

# ***Nation***

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What is the importance of starting this novel off with a myth? How does the myth influence Mau's living situation and outlook on life?
2. What, if anything, do the English and the islanders have in common regarding religion and lifestyle? What role does religion play in their lives? Do their different gods cause them to have different values?
3. As Mau tries to figure out his place and purpose in *The Nation*, he seems to feel that there are certain expectations he must meet. Who set those expectations? What are the expectations? Are they reasonable? Why is it so important to Mau to meet those expectations?
4. What is a stereotype? What stereotypes do the English hold about the islanders? Do the islanders hold any stereotypes about the English? Are any of the stereotypes correct?
5. Ataba tells Mau, "Belief is a complicated matter." Mau and Daphne come from opposite sides of the globe; what beliefs do they have in common? What does Mau learn about belief in the course of the story?
6. How do you respond when you encounter someone whose beliefs differ from yours? Does the fact that Daphne and Mau have survived the wave together affect the way they respond to one another's differing beliefs? Would circumstances change your response?
7. Daphne's grandmother believes the islanders are savages. Daphne believes that the Englishmen Foxlip and Cox are savages. How would you define a savage? What is "civilized" behavior?
8. What is the purpose of manners? How do they help or hinder Daphne's interactions with Mau and the other characters? Are there manners that transcend different cultures?
9. Mau was to have become a man by completing the traditional ceremony and receiving the sunset wave tattoo. The ceremony never takes place. Does Mau become a man anyway? When does a child become an adult? How do you define the difference between children and adults?
10. The old man says, "Religion is not an exact science. Sometimes, of course, neither is science." What are the functions of religion and science in this story? Are science and religion similar? How do they help people?
11. Daphne decides to return to England with her father. Did her choice surprise you? Do you think she make the right decision? What would you have done?
12. History is an important factor when Mau and Daphne think about themselves and their places in the world. How does history contribute to your own identity? What parts of your history are you most proud of? How does history influence how individuals and nations react to new cultures and experiences?

# About the Author

## Terry Pratchett

Terry Pratchett was born in 1948 in Beaconsfield, Bucks, and decided to become a journalist after his first short story, "The Hades Business", was published in *Science Fantasy* magazine when he was fifteen years old. His first job was on the *Bucks Free Press* and he went on to work for various newspapers before becoming a publicity officer for the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1980. He became a full-time writer in 1987.

His first novel, *The Carpet People* (1971), a humorous fantasy, was followed by *The Dark Side of the Sun* (1976) and *Strata* (1981). 1983 saw the publication of *The Colour of Magic*, which became the first in a long series of *Discworld* novels. BBC Radio Four serialized *The Colour of Magic* and *Equal Rites* (1987) and these brought him great popularity. There are now more than 30 books in this series, set in a surreal world on the back of four elephants that stand on the shell of Great A'Tuin, the sky turtle. The *Discworld* series is popular world-wide and has led to the production of much related merchandise. *Thud!* (2005), features Sam Vimes, who has



to get home each evening to read his son a picture book, *Where's My Cow?* (which was published in 2005, alongside *Thud!*). The latest novel in the series is *The Unseen Academicals* (2009).

Hailed as one of the greatest humorous satirists, Pratchett has also become one of the few writers to write across the adult/child divide. His book, *Truckers* (1989), was the first children's book to appear in British adult fiction best-seller lists.

Terry Pratchett has also written many novels for young readers, and the end-of-the-world novel *Good Omens* (1990) - in collaboration with Neil Gaiman. He has also written several short stories, some of which are on *Discworld* themes. His books have sold over thirty-five million copies worldwide and have been translated into over thirty languages. 'To say that Terry Pratchett is popular ...' writes Kate Saunders in the *Sunday Express* (2 June 1996), '... is like saying the Arctic Circle is a bit nippy.

He has been awarded three honorary degrees, in 1999 by the University of Warwick, in 2001 by the University of Portsmouth, and in 2003 by the University of Bath. In 2009 he received a Knighthood.

Terry Pratchett is involved with the Orang-Utan Foundation, and visited Borneo with a film-crew to make the documentary *Terry Pratchett's Jungle Quest* for BBC Television. He lives with his family in Wiltshire.

