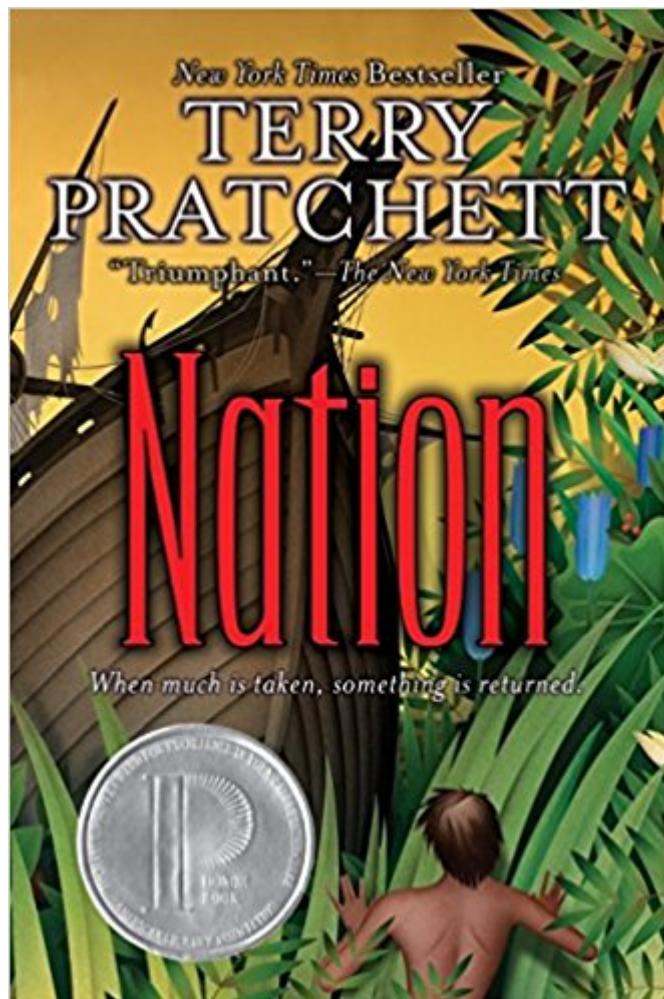


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# Nation



## Synopsis

When a giant wave destroys his village, Mau is the only one left. Daphne— a traveler from the other side of the globe—is the sole survivor of a shipwreck. Separated by language and customs, the two are united by catastrophe. Slowly, they are joined by other refugees. And as they struggle to protect the small band, Mau and Daphne defy ancestral spirits, challenge death himself, and uncover a long-hidden secret that literally turns the world upside down.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 7—œ10—In this first novel for young people set outside of Discworld, Pratchett again shows his humor and humanity. Worlds are destroyed and cultures collide when a tsunami hits islands in a vast ocean much like the Pacific. Mau, a boy on his way back home from his initiation period and ready for the ritual that will make him a man, is the only one of his people, the Nation, to survive. Ermintrude, a girl from somewhere like Britain in a time like the 19th century, is on her way to meet her father, the governor of the Mothering Sunday islands. She is the sole survivor of her ship (or so she thinks), which is wrecked on Mau's island. She reinvents herself as Daphne, and uses her wits and practical sense to help the straggling refugees from nearby islands who start arriving. When raiders land on the island, they are led by a mutineer from the wrecked ship, and Mau must use all of his ingenuity to outsmart him. Then, just as readers are settling in to thinking that all will be well in the new world that Daphne and Mau are helping to build, Pratchett turns the story on its head. The main characters are engaging and interesting, and are the

perfect medium for the author's sly humor. Daphne is a close literary cousin of Tiffany Aching in her common sense and keen intelligence wedded to courage. A rich and thought-provoking read. © Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Critics praised Nation as a hybrid, deeply philosophical book aimed at young adults, but one likely to appeal to adults as well, much like Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy or J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. With echoes of William Defoe and William Golding, Nation takes the form of a "classic Robinsonade," notes the Washington Post—that is, a book in which characters on a desert island recreate civilization. As his characters grapple with questions of leadership, humanity, and survival, Pratchett explores fundamental ideas about religion and culture. This might all sound rather heavy, but there is plenty of originality and humor—and cannibals, spirits, and secret treasures—to go around. In the end, Pratchett offers a vision of a deeply humane world. "In some part of the multiverse there is probably a civilisation based on the thinking of Terry Pratchett," writes the Guardian, "and what a civilised civilisation that will be." © Copyright 2008 Bookmarks Publishing LLC --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Nation is one of the finest books ever written for young readers. It may be Pratchett's masterpiece. What sets this apart from other good reads is the sophisticated way the characters grapple with nationhood, empire, religion, culture, and personal responsibility. They are forced to consider such issues critically, raising questions about the kind of orthodoxies for which people go to war and conquer empires. Yet, like all Pratchett's books, it raises such serious issues while being at times laugh-out-loud funny. And like all the best children's literature, Nation simultaneously entertains both child and adult readers. In my recent experience of reading it with a seven-year-old and a twelve-year-old, we were all engaged by the story despite our very different levels of understanding, experience, and sophistication. Nation has lovingly drawn and lovable characters as well as villains who are all too real. There is plenty of adventure to keep the pages turning and the children asking for more. The main characters—the boy Mau and the girl Daphne—are heroic in their way but fully human, on the cusp of adulthood and faced with the kinds of problems that adults struggle with. Everything resolves into a happy ending, but not AT ALL of the Disney happily-ever-after variety. Still, I teared up as I read the final pages.

I found myself neglecting other things to read this book. It is an engaging story, if difficult to define. It feels like historical fiction, but is technically historical fiction based on an alternate earth with just a few differences from our own. Regardless of classification, it's a good story that is worth reading.

While I still would have an impossible time choosing just one (Equal Rites? Guards Guards? The Truth? Good Omens? ...) I have to admit that Nation is without a doubt some of his most Amazing Writing...but in the end...I worship Terry Pratchett for the way he makes me Laugh...Bless His Insights into Life & Humanity...But I bow to those who Ignite my Laughter

Lately, TP's young adult books have been stronger than his adult books. I was fairly certain I wouldn't like this one, though, being both non-Discworld and about a couple of kids on an island. I had visions of Blue Lagoon Meets Lord of the Flies. I should have had more faith in TP. This may be one of his best books, period. Set on a slightly-alternate Earth, the plot may have sounded convoluted a few years ago--giant wave comes along and destroys everyone and everything in its path. But the 2004 tsunami lent a heart-breaking credibility to it. The characters could have easily been cookie-cutter one dimensional types beholden to the plot; instead, they are all complex, genuine people--some likeable, some not, but all entirely believable. TP, as usual, handles big issues--religion, growing up, "destiny"--with a deft touch. He sees all sides, and gives them all a fair shake. I would happily recommend this book to readers of all ages, all beliefs, and all backgrounds. Everyone will recognize a bit of themselves here.

Terry Pratchett was a literary god. The only reason I put my book down (I'm halfway through in one sitting so far) was to give it a five star review! He has a way with words that just makes me smile--he is able to balance descriptions of things and characters beautifully. It's almost poetic but not in anyway stuffy or forceful. It flows so naturally that I forget I'm reading a book and actually live in the Nation for the time being. Many people compare it to Lord of the Flies, the only similarity is that they all have to survive, and they all happen to be on a beach, all similarities end there. LoTF is about descending from civilisation, Nation is about re-inventing structure and a new order. I love both books, but they don't compare.

I love books of all kinds but I am a touch picky about how I like them to be written. I don't like authors who simply use language as a means of telling a story; I like authors who use language as

a medium. I think that language should be to books like clay is to sculpture. I believe that the author should use language in unique ways to create images and perspectives and ideas that are more than the sum of their parts. I have long been in love with Terry Pratchett's use of language. Since reading my first DiscWorld book many years ago, I have known that he was not a mere writer but an artist of language. This book is no exception to his amazing artistry of language. The nation raises deep philosophical questions and ideas through the use of language art and an amazingly well crafted plot. It is science fiction, but it uses the genre to really make you think about the real life struggle between science and religion among other things. It is the first book I have read that I was voracious about. As I said, I love books, but never have I wanted to read to the exclusion of all else and this was the book that made that happen. This is the first book that I have truly been in love with and I would recommend it to anyone. It is beautiful, thought provoking, well developed and unexpected; all without being over-inflated or obtuse. OH, and, don't let the "young adult" label fool you--I was 34 when I picked this up. I could absolutely see this making sense and being relevant to a young adult, but it's got plenty of substance, artistry and thought for adults as well. I think my friend, who I recently gave a copy of this to, summed it up quite well when he said "It's the mark of a good book or movie when one finishes feeling smarter."

This is a very good, very Pratchett book. I am casting around for any of his books that I have not read, since the Disc World is exhausted and I am still in mourning, and this book was an unexpected pleasure (as I hadn't heard of it). That said, it's not one of his best, since when Pratchett is at the top of his game, his books are kinda the best thing there is (Night Watch, Small Gods), thus my four-star rating. It's still really, really good, and I still heartily recommend it to anyone who loves Pratchett, and speculative fiction with a sly wit, generally.

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