

## ***A Wizard of Earthsea Study Questions***

*The page numbers referred to in some questions are for an old edition and may differ from those in the edition you're reading. I have highlighted the questions I think are most important.*

### **Chapter 1**

1. Describe Ged's personality based on his actions and the descriptions of him in this chapter.
2. Describe the style in which the story is written. Find five instances of foreshadowing in Chapter 1. What effect(s) does Le Guin's use of foreshadowing have?
3. What do you think Ogion means when he says, "To keep dark the mind of the mageborn, that is a dangerous thing"?
4. Describe the setting of the story (not just Gont, but Earthsea) as you understand it thus far. What kind of world is it?
5. What predictions can you make about how the story will develop in the rest of the book?

### **Chapter 2**

1. What is the first lesson that Ogion seeks to teach Ged, and why do you think he does this?
2. What does Ged's question about the use of fourfoil (page 17) show about his personality, and what point does Ogion try to make by asking him, "What, after all, is the use of you? or of myself? Is Gont Mountain useful, or the Open Sea?" (*This is an example of a rhetorical question—a question asked not to gain information, but to make a point and to make the audience reflect on that point.*)
3. Describe Ogion. What surprises Ged about him? What is his philosophy about magic?
4. What things does Ged do and decide in this chapter that reveal more about his personality?

### **Chapter 3**

1. What does the man Ged meets mean when he says, "The wise don't need to ask, the fool asks in vain"?
2. How is the appearance of the School's door appropriate, given the fact that it is a school for wizards? Think about the themes expressed so far in the book, especially the lessons Ogion has tried to teach Ged. Why do you think Ged must tell the doorkeeper his true name to gain entrance to the School?
3. Why do you think Lord Nemmerle has Ged read Ogion's letter himself?
4. Find the important instances of foreshadowing on pages 36 and 45. What do you think is their significance?
5. What is Ged's attitude toward what the Master Hand tells him? What does the Master Hand mean when he says, "To light a candle is to cast a shadow"?
6. Describe Jasper. Find some examples of things he does and says that make Ged angry or envious.
7. Why do you think the otak/hoeg is attracted to Ged?

## Chapter 4

1. How does Ged think he can overcome the anger and envy he feels toward Jasper, and the fear he feels about certain spells of Summoning?
2. What does Jasper say that makes Ged decide to challenge him?
3. Why do you think Nemmerle sacrifices his life to save Ged?
4. Why isn't Gensher willing to accept Ged's fealty (loyalty)?
5. What explanation(s) does Gensher give for why Ged's spell went wrong?
6. Why does Ged want to be alone? What future does he have in mind for himself?
7. How does Vetch show Ged that he considers him a true friend? Discuss the significance of his act.
8. Why is Ged "never so quick to learn as he had been"?
9. What does the Master Summoner mean when he says, "The truth is that as a man's real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower: until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he *must do*"?
10. Why do you think Ged must ask the Master Doorkeeper's name to win his freedom from the School—what lesson does this teach?

## Chapter 5

1. How is Ged's assignment to Low Torning appropriate for him? What are his feelings about the assignment—why does he accept it gladly?
2. Describe the world of the dead and the effect it has on Ged.
3. How is Ged brought back to consciousness? What effect does this have on his thinking?
4. What does Ged learn from his failure to save loeth (Pechvarry's son)?
5. How does his decision to go to Pendor to confront the dragons make Ged glad?
6. How does Yevaud try to manipulate Ged? What things does he offer? What does Ged's reaction to Yevaud's offer tell us about his character?

## Chapter 6

1. What signs tell Ged that his shadow is not far from him?
2. Why do you think Le Guin (the author) decided to keep Ged from returning to Roke?
3. Describe the man who tells Ged to go to the Court of the Terrenon. What is suspicious about him and what he says? How does the man react to Ged's suspicion? Why does Ged decide to take his advice?
4. What examples of foreshadowing can you find in Ged's journey aboard the Osskilian ship?

5. Describe the gebbeth. What is its goal? Why does it lead Ged out into the desert before confronting him?
6. Why do you think the gebbeth is unable to catch Ged, even when Ged becomes very tired and cannot run quickly?

## Chapter 7

1. Why are Lord Benderesk and Lady Serret so hospitable to Ged? What things are suspicious and disturbing about the Court of the Terrenon?
2. What emotions does Ged feel during his stay at the Court, and why?
3. What reaction does Ged have to the Terrenon? Why do you think Serret doesn't believe him? What further explanation about the stone does she later give him, and what is his reaction to this?
4. Recall the description of the man Ged met who told him to go to the Court of the Terrenon. Does Ged's impression of him make more sense now?
5. Why is the Terrenon unable to "capture Ged's will"?
6. Why is Ged unable to turn back into his human form? Why do you think he automatically flies to Gont rather than Roke?
7. What does Ogion say that contradicts what Gensher told Ged? How do you think the shadow knew Ged's name? What advice does Ogion give him, and why?

## Chapter 8

1. Why does Ged want to meet the shadow on the sea rather than on land?
2. Why do you think the shadow turns and flees when Ged pursues it? Why doesn't it attack him when he is lying helpless on the beach?
3. What reaction do the man and woman on the cay (small island) have to Ged? Why don't they want to leave the island?
4. What interesting instance of foreshadowing occurs at the bottom of page 142/top of page 143? What guess might you make about the meaning of this foreshadowing?
5. What does Ged's treatment of the man and woman show about his character? Consider how most people in our society would likely react to their decision to stay on the island.
6. What is ironic about the way the shadow tricks Ged into crashing into the rocks?
7. What is the effect of Ged's grabbing and holding the shadow, even though it escapes his grasp? What realizations does Ged have about his task after this?

## Chapter 9

1. What strange thing happens on Vemish that puzzles Ged? What explanation do you have for this phenomenon?

**phenomenon:** an event that can be observed and studied, especially something special or of scientific interest. (plural: **phenomena**)

2. Why does Ged at first refuse to let Estarriol accompany him, and how does Estarriol persuade Ged to let him come? How is it appropriate that Estarriol should be there? What does this argument show about these men and their friendship?
3. What happened to Jasper? Why do you think he left Roke?
4. What possible future does Ged see before him that frightens him?
5. What explanations do Ged and Estarriol have for the strange behavior of the shadow—for its taking Ged’s form and its inability to defeat Ged by speaking his name?
6. The narration describes Murre, Estarriol’s brother, as having “no gift or scourge [something that causes pain; a “curse”] of mage-power in him.” What is the significance (meaning and importance) of this choice of words?
7. According to Ged, what is the fundamental (basic; essential) difference between summoning light and summoning an object—why is it that summoning light doesn’t upset Equilibrium, yet summoning an object does?

## Chapter 10

1. Why doesn’t Ged use any magic or let Estarriol use his?
2. What brief vision does Ged have about where he will meet the shadow (page 171), and what place do you think it is a vision of?
3. Considering how his quest ends, how do you think Ged might have been “doomed” or “lost” (page 173) if the shadow had escaped him?
4. How might it be reasonable for Estarriol to believe that the world is flat and has only one face?
5. What fears does Estarriol have about their voyage (page 175)?
6. How do you interpret the meaning of the way in which Ged “defeats” the shadow? (How does Ged name the shadow? What happens when he does this?)
7. Describe the place where Ged meets the shadow. How do you think this place comes into existence, and why does it suddenly disappear?
8. What is the meaning of the lines quoted from the *Creation of Ea* (page 181)? How do these lines relate to the story?

## Review Questions

1. Write a summary of the plot of the novel. Be sure to make your explanation of the people, places, and events connected and clear enough that someone who has not read the novel will understand it.
2. Describe the major characters in the novel: Sparrowhawk/Ged, Ogion, Vetch/Estarriol, Jasper, Ged’s shadow, and Lady Serret. What facts about each one are important to the story?
3. What are the main themes and messages of the story? Discuss how the characters, setting, and plot help develop these themes.
4. What aspect(s) of the story do you like best? Discuss why you like these things.