



The Color of Magic

Terry Pratchett

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Terry Pratchett's profoundly irreverent, bestselling novels have garnered him a revered position in the halls of parody next to the likes of Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, Douglas Adams, and Carl Hiaasen.

The Color of Magic is Terry Pratchett's maiden voyage through the now-legendary land of Discworld. This is where it all begins -- with the tourist Twoflower and his wizard guide, Rincewind.

On a world supported on the back of a giant turtle (sex unknown), a gleeful, explosive, wickedly eccentric expedition sets out. There's an avaricious but inept wizard, a naive tourist whose luggage moves on hundreds of dear little legs, dragons who only exist if you believe in them, and of course THE EDGE of the planet...

The Color of Magic Details

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Author : Terry Pratchett

Format : Mass Market Paperback 277 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Humor

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From Reader Review The Color of Magic for online ebook

Mark Lawrence says

I haven't reviewed this because I read it so long ago that all I can remember is I loved it.

I'll take our very old and battered copy (bought in 1987) to the hospice this weekend when I go with Celyn and see if I can't refresh my memory.

RIP, Sir Terry.

'DON'T THINK OF IT AS DYING,' said Death, 'JUST THINK OF IT AS LEAVING EARLY TO AVOID THE RUSH.'

So - to the review!

I've just read this in slightly over 24 hours ... which is extraordinary for me. I normally take a month to read a book.

It is, to be fair, both a very readable and a very short book (65,000 words - a short fantasy these days is ~100,000 words).

I was surprised to find how much of this I remembered, especially as I last read it 28 years ago!

It's a very funny book with some GREAT one-liners. I particularly liked one that said about men falling foul of the thieves' guild (I paraphrase) '... men who wouldn't be going home again ... unless they happened to live near the river and their corpses floated by on the way to the sea."

And this from the character Twoflower was poignant:

"When I think that I might die without seeing a hundredth of all there is to see it makes me feel," he paused, then added, "well, humble, I suppose. And very angry, of course."

Anyway - incompetent and cowardly failed wizard Rincewind falls in with Twoflower, the naive tourist with an impossibly optimistic attitude, oodles of gold, and an indestructible, vicious and implacable treasure chest on legs to defend him.

Hilarity ensues as Twoflower tries to see everything, Rincewind tries not to die, and the gods play games with them. We get a great tour of the Discworld, its geography, magics, and inhabitants, all of which are so fantastically imaginative and amusing that even geography becomes a joy.

This isn't Terry Pratchett's best book but it's full of all the great stuff that gathers together into its peak a few books into the series. It's certainly an excellent book though. Pratchett has an incredibly rare talent for compressing humour into one-liners that are witty, incisive, and yet never feel mean - it's not jokes that you feel are directed at anyone, just mined from the stuff of life.

I had a great time revisiting this book and if you've not tried it - now's the time!

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J.G. Keely says

This series is much beloved of my friends, both here on Goodreads and out in the wilds of meatspace--he's even been referred to as Fantasy's answer to one of my favorite authors: the superlatively funny and insightful Douglas Adams. As such, I was excited to start the series at the beginning, hoping the wit and wisdom would overcome the warts of this early outing. Unfortunately, the jokes drew more groans than guffaws, reminding me of Mark Twain's comments on the book of friend and fellow American treasure Ambrose Bierce:

"There is humor in 'Dod Grile', but for every laugh that is in his book there are five blushes, ten shudders and a vomit. The laugh is too expensive."

Pratchett has none of the wry, oddball musings of Adams, and seems to me to be less the Fantasy version of that author and more the British version of endlessly 'punny' writer Piers Anthony (though thankfully without the unsettling implications of pedophilia). After finding this one unpalatable, a friend suggested I try one of his later books, so I started Moving Pictures, but while it was more competently crafted, I found it no more amusing. I guess you can't trust your friends.

I've since been told to try another of his books--most often *Night Watch* and *Small Gods* are mentioned, but I find it impossible to work up any enthusiasm for another outing with Pratchett--perhaps one day, I'll get there.

My Fantasy Book Suggestions

Kai says

"It is at this point that normal language gives up, and goes and has a drink."

I never really planned to read this until I met someone who loves the Discworld novels so much that I could no longer put them off. Also, this series has so many books that I will probably never be able to finish it, which kept me from reading it in the first place. Apart from the fact that they always seemed a bit too ridiculous to actually be good.

Now, I did catch myself laughing a few times and generally enjoying it much more than I thought I would. The humour ranges from immature to fantastic and makes for a very entertaining read. Apart from that, the stories are fast-paced, imaginative and exciting. It won't take long for me to pick up the sequels, I'm sure.

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Anne says

It had some funny moments, but I really struggled to get through it. In all fairness to the people who suggested I read the Discworld series, this is not one of the ones they said I should start with. I think I mostly had a hard time slogging through all of the world-building and made up words. Fantasy has never been my thing, because I'm not someone who enjoys reading descriptions of the characters surroundings. I'm not giving up on the series, though. I think I'll just go back through my book recommendations and find the ones I was told to start with.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Color of Magic (Discworld #1), Terry Pratchett

The Color of Magic is Terry Pratchett's maiden voyage through the now-legendary land of Discworld. This is where it all begins -- with the tourist Twoflower and his wizard guide, Rincewind.

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David - proud Gleeman in Branwen's adventuring party says

*Reading **The Color of Magic** is akin to eating an entire bowl of ice cream just a little too fast...sure, it may cause your head to hurt at times, but the sweet rewards make it all worth it!*

Filled with ambitious wizards and ruthless assassins, the city of Ankh-Morpork has survived many dangers in the past, but now it faces an even more destructive force...*TOURISM!!!* When a rich but bored outsider named Twoflower decides to explore the city in search for adventure, it soon becomes an adventure for everyone around him, too! Twoflower's well-meaning but careless ways earn him the attention of pirates, dragonriders, and various supernatural entities, all looking to rid Twoflower of his treasure...not to mention his life! Soon failed wizard Rincewind reluctantly becomes Twoflower's guide, and as Twoflower explores more and more of Discworld looking for the adventure of a lifetime, Rincewind tries desperately to make sure his lifetime lasts for more than five minutes!

This was me for about 80% of this book...

Annnnnnd here I am for the other 20%....

What I loved most about this book was definitely the humor. Some authors can only come up with a great laugh-out-loud moment once or twice in a book, but Pratchett is able to pull one off in just about every page! There are oodles of witty dialogue all throughout the novel, as well as some great slapstick moments. In addition, Pratchett gives us some excellent satire, too. I got a big kick out of how familiar some of Twoflower's ideas were, like when he convinces a bar owner to "place a bet" on whether or not the bar will be damaged...Twoflower calls this process "*inn-sewer-ants*"! By having the other characters mock the "outrageous" concepts Twoflower introduces them to, it did a magnificent job painting an amusing picture of some of the absurdities of everyday life. "The Color of Magic" isn't just a humorous book, it actually manages to pull off several different kinds of humor!

Also, I was amazed with the extent of Pratchett's imagination! While some elements of this book are your standard fantasy archetypes, Pratchett really ups the ante by giving us some brilliantly creative concepts as well. With translucent dragons, trolls made out of water, a sentient piece of luggage that manages to display so much personality without ever saying a word, and an upside-down swordfight that has to be seen, err, **read** to be believed, Pratchett never runs out of new ideas to entertain his audience with.

Alas, while I enjoyed this book very much, I did have a couple of issues with it. For one thing, I felt like Pratchett tried to cram way too much into a book that's barely over 200 pages. So many characters and creatures come and go, it quickly becomes difficult to keep track of what's going on! I have some friends who didn't enjoy the "Game of Thrones" book as they found it confusing, but at least George R.R. Martin takes a good amount of time to establish all the characters, whereas this book can sometimes feel like trying to watch a NASCAR race where all the cars are speeding in a different direction! Also, some of Pratchett's ideas were a little too "*out-there*" for me...I knew this was going to be a problem right away, when Pratchett begins the book by revealing that Discworld is a planet that is carried on the backs of four elephants who are all standing on the shell of a giant turtle that is floating through space...

"This is an awful lot to throw at me on page one, Mr. Pratchett!"

Also, while "The Color of Magic" works beautifully as a comedy, I'm afraid the actual story doesn't quite hit the mark. The book is divided into four parts, and each part feels like a separate book. Almost anyone introduced in one section is absent in the other three, so we're left wondering what happened to many different characters. While the events of Rincewind's and Twoflower's journey are fun to watch, there's very little true progression or closure. This storytelling technique was especially baffling in the fourth segment, where Pratchett keeps referring to an adventure that we never got to see, as it occurred inbetween the third and fourth sections. This disjointed method of storytelling prevented the book from becoming anything more than just a comedy of errors, as amusing as those errors may have been.

So, while I felt this book would have been better if it were a bit longer and some of the concepts had been more fleshed out, I still had a lot of fun reading this hysterically funny adventure. I've been told that the first couple of books in the Discworld series pale in comparison to the later ones. Considering how entertaining "The Color of Magic" was, if this truly is one of the weaker entries, I can't wait to read more of the Discworld series!

Jamie says

I'm pretty sure people have told me about Pratchett and his Diskworld series before, usually working in the phrase "He's the Douglas Adams of fantasy" into the description. But the problem was that I always felt that I had had enough of Adams after the third Hithiker's Guide to the Galaxy book, and whenever I scanned Pratchett's section in the bookstore I was immediately put off by not knowing where to start reading among the approximately five hundred thousand Diskworld books. I'm glad I finally took the time to find out that these two books, *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic*, jointly comprise the first tale in the series, and that they were definitely worth reading.

The Diskworld books are essentially satire of the high fantasy genre, or at least that's the foundation upon which everything else is built. This pair of books follows the misadventures of Rincewind, a utterly inept and thoroughly cowardly wizard, and Twoflowers, a clueless traveler who happens to be in possession of both endless optimism and a magical suitcase that's always wandering off and messily devouring people who get in its way. Things go from bad to worse for the two as divine powers both deliver them into and yank them out of all kinds of fantastic perils.

As someone who grew up reading plenty of this kind of thing and playing a lot of Dungeons& Dragons, I'm familiar enough with the genre and trappings that Pratchett lampoons. Yes, there's the Conan parody, there's the Dragonriders of Pern tribute, there's the in-joke about Leiber's Fafhrd and Gray Mouser. But that's easy. The thing that made me almost immediately fall in love with these books is the author's dry wit and his ability to derive humor not only from the absurdity of the story (and believe me, it gets plenty absurd) but also from just good old fashioned turns of phrase, wry commentary, and jokes. The guy just has an amazing ability to stuff five or six jokes into a single sentence, most of them making masterful use of that trusty standby of British humor, irony. It's really smart and really funny, and the fact that it builds on the inherent silliness of the high fantasy genre is just icing.

I should also note how imaginative Pratchett is, which is a useful quality given his subject matter. He bounces his heroes from one (generally horrible and dangerous) situation to another at a frantic pace, and his ability to come up with new material and new situations amazes me. And while many of them are obvious parodies of fantasy staples, just as many seem to be wholly new creations. As one small (and obligatory) example, the Diskworld itself is a flat coin of a world that rides atop four enormous elephants, who themselves ride on the back of a colossal turtle with two continent-sized flippers that it uses to swim slowly through the cold reaches of space.

But at the same time, if I have one complaint about these first two books, it's that they're almost maniacal in their plotting. While it's nice to see Pratchett's considerable imagination and humor on display as we go from situation to situation, the first book reads like an extended doodle with little plot and a whole "gods playing games with mortals" subtext that's entirely dropped in the next book. There's also one Conan the Barbarian parody that's abruptly dropped in favor of another Conan the Barbarian parody who Pratchett apparently liked better. It's not until the latter part of the second book does an overall plot come into play, but honestly I was enjoying myself so much I really didn't mind. Expect to see lots more Discworld books reviewed here in the future.

Lyn says

And so it begins ...

Sir Terry Pratchett's wildly imaginative Discworld series begins with the 1983 publication of *The Color of Magic*.

I have been reading science fiction and fantasy for a long time and somehow I managed to not read any of his works until I came in late to the party. A friend suggested I try one, I'd like it and so I read the fourth in the series, *Mort* and I thought so much that I decided I would climb the hill and enjoy every step.

Begin with a heaping portion of British humor (humour), mix in a share of Douglas Adams, sprinkle liberally with Monty Python, throw in a fantastic amount of fantasy from the Piers Anthony brand of fiction and top with a wink and a nod and you have Terry Pratchett Discworld embarkation. The *Potent Voyager* has set sail and much mirth and irreverence is certainly to follow.

Markus says

This must be the exception that proves the rule. For years I've been adamantly advocating reading series in publication order, whether a coherent story or a set of standalones. In *Discworld*, that simply doesn't seem to be the best solution. Everyone seems to suggest that a new reader should not start with the first book, so this must be partially my fault for doing it anyway.

The Colour of Magic is at best a mediocre introduction to what is supposedly the best humourous fantasy series ever written, by the legendary Terry Pratchett. Granted, the wild descriptions of the cosmology and topography of the Disc are indeed interesting, the writing is good and there are a few funny lines. However, I expected a lot more going on. While the total lack of a coherent plot is understandable in a series based on humour, the lack of humour is really not.

That does not mean I didn't enjoy the book. This rating may be a bit harsh, but it does seem to mean that I found the book to be "okay". I am not discouraged from reading more books in the series, and I both hope and choose to believe that they are of a much higher quality than this first one. For the style is there. It's only the substance that's missing.

That said, the race between two and three stars was pretty much a tie. Being a generally evil person, I opted for the lower option.

I often see Pratchett compared to Douglas Adams, and just as often hailed as "the Douglas Adams of fantasy". And so far, he unfortunately does not come close. You may be a legend, Sir Terry, but it takes a lot more to be a Douglas Adams.

Bradley says

If I hadn't already read the entire series, and if I was judging this book just by its own merits, I'd still be saying that it harnesses the lightning and even finds a way to make it go side to side rather than up and down.

It's really fantastic as a straight fantasy with tons of humorous elements, with a good deal more worldbuilding than all the later books, more obvious and harsher tongue-in-cheek elements, and a great setup for the Great Wizzard Rincewind.

Honestly? I love Rincewind. I love the shard of the Great magical spell lodged in his brain, Death's endless chase for him, the straight adventure he finds himself in, and the sheer fact that HE SURVIVES.

Twoflower is awesome, too, and the chest is one of the greatest unsung heroes of the age, and there is a very good case to be made that this whole novel (and the one following it) is probably the **BEST INSURANCE MAN'S TOURIST GUIDE EVER WRITTEN.** :)

'Nuff said.

Am I sad that Sir Terry is no longer with us? Yeah.

Maria Clara says

Tengo que decir que me ha sorprendido agradablemente; pues no esperaba que fuera a gustarme ni que disfrutara tanto con las locas aventuras de Rincewind.

Lindsey Rey says

I will officially be reading the entire Discworld series!

TL says

A charming and sometimes tedious novel, Rincewind grew on me quickly and I enjoyed watching him get into and out of scrapes along the way. Death's and Fate's frustration with him was hilarious. I kept imagining them as toddlers stomping their feet :-D.

Two Flower I was so so on... sometimes he charmed me and others... eh. His optimism seemed misplaced sometimes, but he had good intentions.

A nice start to the series, plenty of action and some humor :) The scenes with Krull and near the edge of the world were one of my many favorites... I sympathize with Rincewind and the vertigo sensation of looking over the edge *shudders* I'd rather stay on land thanks.

It seemed a lot to cram into one novel, at times my eyes glazed over and I had to re-read a couple passages.

Don't get me wrong, it was all interesting but it could've been spread out more.

An enjoyable ride nonetheless, this world is one I wouldn't mind living in and/or visit from time to time. Hats off to you once again Mr. Pratchett for bringing this to us :)

Read David's excellent review , he captures it wonderfully.

Brad says

Before picking it up, I'd heard that The Colour of Magic was funny. Now that can mean just about anything because, let's face it, comedy is the most subjective of arts.

Funny is a deeply personal thing. The "funny peculiar" and the "funny ha-ha" might not be the same from person to person or even to the same person depending on their mood or their place in life. So knowing something is funny ahead of reading it really doesn't tell me much.

I'd read Terry Pratchett's & Neil Gaiman's Good Omens quite a while ago, so I expected at least a hint of satire and politically conscious wit, but I had no idea which of the authors to blame for the smart laughs in Good Omens, and my recollections really shed no illumination on what was to come. So I read The Colour of Magic with as open a mind as I could and hoped for some laughs.

I didn't laugh much and that surprised me. I smiled an awful lot, though. But I didn't laugh. No out loud snickers; no full-out belly laughs; no snorts; no giggles.

But I did smile.

Pratchett's kooky tale (really four tales to make one) of Rincewind, the one-great-spell, wizarding failure, Twoflower, the in-sewer-ants adjuster/tourist, and his Luggage was smart more often than it was stupid, consciously political, satirically silly, more than willing to take the piss out of Fantasy as a genre, but mostly it was exceedingly absurd. And all of this was what made The Colour of Magic good to very good.

Even so, its audience is necessarily limited. I know why I liked The Colour of Magic, and while I imagine there are other reasons to like the story, I think it is probably a fairly inaccessible tale unless you are a reader who falls into a niche of accessibility. This is not a book that can be widely read or widely liked.

So why did I like it? I liked it because I fall into a niche wherein I was able to access memories of drunken, drug-addled, teenage D&D marathons (which were extremely rare since we preferred our gaming sober), where we gave up being serious and descended into near madness.

Those nights are reflected in everything that happens in The Colour of Magic. Obligatory bar fights of fantastic impossibility, Monty Hall swords and treasures, idiotic last second rescues, gods dicing, heroes thinking with the Dirk in their pants, dimensional slips and deus ex machinas at every turn make The Colour of Magic a collage of gaming stupidity, and it was nice to take a nostalgic trip back to my adolescence. In fact, Pratchett captures exactly the sort of gaming experience that led our halfling priest of Xyice, God of

Mischief, to wish for a foot long penis then fall unconscious from blood loss when he achieved his first erection. So I liked this book...a lot, actually.

But it wasn't the best story I've ever read, and I can't imagine I could sit down and read the entire Discworld cycle without a break. It's fun. It's light. Pratchett writes better than I expected, but I bet there are many folks out there who hate this book. You have my sympathy.

So yes...I was disappointed that I didn't laugh more; I was disappointed that the story wasn't more subtle; I hated the turtle carrying the disc; I wanted The Colour of Magic to be more biting than silly, more critical than absurd, more intelligent than clever. But it was a fun ride that entertained me while I did the dishes, and I couldn't help liking Rincewind, so I will probably go on, and I will likely become a fan of Pratchett's Discworld books...in spite of themselves.

Helen 2.0 says

Terry Pratchett is a genius, as usual. This man can do no wrong. He reminds me a lot of Douglas Adams, my favorite in the realm of satire. Look at this similarity:

"In the beginning the Universe was created. This has made a lot of people very angry and been widely regarded as a bad move." - Douglas Adams, The Restaurant at the End of the Universe

"Disc philosophers agree that the First Men, shortly after their creation, understandably lost their temper." - Terry Pratchett, The Color of Magic

The Color of Magic tells the story of Rincewind, a cowardly fake wizard who happens to carry the most powerful spell in the Discworld in his mind. Rincewind is tasked with protecting Twoflower, a naive but totally loaded insurance agent out on a tour of the world, who has more luck in one day than anyone should rightfully have their whole lives. Joining the travelers is a multi-legged, man-eating, overprotective chest of luggage. The gods then play dice with their lives - literally. Chaos and hilarity ensue.

My favorite character, indisputably the biggest BADASS of the book, was the Luggage. It follows Rincewind across the Disc and protects him from any threat. It also has the uncanny ability to convey emotions (mostly menace) without possessing any facial features. I'm eternally jealous of Twoflower for owning walking luggage - I have to drag my possessions everywhere.

I love Terry Pratchett's ability to make fun of corruption, greed, cowardice, and other evils so common in the world without coming off as bitter or even very critical. He creates characters with many faults but makes them lovable anyway; Rincewind being the big example in this book.

Besides that, Pratchett is insanely skilled at writing simple but funny prose.

Some examples:

"The door flew open, badly damaging the assassin who was standing beside it."

"He drew his sword and, with a smooth overarm throw, completely failed to hit the troll."

"Bel-Shamharoth screamed, a sound that started in the far ultrasonic and finished somewhere in Rincewind's bowels."

I'm attempting a full Discworld series read-through, one book per month. Check back in just over two years to see if I'm done yet xD

