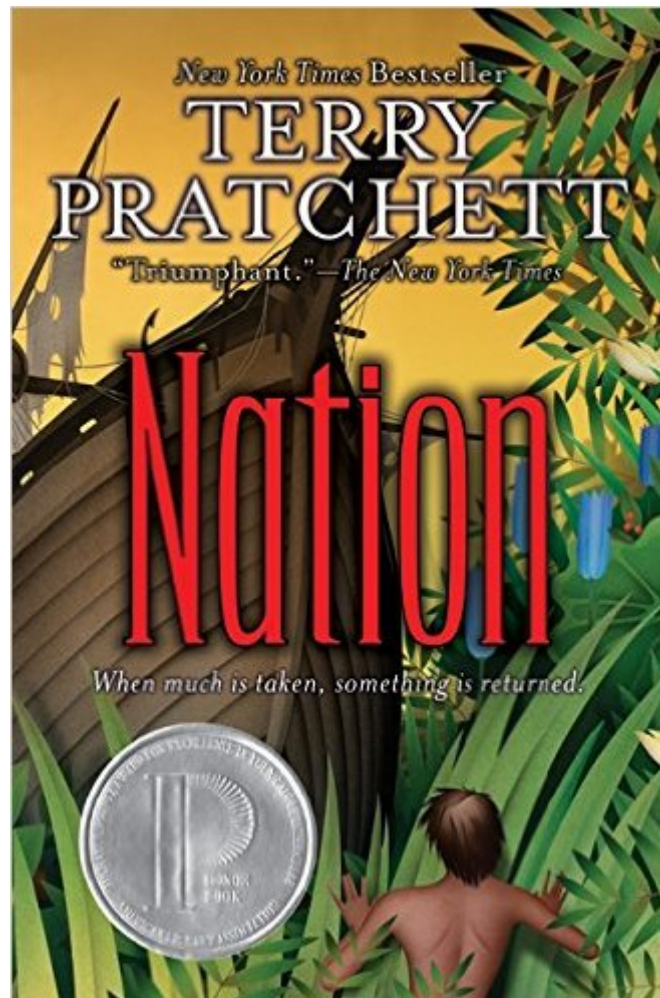


The book was found

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

Nation is an exceptionally good book, rewarding to read; it is aimed at young people, and I think that it would appeal strongly to the best in fourteen-year-olds everywhere; however, even though I haven't been fourteen for many years, I enjoyed it very much and recommend it for all ages. It has many of the characteristics of Terry Pratchett's work, but it does not fit easily into any category. His humor is there, as is his relish in deflating the balloons that make up the given wisdom of human culture; the allusions that make every book he writes a delight, a puzzle, and an unending source of new discovery at each re-reading are there; none of it is present to the degree that any of it would be in a Discworld book. A continuing idea running through his work is that of the alternate universes created at each decision point. One picks up a fork; alternatively, one may not have picked up a fork, and by not doing so may have created a different reality, the fork-not-picked-up universe. Nation takes place on an earth where a good many different utensils have been picked up at different times from what we know, but it is still recognizable as a nineteenth century when Britannia

ruled the waves. Although it is an entertaining book, it is not primarily a funny one. The themes it deals with are overwhelming--loss of the entire cultural framework that makes life in society meaningful, death of all that is known, the futility of traditional coping mechanisms in the face of such loss, the need to build a new life from within when all that has been known before was an old life imposed from without. The young hero has lost everything--even the coming-of-age ritual he was to go through the day of the tragedy.

Just one important point before I start: this review contains no spoilers; Pratchett fans can read it with impunity. 'Nation' is one of Terry Pratchett's Young Adult books. It isn't set on Discworld, and the characters are new. It's set on our Round World, in Victorian days, at the height of the British Empire. Well, to be accurate, it's set in an alternative world, in a different leg of the Trousers of Time, where, among other things, the Royal Family has met with a series of calamities, and it is vitally important that the Heir to the Throne be found (some small print in the ratified version of the Magna Carta, apparently). The two main characters are teenagers - both, for various reasons, without a Nation, and both representing all that is best in their respective cultures. Mau, the boy, is the only survivor after his island is devastated by a tsunami. Ermintrude, the girl, is shipwrecked on his island. No. It isn't The Blue Lagoon. That's all the plot that I'm willing to divulge. Like all of Pratchett's work, this book can be interpreted at many levels. The younger folk will enjoy the yarn, which is brilliantly crafted, as always. They might even identify with the characters. Both show that curious mixture of wisdom, intelligence and basic Humanity of all of Pratchett's younger characters. There are many moments of tension, resolved at the narratively appropriate minute, plus an ending which brought tears to the Reviewer's eye. Pratchett's sense of humour is never absent. A stunningly beautiful scene where all the multi-colored birds in a tropical island take wing at once, is brought to earth when he mentions the problems that occur when standing underneath a large, nervous, flock of birds. And for us older readers?

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