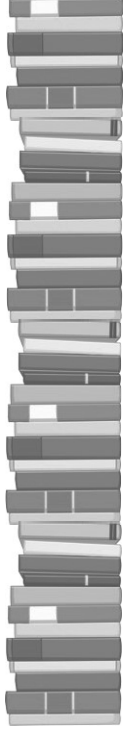


Terry Pratchett Reading Comprehension



Who Was Terry Pratchett?

Terry Pratchett was a British fantasy author who died in 2015. The creator of the 'Discworld' series, he was known for his flamboyant imagination and eccentric attire, which included a black Fedora hat. He was also a dedicated campaigner for greater awareness of dementia and an advocate of assisted suicide.



"The truth may be out there, but the lies are inside your head."

Early Life

Pratchett was born in Beaconsfield in Buckinghamshire on 28th April, 1948. He grew up in a house which had no running water or electricity, but he had very positive memories of his childhood, saying that he spent most of it playing with neighbouring children in local fields and woods. An only child, he was a member of a local radio club with his father and he also enjoyed astronomy. While at school, he wrote stories for the school magazine – one of these, titled 'Business Rivals', was later published under the title 'The Hades Business', earning him £14. He used this money to buy himself a typewriter.

"Some of my teachers could easily have been replaced by a cheeseburger."

While studying for his A-levels in 1965, Terry became aware of a job which was available at the local newspaper, The Bucks Free Press. After talking it over with his parents, he decided to take the plunge and left school for a career in journalism. However, he didn't leave academia behind completely: while working as a reporter,

he studied for his journalism qualification and also got an A-level in English.

At the newspaper, Terry wrote children's stories under the pseudonym Uncle Jim, creating many characters who would reappear in his later work. His big break into writing fiction came when he was sent by the paper to interview the publisher, Peter Bander van Duren. During the interview, Pratchett mentioned a manuscript he had been working on and the publisher, together with his partner Colin Smythe, decided to publish it. In 1971, Pratchett's first novel, 'The Carpet People', was launched in the carpet department of Heal's Department Store on Tottenham Court Road in London. It included 30 illustrations by the author himself – some of them hand-coloured. The novel was not widely reviewed, but those who did read it were very impressed, with one reviewer calling it 'a new dimension in imagination.'

Pratchett continued to work as a journalist by day and write novels by night. His next two works belonged to the science fiction genre and were titled 'The Dark Side of the Sun' (1976) and 'Strata' (1981).



While his career was burgeoning, Pratchett's family life was also developing. He married his wife, Lyn Purves, in 1968, and the couple had their first and only daughter, Rhianna, in 1976. They lived first in a cottage in Somerset, before moving to a house just outside Salisbury in 1993. Pratchett affectionately called this home a 'Domesday Manorette'.

The Discworld Series

In 1983, Pratchett published 'The Colour of Magic', a collection of short stories about the Discworld – a flat world which is carried by four elephants standing on the back of a giant turtle. The book marked the beginning of a series of 41 Discworld books, which would be translated into 37 languages and sell millions of copies.

"Stories of imagination tend to upset those without one."

In 1986, the third Discworld novel, 'Equal Rites', was serialised for BBC Radio Four's 'Woman's Hour', and became the most successful book they



The Discworld novels tend to be gently humorous and also have a number of stylistic quirks. Pratchett was a keen user of footnotes, and these occur frequently as asides to the main action of the novel in which they appear. He also dispensed with inverted commas for speech when writing his recurring character, Death, who communicates telepathically with other characters in capital letters. He eschewed chapters wherever possible, saying that he did not understand the point of them – although some of his works did succumb to pressures from editors and were put into chapter form.

"It's not worth doing something unless someone, somewhere, would much rather you weren't doing it."

The Discworld series became Pratchett's most famous and enduring creation. As well as the novels, he wrote and collaborated on a number of associated publications including a Discworld map, a Discworld recipe book, a Discworld almanac and a Discworld encyclopaedia.

had ever broadcast. In 1987, the publication of the fourth Discworld novel, 'Mort', meant that Pratchett could give up his day job (he was now working as a Press Officer for a nuclear energy company) and make a living from writing full-time.



Music

Pratchett's Discworld series inspired musical creations, including an album released in 1994, titled 'Songs from the Discworld'. This included 14 songs and instrumentals written by Dave Greenslade with collaboration from Pratchett.

Pratchett's favourite band was the folk group Steeleye Span. They played in a concert to mark his 60th birthday, and he worked with them on an album called 'Wintersmith', inspired by the Discworld novel of the same name. Pratchett's voice can be heard on the record, which was extremely well-received by critics when it was released in 2013.

Growing Success

In addition to his Discworld books, Pratchett also wrote a trilogy of books for children: 'Truckers', 'Diggers' and 'Wings', known collectively as 'The Nome Trilogy'. He also collaborated with other writers; perhaps the most famous of these collaborations is 'Good Omens', a novel about the birth of the son of Satan, which he wrote with Neil Gaiman (author of 'Stardust', 'Coraline' and 'The Graveyard Book' amongst others).

Orangutans

In 1994, Pratchett took a film crew to Borneo and filmed 'Terry Pratchett's Jungle Quest', a programme about the orangutan in its native habitat. He was a trustee of the Orangutan Foundation and a fervent campaigner for the endangered species. Two decades after making the documentary, he returned to Borneo to make 'Terry Pratchett Facing Extinction', where he talked about the fate of the red ape, as well as his own battle with Alzheimer's.

Pratchett's interest in orangutans was prompted by a character in his Discworld novels: the character of The Librarian is transformed into an orangutan and has a 'face like a surprised coconut.'

In 1996, The Times declared Pratchett the best-selling author in the UK, and in 1998 he was awarded an OBE by the Queen. This was followed by a knighthood for services to literature in 2009, making him Sir Terry Pratchett. Pratchett held many honorary doctorates and won countless prizes for his fiction; his most coveted was the Carnegie Medal for 'The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents' in 2002.



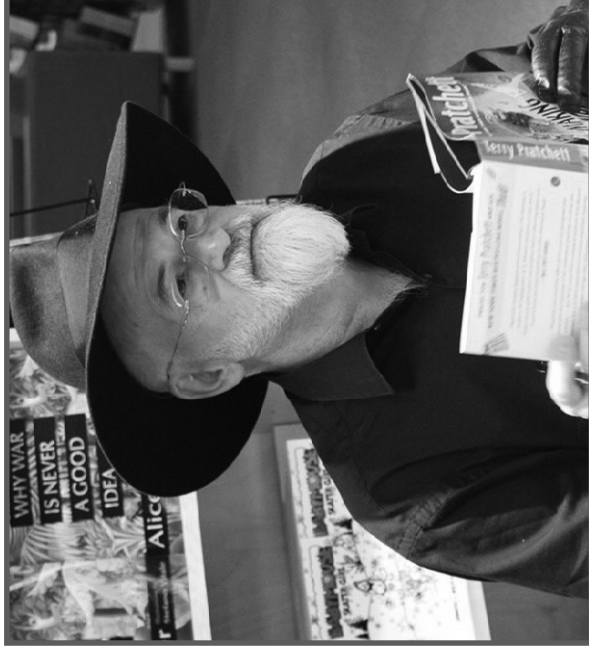


Alzheimer's

In 2007, Pratchett suffered what he thought was a small stroke, which led to a diagnosis of Posterior Cortical Atrophy (PCA), a rare form of Alzheimer's. Deciding to announce the news himself, rather than waiting for it to be leaked to the press, he released a statement titled 'An Embarrassment', where he explained his condition and declared 'I am not dead'. His diagnosis led him to campaign tirelessly for greater understanding of Alzheimer's and he made large donations to fund research into the condition. He promised to 'scream and harangue' to make people aware of the devastating consequences of dementia. Part of his efforts to increase the profile of the disease included a two-part documentary for the BBC, titled 'Living with Alzheimer's', where he candidly discussed its effect on his life.

**"Time is a drug.
Too much of it kills you."**

In 2009, he also became a campaigner for assisted suicide; he wrote a lecture for the BBC, titled 'Shaking Hands with Death', which had to be read by his friend, the actor Sir Tony Robinson,



Despite the progress of PCA, Pratchett continued to write extensively, dictating to an assistant or using voice recognition software as his disease progressed. In 2015 he finally died, aged 66, at home, surrounded by his family and with his cat on the bed beside him. His final tweet read:

'AT LAST, SIR TERRY, WE MUST WALK TOGETHER.
Terry took Death's arm and followed him through the doors and on to the black desert under the endless night. The End.'

Pratchett in Numbers

17 age he left school.

37 number of languages his novels have been translated into.

41 number of Discworld novels

66 age when he died

70 number of novels written.

85,000,000 number of books sold.

because Alzheimer's had affected Pratchett's ability to read. He also introduced a 2011 BAFTA Award-winning documentary, 'Choosing to Die', in which he advocated allowing people with terminal illnesses the right to commit suicide. The controversial programme included film of the final moments of an MS sufferer who had journeyed to Switzerland to end his life in a euthanasia clinic. Pratchett explained his views on the issue, admitting 'I know the time will come when words will fail me. Then, I don't want to go on living.'