ged stands over the sleeping boy and intones his belief in Arren: "None but thee. And thou must go thy way, not mine. Yet will thy kingship be, in part, my own. For I knew thee first. I knew thee first! They will praise me more for that in afterdays than for any thing I did of magerly . . . For first we two must stand upon the balance-point, the very fulcrum of the world. And if I fall, you fall, and all the rest."

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

After Arren faces a major gap in his courage, he realizes that confronting death is his most difficult undertaking. Following Ged's final meeting with Cob, Arren supports his master, who is at the ebb of his strength, and perseveres over the barren land of Selidor back to Lookfar. Ged, unable to guide, mutters hoarsely, "Thy way, lad . . . Help me." On the threshold of manhood, Arren lifts his master and forges on to a cliff, beneath which lies the promise of the sea.)

7. What does Ged gain from his friendship with Vetch? (From the early encounters at Roke Knoll, Vetch proves to be a worthy and dependable friend. Heavysset, dark, unpolished, and plain-spoken, Vetch is nevertheless capable of coming between Ged and his rival, Jasper, who seeks a flashy duel of powers. After Vetch passes on to the next level of competency, he again stands firm in his friend's behalf. On the slopes of Roke Knoll, where Ged foolishly summons the spirit of Elfarran, Vetch runs forward and puts out his hand to help Ged fend off the clinging shadow that rips his face. Unfortunately, he is rendered motionless.

Much later, after Nemmerle rescues Ged and the boy convalesces to the point that he can have visitors, Vetch returns and brings Ged's pet otak. He invites Ged to visit him after he becomes settled in the East Reach. Also, he predicts that Ged will take to the seas and consort with dragons. He concludes his farewell with a statement of his true name, Estarriol—proof of his trust in Ged.

After a long separation, Ged encounters Vetch again in Ismay and learns that he is chief wizard of Iffish. Vetch's greeting is warm, as are the welcomes of his brother and sister. He is sensitive to Ged's travail and is careful not to stir up sorrow over the loss of the otak. Without emphasizing his own role in Ged's quest, Vetch offers to accompany him so that, if Ged fails, Vetch might warn the Archipelago of the fearful shadow; or if Ged defeats the shadow, Vetch might spread word of his deed so that it will be properly noted in future poems.)

8. Explain why Arha chooses to give up her post in Atuan and follow a stranger.

(The seeds of doubt exist in Arha long before she meets the dragonlord. Her association with Penthe reveals another point of view—a person who longs for gaiety and dancing and who would give up the honor of service for a better, more normal life. A second incident that colors Arha's feelings about her post in Atuan is the execution of intruders. Arha tries to believe that she wants death for the next intruder, but her heart belies her words, betraying a tenderness beneath the false layer of

barbarity that her tenure has taught her.

Personal contact with Ged, whom Arha spies on throughout his captivity, reveals a man gentle of touch, "flushed with life and triumph, smiling." She brings along his staff, indicating that her mind is not set on a grisly execution. When she realizes that Ged has the power to hold back the earthquake during their long flight through the underground passageways, Arha feels reassured.

Arriving in the outside world, the two enjoy a pleasant sleep. Arha awakens before dawn and looks over "one whose power was akin to, and as strong as, the Old Powers of the earth." She admires his ability to summon a rabbit. Even more precious, she develops a normal man/woman friendship, which encompasses other emotions, particularly compassion.

Ged is quick to assuage her grief at the people she had a part in killing, especially Manan, her guardian. He promises to be with her whenever she needs him. As they move ashore in Havnor, she raises her hand in acceptance of his world, far from the dismal Undertomb of Atuan.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Explain why the concept of equilibrium is important to Ogion and Ged.

(From the beginning, Ogion tries to help Ged come in close contact with self and the universe. He insists that the boy be silent so that he might listen. After Ged consults his book of incantations without permission, Ogion speaks harshly, warning him that he may endanger both his power and his life. To assure himself that his apprentice appreciates the concept of equilibrium, Ogion sends the boy to Roke Knoll.

At the school for mages, Ged studies under the Master Changer. He learns that he "must not change one thing, one pebble, one grain of sand" until he appreciates the consequences that will follow the act. The world is in balance, he is told; to shake the balance is to act rashly.

To his sorrow, however, Ged learns by experience that a childish display of power can be painful. Ged longs to trounce his rival, Jasper. After his clash with the spirit that he summons from the dead, Ged's face is horribly scarred and his joyous youth vanishes. He sinks into remorse that he is unable to undo his foolish act.

Later, in the last segment of the trilogy, Ged demonstrates that equilibrium is the cornerstone of his mature years. Arren questions why Ged did not set the slaves free after rescuing him from Captain Egre. Ged replies, "On every act the balance of the whole depends. The winds and seas, the powers of water and earth and light, all

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

*that these do, and all that the beasts and green things do, is well done, and rightly done. All these act within the Equilibrium.”)*

10. Discuss the threat to peace which hangs over Earthsea in the last of the trilogy.

*(The threat to Earthsea in the last segment of the trilogy is a loss of self-confidence. Because people lack leadership, they move like a rudderless craft over troubled waters. Their commerce fails because their lives are disrupted. When they no longer trust their wizards, random acts of evil ravage the land. Captain Egre, giving up piracy, resorts to slavery, a true sign that belief in human values has lapsed and is replaced by crassness and greed.*

*As Ged and Arren set out on their quest to restore Earthsea to its former state of equilibrium, they perceive a longing for death. The approach/avoidance dance with death turns on the mastery of Cob, who manipulates the dead as he draws the living into his snare. Arren fears his own glimpse of the dark side of life. Ged, however, convinces him that life and death form a necessary partnership and that death should not seem dreadful.*

*Because Ged faces the ghoulish Lord and bests him, Arren realizes his manhood. No longer paralyzed with fear, he perseveres in the final endurance match, bearing his master's weary form from the lifeless mountains back to the life-giving shore. With the supernatural intervention of Kalessin, Arren returns to Roke Knoll the hero of the hour. Ged leaves him to restore the needed balance, which can come only from a worthy leader.)*

### Questions 11-13 Creative Level

11. Make a list of similes which compare objects to things or conditions in nature. For example, "And when they had walked for several hours Ged thought he saw, away off on the hills in the northwest where their way tended, a tiny scratch against the sky, like a tooth, white."
12. Compose a paragraph in which you give an extended definition of the concept of equilibrium. Explain how the term applies to Ged's wizardry.
13. Create an island in Earthsea in which live fantastic creatures. Draw a map of the island, showing its relationship to neighboring lands. Give information about the shape and topography of the island as well as its products and inhabitants.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Sketch a map of the areas where the greatest adventures take place. Number the location of each

adventure and add commentary about the beings that Ged meets and the method he uses to defeat his enemies. Draw arrows to mark the passage of *Lookfar* from place to place.

2. Compose an episode which explains what happens to Tenar after she arrives at Havnor. Describe the special relationship that exists between her and Ged. Discuss how Ogion responds to her.
3. Draw Orm Embar and Kalessin. Reread the passages which describe the two dragons so that you can delineate the differences in them.
4. Compose a ballad which describes the lifestyle of the raft-folk. Emphasize their acceptance of strangers as well as their celebration of midsummer.
5. Compose the words for a ceremony welcoming the next Arha to the Tombs of Atuan. Include mention of her duties and powers. Explain how she reappears each time that her earthly incarnation dies.
6. Make several journal entries during Arren's first days as king. Comment on how much he misses Ged and how he must learn to rely on himself for strength and advice.
7. Compose a theme in which you compare Ged to some of the more familiar heroes and heroines of Western literature, such as Odysseus, David, Daniel Boone, Joan of Arc, Paul Bunyan, Beowulf, Hercules, Merlin, and King Arthur. Comment on the role of religion and supernatural powers as they apply to each example.
8. Lead a discussion of the nature of despair that threatens Earthsea after Cob lures the inhabitants into the land of the dead. Explain how this despair relates to real feelings of malaise that overwhelm people in stressful times. Describe how ordinary people defeat normal bouts of depression or despair.
9. Explain in an oral report how Ged fulfills his destiny. Arrange your thoughts chronologically and follow his career from goatherd to retired Archmage. Append comments about the people who help educate and guide him along the way.
10. Select an episode from the Earthsea Trilogy to act out with hand puppets. Create stick or bag puppets and assign roles to individual players. Include background music and the voice of a narrator to fill in information about events that lead to the episode.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Authors in the News*, Volume 1.

Bittner, James W. *Approaches to the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*. University Microfilms International, 1984.

*Contemporary Authors*, Volumes 21-22R

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

*Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*, Volume 9.

*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Volumes 8, 13, 22, and 45.

*Children's Literature Review*, Volume 3.

Cogell, Elizabeth Cummins. *Ursula K. Le Guin*. G. K. Hall, 1983.

DeBolt, Joseph W., ed. *Ursula K. Le Guin: Voyager to Inner Lands and to Outer Space*. Kennikat, 1979.

*Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volumes 8 and 52.

*English Journal*, October, 1977.

*Horn Book Magazine*, April, 1971; October, 1971; June, 1973; March 12, 1989.

*Instructor*, November-December, 1988.

*Life*, April, 1986.

*New York Times Book Review*, March 12, 1989.

Nilsen, Alleen Pace, and Kenneth L. Donelson. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Scott Foresman, 1985.

Olander, Joseph D., and Martin H. Greenberg, eds. *Ursula K. Le Guin*. Taplinger, 1979.

Scholes, Robert. *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on Fiction of the Future*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.

*School Library Journal*, December, 1988.

Slusser, George Edgar. *The Farthest Shores of Ursula Le Guin*. Borgo, 1976.

*Something About the Author*, Volumes 4 and 52.

## TEACHING NOTES



## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

### VOCABULARY TEST

Circle a word to complete each of the following sentences.

1. He peered ahead into the dark (**fleck, bane, rune, quay, cleft**), and left and right up the great, cavern-pocked, boulder-tumbled slopes where trees crouched with their roots half in air.
2. The people in the little port looked at him (**hurlyburly, inestimably, askance, sleight, aptly**), and soon their sorcerer came hurrying.
3. “(**Scarp, Avert, Writhe, Abate, Portent!**)” said Vetch, turning his left hand in the gesture that turns aside the ill chance spoken of.
4. By the vague starlight they found the way down to the creekmouth, and untied *Lookfar* from the rock (**refectory, fealty, thyme, cairn, ravine**) where she had been made fast, and pushed her out into the black water.
5. The (**stints, jibes, ruses, talons, stanchions**) at the oars were shortened, for the labor was very hard; the younger lads were set two to an oar, and Ged took his turn with the others as he had since they left Gont.
6. She and Manan had not walked five hundred paces on their (**tortuous, melancholy, dour, appearing, pungent**) course when they came upon him, crumpled up in the narrow corridor like a heap of rags thrown down.
7. Your garment will be (**wary, defiled, immanent, glum, stark**). The Priestess' garment.
8. But you're an (**estuary, abyss, infidel, illusion, atonement**), an unbeliever.
9. On the highest of all the towers the Sword of Erreth-Akbe is set, like a (**dais, phial, domain, ballast, pinnacle**), skyward.
10. It's also true that here in the Place of the Old Powers, my strength is very little and my crafts don't (**desolate, forsake, cache, avail, ebb**) me.
11. “Like this!” she cried, and dived like a seal into the dazzle and liquid (**equinox, pestilence, roil, equilibrium**) of the waters.
12. For first we two must stand upon the balance-point, the very (**lineage, fulcrum, rowan, moly, rheum**) of the world.
13. It was small stone, black, (**sonorous, blithe, awry, porous, illimitable**), hard.
14. I did not like to let it be known that the Archmage and Warden of Roke was (**ferreting, groveling, appeasing, portending, foregoing**) about the slums of Hort Town.
15. . . . he seldom uses his arts, being concerned with the ruling and ordering of his realm, the (**gainsay, assent, avarice, trawler, governance**) of cities and matters of trade.

**THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY**

**COMPRHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Character Identification (30 points)**

Match the following places from the novel with significant events.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Hare invites Ged and Arren to his hovel and offers them drugs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Duny overwhelms a band of warriors by fogweaving.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A small six-year-old girl is presented to the Nameless Ones.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Kurremkarmerruk pays Ged slight compliment for his learning of names.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Arha looks through a spy hole and catches sight of a man carrying a lighted staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The chief of the raft-folk ministers to Ged's shoulder wound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Bats feed on the silk worms; the dyers cease their trade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Ged recognizes a witch who is the daughter of the Lord of the Re Albi.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Ged locates a boat named *Lookfar*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Ged challenges and defeats Cob.

- |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| A. Hall of the Throne | H. Iffish       |
| B. Lorbanery          | I. the Enlandes |
| C. Painted Room       | J. Ten Alders   |
| D. Hort Town          | K. Balatran     |
| E. West Hand          | L. Osskil       |
| F. Selidor            | M. Karego-At    |
| G. Isolate Tower      | N. Havnor       |

**Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)**

Identify the speaker of each quotation. Then name the person to whom it is addressed.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1A. To hear, one must be silent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1B.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2A. Little One, this trickery is not wise. It is not good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2B.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3A. Now they all know my secret name, my true name, and there are no secrets, and there is no truth, and there is no death—death—death!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3B.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4A. I think you'd better remind your goatherd friend again of the law that protects him. He looks sulky.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4B.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5A. It seems his trade has sunk from piracy to slaving. But he took the bear's cub this time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5B.

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

### Part III: Matching (20 points)

Name the character who is described in each phrase below. Select your answer from the list that follows. Some answers will be used more than once. You will have answers left over when you finish.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. keeps the raven Osskil as a pet for thirty years.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. longs to leave the Tombs of Atuan to see something different.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. abandons Roke Knoll, but returns after the balance is restored.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. is the Lord of the Stone, who prepares to punish Serret before Ged stops him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. poses as Tenar's brother and begs for their supper.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6. lops off Hare's hand.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7. keeps Hoeg the otak as a pet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 8. believes Arha has been bewitched by the man in the underground chamber.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9. is a madman and a dyer of Lorbanery.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10. bestows on Sparrowhawk his true name.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 11. creates a werelight to help locate the half-ring.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 12. claims to be able to fence, sail, dance, wrestle, play the lute, and sing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 13. departs Roke without earning his staff.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 14. whips Penthe for climbing over the Men's Wall.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 15. is crushed to death by Orm Embar.

Akaren	Arren	Benderesk	Captain Egre	Changer	Cob	Elfarran	
Ged	Hare	Jasper	Kalessin	Kossil	Manan	Nemmerle	Ogion
Patterner	Penthe	Serret	Sopli	Star	Thorion	Vetch	Yarrow

### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Describe Ged's use and abuse of power.
2. Contrast Yarrow, Arren, Vetch and Tenor as helpmeets for Ged.
3. Explain why despair takes hold of Hort Town and Lorbanery.

**THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Matching (20 points)**

Complete each phrase below with the remainder of the original sentence. You will have answers left over when you finish.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. They must have been brought there as young children,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The founder of the house was King Thoreg.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. They were the tombs of those who ruled before the world of men came to be,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How long has it been, seventeen years or eighteen,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Having choice,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Then he felt the edges of it in his hand, rough and searing, and felt the weight of it,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The more he learned, the less he would have to fear,
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In this he saw that Ogion had been right:
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. An old man it seemed, grey and grim, coming towards Ged;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. He was not laying a spell and yet there was a power in his voice that moved Ged's mind

- A. the ones not named, and she who served them had no name.
- B. until finally in his full power as Wizard he needed fear nothing in the world, nothing at all.
- C. he came with a group of high-leaping lads to the chief's raft and there stopped, while they went on.
- D. and left to die.
- E. we must not act without responsibility.
- F. and among the treasures he left his descendents was the half-ring, which Erreth-Akbe had given him.
- G. her dress was of turquoise-colored silk, bright and soft as the evening sky.
- H. but even as Ged saw his father the smith in that figure, he saw that it was not an old man but a young one.
- I. you were made to hold light, as a lamp burning holds and gives its light.
- J. since the Ring of the King's Rune was returned to the Tower of the Kings in Havnor?
- K. so that the boy was bewildered, and for an instant seemed to behold himself standing in a strange vast desert place alone among shadows.
- L. and knew it for what it was, a bit of rock from the Mountains of Pain.
- M. a puppet doing the will of that evil shadow which you raised up into the sunlight.
- N. the shadow could not draw on his power, so long as he was turned against it.

## THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY

### Part II: Completion (30 points)

Complete each of the following statements with a word from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

1. Then when I bring you back here, you will dig a grave in the \_\_\_\_\_, and make a coffin for it, and put it in the grave empty, and fill in the earth again.
2. Our Lord Nemmerle has his \_\_\_\_\_, and songs say the Red Mage of Ark led a wild boar on a gold chain. But I never heard of any sorcerer keeping a rat in his hood!
3. \_\_\_\_\_. It soothes and numbs, letting the body be free of the mind.
4. This was the \_\_\_\_\_ of the tower. This was the central place, and it was cold, bitter cold; nothing could ever warm the little room.
5. She kept careful count of her turnings and passings, and recited Thar's directions to herself, though she knew them perfectly. For it would not do to get lost in the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I am no lord now, nor you a prince. I am a trader called \_\_\_\_\_, and you're my nephew, learning the seas with me, called Arren; for we hail from Enlad.
7. The world is in balance, in \_\_\_\_\_.
8. It's time there was a king again on the throne of \_\_\_\_\_, to wield the Sign of Peace.
9. But in the cause of justice, \_\_\_\_\_, I take this much upon myself: I bid your voice be dumb until the day you find a word worth speaking.
10. On the dock \_\_\_\_\_ stood and watched them go, as sailor's wives and sisters stand on all the shores of all Earthsea watching their men go out on the sea, and they do not wave or call aloud, but stand still in hooded cloak of grey or brown, there on the shore that dwindles smaller and smaller from the boat while the water grows wide between.
11. \_\_\_\_\_, the Priestess of the Godking, she was always cruel, she kept trying to make me kill you.
12. Now Ged had thought before of how it was always said, the Nine Masters of Roke, although he knew only eight: Windkey, Hand, Herbal, Chanter, Changer, Summoner, Namer, \_\_\_\_\_.
13. By the vague starlight they found the way down to the creekmouth, and untied \_\_\_\_\_ from the rock cairn where she had been made fast, and pushed her out into the black water.
14. And there is a prophecy that must be fulfilled, isn't there? Maharion said that the next king must be a \_\_\_\_\_.
15. I made a little light. The \_\_\_\_\_. It was hard to do, here.

Akarion	Earthsea	Egre	Equilibrium	foundingstone	Hawk	Hazia
Kossil	Labyrinth	Lookfar	mage	Patterner	raft-folk	raven
Erreth-Akbe	rune	staff	Undertomb	Vetch	werelight	Yarrow



**THE EARTHSEA TRILOGY**

**ANSWERS KEY**

**VOCABULARY**

- |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. cleft    | 9. pinnacle    |
| 2. askance  | 10. avail      |
| 3. Avert    | 11. roil       |
| 4. cairn    | 12. fulcrum    |
| 5. stints   | 13. porous     |
| 6. tortuous | 14. ferreting  |
| 7. defiled  | 15. governance |
| 8. infidel  |                |

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Character Identification (30 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. K  |
| 2. J | 7. B  |
| 3. A | 8. L  |
| 4. G | 9. E  |
| 5. C | 10. F |

**Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)**

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| 1A. Ogion  | 4A. Jasper |
| 1B. Ged    | 4B. Vetch  |
| 2A. Manan  | 5A. Ged    |
| 2B. Arha   | 5B. Arren  |
| 3A. Akaren |            |
| 3B. Ged    |            |

**Part III: Matching (20 points)**

- |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| 1. Nemmerle     | 9. Sopli   |
| 2. Penthe       | 10. Ogion  |
| 3. Changer      | 11. Ged    |
| 4. Benderesk    | 12. Arren  |
| 5. Ged          | 13. Jasper |
| 6. Captain Egge | 14. Kossil |
| 7. Ged          | 15. Cob    |
| 8. Manan        |            |

**Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)**

Answers will vary

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Matching (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. L  |
| 2. F | 7. B  |
| 3. A | 8. N  |
| 4. J | 9. H  |
| 5. E | 10. K |

**Part II: Completion (30 points)**

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Undertomb     | 9. Egge            |
| 2. raven         | 10. Yarrow         |
| 3. Hazia         | 11. Kossil         |
| 4. foundingstone | 12. Patterner      |
| 5. Labyrinth     | 13. <i>Lookfar</i> |
| 6. Hawk          | 14. mage           |
| 7. Equilibrium   | 15. werelight      |
| 8. Earthsea      |                    |

**Part III: Identification (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. O | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. O  |
| 3. F | 8. F  |
| 4. O | 9. F  |
| 5. O | 10. O |

**Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)**

Answers will vary.



**PERMA-BOUND • VANDALIA ROAD • JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS 62650**

**Call toll free 1-800-637-6581**