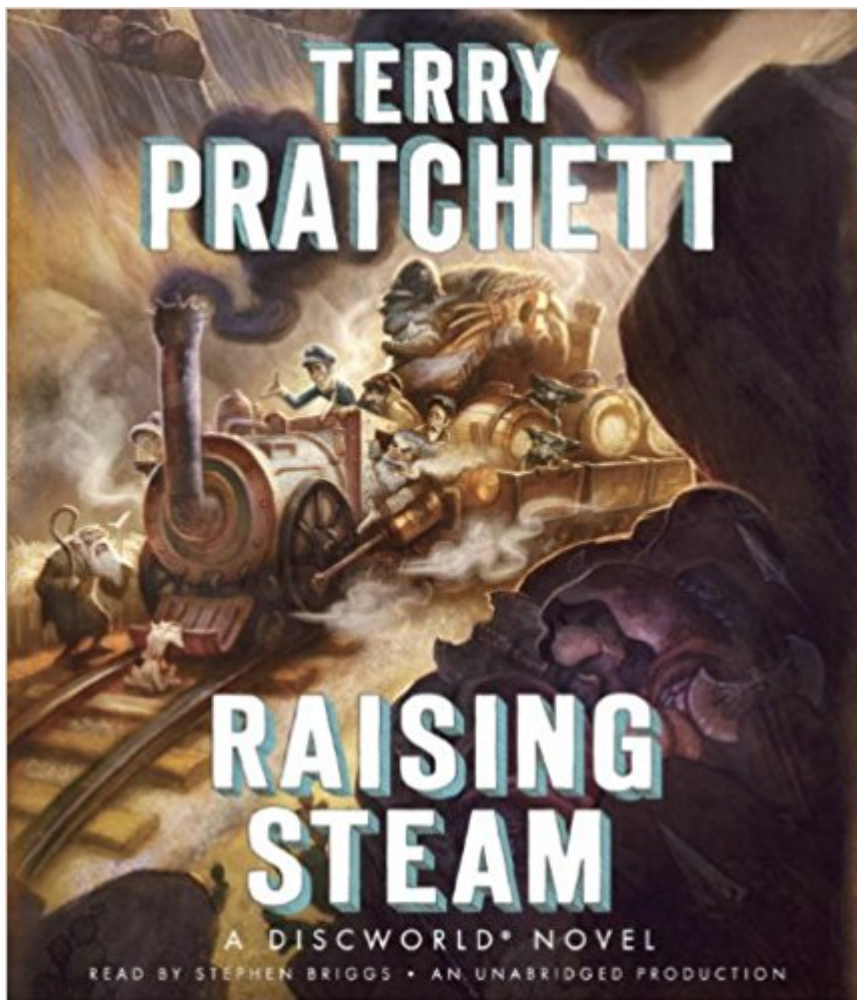


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Raising Steam (Discworld)



Synopsis

The new Discworld novel, the 40th in the series, sees the Disc's first train come steaming into town. Change is afoot in Ankh-Morpork. Discworld's first steam engine has arrived, and once again Moist von Lipwig finds himself with a new and challenging job.

Book Information

Series: Discworld

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Customer Reviews

In 2007, just years before he was granted a knighthood for services to literature, Terry Pratchett announced he had been diagnosed with a rare form of early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Although his illness has limited his ability to use a keyboard, it hasn't stopped him from using dictating software to create yet another installment, number 39, in his internationally popular Discworld series. Here the invention of a steam-powered locomotive by an ingenious young artificer named Dick Simnel creates a stir among the citizens of Discworld's prominent metropolis, Ankh-Morpork, as well as disrupting the affairs of assorted dwarfs, trolls, and goblins in the surrounding countryside. To keep Simnel's invention properly reigned in, Lord Vetinari dispatches Moist von Lipwig, his trusted minister of almost everything, including the Royal Bank, to fund and supervise the construction of a railway. Leavened with Pratchett's usual puns, philosophical quips, and Discworld in-jokes, the story offers an amusing allegory of Earthly technology's many seductions and give series fans at least one more visit with their favorite characters. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: A 200,000 initial print run, extensive advertising

and media appearances, and frenzied online and social media coverage will carry forward the latest in Pratchett's mega-selling series (more than 80 million copies sold). --Carl Hays --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Consistently funny, wise and clever. . . . Rewarding to both longtime readers and novices, filled with characters who leap off the page and metaphors that make you laugh out loud. . . .

Pratchett's appeal isn't just his roller-coaster plots but the depth of his ideas.

•Sam Thielman, Newsday "Salted among all the treacle miners and nascent trainspotters are some serious ideas about technology and the irrevocable changes it brings. . . . While exploring questions about the unintended consequences of technology, Pratchett also blasts fundamentalists who resist all progress. But mostly he seems to be having fun with words in the very British strain of absurdist humor that he has made his own. And 40 books in, why not?"

•Sara Sklaroff, The Washington Post "A delightful fantasy send-up of politics, economics and finance, as the Discworld gets a railway and complications ensue. . . . A lovely homage to the courage at the core of technological advance. . . .

Pratchett melds politics, finance and the occasional dark turn with his fantasy and humor, and as ever his footnotes are not to be missed. . . . How many writers are more fun to spend time with?"

•Ken Armstrong, The Seattle Times "A spectacular novel, and a gift from a beloved writer to his millions of fans. . . . A tremendous synthesis of everything that makes Pratchett one of the world's most delightful writers."

•Cory Doctorow, Boing Boing "What began with a farcical satire of pseudomedieval fantasy has become a Dickensian mirror of contemporary western society.

•Raising Steam is the latest transformation of a remarkable fictional world that has evolved and grown with its creator and it shows how, in the way of many things invested with devotion on the Disc itself, the Discworld has taken on a life of its

own.

•Karin L. Kross, Tor.com "From the first, the novels demonstrated Pratchett's eye for telling detail and the absurdities of the human condition. . . . He remains one of the most consistently funny writers around; a master of the stealth simile, the time-delay pun and the deflationary three-part list. . . . I could tell which of my fellow tube passengers had downloaded it to their e-readers by the bouts of spontaneous laughter."

•Ben Aaronovitch, The Guardian "Terry Pratchett's creation is still going strong after 30 years. . . . Most aficionados, however, will be on the look-out for in-jokes and references from previous novels of which there is no shortage.

Discworld's success, like that of Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster stories, has never been driven by the plots. . . . It is at the level of the sentence that Pratchett wins his fans.

• Andrew McKie, *The Times* (London) "A brash new invention brings social upheaval, deadly intrigues, and plenty of wry humor to the 40th installment of Pratchett's best-selling Discworld fantasy series. . . . As always, Pratchett's unforgettable characters and lively story mirror the best, the worst, and the oddest bits of our own world, entertaining readers while skewering social and political foibles in a melting pot of humanity, dwarfs, trolls, goblins, vampires, and a werewolf or two.

• Publishers Weekly (starred review) "Brimming with Pratchett's trademark wit, a yarn with a serious point made with style and elegance.

• Kirkus Reviews "Leavened with Pratchett's usual puns, philosophical quips, and Discworld in-jokes, the story offers an amusing allegory of Earthly technology's many seductions.

• Booklist "Praise for Terry Pratchett "Terry Pratchett may still be pegged as a comic novelist, but . . . he's a lot more. In his range of invented characters, his adroit storytelling, and his clear-eyed acceptance of humankind's foibles, he reminds me of no one in English literature as much as Geoffrey Chaucer. No kidding.

• Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post Book World* "Given his prolificacy and breezy style, it's easy to underestimate Pratchett. . . . He's far more than a talented jokesmith, though. His books are almost always better than they have to be.

• Michael Berry, *San Francisco Chronicle* "Nonstop wit. . . . Pratchett is a master of juggling multiple plotlines and multiplying punchlines.

• Ken Barnes, *USA Today*

Like many, I was looking forward to another Discworld novel by Pratchett. *Raising Steam* is a sad disappointment. Missing are Pratchett's extravagant wordplay, subtle and non-so-subtle wit, and above all the shimmering allusive intelligence that makes his earlier work such a joy. The writing is downright clunky; the characters appear to have lost their personalities; the story has no surprises. Pratchett has been diagnosed with posterior cortical atrophy, which itself is horrifying. [There was a hyperlink here to a Mail Online story but I edited it out.] The fact that he can still cobble together a story is a tribute to his spirit. I just wish the cobbled-together tale had a little more of that old Pratchett soul.

Michael Smith

Trying to write this review was difficult as it took a while to figure out how to best approach the criticism. It's well-established that Pratchett is suffering from Alzheimer's and as a consequence the caliber of his writing has noticeably diminished. *Raising Steam* is no exception. It simply does not have the wit, charm or humor of Pratchett's earlier Discworld book (the last "real" Pratchett book was probably *Unseen Academicals*). Those who claim that Pratchett's back on form, well, go and reread *Soul Music* or *Hogfather* or *The Truth*. They're two different writers now. But I can't really fault Pratchett for the decline in his writing standards due to his health, nor is it fair at all. In fact I'd even say that it's impressive he's still able to put out a fairly decent story. So I gave the book three stars. But I will comment on the following: Goblins: I am not a fan of the goblins. I found them annoying little characters who add little to the story other than their cumbersomely long names. When Pratchett introduced the other sapient creatures of the Discworld - dwarves, vampires, trolls and the living dead, he introduced them with all their cliches and stereotypes and thoroughly poked holes through all of them and still gave them their due flaws, which made these characters so real to the point that I almost expected to run into a dwarf or troll when I stepped outside after reading a Pratchett novel. But the goblins have been given a hands-off treatment in a fairly politically correct manner that makes it difficult to warm up to them. Compared to the trolls and dwarves of earlier books, the goblins remain limited two dimensional characters that add little to the story. The internal dwarf struggle is clearly an allegory for the tug of war between liberal and conservative Islamic factions. While Pratchett did have conservative "dark" dwarves in previous books, the tensions exists *Raising Steam* to an extent it never did before. I'm not opposed to this development among the dwarves for the purpose of the story but it was still too blatantly similar to fundamentalist Islam. In previous books that involved the deep downers or conservative dwarves such as *The 5th Elephant* we at least did have an understanding for why the conservative dwarves were conservative and their desire to preserve elements of dwarfdom in the face of a changing world, whereas in this book all the grags/conservative leaders were just bloody minded jerks. Part of what made Pratchett's earlier novels so much fun to read was that everyone was deeply flawed. No one was perfect. The "heroes" were really anti-heroes and Pratchett spent much of his writing career making fun and even arguing against the concept of heroes, and *Raising Steam* ultimately fails as a Discworld novel because suddenly we have heroes, and not just heroes but too many of them. The goblins are heroes. Moist is a hero. Rhys Rhysson is a hero. Everyone's a hero except the d*mn grags. Consequently the book felt flat and boring to me, it became the kind of story that Pratchett would have ruthlessly torn to pieces and mocked to death. But I do want to finish my review by referring back to the first paragraph of this review and emphasize that I'm aware that Pratchett has

Alzheimer's and as such it's not fair to be making comparisons to books written in his prime. But what I've written may be of use to people who've just been introduced to Pratchett or who haven't read his earlier books and are wondering what the fuss is all about. *Raising Steam* isn't bad as books go, but it's not the Discworld or Pratchett of old and to understand what hooked us onto the Discworld you need to refer to the earlier books.

A very hard read. Pratchett's humor is missing here and old favorites no longer have the same voices they once did. The book reads more like a bad retelling of a diary of events rather than a story. I hesitate to say the spark that made Discworld is gone but given Pratchett's condition it may very well be the case. Though I found it hard to read I did finish it eventually. Partially because at its core *Raising Steam* reads like a protracted goodbye with forced endings. So goodbye.

A young man invents the steam engine and the train and railroad soon follow. Lord Vetinari feels the winds of change blowing and puts Moist von Lipwig in charge of the burgeoning railway industry. But not everyone likes the idea of progress... Here we are, the 40th Discworld book. Even after 40 books, I forget how clever Terry Pratchett is the time between volumes. I wasn't sold on this at first. The gag subplot felt disjointed and it seemed like old Pratch might have been going off the rails. Then the rhythm caught and soon it was full steam ahead. Moist and Vetinari were in fine form. I was also pleased to see Vimes, Harry King, Lao-Tze, Mustrum Ridcully, and other old favorites make appearances. The fascination with the Iron Girders and the rest of the trains was completely understandable since I'm part of the large segment of the male population that is oddly fascinated with trains. The goblins acclimating to life in Ankh-Morpork was another nice touch. The usual Discworld social commentary is present, as is the usual making me grin like a donkey eating an apple. I even enjoyed the dwarfish subplot as I drew near the end, although it still seemed a little off. It's not the best Discworld book out there but even on his worst day, Terry Pratchett always manages to keep me entertained. Four out of five stars.

While there are allusions to violence (an assassins guild, bad guys arrested, sometimes people die) and sex (a guild of ladies of negotiable affection, light references to adult behaviors), Terry handles them in a way that would make these books appropriate for even pre-teens. It has less double entendres than your basic Disney movie. Also, they have less "descriptive information" about sex or violence than your basic health or gym class. Terry writes his books in a way that will make you laugh (and think!) I would not call the Discworld novels "fantasy" in

so much as I would refer to them as satirical intellectual comedy.

Last and worst. What a shame it had to end this way. I love the Discworld series, the humour, the intelligent insights, the parodies, etc but this book felt forced. A real disappointment.

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