

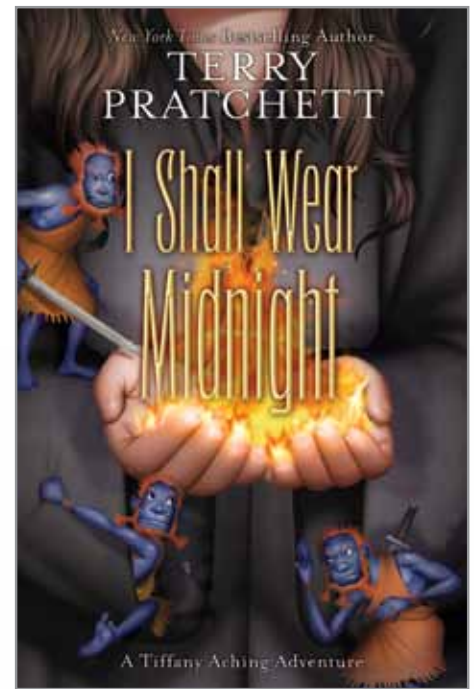
I Shall Wear Midnight

BY TERRY PRATCHETT

DISCUSSION GUIDE

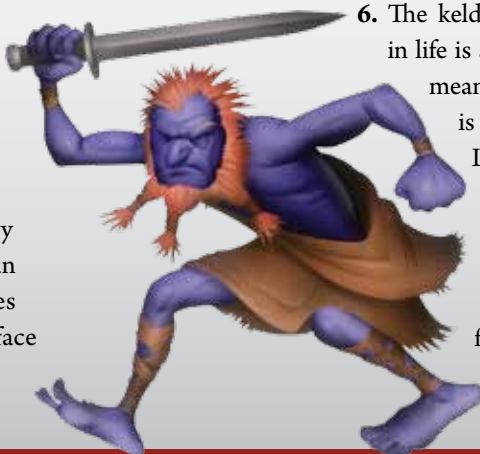
About the Book

Tiffany Aching and the Nac Mac Feegle are back for a fourth and final adventure. As Tiffany grows into her powers as a witch, she facilitates the transfer of power on the Chalk lands from the old Baron (upon his death) to the new one (i.e., her erstwhile flame, Roland). But a new evil is afoot—the Cunning Man, a malevolent ghostly creature—and he threatens the existence of witches everywhere. Tiffany faces him alone without the help of either her sister witches or the Wee Free Men. Oh, crivens!



Discussion Questions

1. Leadership on the Chalk is just as much of an obligation as it is a privilege. The relationships between the Baron and his people (p. 228) and the Duchess and hers (p. 244), for example, are characterized by trust and loyalty. Compare and contrast their leadership styles to Granny Weatherwax's leadership of the witches and the kelda's leadership of the Nac Mac Feegle. What leadership qualities does Tiffany exhibit in her relationships with the people of the Chalk and with the Wee Free Men?
2. After Mr. Petty abuses his pregnant daughter, Tiffany's father warns Tiffany about how much she can—and should—help the village. "People mustn't think you can fix everything, and if you'll take my advice, neither will you. There are some things a whole village has to do" (p. 57). Do people expect too much help from their government? To what degree is the village complicit in the crime that was committed? How could they have prevented the situation before resorting to the vigilante justice of rough music?
3. Mr. Petty denies culpability in the beating of his daughter: "It was the drink what done it!" (p. 23). While Tiffany is not very sympathetic to this excuse, she does acknowledge later that "people aren't just people; they are people surrounded by circumstances" (p. 320). Why is the human race capable of such darkness? And how does this latter view engender compassion in the face of the darker side of human nature?
4. An aphorism, or maxim, is a simple sentence with great (and often self-evident) wisdom. Terry Pratchett effortlessly sprinkles them throughout his narratives, giving them great thematic depth. Consider the following: "Evil begins when you begin to treat people as things" (p. 181); "Knowledge is power, power is energy, energy is matter, matter is mass, and mass changes time and space" (p. 248); and "The reward you get for digging holes is a bigger shovel" (p. 280). Can you spot others?
5. "The past needs to be remembered. If you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going" (p. 184). "And," adds Pratchett in the author's note, "if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong" (p. 351). Compare these statements to George Santayana's famous aphorism "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Do you agree?
6. The kelda reminds Tiffany that finding your true calling in life is a source of happiness. "Ye know full well that the meaning of life is to find your gift. To find your gift is happiness. Never tae find it is misery" (p. 86). Later Tiffany responds to jealousy of her talents as a witch: "Everybody was good at something. The only wicked thing was not finding out what it was in time" (p. 215). Discuss the relationship between the meaning of life, happiness, and finding your calling.



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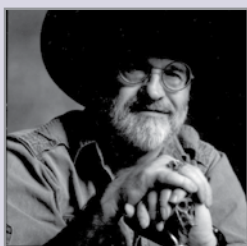
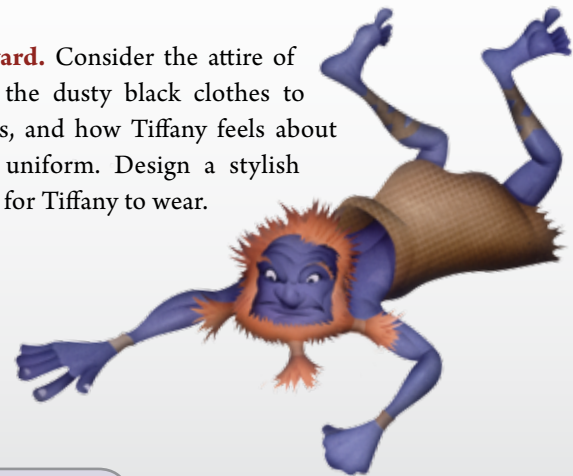
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Discussion Questions *Continued*

- Eskarina Smith counsels Tiffany on overcoming the Cunning Man: “You have to find your own way” (p. 164). *I Shall Wear Midnight* is a coming-of-age story (or *bildungsroman*, in Preston-speak), and many of the changes that take place in Tiffany’s character have to do with her growing into her role as a witch. How does she grow into that role, and what is the particular significance of the title in that respect?
- Eskarina further advises Tiffany, “That’s what I learned at university: to be me, just what I am, and not worry about it. That knowledge is an invisible magical staff, all by itself” (p. 166). By the end of the story, Tiffany petitions the new Baron for a school: “Learning is about finding out who you are, what you are, where you are and what you are standing on and what you are good at and what’s over the horizon and, well, everything” (p. 336). What is the relationship between education and discovering yourself?
- When Tiffany blurts out that she will marry Roland (p. 264), and later when Nanny Ogg describes Preston as “your young man” (p. 298), readers are left with the impression that Tiffany does not know her heart’s desire. Compare and contrast Roland and Preston as potential suitors and discuss how Pratchett resolves the romantic dilemma.
- When Tiffany enumerates the weapons available to her for her upcoming confrontation with the Cunning Man—“Pride, fear, trust. . . . And I have fire” (p. 314)—she considers some atypical qualities. While we usually think of the first two characteristics in negative terms, Tiffany manages to put an ironic spin on them. How does she justify them as weapons, and how does she actually use all of them to defeat the Cunning Man?

Extension Activities

- Mapping Discworld.** Many fantasy books with intricately built worlds include maps to help readers orient themselves. Draw a map for this novel, locating all the important settings of the story. Then label where important events happened along the way.
- Hunting Witch Hunts.** It is the job of the Cunning Man to hunt down witches, a practice that actually happened here in America—most notably during the Salem Witch Trials—and also in medieval Europe. Research these witch hunts, compare and contrast them to the novel, and report your findings in a poster or multimedia presentation.
- Fashion Forward.** Consider the attire of witches, from the dusty black clothes to the pointy hats, and how Tiffany feels about the lackluster uniform. Design a stylish witch costume for Tiffany to wear.



Robin Matthews

Sir Terry Pratchett, the author of over four dozen novels, is one of the world’s bestselling novelists writing in the English language. His books have sold more than 65 million copies worldwide, and he has won a Printz Honor, the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award*, the *LA Times Book Prize* for YA Literature, and Britain’s Carnegie Medal. He lives in England. www.terrypratchettbooks.com

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Discussion guide created by Jonathan Hunt, library media teacher, Modesto, California. 10/10

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