***A Wizard of Earth Sea***

***Chapter 1***

***Brief Summary:***

The narrator tells the story of the birth and early days of a young boy named Duny. Duny’s mother dies soon after he is born, leaving him to be raised by his father, a loveless bronze-smith, and his aunt, the village witch. When he is just seven years old, Duny hears his aunt say something in a strange language to a goat to prompt the goat to move. Later Duny tries saying the same funny language to a herd of goats. He does not know what he is saying but the goats listen to him and follow him. At first he thinks it is funny but soon he is frightened by the goats. His aunt sees the goats under Duny’s spell and realizes he has the power. She tells Duny she can help him learn more spells and he is intrigued.

Soon, Duny learns spells giving him power over birds and animals. The children of his village begin calling him Sparrowhawk because he was often found with a bird of prey on his shoulder. By the age of twelve, Duny has learned most everything his aunt knows about sorcery.

Not long after, the Northern lands are attacked by the Kargs. Many people in Duny’s village run into the ravines to hide, including his aunt. Duny stays in the village with this father and the villagers who have chosen to fight the Kargs. As the morning breaks, Duny and the villagers see the Karg army approaching. Knowing they do not have enough men to stand a chance, Duny has an idea: he will try the fogweaving spell.

Duny begins chanting the spell and interweaving it with a spell of concealment around the village. It works. The Kargs cannot see the village and Duny tells his father to lead them up to the High Fall. The villagers taunt the Kargs and get the invaders to chase them through the dense fog and right off the high cliff’s edge. The Kargs that do not get lured to the cliff are soon attacked by the villagers who look ghost-like in the mist. Soon all the Kargs are running, trying to make their getaway from the bewitched village.

Duny is found back in the village unable to speak or hear or see. His aunt, who has returned from her hiding place, tells the villagers Duny has overspent his powers and she does not have the power to heal him. A few days later, a man comes into the village from the northern forests; he is a wizard. The wizard heads to Duny’s house and touches the boy’s head. Duny awakens; he can see again and is hungry.

The man, Ogion the great Mage of Re Albi, tells Duny’s father and aunt Duny will grow up to be someone great and he has come to the village to give Duny his real name. The Mage tells Duny’s father Duny must receive his name soon and leaves.

On the day Duny turns thirteen, Ogion returns to the village. Duny’s passage ceremony occurs. His old name is removed and Ogion gives Duny his new name: Ged. When the feast and celebration is over, Ged gathered his belongings, said good-bye to the villagers, and set off with Ogion.

***Brief Analysis:***

The first chapter introduces the reader to the main character—a boy named Duny who becomes a great wizard known as Ged. An unknown narrator tells the beginning of Ged’s story, focusing on his birth and childhood. The setting of the story is also referenced; the reader is introduced to various lands and peoples such as the Northern Reach which includes Gont, Ged’s village, and the Kargs and their lands.

The main plot of the story has begun in these first chapters. The reader learns right away there is something different about Duny. He is a wizard, and not just any common wizard but one destined to be someone great. Duny embraces his powers and seems to be ready to learn more. By the end of the first chapter, a great wizard known as Origon has taken Duny, now named Ged, away to have Ged be his apprentice and learn all he has to offer about sorcery.

***Critical Study:***

[Ged](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/#Ged), known as Duny as a child, is the seventh son of a bronzesmith in the Gont village of Ten Alders. His mother is long dead, and he runs wild, herding goats on the mountain. One day Ged hears his aunt, the witch of Ten Alders, speak out a spell to a goat. Ged repeats the words and is surrounded by goats. Ged's aunt begins teaching him spells, and he is a quick learner.

Warriors from the Kargad Empire come to Gont, and Ged's village prepares to fight them off. Ged uses the fog to hide the village from the invaders. This cover of fog allows the villagers to strike at the warriors unseen and scare them off. After the battle Ged falls into a stupor, having spent his power. A stranger comes days later, announcing himself as [Ogion](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/" \l "Ogion) the Silent. He heals Ged, leaves, and returns on Ged's 13th birthday to give him his true name and take him on as a prentice, or student.

In this opening chapter [Ged](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/#Ged) proves to have an innate talent for magic. His quickness to learn will become a source of pride, and his humble beginnings in a simple village will become a source of shame. Ged's aunt, the villagers, and the mage of Re Albi—Ogion the Silent—all recognize Ged's power. When Ged's father meets [Ogion](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/character-analysis/" \l "Ogion), he remarks, "You are no common man." Ogion answers, "Nor will this boy be a common man." Ogion offers to take Ged as a prentice because he understands Ged's potential. Ogion knows one with such great power also has the responsibility to control it, which is Le [Guin](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/A-Wizard-of-Earthsea/author/)'s first major theme.

Le Guin proposes that the best way use power responsibly is by gaining knowledge. In Earthsea the source of magic is the knowledge of the true name of a person or thing. Therefore, education is extremely important. But Ged's lessons do not all come from academic study. In fact, one of the most essential lessons he must learn is the value of friendship and community. As a wild child, Ged spends most of his time alone and has not forged close bonds with his family or the other villagers. And yet, when invaders threaten, Ged's instinct is to protect his community, which he does at the expense of his own health. This self-sacrifice results in the first of his coma states, brought on by not yet understanding his own limitations or the balance of the universe.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

The island of Gont in the Northeast Sea of the Earthsea Archipelago is a land famous for its wizards. The greatest, bravest, and most famous of all these wizards, according to many, was the wizard Sparrowhawk, who was also known as [Ged](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk). Before he was either Ged or Sparrowhawk, however, this young Gontish boy was known as Duny. The last of six children, Duny’s mother died shortly after his birth. Duny had a “wild” childhood adventuring through Gont’s forests and cliffs.

***Analysis Part 1:***

By providing context for the place Ged’s story holds in the larger mythology of Earthsea, Le Guin sets up the novel as a coming-of-age tale which will center around the early adventures of a wizard destined for greatness.

***Summary Part 2:***

One day, when [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) is a boy of seven, he hears his [mother’s sister](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-s-aunt)—a local witch and herbalist—command a herd of goats by crying out a rhyme to them. The next day, Duny repeats the charm to the herd. As the goats slowly, as if in a trace, march toward him, Duny finds himself both mesmerized and terrified by his ability to command the beasts.

***Analysis Part 2:***

This passage shows that even as a young boy, Duny is powerful beyond his years. The early days of Ged’s training in magic will revolve around balancing this innate power with a tempered investment in patience and the pursuit of knowledge rather than glory and pride.

***Summary Part 3:***

As the goats come closer and closer, [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) tries to run away from the herd, but they follow him through the village. Hearing the commotion, [Duny’s aunt](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-s-aunt) emerges from her hut and speaks a single word to the goats. They are released from the spell. Duny’s aunt calls him into her dark hut, which is fragrant with the herbs the woman uses in her healing spells. Duny’s aunt sees the “makings of power” in her nephew and offers to teach him more spells—provided he doesn’t share them with the other children. Duny promises to keep the knowledge hidden. It is an easy promise for him to make, as he likes to “know and do what they [know] not and [can] not.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

This passage again confirms that the young Duny wants to use magic to assert his power, excellence, and dominion over the creatures—and people—around him. Duny craves power and glory, and will need to learn to temper this impulse if he is to succeed as a young wizard.

***Summary Part 4:***

To make sure [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) follows her directive, [Duny’s aunt](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-s-aunt) creates a spell that will bind his tongue until she permits him to speak, and that will even then keep him from sharing what she’s taught him with another. Duny’s aunt starts a ritual fire, feeding it with leaves and herbs as she chants songs in a language Duny does not recognize. When the witch tests her spell, Duny is still able to laugh. She realizes that young though he is, he must be extremely powerful to make any noise in the face of the strongest spell she knows how to weave. Duny’s aunt douses the fire, allows Duny to speak, and begins teaching him the animals’ [true names](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/symbols/true-names)—the names to which they must come when called. This is the first step of Duny’s life as a mage, or wizard.

***Analysis Part 4:***

This passage introduces the concept of true names—one of the novel’s central symbols, true names relate to the fundamental essence of every living thing on the Earthsea archipelago. In order to bind, control, change or use something, one must first know its true name.

***Summary Part 5:***

Soon, [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) can call birds out of the sky with ease. He is so hungry for the knowledge his [aunt](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-s-aunt) possesses that he does anything she asks of him. Duny has reverence for what his aunt teaches him, but being a simple country witch, she knows little of “the Balance […] which the true wizard knows and serves.” Duny’s aunt teaches him small spells and charms for every circumstance. Duny takes pleasure in being able to control the animals around him, and, by the time he is 12, he knows a good deal about herbals, healing, mending, finding, and binding. He has studied the lore his aunt has taught him about the great deeds of great wizards, and he has even begun to dabble in the powers of illusion.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Though Duny’s aunt does her best to instruct him in the art of healing and spells, she is ignorant of the sacred “Balance” that governs the world. To use too much magic too freely is to disrupt the careful equilibrium of the universe—in other words, for a wizard to seek too much power is a dangerous thing. This hard realization will form the crux of Duny’s early years as a mage-in-training.

***Summary Part 6:***

The narrator describes the strong and powerful Kargad Empire, rulers of four great lands in the Earthsea archipelago. The Kargs are “savage” people with white skin and yellow hair—as opposed to the people of Gont, who are dark-skinned—and they sail the Archipelago ransacking towns and conquering all they can. The people of Gont have heard that the Kargs recently raided lands just south of them, but as an insular community, they care little for the struggles of other isles. One night, though, the people of Gont can see the fires of a nearby island being raided—some hurry to flee into the forest while others prepare to make a stand against the Kargads. [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) helps his [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters), a bronze-smith, prepare through the night by building as many weapons as fast as he can.

***Analysis Part 6:***

As a threat of invasion and destruction comes to Gont, it seems there is little the island community can do to protect itself—yet Le Guin shows how the members of the humble isle come together, bound by the duty to defend one another.

***Summary Part 7:***

In the foggy morning, as [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) prepares to fight alongside the other Gontish men, he is scared. He knows he has no physical strength. Though there is power in him, he does not have the knowledge to set that power free. He laments that he will soon die in battle before he can achieve any of his dreams of greatness. As the Kargs approach, Duny suddenly thinks of a spell that might help his people: a fogweaving charm that binds the mists together and allows one to shape the fog into illusory ghosts.

***Analysis Part 7:***

This passage represents the first instance in which the young Duny uses his powers for a higher purpose and not simply for the sake of them. Duny is young but powerful, and he is able to perform with relative ease magic far beyond what his aunt has taught him.

***Summary Part 8:***

Quickly, [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) changes the spell to suit his needs: he [names](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/symbols/true-names) aloud the boundaries of the village, then speaks the charm, adding to its words a spell of concealment. His [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters) urges him to be quiet as the Kargs approach—but he explains to his father that he’s hidden their village from the Kargs, buying them all time to escape. Duny’s father heeds his son’s words.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Duny uses his powers—which are great in spite of his youth—to serve his community. This episode is important because it establishes the fundamental use of magic as a tool of support, solidarity, and generosity rather than a means to glory, power, or fame.

***Summary Part 9:***

The villagers attack the Kargs through the fog, leaving the Kargs confused and wounded. Though the Kargs attempt to charge through the fog, they are distracted and frightened by the fleeting fog-ghosts [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk) has conjured. They turn tail and run for their ships. Though the Gontish people suffer some losses, their village is by and large safe. Duny is hailed as a hero—yet something has come over him in the wake of the battle, and he seems unable to hear or speak. His [aunt](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-s-aunt) assesses him and tells the others that he has overspent his power—she can do nothing to help him. Duny spends several days recovering, and on the fifth day, a cloaked stranger wielding a staff comes to town. The man, a wizard, visits Duny and heals him with a simple touch.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Duny finds that in the wake of his great act of magic, his faculties are nearly completely depleted. This passage underscores the great amount of energy it takes to produce spells of such a high caliber—and foreshadows the darkness and danger beneath grand displays of might and power.

***Summary Part 10:***

The wizard, who is called [Ogion the Silent](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ogion), announces that the tales of [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk)’s deed with the fog have reached his home of Re Albi, on the southern side of the island, where he is Mage. [Duny’s father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters) knows that Ogion wants to take Duny away and train him, but he begs the wizard to let Duny spend his 13th birthday—his “Passage” into adulthood—at home. Ogion vows to return for the boy after the winter has passed and keep him as prentice, or apprentice. Ogion says he anticipates with excitement the day Duny turns 13 and receives his [true name](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/symbols/true-names).

***Analysis Part 10:***

Duny’s life is about to change forever. He is soon to become a man, and soon after that, he will enter into an apprenticeship with a powerful wizard who recognizes his gifts and wants to help him harness his power.

***Summary Part 11:***

On [Duny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-duny-sparrowhawk)’s 13th birthday, he takes a ritual dip in the cold river Ar just outside the village. On the near bank, his [aunt](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ged-s-aunt) takes his name from him. On the far bank, as the boy emerges from the river, he finds that [Ogion](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/characters/ogion) is there to receive him. Ogion gives the boy his [true name](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-wizard-of-earthsea/symbols/true-names): Ged. That evening, as the feast of the Sunreturn carries on, Ogion bids Ged to follow him—it is time to leave the village and head for Re Albi, far away across the isle of Gont. Ged gathers his few possessions, says farewell to his people, and sets off with his new master.

***Analysis Part 12:***

Duny’s ritualistic swim in the river Ar represents his crossing over from boyhood to manhood. On the far side of the river, as Ged receives his true name from his new master, Le Guin symbolizes the fact that Ogion sees, understands, and accepts Ged for who he is. Ogion agrees to take Ged on as a prentice with the full truth of who Ged is in mind—he is ready to accept the challenges of teaching Ged alongside the joys.