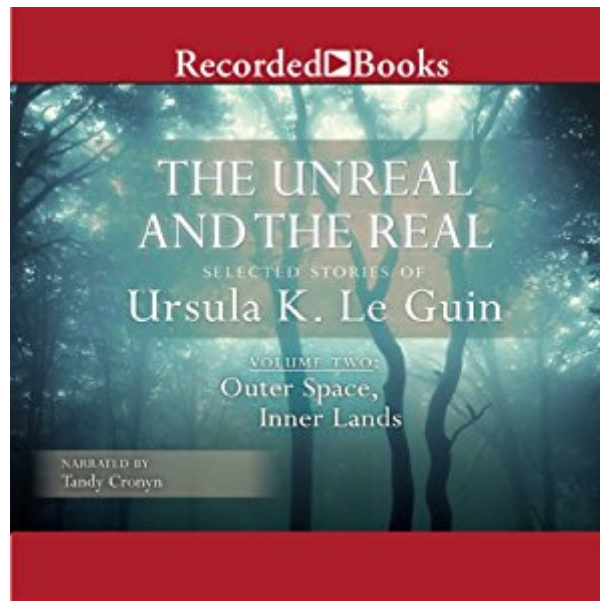


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The Unreal And The Real: Selected Stories Of Ursula K. Le Guin, Volume Two: Outer Space, Inner Lands



Synopsis

Outer Space, Inner Lands includes many of the best known Ursula K. Le Guin nonrealistic stories (such as "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," "Semley' s Necklace," and "She Unnames Them") which have shaped the way many listeners see the world. She gives voice to the voiceless, hope to the outsider, and speaks truth to power - all the time maintaining her independence and sense of humor. Companion volume Where on Earth explores Le Guin's satirical, risky, political and experimental earthbound stories. Both volumes include new introductions by the author.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most every serious fan of science-fiction and fantasy is aware of the impact Le Guin's fiction has had on the genres, but many have not delved further than her classic novels like 'The Dispossessed' or the 'Earthsea' cycle. I would argue that some of her very best, most powerful and imaginative work was in the short form, and these two volumes (sold separately) provide the perfect evidence. The 38 stories found within would serve as an excellent introduction for newcomers to her work, and as a definitive collection of Le Guin's best short fiction for the more serious fan. The first volume, subtitled 'Where on Earth,' collects her more literary and experimental fiction, as opposed to the more science-fiction-based second volume. Many of the stories here blur the line between "serious" literature and science-fiction, as evidenced by the first four stories, all set within the fictional country of Orsina. But while the setting may be fictional, these four stories deal with very real, human issues, such as freedom and what it is to be human. Some of the stories are very moving, like "Buffalo Gals," in which a small child, lost in the desert, finds a new mother-figure in Coyote, the

trickster god. Others are rather strange and surreal, such as "Either, OR," about a small town that's constantly on the move. Every story here is unique and well worth reading, not to mention beautifully written, and I imagine even sf-only readers will find much to love. 'Outer Space, Inner Lands' collects Le Guin's more sf-based works, though only a few would be considered "straight" or "traditional" science-fiction. Le Guin, more often than not, used science-fiction as a launching pad to explore philosophical themes that would otherwise be much more difficult to accomplish effectively.

This is the second volume of *The Real and the Unreal: Selected Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin*. The first book, *Where on Earth*, contains her more *mundane* stories. This book contains stories that are more clearly fantasy or science fiction. Le Guin fans may balk at the distinction; I can only answer that it is the one the author makes in the introduction. This collection serves as both an effective introduction to Le Guin's work and a reminder to longtime readers of what we enjoy about her style. Her best short science fiction reads like ethnography written by a careful observer of alien cultures. They are made convincing by the details, personalities, and author/protagonist reactions included—and sometimes by what is not overtly included but feels present by implication, extension or closure. Four of these stories stand out for me, but please read them all. *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* is perhaps the author's best-known story and deservedly so. It is a heavy-handed morality tale that works as intended even though its intent is crystal clear. It reads a little like it might have been written down by a folklorist who only later realized its worth. *Mazes* is a first contact story told from the point of view of a captured alien. It is persuaded to perform a number of intelligence tests while its human captors attempt to communicate. Frustration ensues. *The Matter of Seggri* is presented as excerpts from various official and personal documents written while a native planetary culture is exposed to the knowledge and values of a spacefaring civilization.

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