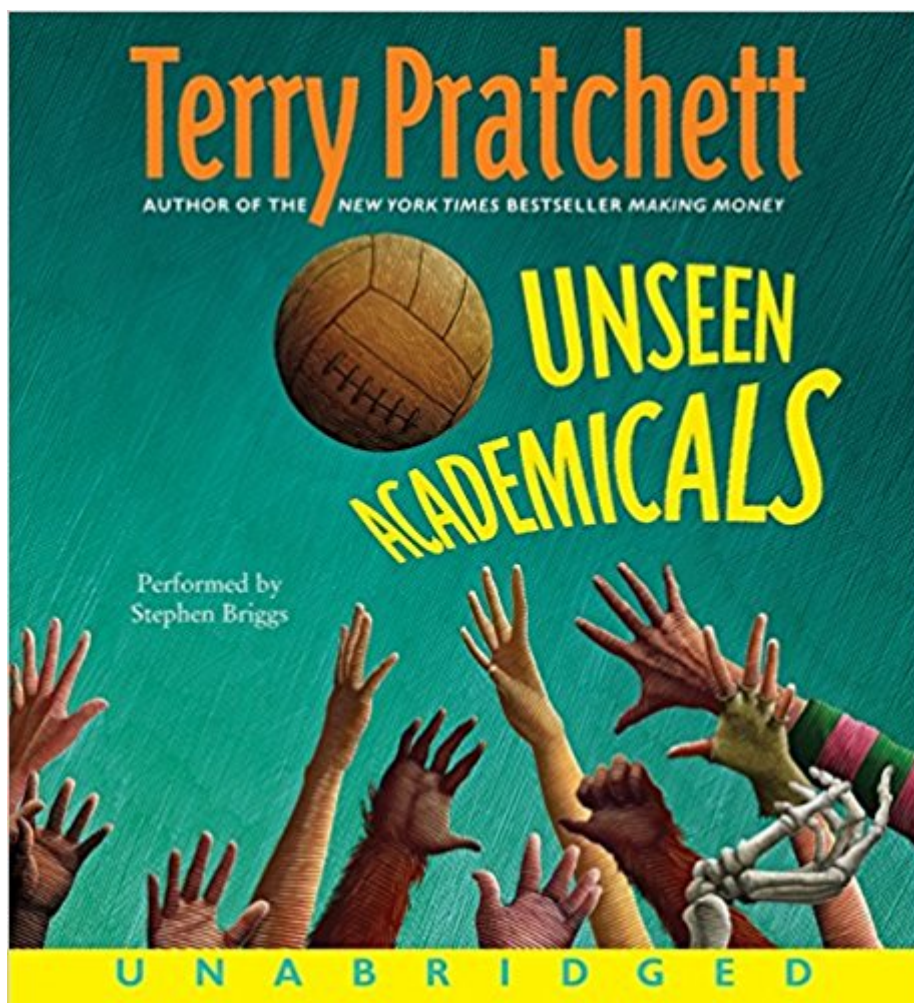




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Unseen Academicals (Discworld)



Synopsis

Discworld lives on in *Unseen Academicals*, the latest novel from Terry Pratchett. Delivering the trademark insight and humor readers the world over have come to expect from the purely funniest English writer since Wodehouse • (Washington Post Book World), *Unseen Academicals* focuses on the wizards at Ankh-Morpork's Unseen University, who are renowned for many things "sagacity, magic, and their love of teatime" as they attempt to conquer athletics.

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Customer Reviews

Football, food, fashion and wizards collide in Pratchett's 37th Discworld novel (after 2007's *Making Money*), an affectionate satire on the foibles of sports and sports fans. The always out-of-touch wizards at Ankh-Morpork's Unseen University stand to lose a very big bequest unless they enter a team in a violent but popular street sport competition. As the wizards struggle to learn the game, aided by the university's hired help, Ankh-Morpork's ruler schemes to use the competition for his own purposes. Though the book suffers from a few awkward moments (Pratchett's attempts to discuss racism through the strained relationships of dwarves, humans and goblins fall particularly flat), the prose crackles with wit and charm, and the sendups of league football, academic posturing, *Romeo and Juliet* and cheesy sports dramas are razor sharp and hilarious but never cruel. At its heart, this is an intelligent, cheeky love letter to football, its fans and the unifying power of sports. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

• In short, this is as busy and as daft as any other Discworld yarn, which means it is the quintessence of daft. Nobody writes fantasy funnier than Pratchett. • (Booklist) • At its heart, this is an intelligent, cheeky love letter to football, its fans and the unifying power of sports. (Publishers Weekly) • This account of Unseen University's entry into the world of soccer (or, as they occasionally call it, "foot-the-ball") pushes past the usual conventions of satire to offer equal parts absurdist philosophy and heartwarming romance....A witty addition to the long-running fantasy series • (Kirkus Reviews) • Thirty-seven books in and ... Discworld is still going strong...and doing so with undimmed, triumphant exuberance. • (The Guardian) • It's a triumphant effort • (The Independent on Sunday) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

While there are allusions to violence (an assassins guild, bad guys arrested, sometimes people die) and sex (a guild of ladies of negotiable affection, light references to adult behaviors), Terry handles them in a way that would make these books appropriate for even pre-teens. It has less double entendres than your basic Disney movie. Also, they have less "descriptive information" about sex or violence than your basic health or gym class. Terry writes his books in a way that will make you laugh (and think!) I would not call the Discworld novels "fantasy" in so much as I would refer to them as satirical intellectual comedy.

In the changeless, stifling, formula that seems to dominate a large portion of the world of fantasy where our hero(s) careen from one crisis to another in what will ultimately be a successful crusade to save the world, Pratchett's Unseen Academicals is a welcome breath of fresh air. The book is, on its superficial surface, an exercise in humor after the formula made so delightful by Monty Python's Flying Circus and Douglas Adams's perspective on Life, the Universe, and Everything. But, like these venues, Unseen Academicals also has, albeit sometimes deeply encoded, a more serious side which will make you stop reading (and chuckling), put the book in your lap, gaze at a wall and think "damn if that isn't the truth". On both counts, humor and human philosophy, I say thanks for the ride. I highly recommend the book but must caution that Pratchett is a prolific writer and his work can be addictive so you may be committing no small amount of time.

Funny, witty, packed with insightful, witty, sometimes biting social commentary. Good cameos from the other novels & intelligent, sympathetic new characters, make this a worthy Discworld addition.

I've read the entire Discworld series as well as several of Pratchett's other books, and I must say that *Unseen Academicals* is his one of his very best Ankh-Morpork books if not the best, period. Without giving anything away, the main theme is very appealing and satisfying one about how people choose to live, whether as a mob or as individuals, and how important it is to direct that potential in ways that bring out our best traits, manage and direct our worst traits, and make us happy. As usual, though the thought-provoking aspects are easily set aside if you just want to enjoy some good, sometimes raunchy fun. The book isn't remotely preachy which is why it works. Well, that and outstanding craftsmanship. *Unseen Academicals* also has the largest ensemble cast of Pratchett's books, but with many of the Ankh Morpork regulars we know and love (the Watch, Lord Vetinari, the Press, the Unseen University Staff (ook!), and even the original Discworld lead Rincewind). However, they play entirely supporting roles to some fresh but appealing characters. As a result, you don't need to know a thing about Discworld to enjoy *Unseen Academicals*, but if you know anything about the series, you'll be delighted by your previous reading efforts paying off again and again. By reading this, I feel like I have new insights into his own perspectives and affection for his characters and settings. In short, I loved the book. I suppose I especially loved it especially both because it is so well done and knowing that we won't see many more from Pratchett because of his early onset Alzheimer's disease (though I hope I am wrong -- though not nearly as much as Pratchett himself, I suspect). I hope he gives us another similar book in the Lancre setting. Here's to hoping he stays ridiculously healthy.

Funny, but oh man, does it drag! It's all about a soccer (football) game that doesn't happen until the book is 15/16 over. Not one of his best, but worth a read if you're a die-hard Discworld fan.

In the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" series there was an episode called "Lower Decks" that focused on a group of young people serving in minor positions on the Enterprise instead of the usual group of head honchos. That is essentially what happens in "*Unseen Academicals*" which focuses on the people who work in the Night Kitchen and the candle vats of Unseen University, the school for wizards in the city of Ankh-Morpork. Ostensibly though the book is about the game of foot-the-ball or football (or soccer as we call it across the Pond). In Ankh-Morpork, the game of foot-the-ball is actually more like rugby, with a lot of tackling and fighting and very little scoring. Young Trevor Likely's father was a legend because he scored 4 goals. Trevor works in the candle vats of Unseesn University with Nutt, a very learned goblin who talks like a shelf of self-help books. Nutt has a Mysterious Past that not even he remembers. Eventually though Trev and Nutt go up to

the Night Kitchen, where they meet the plain, fat Glenda and the beautiful, ditzy Juliet. As it happens Juliet is from the Stoops family, who are sworn enemies of Trev's family because of their foot-the-ball allegiances. Trev & Juliet doesn't play out like Romeo & Juliet because tragedy is not ever really on the menu in the Discworld. Nutt does a little Cyrano in writing a poem to help woo Juliet, which would work better if Juliet could read words of more than one syllable. Oh yes, there is a football game in there too. The wizards of Unseen University discover that they have to play a game of football in order to keep a bequest that keeps their Night Kitchen stocked. (If there's one thing wizards really like it's their kitchen.) When some new old rules are "discovered" from a museum, a new brand of foot-the-ball is born with Nutt taking the lead as coach. This book utilizes two recurring theme-like items in the Discworld series. One is equal rights/tolerance, which is embodied by Nutt. Goblins (or what Nutt really is) being the latest in a line that includes dwarfs, trolls, werewolves, vampires, and golems who break the racial barrier in Ankh-Morpork. The other theme-like substance is modernizing the city. The police force, post office, bank, and Unseen University itself have all been dramatically remodeled since the earliest Discworld novels. As well football joins other modern things like newspapers, movies, the Internet, and rock music to become part of the fabric of Disc society. So really while the book is entertaining (as most Discworld books are) it's not anything fans of the series haven't really seen before. What bugged me about the previous book "Making Money" was that there was no money made in it; the actual printing of money seemed like it would be taking place off the pages. I feared that Pratchett was going to do the same here and have the football game take place off the page, but he does at least manage to get it in, even if it is a bit underwhelming. While it was nice to see Rincewind (with a cameo by The Luggage) and the Librarian again, I wish they could have been used more. That the book doesn't focus on any of the major characters in the end means that this can be filed away as "Minor Discworld" along with one-offs like "Pyramids," "Small Gods," "The Truth," and "Monstrous Regiment." Since football (soccer) hooliganism isn't a big thing here in the States, I'm sure some of the jokes in this one went over my head; British readers would then probably enjoy this more. Still, it's not a bad entry in the series, but not an overly important one either. You could do a lot worse. That is all.

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