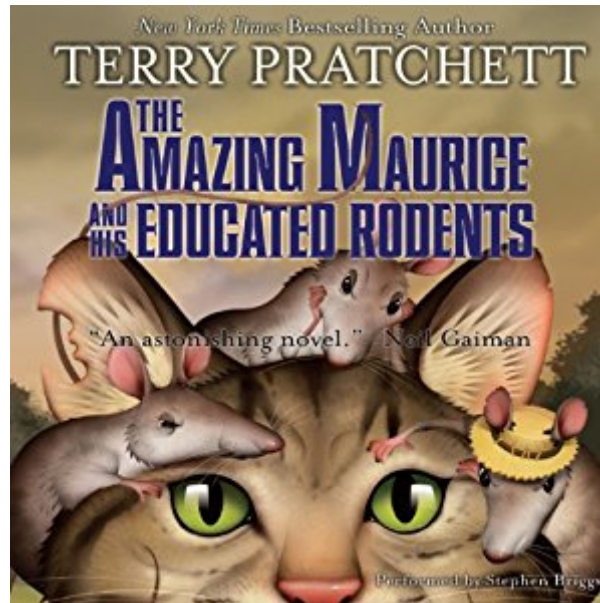


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The Amazing Maurice And His Educated Rodents



Synopsis

One rat, popping up here and there, squeaking loudly, and taking a bath in the cream, could be a plague all by himself. After a few days of this, it was amazing how glad people were to see the kid with his magical rat pipe. And they were amazing when the rats followed him out of town. They'd have been really amazed if they'd ever found out that the rats and the piper met up with a cat somewhere outside of town and solemnly counted out the money. The Amazing Maurice runs the perfect Pied Piper scam. This streetwise alley cat knows the value of cold, hard cash and can talk his way into and out of anything. But when Maurice and his cohorts decide to con the town of Bad Blintz, it will take more than fast talking to survive the danger that awaits. For this is a town where food is scarce and rats are hated, where cellars are lined with deadly traps, and where a terrifying evil lurks beneath the hunger-stricken streets...Set in Terry Pratchett's widely popular Discworld, this masterfully crafted, gripping listen is both compelling and funny. When one of the world's most acclaimed fantasy writers turns a classic fairy tale on its head, no one will ever look at the Pied Piper or rats the same way again!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Terry Pratchett's Discworld series has topped British bestseller lists for years and has a sizable fanbase in the United States as well. Now with "The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents" Pratchett expands Discworld from adult fantasy to young adult fantasy as well. A boy, a cat, and a troupe of rats arrive at the town of Bad Blintz. But while Keith is normal, feline Maurice and his "educated rodents" are not -- they speak, think, and are self-aware (they ate wizards' garbage). And

they have a nice racket going, where the rats pretend to infest a town (they gnaw things and "widdle" on the flour), and Keith poses as a piper to lead them away. But something is wrong with Bad Blintz -- there are no native rats, yet the rat-catchers claim that there's an outright plague of them, and are producing rat-tails to prove it. (They bear a remarkable resemblance to shoelaces) With the help of a too-imaginative-for-her-own good girl, Malicia, Keith and Maurice begin to investigate why all the rats are gone, and what the rat-catchers are up to. But when they discover the conspiracy, Maurice starts hearing the voice of something down in the sewers -- something evil, something powerful, something that can command hundreds of rats... So help me, I'm an idiot where funny titles are concerned, and "Amazing Maurice" is further proof that they often c. Much as he gave a new spin to MacBeth in "Wyrd Sisters," here he gives a new spin to the "Pied Piper" legend, with some interesting philosophy and his trademarked humor as well. Does the idea of talking animals and preteens make you cringe? Don't -- Pratchett handles it with rare style. There's plenty of humor in this book, from the names of the rats (Dangerous Beans, Additives, Big Savings, Toxie) to Sardines, the tap-dancing rat with a hat to the incident with the laxatives. His dialogue is still brilliant. ("Think of my dear wife and my four lovely children who'll be without their daddy!" "You're not married. You don't have any children!" "I might want some day!") But Pratchett doesn't forget the deeper currents either -- the sense of evil he builds up is very genuine, and Spider is one of the most unique fantasy villains he's created. Also good is the attitude of the Changed rats: they cherish their greater intelligence, fear their instincts, and gradually we see them overcome some of those ratty instincts (rather than eating one of their dead, they bury him like humans do). Keith is a nice character, seeming dim but surprisingly intelligent; Malicia is a pain in the butt, and only seems to gain any brains near the end. Maurice is the character that Pratchett does best -- he seems, initially, to have no good characteristics, but he's a good person underneath. (With a dirty little secret involving one of the rats) The Educated Rodents are all given individual personalities that Pratchett juggles very well. And Dangerous Beans, a little blind rat, has one of the best scenes in which he confronts the mysterious Spider. "The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents" isn't actually that different from Pratchett's adult fantasies, and older fans of that series will enjoy this one just as much as the kids. Witty, thought-provoking, entertaining.

It's a Discworld tale aimed at younger readers (ages 9-12) but I don't care. It's a DISCWORLD novel, people! Besides, if kids can enjoy the "regular" Discworld books, why can't an adult enjoy this one? Terry Pratchett (TP) does not patronise his target audience in this novel. The storyline tackles heavy issues but done in such a way that it won't turn off the younger mindset. Such is TP's

creativity that he's able to tell a tale for his younger fans without appearing to be a doddering old man preaching to the kiddies. In fact, his fans of all ages will laugh themselves silly at the ever present humour, though the young 'uns will enjoy it more as the references are more recognisable to them. The regular Discworld characters do not make an appearance (Death has a cameo, though) but again that does not affect the story for veteran Disc fans...although events that happened in other Disc books are hinted at, which is nice. Besides, this is an "Amazing Maurice" novel, so let the cat and his rats shine. TP has parodied Shakespeare's plays, Hollywood, politics, murder mysteries and err...Australia in his previous works and this time it's the turn of the Brothers Grimm 'Pied Piper' fairy tale. Maurice the cat runs a very profitable scam involving the rodents and a naive kid who can play a pipe but this being a Discworld book, things soon go pear-shaped real quick. There is evil about and it does not like cats. All in all, TP has once again created lovable characters to populate the Discworld and join the ranks of fan favourites like DEATH, the Patrician, Granny Weatherwax, Commander Vimes and the Librarian (oook!). I hope there will be other books featuring Maurice and/or the rats in either the regular Discworld books or this "Young Readers" set. My only criticism is the cover. Why oh why do the Discworld novels published in the US cant have great cover art like its UK counterpart??? This novel suffers the same fate as the regular Disc novels published in the US -- boring covers. Go to .co.uk to see what I mean.

A friend gave me this book for my birthday, explaining that it was a book about rats. Was I ever surprised when I opened the cover and started reading. It is not just about rats. Pratchett has done his work. I believe him when he says that he read loads about rats before beginning this. But not only the rat part is accurate. When he describes rat writing (pictograms, could be hieroglyphic-like), it parallels the history of the development of human writing. The rats in this story provide a kind of microcosm of how human society might have developed; their dreams of utopia do not come from out of the blue. The rats have their version of a holy book, a keeper of the flame, and of course their characters are all very different and sometimes conflict. Baseness, greed, and corruption all figure in the story, and the rats need to discover how to deal with this new threat called EVIL (as the book's back cover will also tell you). Although the mentally-mutated (smart) rats naturally figure prominently in the story along with a mentally-mutated cat (Maurice), I think that it also works as an allegory. You can read this story either for face value or more deeply. In the latter way, I think that Terry Pratchett critiques current society. It's funny that reading about rats would make one question humanity, but that's what happened to me! In a way this book is about having dreams and trying to fulfill them, and getting disillusioned along the way but not giving up. However, it has no morality

overtones and despite its seriousness, it is also pretty funny (take the tap-dancing rat named Sardines, for instance). The story ends on a happy note too but it isn't overly saccharine. In a way, it's like pop philosophy and a good story rolled into one. I was also able to read this story without knowing anything at all about Discworld.

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