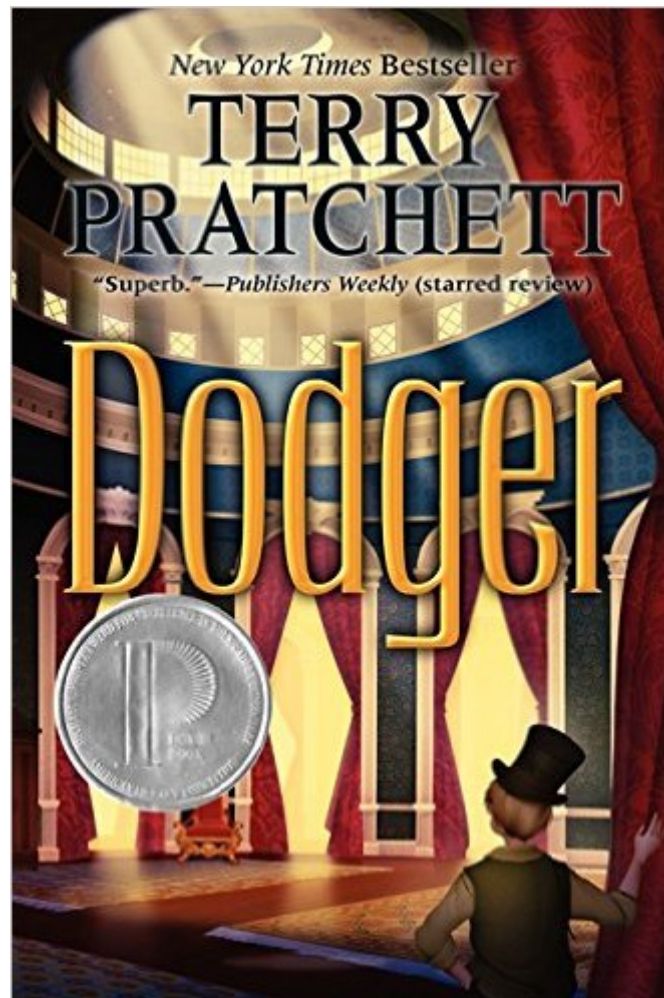


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Dodger



Synopsis

Beloved and bestselling author Sir Terry Pratchett's *Dodger*, a Printz Honor Book, combines high comedy with deep wisdom in a tale of one remarkable boy's rise in a fantasy-infused Victorian London. Seventeen-year-old Dodger is content as a sewer scavenger. But he enters a new world when he rescues a young girl from a beating, and her fate impacts some of the most powerful people in England. From Dodger's encounter with the mad barber Sweeney Todd, to his meetings with the great writer Charles Dickens and the calculating politician Benjamin Disraeli, history and fantasy intertwine in a breathtaking account of adventure and mystery.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

C'mon, everybody, be thankful that Sir Terry is alive, much less producing books. We lost Robert Jordan a couple of years ago and now we must settle for a 'ghost' writer.'Not disappointed' a reviewer wrote. So sad. 'Damned by faint praise' to quote somebody. It's a feel-good book and no mistake. Just sit back and enjoy *Dodger* et al. If you are expecting the kind of genius level creativity he exhibited in his earlier books, well, who of that age is capable of that? Twain wasn't. I have all of his books, most them read more than twice and I will come back to this one someday, though I am 70 and it may have to be soon. I go to libraries, pick up a few books and read maybe 50 pages before sighing and getting some more. At the very least, Pratchett is reliable, funny, satiric, full of puck and good humor and understands people as well as any writer since.....well, nearly all of them. If I die while reading or re-reading one of his, I'll die happy. My favorite author of all time.

Set in the Victorian era, *Dodger* is the story of a seventeen-year-old street urchin, who earns his living by retrieving items in the sewers of London. I am a huge fan of the Discworld books, and everytime Terry Pratchett releases a non-Discworld book I get nervous. Some of his non-Discworld books I love, while others I feel are ordinary. For the most part I loved *Dodger*. *Dodger* himself is awesome. He's the little guy that you can't help rooting for. Especially as he is determined to save the girl and win her heart. There are some great characters (both real and fictional) including Sweeney Todd, Robert Peel and Charlie Dickens. I listened to the audio, as read by Stephen Briggs, and the audio was excellent. The voices as read by Briggs were spot on, and I found myself clinging to every word. My only negative is I felt like the end dragged a bit. While the ending could've been a bit better, there were plenty of zany, awesome moments in the story and I will likely listen to this one again.

I wanted to write something pithy; commentary that confirmed to all readers that I have been a committed fan of Mr Pratchett for a very long time now. But I've just done that - albeit sans pith. So I'll just call it as I found it: It's a 'nice' read. Not so much a 'whodunnit' as a 'come along for the ride and let's see what happens in this new world of Mr Pratchett's devising.' Not laugh out loud funny, but certainly worthy of the occasional smile. The historical liberties taken are both gentle and generally useful. I've read many of Mr Pratchett's books time and time again. Would I re-read this one? Most likely not... but I'm happy enough to have read it the once.

Did you ever wonder what *Ankh Morpork* was based on? Vimes? Vetinari? The answers are all found in Dicken's England, and this book is an enjoyable and creative romp through the original source. Allowing Pratchett to include realistic details that we would scoff at if he put them in a fantasy book. Did you not understand the previous paragraph at all? Then maybe you shouldn't read this book. As a stand alone book it is somewhat forced. It is a Historical Romance, with the emphasis on Romance. I don't mean there are lots of kissing scenes, I mean that this happens in a fantasy world based on Dicken's England. The things that happen to the hero are not credible, at least as far as my understanding of history goes. Pratchett has to take an extraordinary character and then force him through a bunch of incredible adventures until at the end he catches the Queen's eye. How often did that happen to street urchins in Dicken's England? Never? That would be my guess. I believe that the main character is supposed to be the inspiration for the artful *Dodger* from *Oliver Twist*. And he is except that all the evil has been sucked out of him. Leaving him a colorful and unabashedly admirable character. Exciting and interesting to follow, but really not believable. And if

you're wondering at my guesses for where Ankh Morpork, Vimes, and Vetinari came from they are (respectfully) Dicken's England, Robert Peel, and Disraeli. But those are just guesses.

As a long time Pratchett fan, I have been left feeling bemused by this book. For many fans, Pratchett's name on the cover leads to a lot of expectations, and in this book he departs in some respects away from those expectations. As the setting is Victorian era London, the carefully constructed Discworld universe is not here. And that's okay, because the great joy of the Discworld books is to highlight some of our 'real' worlds amusing and nonsensical foibles. On the face of it, this new location seems perfectly suited, as though Pratchett is breaking down the wall of Ankh-Morpork and saying, 'Look it was London all along!' And whether that was important or irrelevant, or even un-noticed, without that teeming world this book is a bit...dry. The characters are all the familiar Pratchett archetypes, the loveable rouge, the shadowy gentry, pulling strings and so on. But it never picks up speed. I was constantly feeling like I'd read this one before, and then the references to London, Spain and so on would somehow remind me that this was a story set in our world. It is a testament to Pratchett's skills that a series of books with wizards, trolls, werewolves and the like can utterly suspend my disbelief. And it's worrying that a book filled with real places, real life figures (In the form of Dickens) and context that is familiar to me can leave me not immersed, but slightly bored. I had the feeling this book was mugging for the cameras, name dropping, trying to be playful, but ending up coming across like a species of fan-fiction, written by the kind of author who finds fantasy scenarios a bit silly, and unworthy of 'real' authors. That sounds a bit cruel, and I should say that this is a solid book, and a must for Pratchett obsessives, but the vital spark is missing. If you're new to Pratchett, this might not be the place to start though.

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