

= Obernewtyn (novel) =

Obernewtyn is the first novel in the Obernewtyn Chronicles series by Australian author Isobelle Carmody . Carmody began writing it at the age of fourteen , and reworked the novel through high school and university . Much of the inspiration for the protagonist , Elspeth Gordie , comes from her own life experiences . It was published by Penguin Books in Australia in 1988 and shortlisted for the Book of the Year for Older Readers in the Children 's Book Council of Australia Awards .

A science fiction @-@ fantasy novel set in a post @-@ apocalyptic world , the story follows Elspeth Gordie , an orphan with special mental abilities , who lives a life of fear and danger . When her abilities are brought to the attention of the ruling , totalitarian Council , she is banished to the remote mountain institution of Obernewtyn , where all " Misfits " are sent . The leaders of Obernewtyn are secretly searching for the old weapons that had sent the world to the brink of despair , and Elspeth finds herself embroiled in a plot that risks more than just her personal safety .

The book has been published in Australia , the United Kingdom , the United States of America , Germany and Portugal . The Library Journal stated it was a " thought @-@ provoking tale of courage and sacrifice " ; other reviews found it one @-@ dimensional and difficult to follow . Adapted as a stage play by Caroline Heske , it was performed in Darwin , Australia in 2004 by the Corrugated Iron Youth Arts Theatre .

= = Composition = =

Isobelle Carmody began writing the book when she was fourteen , in 1972 . She rewrote and developed it throughout high school and university . After briefly working as a journalist , she left to write full @-@ time . Penguin Books agreed to publish the book when Carmody submitted the manuscript in her early twenties and it was published in 1987 . Carmody has said that the character and life experiences of Elspeth reflect her own :

As a girl , I felt myself to be a Misfit . I was the eldest of eight children and I grew up in this tough neighbourhood where there were kids that beat up odd kids like me who read and wrote stories . I longed not to fit in and be like the other kids , but to find people who were like me . And of course like probably every kid , though I did not know that then , I longed to have something important to do . I longed to be special . I think this is the natural result of the powerlessness of children in a world of adults that don ' t always seem to be looking after the world all that well .

The author named The Chronicles of Narnia , The Lord of the Rings , Doctor Dolittle and books about Pippi Longstocking as sources of influence .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Context = = =

Obernewtyn is set in a world recently ravaged by a nuclear holocaust , known to the survivors as " the Great White " , later said by the Herders (leaders of the new religious order) to have been sent by Lud (God) to punish humanity . The surviving remote communities attempted to rebuild society , which over time developed into a totalitarian Council , and a religious order , the Herder Faction . Mutations of the mind also began to appear in some of the surviving generations ; those discovered are either burnt alive along with the rebels or labelled as " Misfits " and outcasts . The resulting large group of children are placed in orphan homes and used for manual labour .

= = = Voice and setting = = =

The story is told in the first @-@ person through the protagonist , Elspeth Gordie , a teenage girl who has secret mental powers such as telepathy and the ability to communicate with animals . The story begins at Kindraide orphan home , where she and her brother Jes live , before moving briefly

through Sutrium , the capital , and the countryside . However the majority of the narrative is set at Obernewtyn , which lies in the northern mountains of the Land , the fictional nation in which the Obernewtyn Chronicles is set .

= = = Plot = = =

Elspeth learns from her premonitions , and her cat Maruman 's prophecies , that a keeper from Obernewtyn , a feared institution where Misfits are sent to work , will come to take her there . Soon , when delivering tea to visiting Head Keeper of Obernewtyn , Madam Vega , Elspeth accidentally reveals she is a Misfit , though not to what extent , and is soon dispatched to Obernewtyn . Her first few weeks at Obernewtyn are spent in the kitchen , where she is worked to the bone . The cook ? s daughter delights in tormenting her . The favoured Misfit , Ariel , and farm overseer , Rushton , immediately dislike her . Later reassigned to the farm , an encounter with a pair of Misfits named Matthew and Dameon reveals she is not alone in her particular abilities . She also befriends Cameo , a delicate , pretty Misfit of whom Matthew is very fond . Elspeth , plagued by nightmares , begins to feel there is a dark secret underneath their everyday tasks . While working , Elspeth decides to test the range of her telepathic ability , " farseeking " , but beyond the boundaries of Obernewtyn , a strange machine , the Zebkrah , traps her mind . She is only freed by combining her mental strength with another anonymous mind who offers assistance . Asked by Vega to look out for " special " Misfits , her interview reveals the Doctor is a defective simpleton ; his " assistant " , Alexi , has no interest in Elspeth in his quest to find the " right one " who will lead him to what he desires . Elspeth and Matthew later deduce that tortuous experiments on their kind are occurring , and they resolve to escape . Cameo begins disappearing from her bed at nighttime , and Elspeth fearfully suspects that Cameo is the subject of some of these experiments .

That night , Elspeth sneaks into the Doctor ? s office to retrieve a map and compass , but on finding forbidden books and maps from before the Great White , the " Beforetime " , she realises they must be searching for something from long ago . She leaves empty @-@ handed . Rosamunde , a fellow orphan from the Kinraide orphan home , arrives at Obernewtyn and coldly informs Elspeth that her brother Jes had discovered he also had mental abilities , but was killed by guards in an escape attempt . Rushton comforts the distraught Elspeth , and asks her why she plagues him . Fearful that someone will soon be after her as well , her group ? s escape plans begin in earnest . Elspeth returns a second time to the Doctor ? s office , but when Vega , Alexi and Ariel enter , she learns Ariel is part of the Obernewtyn family , and that they are searching for a Misfit to help them find the location of Beforetime weapons . Pre @-@ warned that two Councilmen are coming to fetch her for questioning by the Herders , at nightfall she makes to escape but Rushton stops her . He reveals a secret network of drains which gets her safely to the farms . Once she is safely through the drains after a close shave with Ariel 's pack of mad , wild wolves , she finds that the path to the farms has been obscured by a blizzard and gets lost . She nearly dies , but a Misfit named Domick finds her and locks her in the farmhouse to return later to Obernewtyn . Overhearing a conversation between her captors , she discovers they are Rushton 's accomplices and were to secretly meet with a rebel group , but Rushton has gone missing . Convincing them that her powers can help find him , she makes her way on foot through the blizzard to the far mountains , with Maruman as her guide .

Inside the cave network she finds a dying Cameo , who tells her the Beforetime weapons Alexi and Vega are searching for caused the Great White , but they do not know this . She also reveals it is Elspeth ? s destiny , as the Seeker , to destroy them . After mourning her death , Elspeth overhears that Rushton , imprisoned in the next cavern , is the true heir of Obernewtyn . Suddenly , she is captured by Ariel , who ties her to a table next to the Zebkrah machine . Elspeth is forced to hold the diaries of Marisa Seraphim , the wife of the founder of Obernewtyn and Alexi 's stepmother , and use her abilities to discover what Marisa was thinking when she wrote them to determine the weapons ? location . Still withstanding the torture , Elspeth mentally enters Rushton ? s mind and recognises the voice of her earlier rescuer from the Zebkrah . Rushton gives his mental strength to her to endure the pain inflicted on her by the machine . In her despair at their threats to kill him , her resistance breaks and Marissa ? s thoughts reveal the map to be carved into the front doors of

Obernewtyn . At this point , the Zebkrahns overheat and burst into flames . Something in Elspeth 's mind cracks and she uses this new power to kill Vega , who she saw standing over Rushton with a knife . She falls unconscious as Domick and Rushton 's other friends rush in . Alexi is killed , but Ariel flees into the night and is believed to have died in the blizzard . Now known to be the legal master of Obernewtyn , Rushton plans to build it into a secret refuge for Misfits .

== Reception ==

=== Critical ===

On the whole , Obernewtyn has been positively received . A reviewer for Publishers Weekly called it " a promising new series " and stated that Carmody evades stereotyping by imbuing her characters with conflicting interests . The Library Journal stated that it is a " thought @-@ provoking tale of courage and sacrifice " .

Lloyd Alexander , an American fantasy author , commented that it is a fantastically imaginative novel . He cited intricate detail , in @-@ depth character development , and skilled use of language as some of the strengths of the work . American Young Adult fantasy writer Tamora Pierce expressed that the novel is " a dream date for [her] " , given the novel involves a courageous girl of many talents and animals with " minds of their own " .

However some reviewers have criticised aspects of the book . A reviewer writing for Kirkus Reviews said that the novel is " pedestrian and one @-@ dimensional " . Victoria Strauss , of SF Site , felt the emotional detachment of Elspeth , despite her loss and grief , robs the novel of some of its impact . John Foster felt Obernewtyn is hard to follow due to the complexities of the language and plot .

=== Awards and nominations ===

Obernewtyn won the Marcus Clark Literary Award for Best Unpublished Manuscript , which subsequently saw Carmody receive an Australia Council of the Arts Writer 's Grant .

In 1988 , Obernewtyn was shortlisted for Book of the Year for Older Readers in the Children 's Book Council of Australia Awards .

== Publication history ==

Single Book Publications :
Combined Volumes :

=== Foreign language publications ===

=== Audiobooks ===

== Adaptations ==

The Corrugated Iron Youth Arts Theatre in Darwin , Australia , produced Caroline Heske 's stage play adaptation of Obernewtyn , directed by Jeremy Rice , at the Brown 's Mart Theatre from 3 to 7 November 2004 . Rice stated that the original novel has " that imaginative streak that suits theatre " .