

My favorite Le Guin novel is *The Word for World Is Forest*, mostly because of its anti-colonialist take on cultural interactions and its emphasis on ecology. But Le Guin made two smaller points that have stuck with me all the 40+ years since I first read it. For starters, she has a character note that the Terrans' sexual predation of the female indigenes must be either rape or bestiality, since either the indigenes are sentient beings withholding consent or they're nonsentient beings incapable of giving it. She also tries, less successfully, to imbue her African-descended characters with some of the arrogance of privilege typical of white people. I admired the effort.

Nisi Shawl
Author of *EVERFAIR*

A Wizard of Earthsea

Books that you read at the age of eleven change everything, and [*A Wizard of Earthsea*] changed me. I love the folkloric understanding of names and shadows, the wit and wisdom of the Master Doorkeeper, and the misleading word "dragonlord" that shows up on the first page... but gets no explanation until the second novel: "It's not a trick of mastering the dragons, as most people think. Dragons have no masters. The question is always the same, with a dragon: will he talk with you or will he eat you? If you can count upon his doing the former, and not doing the latter, why then you're a dragonlord." We should all strive to be more interesting than edible.

William Alexander
Author of *A PROPERLY UNHAUNTED PLACE*

The Dispossessed: Utopias and novels are two different genres, not much alike, and combining them together is a difficult problem, like combining blueprints and soap operas. There are precursor attempts, but for me *The Dispossessed* is the first great utopian novel, and as such very important. I stayed up all night reading it in 1976 and have been inspired by it ever since. On rereading I think the strongest part of its utopian vision is its feminism.

Kim Stanley Robinson
Author of *MINISTRY OF THE FUTURE*

The Left Hand of Darkness: Bringing her anthropological background and literary gifts to the planetary romance so popular in the 1950s, Le Guin wrote what I think is her finest novel [*The Left Hand of Darkness*]. Because of the thought experiment concerning gender that it explores, it serves as the perfect example of something that science fiction can do that domestic realist fiction can't. A great novel.

Kim Stanley Robinson
Author of *MINISTRY OF THE FUTURE*

Ursula Le Guin's work strikes me as one great story, each text extending the others. No favorite text, but at this moment, *Voices* speaks to me. A colonial, genocidal war rages. Retribution and revenge could make it a forever war. Characters do the hard, almost inconceivable work and find a way out of no way. An alternative to violence, a different story to tell on ourselves.

Andrea Hairston
Author of MASTER OF POISONS

What I love best about Ursula Le Guin is her constant commitment to elevating not only her craft, but her work's ability to engage with and illuminate the social and political problematics of our world. Each book in the Earthsea series is, in part, an attempt to fix a limitation of its predecessors. The result is an artist who never stops blazing trails and beating her own high score.

Sam J. Miller
Author of THE ART OF STARVING

Changing Planes, for me, is quintessential Le Guin. The book's primary conceit springs from a pun, while its tales visit an array of different realities and ways of living. Best of all, its prose, by turns funny, moving, tender, scathing, is always delightfully mischievously playful.

L. Timmel Duchamp
Author of THE MARQ'SSAN CYCLE

My favorite is Lathel!

Jonathan Lethem
Author of BROOKLYN CRIME NOVEL

Solitude is my favorite short story by Ursula Le Guin:

In the story, an anthropologist takes her daughter with her to this post apocalyptic planet in which solitude is prized. The anthropologist mother thinks the community is backwards and uncivilized, but the daughter loves this world where there are “no people only persons.” The daughter writes, “In the greatness of my joy I thought that when I was grown and went out alone I would go to the sea shore and watch the sea-beasts shimmering their colors and tunes till I knew what they were thinking. I would listen, I would learn, till my soul was as large as the shining world. And though it is of the others, of relationships, that I write, the heart of my life has been my being alone. I think there is no way to write about being alone. To write is to tell something to somebody, to communicate to others.”

Micah Perks

Author of TRUE LOVE AND OTHER DREAMS OF MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

Set primarily in northern California's Napa Valley many centuries after an unspecified apocalypse has obliterated our current civilization, "Always Coming Home" is an extreme example of the kind of world-building that all story-shapers engage in, but few - if any - take to such lush and exacting extremes. Structured as a set of field notes and selected texts collected by a present-day ethnographer, "Always Coming Home" uses stories, poems, plays, biographies, recipes, a glossary, descriptions of clothing, medical practices, ceremonies, the Kesh alphabet, & etc. to conjure a finely-grained, fascinating, and hopeful vision of the culture that has managed to evolve from the ruins of our own. An utterly unique and surprisingly engaging interrogation of what it means to be human and how we might best inhabit our human lives, "Always Coming Home" is worth coming back to many times.

Jean Hegland

Author of INTO THE FOREST

My nomination is the novella *Paradises Lost*. My main reason is *Paradises Lost*. [I appreciate] Its complex treatment of generational conflict and of language change on a multi-generational, multi-lingual, multi-peopled spaceship heading to a “new earth.” Revolt during this voyage (always imperialist, always heading away from a damaged Earth) splits the people of the ship in inevitable ways, with a scary ‘religious’ authoritarian cult at the center (predictable in colonial worlding, to say the least). Le Guin explores the tones of colonialism and earthlings in such rich ways. But this novella is close to my heart for another reason: Le Guin's 4-generations-out, no-longer-exactly Mandarin term for the planet to which the ship is moving is “Shindychew.” All my truly contemporary Mandarin-speaking friends say, no it should be “...” No! I say, this is 4-generations removed! My dog is a former street dog from Taiwan who flew to me in the belly of an airplane in a non-innocent international adoption process. So she earned her name, Shindyche.

Donna Haraway

author of *The Companion Species Manifesto*

Lavinia is many things: A historical fantasy set in the Italian Bronze age; a parallel telling alongside the heroic deeds of *The Aeneid*; a metafictional experiment in which the narrator converses with her creator; a final novel to cap off an inimitable career. Above all, *Lavinia* is a haunting tale told by a master storyteller. Le Guin wields a lifetime of skill to breathe life into a little-known pre-Roman world, capturing the lived essences of a semi-mythical, duty-bound people, offering voice to a character who was never given one, allowing her the chance to speak her life's story and beyond.

Isaac Yuen
Author of UTTER, EARTH

Likely because, back in the 70s, it was my first encounter with Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* remains a favorite and represents a watershed moment in my reading life. It's hard to convey my sense of shock and astonishment as a young writer at the power and vastness of her imagination; she seemed almost to have come from another world herself, piercing the outer limits of what I thought possible in a work of fiction.

Elizabeth McKenzie
Author of THE DOG OF THE

NORTH

BUFFALO GALS, WON'T YOU COME OUT TONIGHT

I love that this story is a kind of roundabout reclaiming of many things -- it namechecks a blackface minstrel song objectifying sex workers, but the story itself is feminist, anti-racist, inclusive in a way that still felt rare and special in the Eighties (and the Nineties, when I read it). It was my first introduction to the fact that tricksters are so prevalent in human myth, across cultures and continents, and that there must be some fundamental element of human psychology that makes this so (an idea I later explored in my Inheritance Trilogy). It's also a tale that just makes me feel warm? I can't explain that further. I read this story and feel warm inside.

N.K. Jemison – Author of the Broken Earth Series