

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch
Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett

BOOK GROUP

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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Neil Gaiman is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels *Neverwhere*, *Stardust*, *American Gods*, *Coraline*, *Anansi Boys*, *The Graveyard Book*, *Good Omens* (with Terry Pratchett), *The Ocean at The End of The Lane* and *The Truth Is a Cave in The Black Mountains*; the *Sandman* series of graphic novels; and the story collections *Smoke and Mirrors*, *Fragile Things* and *Trigger Warning*. He is the winner of numerous literary honors, including the Hugo, Bram Stoker and World Fantasy awards, and the Newbery and Carnegie Medals. Originally from England, he now lives in the United States. He is Professor in the Arts at Bard College

Sir Terry Pratchett sold his first story when he was thirteen, which earned him enough money to buy a second-hand typewriter. His first novel, a humorous fantasy entitled *The Carpet People*, appeared in 1971 from the publisher Colin Smythe.

Terry worked for many years as a journalist and press officer, writing in his spare time and publishing a number of novels, including his first Discworld novel, *The Color of Magic*, in 1983. In 1987, he turned to writing full time.

There are over 40 books in the Discworld series, of which four are written for children. The first of these, *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*, won the Carnegie Medal.

A non-Discworld book, *Good Omens*, his 1990 collaboration with Neil Gaiman, has been a longtime bestseller and was reissued in hardcover by William Morrow in early 2006 (it is also available as a mass market paperback — Harper Torch, 2006 — and trade paperback — Harper Paperbacks, 2006).

BOOK SUMMARY

There is a distinct hint of Armageddon in the air. According to *The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch* (recorded, thankfully, in 1655, before she blew up her entire village and all its inhabitants, who had gathered to watch her burn), the world will end on a Saturday. Next Saturday, in fact. So the armies of Good and Evil are amassing, the Four Bikers of the Apocalypse are revving up their mighty hogs and hitting the road, and the world's last two remaining witch-finders are getting ready to fight the good fight, armed with awkwardly antiquated instructions and stick pins. Atlantis is rising, frogs are falling, tempers are flaring... Right. Everything appears to be going according to Divine Plan.

Except that a somewhat fussy angel and a fast-living demon — each of whom has lived among Earth's mortals for many millennia and has grown rather fond of the lifestyle — are not particularly looking forward to the coming Rapture. If Crowley and Aziraphale are going to stop it from happening, they've got to find and kill the Antichrist (which is a shame, as he's a really nice kid). There's just one glitch: someone seems to have misplaced him...

First published in 1990, Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's brilliantly dark and screamingly funny take on humankind's final judgment is back — and just in time — in a new hardcover edition (which includes an introduction by the authors, comments by each about the other, and answers to some still-burning questions about their wildly popular collaborative effort) that the devout and the damned alike will surely cherish until the end of all things.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Reprinted from 20-30 meet-up discussion board.

1. Do you think that Aziraphale and Crowley are distinctly either good or evil? Why or why not?
2. It is suggested throughout the story that there is some divine plan that lays out every action and event in life. When Adam averts Armageddon at the Tadfield Air Base, it seems to surprise many that are present. Do you think that this surprise is part of the divine plan, or do you think that there was no divine plan in action? Explain.
3. Aziraphale and Crowley made concerted efforts to shape the upbringing of the Antichrist until they discovered that they had the wrong child. Do you suppose that Adam would have found his powers sooner had they been involved in his life? Why or why not? Is it possible that their involvement in Warlock's life made a difference?
4. How do you view the treatment of traditional Christianity in this book, particularly in regards to the characters Aziraphale, Crowley, and Adam? What, in your opinion, is the relationship of free will and "God's ineffable plan" in the events of the book?
5. What are your thoughts on the recurring theme that no angel or demon could even think up the horrible things humans do to each other or the wonderful things they do to help each other? How do you see the role of humanity in the book vs. the role of the supernatural?
6. Do you find a message in this book? If so, what? Do you think its satire works as intended?
7. In your opinion, would this novel work better if viewed as a "political" novel (as books with religious themes tend to be viewed, currently), or if viewed as a humorous novel that happens to satirize religion? In what ways does the humor add and detract from its message?
8. How do you view the roles of Agnes Nutter and Anathema? Do their prophecies fit in to the satire or are they merely there as a plot moving device? What about the roles of other secondary characters? (Newt, Shadwell, Madame Tracy, The Chattering Order of St. Beryl, etc.)

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