



Terciel and Elinor

GARTH NIX

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Recommended for: 14+ years old

Themes: Fantasy, adventure, good vs evil, destiny vs free will, coming of age

Applicable to learning areas: English literacy, literature and language

Summary

In the Old Kingdom, a land of ancient and often terrible magics, eighteen-year-old orphan Terciel learns the art of necromancy from his great-aunt Tizanael. But not to raise the Dead, rather to lay them to rest. He is the Abhorsen-in-Waiting, and Tizanael is the Abhorsen, the latest in a long line of people whose task it is to make sure the Dead do not return to Life.

Across the Wall in Ancelstierre, a steam-age country where magic usually does not work, nineteen-year-old Elinor lives a secluded life, her only friends are an old governess and an even older groom who was once a famous circus performer. Her mother is a tyrant, who is feared by all despite her sickness and impending death . . . but perhaps there is even more to fear from that.

Elinor does not know she is deeply connected to the Old Kingdom, nor that magic can sometimes come across the Wall, until a plot by an ancient enemy of the Abhorsens brings Terciel and Tizanael to Ancelstierre. In a single day of fire and death and loss, Elinor finds herself set on a path which will take her into the Old Kingdom, into Terciel's life, and will embroil her in the struggle of the Abhorsens against the Dead who will not stay dead.

Praise for *Terciel and Elinor*

'There is no joy like returning to the Old Kingdom. Once again, Nix sets the standard for fantasy, bringing us a tale full of old friends and new enemies, gruesome monsters, and heroines of wit, will, and imagination.'

Leigh Bardugo, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Shadow and Bone* and *Six of Crows*

In the Author's Own Words

'It is twenty-seven or twenty-eight years since I wrote the words:

*The woman who had
staggered into their forest
camp was dead, only holding
on to life long enough to
pass it on to the baby at her
side.*

'That is on the first page of *Sabriel*, in the prologue. The story moved rapidly on from there, and Sabriel's mother was throughout the rest of the book notable for her absence. Indeed, her father, Terciel, makes only a relatively brief appearance, though Sabriel's search for him is one of the driving forces of the story.

'I have often thought about the woman who dies on the first page of *Sabriel*. How did she come to that point, the end of her own story? How did she meet Terciel? What was she like? For that matter, what was Terciel like? Was he different as a young man? When we

meet him later, he is grim and focused. He has lost his wife and been so afraid for his daughter's future he has hidden her away across the Wall. Even more than that, he has borne the burden of being an Abhorsen for many decades, guarding the boundary between Life and Death.

'*Terciel and Elinor* is the story of Sabriel's parents when they were young. How they met and fell in love and hoped for a future together (and how much of one they got to have). It is also a return to the unending struggle between the Charter and Free Magic in the Old Kingdom, and in Death, and we once again meet terrible foes and uncertain friends on both sides of the Wall.

'Like all my books to one degree or another, this is an adventure story, a love story, and a fantasy, which I hope will also live up to the quote the kind Mr Philip Pullman gave to *Sabriel* many years ago: "A fantasy that reads like realism."

– Garth Nix

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

On the cover

- Before reading *Terciel and Elinor*, consider the title and cover design. What visual techniques have the designer and illustrator used? Consider font, colour, image and composition and the role of each in creating a mood.
- Compile a list of words to describe the mood that the cover evokes. Refer to the [Old Kingdom website](#) for observations and insights from the illustrator of the most recent Old Kingdom covers.

Prologue

- If the purpose of a prologue is to provide background information, foreshadow events, and make the reader want to keep reading, is *Terciel and Elinor's* prologue successful?

Theme

- '*Does the walker choose the path, or the path the walker?*' This question has been posed in several Old Kingdom novels by Garth Nix. What do you think the question means? Do you think Terciel and Elinor have chosen their paths or are their destinies pre-ordained? Consider this question in light of their lineage and Elinor's 'vision' in the Epilogue.

- Which famous playwright is Breakespear based on? Other than the similarity in names what else do the fictional and real writers share? How did including quotations from Breakespear's plays enhance the novel for you?

Characterisation

Terciel and Elinor is more about 'finding your place in the world' than 'the fight between good versus evil'.

- What have Terciel and Elinor learned and – more importantly – how have they changed over the course of the novel?
- Research the concept of 'The Hero's Journey' and compare and contrast the theory with the characters and events of *Terciel and Elinor*.

Genre

- Research the key characteristics of fantasy novels then discuss the extent to which *Terciel and Elinor* can be labelled a 'fantasy' novel?
- General discussion: Why do you think novels featuring magic, strange creatures and other worlds are so popular today?

Other Worlds

- Write a paragraph to explain your understanding of the following terms from *Terciel and Elinor*.

Charter Magic

Free Magic

Necromancer

Abhorsen

Clayr

Creative Writing

- Garth Nix says that the Old Kingdom 'is a very big world full of story possibilities'. Choose a character – other than Terciel and Elinor – and explore what might happen to them next in the Old Kingdom.

Bonus Content

- Why do you think Garth Nix included the bonus story about Sabriel's battle with the Mordicant after the final scene involving the young Terciel and Elinor. Go to oldkingdom.com.au to find rich additional content.

About the Author

Garth Nix has been a full-time writer since 2001, but has also worked as a literary agent, marketing consultant, book editor, book publicist, book sales representative, bookseller, and as a part-time soldier in the Australian Army Reserve.

Garth's books include the Old Kingdom fantasy series: *Sabriel*, *Lirael*, *Abhorsen*, *Clariel*, *Goldenhand* and *Terciel and Elinor*; SF novels *Shade's Children* and *A Confusion of Princes*; fantasy novels *Angel Mage* and *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London*; and a Regency romance with magic, *Newt's Emerald*.

His novels for children include *The Ragwitch*; the six books of *The Seventh Tower* sequence; *The Keys to the Kingdom* series and *Frogkisser!* His short fiction includes more than 60 published stories, some of them collected in *Across the Wall* and *To Hold the Bridge*.

He has co-written several books with Sean Williams, including the *Troubletwisters* series; *Spirit Animals Book Three: Blood Ties*; *Have Sword, Will Travel*; and *Let Sleeping Dragons Lie*.

More than six million copies of Garth's books have been sold around the world, they have appeared on the bestseller lists of *The New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Bookseller* and others, and his work has been translated into 42 languages. He has won multiple Aurealis Awards, the Ditmar Award, the Mythopoeic Award, CBCA Honour Book, and has been shortlisted for the Locus Awards, the Shirley Jackson Award and others.

