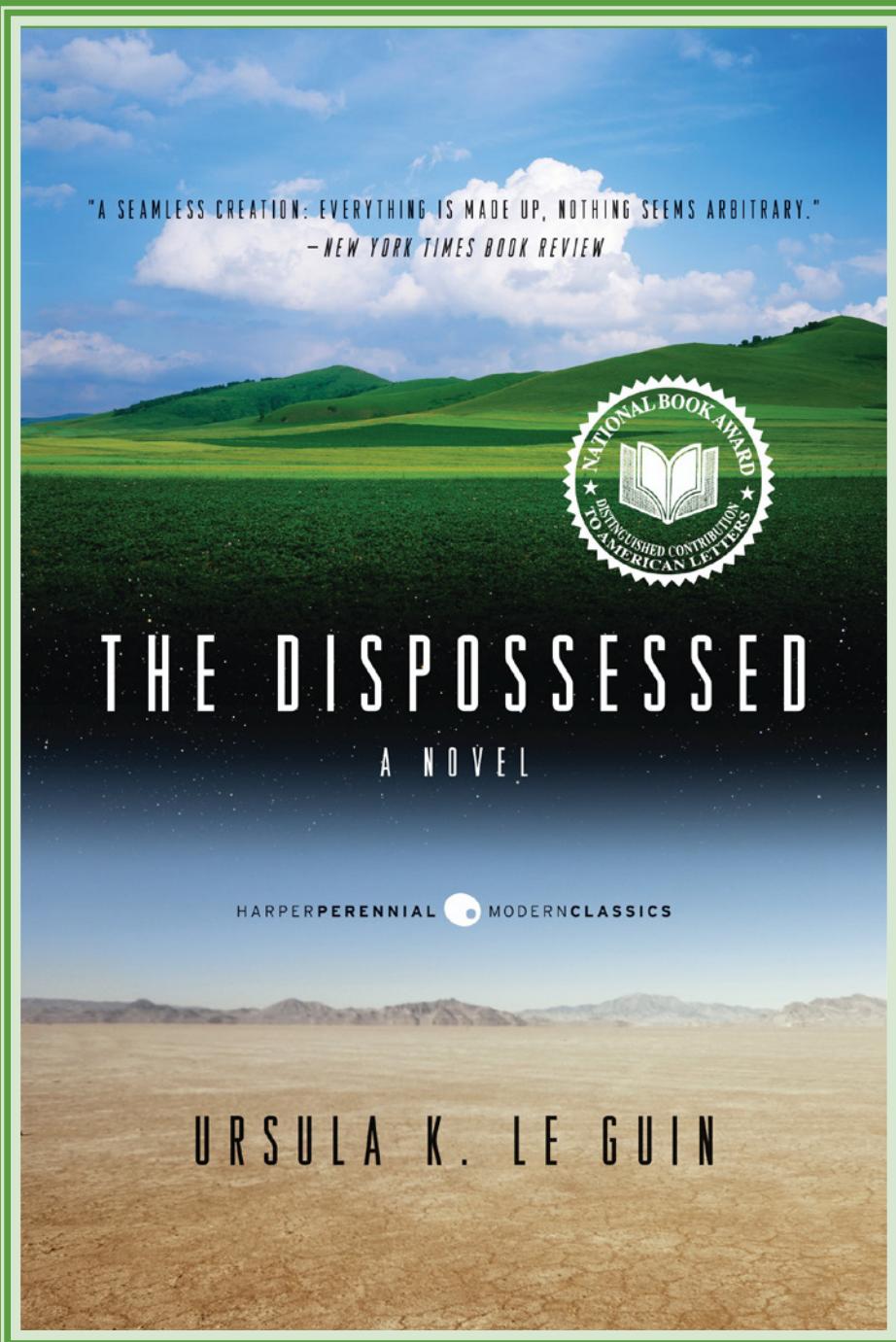

TEACHER'S GUIDE



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About the Book

A bleak moon settled by utopian anarchists, Anarres has long been isolated from other worlds, including its mother planet, Urras—a civilization of warring nations, great poverty, and immense wealth. Now Shevek, a brilliant physicist, is determined to reunite the two planets, which have been divided by centuries of distrust. He will seek answers, question the unquestionable, and attempt to tear down the walls of hatred that have kept them apart.

To visit Urras—to learn, to teach, to share—will require great sacrifice and risks, which Shevek willingly accepts. But the ambitious scientist's gift is soon seen as a threat, and in the profound conflict that ensues, he must reexamine his beliefs even as he ignites the fires of change.

About the Author

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin was born in 1929 in Berkeley, and lived in Portland, Oregon. She published twenty-one novels, eleven volumes of short stories, four collections of essays, twelve books for children, six volumes of poetry and four of translation, and received many honors and awards including the Hugo, Nebula, National Book Award, PEN-Malamud. Le Guin died in January 2018 at the age of eighty-eight.

About this Guide

This guide is designed as a supplementary resource for faculty teaching Ursula Le Guin's classic, *The Dispossessed*. It is broken down into two parts: Discussion questions intended to think through the novel's themes, characters, and conflicts throughout the book as a whole, and then a section on writing prompts to allow students to think more analytically about the novel's issues, as well as placing it in the larger contexts of science fiction writing and women's writing.

Discussion Questions

- *The Dispossessed* is set on Anarres and Urras, the twin inhabited worlds of Tau Ceti. What are Anarres and Urras like? What kind of society's do they have?
- Who is Shevek? What do we learn about his childhood throughout the novel, and how does that influence his adult life?
- How is Shevek as a narrator? Do you find him reliable?
- What kind of theories does Shevek develop? How is his thinking influenced by living in Anarres? And how does learning about, and traveling to, Urras challenge them?
- How does the novel talk about relationships between men and women? Do you think its ideas about gender are traditional or revolutionary or a bit of both?
- Labor relations: what are the philosophies of Anarres and Urras on work and workers?
- How do they arrive at the conclusion that there's nothing on Urras that the Anarresti need? What is this conclusion rebelling against? What does this disillusionment mean for their way of thinking and their society?
- A main symbol of Odonianism is the circle. How are circles used in Odonianism? How do circles apply in other ways to *The Dispossessed*?
- A prominent theme in the novel is freedom. What are the ways in which *The Dispossessed* talks about freedom? Why are these ways significant for Shevek?

Writing Prompts

- What kind of structure does *The Dispossessed* have? How does telling the story this way influence how we read Shevek's response to Anarres and Urras?
- What parts of the genre of science fiction does *The Dispossessed* challenge most?
- How does *The Dispossessed* imagine different utopias? What does the novel critique about the idea of utopia?
- Would you describe *The Dispossessed* as a feminist novel? Why or why not?
- How does Le Guin's novel, first published in 1974, and its themes compare to more contemporary science fiction? How have the issues with which Le Guin concerns herself in *The Dispossessed* talked about today?

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