

# The Left Hand of Darkness

Reading selection for this module:

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. New York: Ace, 1987.

Science fiction explores ethical and moral issues created by new technology. Many of the technologies explored in science fiction stories of the 1940s and 1950s have become a part of our everyday world, and we live with the consequences. As Ursula K. Le Guin argues in her introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, we can think of science fiction as a kind of thought experiment: If we do this, what will happen? How will it work? How will it change society? How will it change people? Should we do it at all?

*The Left Hand of Darkness* takes place in a universe in which humanity did not originate on Earth. The original humanoid race is the *Hain*, who deposited different versions of humanity on different planets throughout the galaxy. Perhaps the strangest to us are the inhabitants of *Gethen*, a planet in perpetual ice age. The humans of Gethen are all hermaphrodites, capable of being either male or female when ready for reproduction (in *kemmer*) but asexual the rest of the time. Le Guin uses this situation to explore male and female stereotypes as well as a number of different political philosophies.

For the purposes of this module, the book is divided into the introduction and four main sections. The reading assignments may be further divided to fit the schedule and pace of a particular class. Read the overview quickly to get a general sense of what the novel is about.

## Reading Rhetorically

### Prereading

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#### Activity 1

#### An Overview of the Book

**Section One** (pages 1–71, Chapters 1–5): This section takes place predominantly in the kingdom of Karhide with Genly Ai (the representative of a sort of federation of planets called the *Ekumen*) as the viewpoint character. It starts with a ceremonial parade. Genly has an

## Activity 1 (Continued)

awkward conversation with Tibe, an unpleasant political type, and then an awkward dinner with Estraven, the prime minister. The next day Genly has an audience with Argaven, the mad king, and finds that Estraven has been banished. Genly goes to a group called the “Fore-tellers” and learns much about the Handdara religion. This section also contains a folktale called “The Place Inside the Blizzard,” which figures later in the story. Much is presented in this section that becomes important later, but the relevance and meaning of these events are unclear for the moment. Our narrator is confused, and thus, so are we. This section, in a sense, lays out the mechanisms of the political, cultural, and narrative snares that will ultimately trap both Genly and Estraven.

**Section Two** (pages 72–161, Chapters 6–12): Chapter 6 switches viewpoint characters and relates Estraven’s flight from Karhide to Orgoreyn, a neighboring country organized as an authoritarian, socialist state, from Estraven’s point of view. Chapter 7 is presented as a field report on Gethenian sexuality from one of the original *Ekumen* investigators. This report fills in much about Gethenian culture and practices that have been hinted at in the narrative up to this point. Chapter 8 describes Genly’s journey to Orgoreyn, and eventually Genly meets Estraven there. Chapter 9 is another folktale, this one about “Estraven the Traitor,” a distant ancestor of the current Estraven, which has many parallels to the current situation. Chapter 10 is about Genly’s negotiations in Orgoreyn from Genly’s viewpoint, and Chapter 11 covers much of the same events from Estraven’s point of view. Genly doesn’t understand the politics of Orgoreyn, doesn’t trust Estraven, and continues to behave in a naïve and idealistic manner. Estraven understands the politics of both Orgoreyn and Karhide very well, but is confused at Genly’s behavior. At the end of this section, Estraven warns Genly that he is in danger of his life. One could say that this section clarifies much that is referenced in section one and winds the springs in all the cultural and political traps very tightly. In other words, Genly’s continuing misunderstandings of the culture and politics of both Karhide and Orgoreyn are about to get him in big trouble.

**Section Three** (pages 162–236, Chapters 13–16): In Chapter 13, Genly is arrested and sent to a “voluntary farm.” The traps are all sprung. In Chapter 14, Estraven escapes Mishnory (the capitol of Orgoreyn) and rescues Genly. In Chapter 15, we view events from Genly’s perspective again. He begins to recover from the drugs that were administered at the farm, and Estraven begins to recover from *dothe*, a state of heightened energy that Gethenians are able to enter when necessary. The two set off back to Karhide, traveling the long way around, over a glacier in winter. Chapter 16 is from Estraven’s viewpoint. The two discuss philosophy, religion, kinship, love, sexuality, and telepathy. They begin to understand one another.

Activity 1  
(Continued)

**Section Four** (pages 237–301, Chapters 17–20): Chapter 17 is presented as a Gethenian creation myth. Chapter 18 describes the last difficult passage over the glacier. Chapter 19 shows the two crossing the border, back into Karhide. They are taken in and fed but are betrayed. Chapter 20 winds up the story. Genly has called his ship, and Karhide joins the Ekumen.

**The Left Hand of Darkness—Author’s Introduction**

Activity 2

**Introducing Key Concepts**

Complete the table provided below according to the directions stated here. (You will refer to this table and add to it as you do the next activity, “Getting Ready to Read.”)

Steps are as follows:

1. Select a word or concept and then define the new concept, providing necessary attributes.
2. Distinguish between new concept and a similar but different concept from your background knowledge.
3. Give examples of the concept and explain why they are examples.
4. Give non-examples of the concept and explain why they are non-examples.
5. Given examples and non-examples (from the teacher), you are to distinguish between them.
6. Then present your examples and non-examples of the concept and explain your choices.

Define new concept: <b>reality</b>	<b>Attributes</b> for this concept	Attributes for <b>truth</b> or other concepts that are <b>similar</b>	Attributes for <b>fantasy</b> or other concepts that are <b>dissimilar</b>
<b>Examples</b> for concept	<b>Explanation</b> for why they are <b>examples</b>	<b>Non-examples</b> for concept	<b>Explanation</b> for why they are <b>non-examples</b> for this concept

## Activity 3

### Getting Ready to Read

1. What is science fiction? (Refer to your working definition and examples of its attributes. )

Think of some books, stories, TV shows, and movies that you have seen that you consider to be science fiction. Make a two-column list with the name of the work on the left and some reasons why you think this work is science fiction on the right. Then look at your lists and try to come up with a definition of the genre of science fiction.

2. How is science fiction different from other types of fiction?

Now think of some books, stories, TV shows, and movies that are definitely *not* science fiction. How are they different from the science fiction works? Add these to your list and describe why they are not science fiction. Are there any works you can think of that are in-between or hard to categorize?

Now write a short answer to this question: Do you enjoy science fiction? Why or why not?

3. What is the role of the literary artist?

What is the role of the writer in society? Is it to entertain us? Educate or enlighten us? Make us think? Change our views? Help us live better lives? What do you think?

4. What is the nature of the artistic process?

How do writers create stories? When you write a story, where does your inspiration come from? How do you know what to write about? How do you know what words to use? Do you think professional writers work the same way?

5. Why do we read fiction, and what effect does it have on us?

Have you ever identified with a character in a book, TV show, or a movie so much that you felt as though you were living a part of that character's life? Have you ever been inspired to do something because of a character's actions in a book or a movie? Have you ever wished you could be a character in a story? Have you ever been sad when a book or movie is finished, because now you have to return to the real world? Think of a work that affected you in one or more of these ways and write a short description of what it was about and why it affected you. Then share your description with another student.

## Activity 4

### Surveying the Text

You are going to read the author's introduction to one of her most famous works.

1. Look at the reverse of the title page. When was this book first published?
2. What kind of information would you expect to find in an introduction?
3. How long do you think it will take to read the introduction? How much benefit do you think you will get from it?
4. What do you know about this author? (Try looking at her Web site: <<http://www.ursulakleguin.com>>)

## Activity 5

### Making Predictions and Asking Questions

Ursula Le Guin tries to answer the five questions from Activity 3 in her introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*. As you read it, think about whether her answers to those questions are similar to yours. Here are the questions again:

1. What is science fiction?
2. How is science fiction different from other types of fiction?
3. What is the role of the literary artist?
4. What is the nature of the artistic process?
5. Why do we read fiction, and what effect does it have on us?

## Activity 6

### Introducing Key Vocabulary

The following words and phrases are important to understanding Le Guin's introduction. Study the words' derivations and use them to summarize the text, or explore the word using the Frayer method or a word tree. Share your results with the class. Keep your own dictionary of new terms learned here and throughout this module.

- extrapolation—To project a conclusion or a final state from a set of facts and conditions.
- escapist—Entertainment that allows the reader or viewer to escape from his or her problems into a fantasy world.
- rationalist—Based on facts, arguments, and reasoning. One who makes decisions based on these things.
- thought-experiment—An experiment that is not actually performed but instead takes place in the mind.
- clairvoyants—People who can see into the future through psychic means.
- futurologist—A scientist who tries to predict what the future will look like.
- apocalyptic—Having to do with the end of the world.
- androgynous—Having characteristics of both sexes, neither man nor woman (Greek roots *andro*, man, and *gyn*, woman).

## Reading

### Activity 7

#### First Reading

Think about these questions:

- Which of your predictions turned out to be true?
- How are Le Guin's answers to these questions different from your own?
- What surprised you about her answers?

#### Ursula Le Guin's Answers

##### 1. What is science fiction?

Le Guin says that contrary to what most people think, science fiction does not try to predict the future. Instead, she calls it a “thought-experiment.” Some people say that science fiction asks a “what if” question. Le Guin gives a couple of examples from other science fiction writers:

- What if the Allies (the U.S., Britain, France, the Soviet Union) lost the second world war against the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan)? This question is explored in Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*. In this book, the eastern part of the U.S. is governed by Nazis, and the western part is governed by Japan.
- What if a young doctor made a living being out of dead body parts? (This, of course, is the story told in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.)

Here are some other “what if” questions:

- What if people lived on the moon?
- What if machines had feelings?
- What if scientists made cows with wings?
- What if everybody looked exactly the same?
- What if people could communicate with anyone, anywhere they went? (Note, that isn't a “what if” question anymore. Cell phones have already made that possible, and we know how they have changed our culture.)
- What if people could travel from one place to another just by thinking about it (teleportation)?

After reading the introduction, what do you think the “what if” question might be in *The Left Hand of Darkness*?

*Assignment:* Think of your own “what if” question. Write it down. Try to imagine a world in which your question is true. What would it be like? What would people do? Make some notes about how your world would be different from our present world. Think about what kind of character you might use to explore this world. Discuss your world with a partner.

## Activity 7 (Continued)

2. How is science fiction different from other types of fiction?

According to Le Guin, science fiction is not very different from other fiction. It just uses some different metaphors, often based on technology and science. Do you agree?

3. What is the role of the literary artist?

Le Guin says the business of the novelist is telling lies. What does she mean by this? Do you agree? If the novelist tells lies, what is truth?

4. What is the nature of the artistic process?

Le Guin talks about the spirit of inspiration flowing through the writer. She talks about saying in words what cannot be said in words. She talks about Genly Ai (the main character in *The Left Hand of Darkness*) sitting down at her desk and using up her ink and typewriter ribbon. What does this all mean? Do you think that writing is to a certain extent an unconscious process for her? If you were going to imitate her writing process, what would you do?

5. Why do we read fiction, and what effect does it have on us?

Le Guin says that reading a novel makes us temporarily insane because we hear voices that do not exist and believe in places we have never seen and events that never happened. Do you agree? Have you ever felt a bit distant from the real world when you are reading a story?

Now compare your answers to these questions with those of Le Guin. How are they different? Did Le Guin's introduction make you think about any of these questions in a different way?

## Activity 8

### Looking Closely at Language

Here are some words and phrases from the text that may be unfamiliar to you. They are in alphabetical order. Some of them you have seen before. If you get stuck on a word or phrase in the text, look to see if it is here. Return to the text to see what its meaning is there based on the definitions provided here or in the dictionary. Add the words to the dictionary you are creating. Find synonyms and related words to these to learn new words and to increase your vocabulary.

- aesthetically—Having to do with artistic beauty.
- androgynous—Having characteristics of both sexes, neither man nor woman.
- apocalyptic—Having to do with the end of the world.
- Apollo—Ancient Greek god of the sun and of music and poetry.
- *awen*—An ancient Welsh word that means “flowing of spirit.”
- Battle of Borodino (Russian forces successfully fought Napoleon at a village south of Moscow on August 26, 1812. However, that knowledge is unnecessary to understand what Le Guin is talking about here.)

## Activity 8 (Continued)

- carcinogenic—Causes cancer. Here it is used metaphorically to mean that extrapolating too much tends to lead to a bad result.
- circumstantial—Circumstantial evidence is facts and plausible assumptions that would be consistent with something happening a certain way but do not actually prove that it happened that way.
- clairvoyants—People who can see into the future through psychic means.
- Club of Rome—A nonpartisan “think tank.” A group of philosophers and scientists who try to come up with solutions to the world’s problems.
- devious—Tricky or deceiving.
- Dionysios—Ancient Greek god of wine and madness.
- escapist—Entertainment that allows the reader or viewer to escape from his or her problems into a fantasy world.
- extrapolation—To project a conclusion or a final state from a set of facts and conditions.
- futurologist—A scientist who tries to predict what the future will look like.
- Marshalsea Prison—A debtor’s prison in London that is mentioned in the works of Charles Dickens. It no longer exists.
- peculiar—Unique, strange, or different.
- prophets—Religious figures who predict what will happen if people do not change their behavior.
- Pythagoras—An ancient Greek philosopher, sometimes called the first pure mathematician.
- rationalist—Based on facts, arguments, and reasoning. One who makes decisions based on those things.
- Schrödinger—Erwin Schrödinger is famous for a paradox called “Schrödinger’s cat.” This was a thought experiment in which we imagine a cat in a closed box. Is the cat alive or dead? We don’t know until we open the box, and so two universes, one with a dead cat and one with a live one, seem to exist in parallel until we open it. <http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Mathematicians/Schrodinger.html>
- seers—An older term for clairvoyants, people who can see the future.
- simplistic—An explanation that oversimplifies the real conditions.
- thought-experiment—An experiment that is not actually performed but instead takes place in the mind.

## Activity 9

### Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Le Guin makes a number of statements that are unexpected or surprising. She says:

1. Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive.
2. A novelist’s business is lying.
3. When we read a novel, we are insane—bonkers.



Activity 9  
(Continued)

4. Is it any wonder that no truly respectable society has ever trusted its artists?
5. I talk about the gods; I am an atheist.
6. I am an artist too, and therefore a liar.
7. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth.
8. In reading a novel, any novel, we have to know perfectly well that the whole thing is nonsense, and then, while reading, believe every word of it.
9. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words.
10. The truth is a matter of the imagination.

Why does Le Guin use all these contradictory and surprising statements to make her points?

What is the effect on the reader of all these contradictions?

What is Le Guin trying to do in writing this way?

Do you think it would have been better to say these things more directly, more straightforwardly? Is it possible to do that?

Pick one of the statements listed above and explain what the author might mean by it. Try to include at least three words from your vocabulary dictionary in creating your explanation.

## ***The Left Hand of Darkness*—Section 1 (pages 1–71, Chapters 1–5)**

### **Prereading**

Activity 10

#### **Getting Ready to Read**

The following information will help you prepare to read Chapters 1–5 of *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

People have different preferences when reading novels. The questions and discussion activities that follow are designed to help you get the most out of your reading by helping you think about issues, make connections, recognize important points, and so forth. However, some people just like to read and enjoy first, then go back and think about the details. If you are that type of reader, you may want to read the whole novel and then come back to the exercises and activities.

Most fictional works start in the middle of the events, and the reader has to work pretty hard for the first few pages to figure out what is going on. This problem is even more complicated in science fiction, because the world in which the events are taking place is often quite different from the world that we live in. The events of *The Left Hand of Darkness* take place on a world called “Gethen” by the inhabitants and “Winter” by outsiders. Gethen is in the midst of an ice age; therefore, snow, ice, and cold are major factors in the environment. The names of the people and places are unusual and foreign. For example, the story

## Activity 10 (Continued)

begins in Erhenrang, the major city of the kingdom of Karhide, and the major character is Genly Ai (whose first name is pronounced with a hard “g” as in “ghost” or “grape,” and whose last name is pronounced like “eye”). Genly is from off the world. He is a representative of a sort of United Nations of planets called the “Ekumen,” and his job is to convince the people of Gethen to join. As the story opens, Genly is watching a ceremony and trying to arrange an audience with the king, Argaven, but he is confused by the culture and language, and things are not going well.

## Activity 11

### Surveying the Text

The chapters in this section are:

1. A Parade in Erhenrang
2. The Place Inside the Blizzard
3. The Mad King
4. The Nineteenth Day
5. The Domestication of Hunch

Some things to think about when you read these chapters:

- We have parades for celebrations and holidays. What kind of celebration could it be?
- How could there be a place *inside* a blizzard?
- Is the king angry or crazy? Is an angry or crazy king a good ruler?
- What is the significance of the nineteenth day?
- A hunch is a kind of irrational feeling, without any visible evidence, that something is true or is going to happen. What would it mean to “domesticate” the power to have a hunch?

At this point you don’t have enough information to answer these questions. You need to read the book with these questions in mind.

## Activity 12

### Making Predictions and Asking Questions

People often ask, “What is this novel about?” Sometimes they are asking about the plot of the novel, the series of events that happen in it. But events are usually driven by people who are trying to do something, who have goals and objectives and are facing obstacles and dangers. So we might say that the novel is about the characters, especially the protagonist, or viewpoint character. However, a novelist is usually exploring some particular themes and ideas, and we could also say that the novel, in some abstract sense, is about those themes.

*Three points of view.* We might see *The Left Hand of Darkness* as having three main areas of exploration:

- First, Le Guin is clearly interested in the development of her characters: who they are, what they are trying to do, their emotional states, and their growth as people. We might call this a psychological orientation.

## Activity 12 (Continued)

- Second, this novel explores cultural differences, differences between Gethenian culture and our own and between the different countries of Gethen. We might call this a cultural or anthropological perspective. This perspective is especially interesting because physically, in one particular sense, the people of Gethen are very different from us.
- Third, Le Guin is interested in the way different societies organize themselves politically. Karhide, where Genly starts out, is a traditional monarchy, but it is starting to change. Orgoreyn, where Genly goes after he is unsuccessful in Karhide, has a more modern and efficient government, but all is not quite as it seems. This we might call the political perspective.

Before beginning to read the novel, you should choose one of the three perspectives as a focus for reading. You can be a “psychologist,” an “anthropologist,” or a “political officer.” As you read, you will keep your particular perspective in mind, looking for information relevant to your questions.

The **psychologist** should pay attention to the main characters, Genly Ai and Estraven, and their relationships with some of the other characters, such as Tibe and Argaven. Throughout your reading you will encounter “character questions,” such as these:

- What kind of personality does this character have? How can you tell?
- What are the strong points of this character?
- What are the weak points?
- What is this character trying to do?
- What motivates this character?
- What obstacles does this character face?
- How does this character change through the course of the novel?
- What causes the character to change?
- What does the character learn?
- What kind of language would a psychologist use to describe a person? Identify those kinds of words from the text and create a page for them in your vocabulary notebook.

The **anthropologist** should pay attention to foods, etiquette and standards of behavior, cultural practices and concepts, religious ideas, significant words, marriage and family customs, and all the ways that people in a society interact with one another. Throughout your reading, you will encounter “culture questions,” such as these:

- How are Gethenians different from us?
- How does the cold affect Gethenian culture?
- What do Gethenians eat and drink? How is their diet different from ours?
- What is the equivalent of marriage on Gethen?
- How do Gethenians organize families?
- What kind of technology do Gethenians have?
- What kinds of weapons do Gethenians have?

## Activity 12 (Continued)

- What are the major religions on Gethen? How are they different?
- What is *shifgrethor*? (This is an important Gethenian concept, somewhat different from any American one.)
- What kind of language would an anthropologist use to describe a person, place, or situation? Identify those kinds of words from the text and create a page for them in your vocabulary notebook.

The **political officer** has an interesting job. *The Left Hand of Darkness* was written during the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union were two nuclear-armed superpowers with very different political systems and beliefs. In one sense, this novel explores those different political beliefs. Every Soviet naval vessel had a political officer whose job it was to make sure that the crew remained true to Soviet political beliefs. In some ways, the political officer was more powerful than the captain. In your reading of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the political officer should think about “political questions,” such as these:

- What kind of government does Karhide have? Who has power, and what kind of power do they have?
- What aspects of Karhide have remained the same for hundreds of years? What aspects are changing?
- What kind of government does Orgoreyn have? Who has power, and what kind of power do they have?
- How is the government of Karhide different from the government of Orgoreyn?
- Which of the two countries would you prefer to live in? Why?
- In Orgoreyn, what is the *Sarf*?
- What kind of communication system do Gethenians have, and who controls it?
- What is the *Ekumen*? Is it a government? What is it trying to do, and why?
- What kind of language would a political officer use to describe a person, situation, or setting? Identify those kinds of words from the text and create a page for them in your vocabulary notebook.

At least once a week, the three researchers (psychologist, anthropologist, and political officer) should meet together and discuss their findings.

*Assignment:* To begin our reading, read the italicized report headnote and the first two paragraphs of Chapter 1, “A Parade in Ehrenrang.” Note that this novel is presented as a report from Genly Ai to an Ekumen official on another planet. It is called an *ansible* document. The ansible is a faster-than-light communication device. According to Einstein’s theory of relativity, nothing can travel faster than light, but in Le Guin’s novels, people can communicate instantaneously across interstellar distances by using the ansible. (Although Le Guin apparently invented this word, the ansible also appears in the *Ender’s Game* series of novels by Orson Scott Card.)

## Activity 12 (Continued)

Genly says, “I’ll make my report as if I told a story, for I was taught as a child on my homeworld that Truth is a matter of the imagination.”

1. What are some of the normal differences between a report and a story? Why do you think Genly chooses to tell a story instead of writing an official report?
2. Why doesn’t Genly think that facts equal Truth? What does he mean by comparing facts to pearls that look different when worn by different people?
3. Genly says that the story is not all his, nor told by him alone. What do you think this means about how the story will be told?
4. Genly says, “If at moments the facts seem to alter with an altered voice, why then you can choose the fact you like best.” Does this mean that the facts change depending on the perspective of the teller? Do you agree?
5. Genly says that where he comes from, “Truth is a matter of the imagination.” Le Guin quotes Genly saying this in her introduction, so she must think it is an important idea. What does it mean?

## Activity 13

### Introducing Key Vocabulary

Le Guin’s style is literary, and there is a lot of interesting vocabulary. The following words are useful in understanding the story, especially at the beginning. Look for these words in the story when you read it:

- **potentates**—Persons with power; kings, rulers.
- **dignitaries**—Important people; people with dignity, which come from their social status.
- **insolent**—Very disrespectful (adjective form).
- **insolence**—Disrespectful speech and behavior (noun form).
- **animosity**—Hostile or unfriendly feeling.
- **specious**—Used to describe an argument that looks reasonable on the surface but is not really so.
- **proclamation**—An announcement.
- **pretense**—A pretended reason for doing something that is really being done for another reason.

The following “Gethenian” words are very important to understanding the story. These words are made-up words that do not exist in English, but you need to know them to understand Gethenian culture.

- **shifgrethor**—Gethenian term related to honor and prestige.
- **kemmer**—Gethenian word meaning that a person is in a physical state of being “ready for reproduction.”
- **kemmering**—A vow similar to marriage between two Gethenians.

## Reading

### Activity 14

#### First Reading

Read pages 1–71 (Chapters 1–5), keeping in mind the questions raised in “Surveying the Text” and “Making Predictions.” As you read, look for the answers to the questions listed below for each chapter. Also keep in mind your techniques for learning about words from contextual clues.

#### Chapter 1

1. What is the occasion of the parade?
  - a. A celebration of a great military victory.
  - b. Mother’s Day.
  - c. The completion of the Arch of the River Gate.
  - d. The parade has been done every year for so long that no one knows why.
2. Who is Estraven?
  - a. The Prime Minister of Karhide.
  - b. The “King’s Ear.”
  - c. A dignitary.
  - d. All of the above.
3. How does Genly feel about Estraven?
  - a. He doesn’t like him.
  - b. He trusts him completely.
  - c. Estraven is his greatest enemy in Karhide.
  - d. Genly has never met him.
4. Who is Argaven?
  - a. A spy from Orgoreyn.
  - b. The king of Karhide.
  - c. Estraven’s brother.
  - d. All of the above.
5. Who is Tibe?
  - a. Genly’s landlady.
  - b. A politician with a wrinkled face.
  - c. A fortuneteller.
  - d. Genly’s friend.
6. On Gethen, what is an “island”?
  - a. A bit of land surrounded by water.
  - b. A bit of land surrounded by ice.
  - c. A boarding house or hotel.
  - d. A part of a roadway.

Activity 14  
(Continued)

7. What caused Estraven to lose favor with the king?
  - a. A border dispute between Karhide and Orgoreyn.
  - b. The king thinks Estraven is insane.
  - c. The king doesn't like Genly.
  - d. Estraven wasn't re-elected as Prime Minister.
8. What is Genly trying to accomplish?
  - a. He is trying to sell guns and rockets to Karhide.
  - b. He is trying to sell "ansible" technology.
  - c. He is a spy from Orgoreyn.
  - d. He wants Karhide to join the Ekumen, a league of planets.

**Chapter 2**

1. What is "The Place Inside the Blizzard?"
  - a. A shelter for lost travelers.
  - b. A spirit place for people who kill themselves.
  - c. A famous tavern in the north country.
  - d. The eye of a hurricane.
2. What crime have Hode and Getheren committed?
  - a. They robbed a liquor store.
  - b. They killed a neighbor.
  - c. They pledged "kemmering" for life, even though they were brothers.
  - d. They kidnapped a woman to be their wife.
3. Why does Getheren curse the people of his homeland?
  - a. No one would let him stay in their house for longer than three days.
  - b. His homeland had exiled him and called him an outlaw.
  - c. No one showed him any kindness.
  - d. All of the above.
4. Why does Getheren refuse to stay inside the blizzard with Hode?
  - a. It's too cold there.
  - b. He is mad at Hode for killing himself.
  - c. He is scared of Hode because he looks too white.
  - d. Hode doesn't want him to stay.

**Chapter 3**

1. Why was Estraven banished?
  - a. He was friends with Genly, who is an alien.
  - b. He made fun of the king's ear.
  - c. The king thought he was a spy.
  - d. His policy on the border dispute with Orgoreyn made the king think he was a traitor.
2. Why does Genly, the "First Mobile," go to Gethen alone?
  - a. He is less threatening to the people of the planet if he is alone.
  - b. He doesn't really like other people very much.

Activity 14  
(Continued)

- c. There were others with him but they got lost somehow.
  - d. His partner, Archon Fabrile, was killed by a sonic gun.
3. Why does the king think that all the people in the Ekumen are monsters?
- a. The people of the Ekumen have two heads, except for the kings.
  - b. The people of the Ekumen are either male or female and stay that way all the time.
  - c. The people of the Ekumen don't have any kings.
  - d. The king is crazy.
4. Why is the king afraid of Genly?
- a. Genly has a sonic gun.
  - b. Genly looks like a monster.
  - c. Genly brings change to Karhide.
  - d. He thinks Genly might poison him.
5. Why doesn't the king want to join the Ekumen?
- a. He wants Karhide to go its own way.
  - b. He wants more money.
  - d. He is crazy.
  - d. Estraven told him not to.

**Chapter 4**

1. Why isn't Berosty happy with the answer the Foretellers give to his question, "When will I die?"
- a. The date they told him is too soon.
  - b. The answer they gave him was too vague.
  - c. He wanted them to tell him he would never die.
  - d. Knowing the precise day of his death was too much for him.
2. Why isn't Berosty happy with the answer Herbor gets from the Foretellers?
- a. The date they told him is too soon.
  - b. The answer they gave him was too vague.
  - c. He wanted them to tell him he would never die.
  - d. Knowing the precise day of his death was too much for him.
3. How does the story end?
- a. Berosty finally gets the right answer and is happy until the day of his death.
  - b. Herbor convinces Berosty that it was a stupid question anyway.
  - c. Berosty goes crazy and kills Herbor and then dies on the 19th day of the month.
  - d. Herbor runs away, never to be seen again.

**Chapter 5**

1. What are the two main religions of Gethen? (See the first page of the chapter.)
- a. The old way of the Handarra and the new way of Yomesh.
  - b. Nihilism and Bokonism.



Activity 14  
(Continued)

- c. Socialism and facism.
  - d. On Gethen, there is no religion.
2. Why don't Gethenians go to war?
- a. They have no weapons.
  - b. They never commit acts of violence of any kind.
  - c. Acts of violence are instantly punished by death.
  - d. They lack the ability to mobilize, and they don't even have a word for war.
3. Why does Genly seek out the Foretellers?
- a. He wants to convince them to join the Ekumen.
  - b. He wants to teach them telepathy.
  - c. He wants to find out if they can really tell the future.
  - d. He wants to ask them where Estraven went.
4. What happens if someone asks the Foretellers an unanswerable question?
- a. They charge twice as much.
  - b. They won't even try to answer it, because once they tried and it made them all crazy.
  - c. They just give a vague, ambiguous answer.
  - d. They just take the questioner's money and run away.
5. What questions does Genly ask the Foretellers?
- a. Who is the fairest one of all?
  - b. What is the square root of four?
  - c. Will Gethen be a member of the Ekumen in five years?
  - d. Where did Estraven go?
6. When Genly asked his question, why were there ten members in the telepathic circle of the Foretellers instead of the usual nine?
- a. Estraven was spying on the circle.
  - b. Genly's telepathic abilities caused him to join the circle.
  - c. The Foretellers miscounted how many people were there.
  - d. Genly's gems were worth more than he thought, so another person was added.
7. Why don't kings ask many questions of the Foretellers?
- a. The Foretellers charge kings a lot of money, and the answers aren't very useful.
  - b. Kings on Gethen are usually crazy.
  - c. The Foretellers are afraid of kings.
  - d. Kings have their own fortune tellers.
8. What answer do the Foretellers give to Genly's question?
- a. "Good fences make good neighbors."
  - b. "Karhide isn't a country; it's a family quarrel."
  - c. "No."
  - d. "Yes!"

## Activity 15

### Looking Closely at Language

1. Gethenian words: Do Le Guin’s made-up Gethenian words add essential meaning to the story? What if Le Guin used *tuba-trom-bones* instead of *gossiwors*? What if she said “Estraven suddenly became super-strong, but afterwards he was unnaturally tired” instead of “Estraven used *dothe* strength to counter the effects of paralysis”? Discuss the Gethenian words noted below with a partner. Can you think of English words that would work just as well? To do this, you will need to use a little creativity and return to the text to see how the words are used in the context of the text. Try to substitute words you know to create meaning.
  - *gossiwors*—A musical instrument of Karhide, played only in the king’s presence (3).
  - *kyorremy*—Upper parliament in Karhide (6).
  - *dothe*—A state of abnormal, but temporary strength (59).
  - *Handdaratta*—People who practice *Handdara*, the ancient religious practice of Gethen (57).
  - *nusuth*—A word used by the *Handdarrata* meaning “it doesn’t matter” (58).
  - *Yomeshta*—People who practice *Yomesh*, the newer religion that branched off from *Handdara* (61).
2. Some English words from the book might be difficult. Practice your context clues to get meaning from the text, but if you want to be sure about a word’s meaning, use the dictionary to support your prediction. The words in each chapter section are alphabetized below. You may also opt to identify words you do not know from the text and look them up to help you understand the text better.

#### Chapter 1

adroit—skillful  
artisans—artists or craftsmen  
ascends—climbs  
augmentation—an addition  
breeches—trousers reaching to the knees  
diurnal—daily or “of the day”  
effeminate—a male who looks or acts like a female  
eminence—a high position  
foray—a raid to seize things  
impugns—to fight against or challenge as false  
insipidly—blandly  
masons—bricklayers  
obdurate—stubborn  
obliging—cooperating  
obviate—make unnecessary  
ornate—highly decorated  
patronage—political favors

Activity 15  
(Continued)

pertinacious—holding firmly to a purpose  
phlegmatic—sluggish, slow, calm  
transmuted—changed or transformed

**Chapter 2**

blighted—diseased, sick  
chafallen—having the lower jaw hanging loosely, surprised and depressed  
prospered—things went well, there was growth and good health  
transgression—breaking the rules  
tumult—disordered action, chaos

**Chapter 3**

augmented—added to  
etiquette—politeness  
implicated—involved, responsible  
intently—with great attention  
interior—inside  
panoply—impressive clothes  
perjuring—lying  
physiological—having to do with the physical body and its systems  
predecessors—people who came before  
resolution—strength of purpose  
rufous—reddish  
simultaneously—at the same time  
trudging—walking as if very tired  
verbatim—completely word for word

**Chapter 4**

demented—mentally ill

**Chapter 5**

abominations—hateful things  
abyss—a deep drop, a canyon  
aerie—the high nest of an eagle; a high dwelling place  
ambiguous—unclear, vague  
anomalies—differences  
appalling—shocking  
buttresses—structures to hold up a wall  
chasms—a wide, deep opening, similar to “abyss”  
creed—a set of beliefs  
emulate—to imitate or copy  
evasion—escape  
frailest—weakest  
hallucinations—things seen that are not really there  
ignoble—not noble, base  
inarticulate—unable to speak or unable to speak clearly  
paraverbal—beyond words

## Activity 15 (Continued)

phantasmal—like a phantasm, an illusion, or a ghostly figure  
precipice—a sharp drop; a cliff  
recoil—pull back in shock or disgust  
sheaf—a bundle  
skein—a coil of yarn or thread  
transients—temporary visitors passing through  
ubiquitous—seen everywhere  
vendettas—feuds  
voluble—talkative

## Activity 16

### Analyzing Stylistic Choices

The linguistic choices writers make create certain effects for their readers. The questions for discussion are divided into two categories: words and sentences.

#### Words

Although Le Guin writes this story in English, she also uses some Gethenian words, such as *gossiwor*, *kyorremy*, *shifgrethor*, and *nusuth*. Since Gethen is a fictitious place, clearly these words have been invented by the author. Discuss the following questions:

1. What is the effect of these alien words on the reader?
2. Does an author need alien words to describe an alien culture?
3. Does using these “Gethenian” words help Le Guin create the feeling of a different culture with different ideas?
4. Would the story be less confusing and easier to read without using these words?
5. Do you think words like *shifgrethor* and *nusuth* would be useful in English? Could you use them with your classmates?

#### Sentences

Although Le Guin’s sentence structure is quite varied, she does tend to favor long, complex structures with phrases and sentences connected by semicolons, dashes, commas, and even periods. Here are some examples:

1. I don’t trust Estraven, whose motives are forever obscure; I don’t like him; yet I feel and respond to his authority as surely as I do to the warmth of the sun (7).
2. No doubt this was all a matter of *shifgrethor*—prestige, face, place, the pride-relationship, the untranslatable and all-important principle of social authority in Karhide and all civilizations of Gethen. And if it was I would not understand it (14).
3. I thought of Estraven waiting for me there as the snow fell last night, and felt a pang of pure pity for the man whom I had seen in yesterday’s parade sweating and superb under the weight of his panoply and power, a man at the prime of his career, potent and magnificent—gone now, down, done (41).

## Activity 16 (Continued)

Each of these sentences names the topic of the sentence in the first phrase and then piles up detail and comments about that topic in the phrases and independent clauses that follow.

1. What is the effect of this writing style? Is it quick or slow to read?
2. Would Le Guin's style be better if it were short, simple, and easy to read?
3. In the introduction, Le Guin says that she tries to say in words what cannot be said in words. Is this writing style part of her attempt to do just that?

As an experiment, try re-writing one of these passages as a series of simple sentences. Is it better? Is it easier to read?

## Activity 17

### Considering the Structure of the Text

The chapters in this section alternate between presenting Genly's narrative report to the Ekumen and Gethenian folktales that explain aspects of Gethenian culture. There are three sections of narrative with two folktales in between.

The narrative starts with "A Parade in Erhenrang."

- Why does Le Guin start the story with the parade? Why not start with Genly's ship landing on Gethen or Genly struggling to learn the Gethenian languages and studying the culture before he arrives?

The first folktale is "The Place Inside the Blizzard."

- What information does this tale provide about Gethenian culture? What do we learn from it?
- Why didn't Le Guin just give us this information as part of the narrative?

The second folktale is "The Nineteenth Day."

- What information does this tale provide about Gethenian culture?
- How does this tale influence our understanding of the chapter that follows it?
- Why didn't Le Guin just give us this information as a part of the narrative?

## Postreading

### Activity 18

#### Thinking Critically

Read these questions, then look for the answers as you read the text:

#### Character Questions for the Psychologist

1. Why doesn't Genly like Estraven? Is it a personality conflict, a misunderstanding, a grudge, or some other problem?
2. What kind of person is Genly? Is he intelligent? Clever? Emotional? Idealistic?

## Activity 18 (Continued)

3. What kind of person is Estraven? Is he as devious as Genly thinks he is?
4. Why did Estraven help Genly at first, but then stop helping him?
5. Why did Estraven invite Genly to dinner?
6. When Genly is having dinner with Estraven, he thinks, “I was alone, with a stranger, inside the walls of a dark palace, in a strange snow-changed city, in the heart of the Ice Age of an alien world.” What is he feeling? Can you imagine how you would feel in this situation?
7. What kind of person is Tibe? What do you think Tibe is trying to do?
8. What effect does the constant cold have on Genly?
9. What kind of person is Argaven? In what sense is he “mad”? How can you tell?
10. Why doesn’t Getheren want to stay with his brother Hode in the place inside the blizzard? What is wrong with being together in that place?
11. In “The Nineteenth Day,” why does Berosty kill Herbor after he brings back the second answer from the Foretellers?
12. When Genly first goes to the Foretellers, does he believe in their powers? Does he believe in them after they answer his question?
13. Faxe says, “The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty: not knowing what comes next.” Is this the lesson of “The Nineteenth Day”? Do you agree?
14. If you were going to ask the Foretellers a question, what question would you ask?

### Cultural Questions for the Anthropologist

1. What does the ceremony in which the king sets the keystone of the arch of the new bridge in red cement say about the culture of Karhide?
2. What does the institution of the “island” show about Karhide?
3. Genly says he sees “a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own” (12). Genly has a lot of trouble even finding language to talk about Gethenian sexuality. Chapter 5 opens with the statement, “My *landlady*, a voluble *man*, arranged my journey into the East.” What are some of the ways that the dual nature of Gethenian sexuality makes their culture different from ours? Do you think it would be easier in some ways to live in a society that did not have set gender roles?
4. What does the transportation technology in Karhide say about Gethenian culture? What about their media?
5. Le Guin drops lots of hints about the concept of *shifgrethor* throughout this section. What do you think it means?
6. Why does Genly go to see the Foretellers?
7. What are the basic beliefs and practices of the Handdara religion? Does it have any wisdom for our own culture?
8. How did the Yomesh religion start?

## Activity 18 (Continued)

### Political Questions for the Political Officer

1. How is the government of Karhide organized? Who has power?
2. Estraven says, “Karhide is not a nation, but a family quarrel.” What does he mean by this?
3. Why did Estraven help farmers move out of the disputed border area between Karhide and Orgoreyn?
4. Why is the border dispute between Karhide and Orgoreyn important? Why does Estraven see it differently from the king?
5. What kind of person is Tibe? What do you think Tibe is trying to do?
6. Estraven says, “You came to my country at a strange time. Things are changing” (16). It seems that things in Karhide take thousands of years to change. What does he mean?
7. Estraven says that patriotism does not mean love of country, but fear of the other. What does he mean? Is he right?
8. Estraven says, “The Orgota [people of Orgoreyn] have experience in subordinating local interests to a general interest, while Karhide has almost none. And the Commensals of Orgoreyn are mostly sane men, if unintelligent, while the king of Karhide is not only insane, but rather stupid” (20). Genly interprets this statement to mean that Estraven has no loyalty to anyone. Is Genly right? What does Estraven mean by local interests compared with general interests?
9. Why don’t kings often go to the Foretellers?

## Connecting Reading to Writing

### Activity 19

#### Using the Words of Others

In Chapter 4, “The Mad King” (pages 33–40), Genly meets with King Argaven and presents his case for joining the Ekumen. Think about the following question:

Consider Genly’s arguments to the king. Are they logical? Are they well-supported? If you were the king, would you join the Ekumen? Why or why not?

In preparation for writing about this question, choose three passages from pages 33 to 40 that you might be able to use in your essay. First, write each passage down as a correctly punctuated direct quotation. Second, paraphrase the material in your own words. Finally, respond to the idea expressed in the passage by agreeing or disagreeing with it and explaining why.

Example:

**Quote:** King Argaven tells Genly Ai, “Keep clear of factions. Tell your own lies, do your own deeds. And trust no one” (33).

Activity 19  
(Continued)

**Paraphrase:** King Argaven tells Genly to keep clear of factions, tell his own lies, do his own deeds, and to trust no one (33). (Notice that there are no quotation marks, and the pronouns change from “your” to “his” because it is indirect speech.)

**Response:** This is an interesting passage because normally Gethenians consider it impolite to give someone advice. It is also interesting because later in the book Estraven gives Genly the same advice that the king gave.

## Writing Rhetorically

### Prewriting

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Activity 20

#### Reading the Assignment

##### Writing Assignment

In a well-organized essay of approximately two to three pages, answer the following question:

Consider Genly’s arguments to the king. Are they logical? Are they well-supported? If you were the king, would you join the Ekumen? Why or why not? Support your decision with logical arguments and information from the book, especially pages 33–40.

Activity 21

#### Getting Ready to Write

Gather your answers to the various questions we have considered up to this point and your “quote, paraphrase, response” exercise. Review these materials as you think about the question. Is your opinion leaning toward joining the Ekumen or not?

List the reasons and justifications for your answers, and refer to your notes and vocabulary

Activity 22

#### Formulating a Working Thesis

A thesis statement is a statement of a position that the essay is going to support. The thesis should be something that the reader could possibly agree or disagree with. For example, “Watching television has good and bad aspects” is not a strong thesis because almost no one would disagree with it.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Genly’s thesis is on these lines: “Joining the Ekumen will bring great advantages to Karhide and Gethen through trade in ideas and goods.” Genly believes this strongly. He has devoted his life to it.



Activity 22  
(Continued)

Argaven's thesis is, "If there are eighty thousand worlds full of monsters out there it doesn't matter because Karhide has its own culture and wants nothing from them." Argaven is afraid that the Ekumen will come and impose its ideas on Karhide, changing its culture and making the king irrelevant. In the past, change has come very slowly on Gethen.

Might they possibly both be right? How would the people of Earth react if Genly Ai showed up in Washington, D.C., with a message like that?

Considering these positions and the evidence in the book, what do you think Argaven should do? Do you think Genly is right? Is Argaven right to protect his country from outside influences? Is change inevitable anyway? Is Genly simply trying to get Gethen to rejoin the rest of humanity? Write down your working thesis. You can always change it later if you find that your opinion has changed after writing about it.

Here are some examples:

Karhide should join the Ekumen because the people will learn about new ideas and technology, and their lives will improve.

Karhide should not join the Ekumen because doing so would threaten its own unique cultural heritage, and losing your culture is a terrible thing.

Karhide should join the Ekumen because that will make it more powerful than its neighbors and will bring many technological advantages.

Write your thesis here:

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Now think about what points you want to make to support your thesis. You might want to make points about trade, technology, culture, religion, and so forth. You might even want to talk about what makes a happy life. List your points here:

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When you have your thesis and your main points listed, find a partner and take turns explaining your thesis and your points.

## Writing

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### Activity 23

#### Composing a Draft

Write the first draft of your essay by following the plan you have already outlined. The most important concern for this draft is to get your ideas and arguments down on paper. Try to use some of the quotes from the book you gathered in the previous “quote, paraphrase, respond” activity. Create lists of the key terms from the novel that will help you to clarify your own thoughts and to respond directly to the question asked.

### Activity 24

#### Organizing the Essay and Developing the Content

With your first draft in front of you, think about the following questions:

##### Introduction

- Do you think you need a question, a surprising statement, or some other “hook” to get the reader’s attention?
- This is an essay for a general audience, some of whom may not have read *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Does your introduction have the essential background information that the reader needs to understand what you are talking about?
- Does your introduction provide a context for understanding the thesis statement?
- Is your thesis clearly stated? Could some people disagree with it?
- Have you given the reader some idea of how you are going to develop the essay?

##### Body

- Do you have at least two or three paragraphs that support the thesis statement?
- Do you have topic sentences that present each main point?
- Are the main points supported with evidence; that is, facts, arguments, quotations, or paraphrases from the book?
- Are there paragraphs that include different points of view or address counterarguments? Do you address those points of view in one of these ways:
  - By refuting them?
  - By acknowledging them but showing how your own argument is better?
  - By granting them altogether but showing they are irrelevant?

##### Conclusion

- Do you have a final paragraph (or paragraphs) that includes a solid argument to support the thesis and indicates the significance of the argument—the “so what” factor?

## Revising and Editing

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### Activity 25

#### Revising the Draft

After considering the previous questions and revising your draft accordingly, get into a three- or four-person group and pass your revised draft around the circle to the next person. Read each draft carefully and make notes on your responses. Answer the following questions:

- What is the thesis? Do you agree with it?
- Do the arguments provide enough support? Which ones are strong? Which are weaker?
- Would a reader from outside the class who had not read the book be able to understand the paper?
- Does the conclusion wrap things up well?

Do this for each paper in your small group. Then discuss your answers. At the end of this process, make any revisions to your own draft that you think are necessary.

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### Activity 26

#### Editing the Draft

Now that the content is in place, it is time to work with the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics of your draft to make sure that your essay conforms to the guidelines of standard written English.

#### Editing Guidelines for Individual Work

- If possible, set your essay aside for 24 hours before rereading to find errors.
  - If possible, read your essay aloud to a friend so you can hear your errors.
  - Focus on individual words and sentences rather than the overall meaning. Take a sheet of paper and cover everything except the line you are reading. Then touch your pencil to each word as you read.
  - With the help of your teacher, figure out your own pattern of errors—the most serious and frequent errors you make.
  - Look for only one type of error at a time. Then go back and look for a second type, and if necessary, a third.
  - Use the dictionary to check spelling and confirm that you have chosen the right word for the context.
- 

### Activity 27

#### Reflecting on the Writing

Think about the following questions:

1. Writing often helps us focus our thinking so that we learn about things that we might not have otherwise noticed. What did you learn about *The Left Hand of Darkness* from writing this paper?
2. Working systematically through a writing process can help improve writing skills. What skills do you think you improved by writing this paper?

# Reading Rhetorically

## *The Left Hand of Darkness*—Section 2 (pages 72–161, Chapters 6–11)

### Prereading

#### Activity 28

#### Surveying the Text

The chapters in this section are the following:

6. One Way into Orgoreyn
7. The Question of Sex
8. Another Way into Orgoreyn
9. Estraven the Traitor
10. Conversations in Mishnory
11. Soliloquies in Mishnory

Think about these questions:

- Apparently there are at least two ways into Orgoreyn. Who is going there?
- We already know that Gethenians are a bit different physiologically from other humans. How does this affect their culture?
- The king thinks that Estraven is a traitor. Is he really?
- A “soliloquy” is a speech made alone by one actor. What could it mean that there are both conversations and soliloquies in Mishnory?

At this point you don’t have enough information to answer these questions. You will have to read the book with these questions in mind.

#### Activity 29

#### Making Predictions and Asking Questions

To begin, read the first sentence of Chapter 6:

The cook, who was always at the house very early, woke me up; I sleep sound, and he had to shake me and say in my ear, “Wake up, wake up, Lord Estraven, there’s a runner come from the King’s House!”

Who is the viewpoint character in this chapter? Why did the author decide to change viewpoint characters? What are the advantages of this shift? What are the disadvantages?

#### Activity 30

#### Introducing Key Vocabulary

Use contextual clues to identify meanings and look for these words when you read further:

- celibate—A person who has sworn to have no sexual intercourse (74).
- pretext—A false reason for doing something (76).
- digit—Literally a finger or toe. In Orgoreyn it seems to mean something such as *citizen*, and the opposite is *dependent* (80).

Activity 30  
(Continued)

- prestige—High social status. On Gethen, this is tied to the concept of *shifgrethor*. Estraven talks about “playing *shifgrethor*” and “prestige battles” (83).

## Reading

Activity 31

### First Reading

Read pages 72–161 (Chapters 6–11), keeping in mind the questions raised in “Surveying the Text.” As you read, look for the answers to the questions listed below for each chapter.

#### Chapter 6

1. Why does Estraven have to leave Karhide so quickly?
  - a. He has to go to another parade.
  - b. He wants to go look for Genly.
  - c. The king has exiled him.
  - d. His rent is due and he doesn’t have any money.
2. What are the rules governing Estraven’s exile?
  - a. He has three days to leave Karhide.
  - b. No one can help him.
  - c. If he is still in Karhide after three days, anyone can kill him.
  - d. All of the above.
3. Why does Estraven steal a rowboat?
  - a. Tibe has warned the sailors not to help him.
  - b. There is no ship from Orgoreyn to take him.
  - c. If he stays, Tibe’s men will kill him.
  - d. All of the above.
4. Why does Estraven end up in a hospital?
  - a. He fell overboard and almost drowned.
  - b. Tibe’s men shot him with a sonic gun, and he used “dothe” to get away.
  - c. He has a bullet wound.
  - d. The inspector thought he was crazy.
5. Who does Estraven call when he gets tired of loading fish?
  - a. A job agency.
  - b. Political leaders of Orgoreyn that he knows because he used to be Prime Minister of Karhide.
  - c. Some dear old friends.
  - d. Tibe.
6. What are the *Commensals*?
  - a. A soccer team.
  - b. A type of pastry.
  - c. The 33 rulers of Orgoreyn.
  - d. A part of a roadway.

Activity 31  
(Continued)

7. How does Tibe want to change Karhide?
  - a. He wants to make Karhide more “efficient,” like Orgoreyn.
  - b. He wants Orgoreyn to take over Karhide.
  - c. He wants to make money selling Genly action figures.
  - d. He wants to have more parades.
8. What does Estraven mean when he asks if the Great Continent can hold two Orgoreyns?
  - a. The Great Continent is really not so great.
  - b. He is just making a joke.
  - c. He is trying to flatter the commensals.
  - d. If Karhide becomes more like Orgoreyn, there might be war between the two countries.

**Chapter 7**

1. Who is Ong Tot Opong?
  - a. An Investigator from the Ekumen, one of Genly’s predecessors on Gethen.
  - b. A famous radio actor in Orgoreyn.
  - c. A particularly clever bandit in the mountains.
  - d. The leader of the commensals.
2. This chapter is supposed to be field notes. What are these field notes about?
  - a. The plants and animals of Gethen.
  - b. Gethenian weapons and military strategy.
  - c. Gethenian sexuality and how it came about.
  - d. Gethenian cultural practices.
3. How are Gethenians different from the other humans in the Ekmen?
  - a. They have wings and can fly.
  - b. They have two heads, a thinking head and a talking head.
  - c. They can’t read.
  - d. Each individual is androgynous most of the time.
4. What is the closest thing to marriage on Gethen?
  - a. They go to the kemmerhouse.
  - b. Two individuals “vow kemmering” to each other for life.
  - c. They can’t get married because they are all the same sex.
  - d. They have to ask the king’s permission.

**Chapter 8**

1. In the Ekumen, what is the difference between a Mobile and an Investigator?
  - a. The Investigator stays in one place and does research while the Mobile wanders around looking at things.
  - b. Investigators come first and pretend to be native to the planet, working in secret, but the Mobile announces that he or she is a representative of the Ekumen and works openly.

Activity 31  
(Continued)

- c. The Mobile comes first and then the Investigators come later when it is safe.
  - d. The Mobile is the leader, and the Investigators are followers.
2. When Genly is in Old Karhide, he hears a bulletin about the king. What does it say?
- a. The king is pregnant.
  - b. The king died of old age.
  - c. Tibe has become king.
  - d. The king has learned to play the gossiwor.
3. Who is Foreth, and why does he come to Genly?
- a. Foreth is a scientist, and he wants to buy the ansible.
  - b. Estraven owes Foreth money, and he wants to collect it.
  - c. Foreth is Estraven's kemmering, and he has money for Estraven.
  - d. Foreth is an Orgota spy, and he wants to know if Genly is really from another planet.
4. Genly stays his first night in Orgoreyn in a village called Siuwensin, but the village is attacked. Who are the attackers?
- a. Investigators from the Ekumen.
  - b. Foretellers from the Handdaratta.
  - c. Farmers from Karhide.
  - d. All of the above.
5. When Genly is at a large dinner party in Mishnory, the capital of Orgoreyn, he meets someone he calls a "ghost." Who is it?
- a. Estraven.
  - b. Stokven.
  - c. Argaven.
  - d. Faxe.

**Chapter 9**

1. What does "Estraven" actually mean?
- a. Man of the stars.
  - b. From Estre.
  - c. Prime minister.
  - d. Traitor.
2. Is the "Estraven" in this tale the same as the "Estraven" that Genly knows?
- a. No, it's his twin brother.
  - b. Yes, the same one.
  - c. No, it's just a fairy tale.
  - d. No, but the Estraven in the tale could be an ancestor from long ago.
3. What is the relationship between Therem of Stok and Therem of Estre?
- a. They have no relation. Their names are a coincidence.
  - b. They are second cousins on their mother's side.

Activity 31  
(Continued)

- c. Parent and child.
- d. They are kemmerings.

**Chapter 10**

1. Why is Genly unhappy to see Estraven?
  - a. He doesn't like or trust him.
  - b. He wants to keep Estraven's money.
  - c. Estraven interrupted his breakfast.
  - d. It's too early in the morning.
2. Why does Genly have to use the Orgota word for *firecracker* when talking about his lander?
  - a. He is trying to keep his rocket a secret.
  - b. He likes the word *firecracker*.
  - c. He doesn't trust the Commensals.
  - d. The Gethenians have no word for *rocket*, and *firecracker* is the closest thing.
3. Why are the Commensals so surprised to hear that Genly has a starship waiting for his signal?
  - a. They don't believe in the lander or the starship because they haven't seen them.
  - b. They think that they should be able to see the starship in the sky.
  - c. Genly never talked about the starship before, and the Commensals know everything he said in Karhide.
  - d. They are confused.
4. What is the Sarf?
  - a. The trash collection service.
  - b. A nickname for the Water Office.
  - c. The immigration service.
  - d. The secret police.

**Chapter 11**

1. Why is Estraven no longer a "dependent" of Yegey but a "unit" of Orgoreyn?
  - a. He swore allegiance to Orgoreyn.
  - b. The money Genly brought from Ashe allowed Estraven to support himself.
  - c. He got a new job working for the Sarf.
  - d. He had a big argument with Yegey.
2. Why do the people of Orgoreyn, except for the Commensals, know nothing about Genly?
  - a. The people are not interested.
  - b. There are no newspapers.
  - c. The Sarf censored all the radio broadcasts from Karhide and will not allow any information about Genly to be broadcast in Orgoreyn.
  - d. They are all too busy.



Activity 31  
(Continued)

3. What does Gaum, the agent of the Sarf, think Estraven is doing in Orgoreyn?
  - a. He thinks he is a spy.
  - b. He thinks that he is trying to trick the Commensals into believing that Genly is telling the truth so that Orgoreyn will lose face.
  - c. He thinks that Estraven is a traitor, trying to join the Sarf.
  - d. He thinks that Estraven is crazy.
4. What do the Sarf think Genly is?
  - a. The Sarf think Genly is a liar sent by Karhide to trick them.
  - b. They think he is an alien from another planet.
  - c. They think he is a harmless fool.
  - d. They think he is actually the king of Karhide.

Activity 32

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**Looking Closely at Language**

Here are some words from Chapter 6 that might be difficult. If you get stuck, look here for some help. The words are alphabetized.

**Chapter 6**

- bereft—having experienced a loss of something (72)
- celibate—a person who has sworn to have no sexual intercourse (74)
- circumambulating—“Circum” means “around,” and “ambulating” means “walking.” Walking around the problem (86).
- digit—Literally a finger or toe. In Orgoreyn it seems to mean something like “citizen,” and the opposite is “dependent” (80).
- dour—sad, depressed mood or appearance (82)
- engraved—carved into the surface (79)
- folly—foolishness (73)
- haste—in a hurry (72)
- hoax—an effort to make people believe in something that is not true (88)
- in exile—forced to live away from your country for political reasons (72)
- indifferent—uncaring (73)
- indigent—homeless, unemployed, and without funds (80)
- inexplicable—unexplainable (78)
- invalidated—no longer valid (81)
- mishap—an accident (73)
- obfuscation—to hide ideas behind confusing language (86)
- obscuration—to hide something from view (86)
- prestige—high social status (83)
- pretext—a false reason for doing something (76)
- sledge—like a sled, with runners to slide on ice and snow, but bigger (84)
- urgency—important to do quickly (72)

## Activity 33

### Considering the Structure of the Text

1. After Estraven's narrative in Chapter 6, Le Guin gives us a chapter that consists of a field report on Gethenian sexual practices from one of the original investigators sent to Gethen by the Ekumen. This report fills in all the details that have been hinted at by Genly Ai in the previous chapters. Why include it? And if it is to be included, why not start with it so that we have all the information we need at the very beginning?
2. Chapter 8 returns to Genly Ai as narrator, establishing a pattern of switching back and forth between him and Estraven—a pattern that continues throughout the book. What are the advantages of this technique? What are the disadvantages?
3. Chapter 9 is another folktale, "Estraven the Traitor." What is the relationship between the characters in the tale and the characters in the novel as a whole?
4. Chapter 10 is narrated by Genly, but Chapter 11 is a series of diary entries by Estraven. This is the first time in the novel that the genre of the diary has appeared. What is the advantage of writing part of the novel as a diary? Are there any disadvantages?

## Postreading

### Activity 34

#### Thinking Critically

Read these questions before you begin reading the section, and then look for answers as you read.

#### Character Questions for the Psychologist

1. Why does Estraven treat Ashe so coldly?
2. Estraven steals a rowboat to escape but is shot by Tibe's men at long range with a sonic gun. He is picked up by a patrol boat. As he is picked up, the ship's master says, "It's not the sixth hour yet," and then answering another, says, "What affair of mine is that? The king exiled him, I'll follow the king's order, no lesser man's." The patrol boat takes Estraven to Orgoreyn instead of back to Karhide. Why does the master of the patrol boat take Estraven to Orgoreyn instead of following Tibe's order?
3. What does Estraven mean when he says, "At the pit's bottom is no anger"? Do we have a similar saying in our culture?
4. In Chapter 6, Estraven talks about his purpose in coming to Orgoreyn (83). Later, in Chapter 11, he says, "For this useless sneaking life I threw away my power, my money, and my friends. . . . Why can I never set my heart on a possible thing?" (159). What is his purpose? If you were Estraven, what purpose would you have?
5. When Ashe Foreth visits Genly to give him money to take to Estraven, Genly says that his mission "overrides all personal debts and loyalties." Ashe says, "If so, it is an immoral mission"(105). Who do you think is right, and why?

## Activity 34 (Continued)

6. At the beginning of Chapter 10, Estraven arrives in Genly's room to pick up the money that Ashe Forthe sent him. Genly says that his visit "certainly spoiled the peaceful mood of self-congratulation in which I had eaten breakfast" (132). Why was Genly congratulating himself? How did Estraven spoil his mood?
7. What is "farfetching"? Why is Genly Ai finding the Orgota politicians a little hard to grasp? (147)

### **Cultural Questions for the Anthropologist**

1. How is Orgota culture different from that of Karhide? What are some examples of differences?
2. What does it mean to "waive" shifgrethor?
3. In what ways is Gethenian society influenced by the "ambisexuality" of its inhabitants? (The Investigator does not seem to think that the English word *androgeny* quite covers the Gethenian situation.)
4. What does the tale "Estraven the Traitor" tell us about the culture of Gethen?
5. Estraven notes that he insulted Genly Ai by giving him advice but that Genly did not seem to know that he was insulted. He wonders if Genly had been seeking his advice all along, not knowing how to ask for it. He says of Genly, "His shifgrethor must be founded, and composed and sustained, altogether differently from ours." *Shifgrethor* is an essential human concept on Gethen. Is it prestige? Is it dignity? Respect? Status? Independence? Authority? A combination of these?

### **Political Questions for the Political Officer**

1. Karhide is a traditional monarchy that hasn't changed much in a thousand years. What kind of government does Orgoreyn have?
2. Why is the trouble in the Sinoth valley more than a border dispute?
3. What is Tibe's ultimate aim?
4. Genly Ai notes that Tibe makes long speeches on the radio, full of "praises of Karhide, disparagements of Orgoreyn, vilifications of 'disloyal factions,' discussion of the 'integrity of the Kingdom's borders,' lectures in history and ethics and economics, all in a ranting, canting, emotional tone that went shrill with vituperation or adulation." He talked "much about pride of country and love of the parentland, but little about shifgrethor, personal pride or prestige." Who does this remind us of? Is Tibe becoming a fascist dictator? (102)
5. Genly Ai gives Estraven the packet of money given to him by Estraven's friend and "kemmering" Ashe Forthe, and he receives the following advice as thanks: "You are the tool of a faction. I advise you to be careful how you let them use you. I advise you to find out what the enemy faction is, and who they are, and never to let them use you, for they will not use you well." What does Estraven mean? Why doesn't Genly trust him?
6. In Chapter 10, Genly asks Shusgis, the person whose house he is staying in, about the Sarf. Shusgis's answer is evasive. He says, "I'm

Activity 34  
(Continued)

in the External Administration, of course, and I can't keep all of the offices straight, over in Internal" (144). Later, in Chapter 11, Estraven identifies Shusgis as a Sarf agent (160). What is going on? Who are the Sarf and what are they doing?

**The Left Hand of Darkness—Section 3 (pages 162–236, Chapters 12–16)**

**Prereading**

Activity 35

**Surveying the Text**

The chapters in this section are:

12. On Time and Darkness
13. Down on the Farm
14. The Escape
15. To the Ice
16. Between Drumner and Dremegole

Do you get a positive, happy feeling from these titles? Why or why not?

**Reading**

Activity 36

**Considering the Structure of the Text**

As we have seen, Ursula Le Guin builds this novel through a number of different kinds of texts written from different viewpoints. Chapter 16, "Between Drumner and Dremegole," is a continuation of Estraven's diary. In it, Estraven records a conversation between Genly and himself about the uniqueness of Gethenian "ambisexuality." He quotes yet another kind of text, a Handdarata poem:

*Light is the left hand of darkness  
and darkness the right hand of light.  
two are one, life and death, lying  
together like lovers in kemmer,  
like hands joined together,  
like the end and the way.*

Since Le Guin takes the title of the novel from this poem, it must be important to the theme. The key phrase here is "two are one." What does Estraven mean by reciting this poem? How does it relate to the rest of the novel? How many examples can you think of in which what seems to be the opposite of something is really in some sense the same thing?

## Postreading

### Activity 37

#### Thinking Critically

Read these questions before you begin reading the section, and then look for answers as you read.

#### Character Questions for the Psychologist

1. Alarmed by Estraven’s warnings, Genly tries to contact all his friends in Mishnory without success. They don’t answer their doors or return his calls. Why?
2. How does Estraven find out what happened to Genly Ai? (184)
3. In order to get Genly out of prison, Estraven forges papers, pretends to be a prison guard, and steals food. Are these actions justified?
4. What are some of the things that Genly and Estraven learn about each other on the long journey across the ice?
5. Estraven says that Genly Ai is unjust. He says, “I am the only man in all Gethen that has trusted you entirely, and I am still the only man in Gethen that you have refused to trust.” Why does he say this? Do you agree with him? (198)

#### Cultural Questions for the Anthropologist

1. Long ago, Meshe was the Weaver in a group of Foretellers who tried to answer an unanswerable question, “What is the meaning of life?” (60) That attempt led to death and disaster for most of the participants. The cult Meshe founded, the Yomeshta, believes that after that experience, Meshe saw all of the past and future clearly for the rest of his life. The story “Time and Darkness” is about what it is like to be Meshe. Meshe knows all the answers. Is it a good thing to be Meshe, or are the Handdarata right to say it is better not to know?
2. Why do the guards at the voluntary farm inject Genly with drugs? What effect do the drugs have on him?

#### Political Questions for the Political Officer

1. What is a “voluntary farm” and why do the Sarf send Genly to one?
2. When Genly wakes up in the truck, he realizes that he had misunderstood the “sign” he had been given about Orgota society. What signs should he have paid attention to? (167)
3. Genly observes that the qualities of independence and decision making are weakened in the Orgota people. How did this happen to them? Why didn’t he notice it at first? (173)
4. In the first chapter, Estraven says that patriotism is more about fear of the other than about love of country. In Chapter 15, he asks if love of one’s country isn’t hate of one’s uncountryside, and he says that he does not much care if Orgoreyn or Karhide is the first to join the Ekumen, because whichever is first the other will follow, and it will be good for both. However, he also says that a man who does not hate a bad government is a fool and that to serve a good government would be a joy (212). How would you describe Estraven’s political views? Do you agree with him?

## The Left Hand of Darkness—Section 4 (pages 237–301, Chapters 17–20)

### Prereading

#### Activity 38

#### Surveying the Text

The chapters in this section are:

17. An Orgota Creation Myth
18. On the Ice
19. Homecoming
20. A Fool's Errand

What can you predict about the ending of the novel from these chapter titles?

### Postreading

#### Activity 39

#### Thinking Critically

Read these questions before you begin reading the section, and then look for answers as you read.

#### Character Questions for the Psychologist

1. In the journey across the glacier, Genly teaches Estraven mind-speech. What effect does this have on their relationship? Why is mind-speech so difficult for Estraven?
2. Genly says, "Happiness has to do with reason, and only reason earns it." In a sense, Genly is arguing that good pathos comes from good logos. Is this true? Is it even true for Genly?
3. One of the characteristics of a good novel is character development. What does Genly Ai learn during his experience in Karhide, in Orgo-reyn, and on the ice? What does Estraven learn?

#### Cultural Questions for the Anthropologist

1. The Orgota creation myth says, "In the beginning there was the sun and the ice and there was no shadow." How is it possible to have sun and no shadow?
2. The myth also says, "In the end, when we are done, the sun will devour itself and shadow will eat light." Is this scientifically true?
3. Compare this myth to other creation myths. How does it reflect Gethen's unique culture?
4. Estraven says that the word *shifgrethor* comes from an old word for *shadow*. Is there a connection between the creation myth and the concept of *shifgrethor*?
5. Genly says he has no *shifgrethor* to waive. In what sense is this true? In what sense is it not?

Activity 39  
(Continued)

**Political Questions for the Political Officer**

1. After returning to Karhide, Genly sends his radio message to the ship, and Estraven is betrayed by his friend and has to return as quickly as possible to the Orgota side of the border. When they get there, there are no guards on the Orgota side, but there are guards on the Karhide side. Estraven calls them “Tibe’s inspectors.” What does he mean? (282)
2. Argaven says to Genly Ai, “You’ve served me well.” Genly answers, “But I am not your servant.” What has Genly done for Argaven? Why is Genly not his servant? (292)
3. This story was written during the cold war. In what ways is Orgoreyn like the Soviet Union? How is it different? Does Karhide correspond to the U.S.? Or perhaps Europe? Why or why not?

## Connecting Reading to Writing

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Activity 40

**Using the Words of Others**

**Group Activity**

Many people are unhappy with the ending of this book because although Genly survives and completes his mission, his friend Estraven is killed. If you were going to rewrite this ending, what kind of ending would you write?

You might think, “I will just have Estraven escape across the border without getting shot.” That’s easy, but how would Estraven survive at the foot of the ice sheet? Could he go back across the ice without the tent and the stove and with no money? What are the other alternatives? What about his banishment?

The problem starts near the end of Chapter 19, when Estraven’s friend, Thessicher, betrays him to Tibe by using his radio. In your group, think of a general plan for saving Estraven, then find the passages in Chapter 19 that you need to change to make this plan work. Your group may want to assign different passages to different members. Quote the passage you will change, and then rewrite it to conform to your plan.

Whatever ending you devise, it must fit seamlessly with the rest of the story. Try to make your ending both artistically effective and emotionally satisfying.

# Writing Rhetorically

## Prewriting

### Activity 41

#### Reading the Assignment

Your final assignment for *The Left Hand of Darkness* is to write a book review. This is not a “book report” such as you may have done many times before. A book *report* is usually a summary emphasizing some key points about the book. The purpose of a book report is often simply to demonstrate that you have read the book. A book *review*, on the other hand, is a critical analysis of the book designed to convince a reader that the book is, or is not, worth reading and why. A book review has a thesis. It has an argument to make.

#### Writing Assignment

Write a review of *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Your review depends on your reaction to the book:

Did you think that *The Left Hand of Darkness* was the most fascinating book you have ever read? What kind of reader would agree with you? What would that reader want to know about the book in order to decide whether or not to read it?

Did you think that this was the coldest, dreariest, most confusing book you ever had to read for a class? What made it that way for you? How would you warn other readers who probably wouldn't like this book to avoid it? How would you make your case?

Was your reaction to that book somewhat mixed? Were there some interesting ideas and some ideas you disagreed with? Were there good parts and bad parts? In this case, rather than writing a positive or a negative review, you would write a mixed review.

### Activity 42

#### Getting Ready to Write

Whether you are writing a positive, negative, or mixed review of the book, you need to think about what aspects of the book you are going to talk about. You could use the character, culture, and politics categories that we have been using for the discussion questions. You could talk about the language of the book and the made-up words and concepts. You could talk about the nature of science fiction and “what if” questions. The role of gender in our own culture is clearly a major theme in this book. Some other themes might be:

- The role of the individual and society
- Life under different political systems and governments
- Tradition versus innovation and efficiency (Karrhide versus Orgoreyn)
- Patriotism versus individual loyalty



## Activity 42 (Continued)

- The role of religion (Handdaratta versus Yomeshta, and the value of knowledge)

Whatever you decide to discuss, think about what Le Guin tried to do in this book, and how effectively she did it.

Make a list of the topics you want to cover in discussing this book. Remember that the purpose of a book review is to persuade the reader that the book is, or is not, worth reading. Most readers will not want to read about every possible aspect of the book, especially as this book has so many themes. If you have several topics to cover, you may want to limit your review to the best two or, at the most, three.

Once you have chosen your topics, make a list of words related to those topics (words that you have read in the book or heard in class). This process will help you generate ideas.

## Activity 43

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### Formulating a Working Thesis

Your introduction should include the author and title of the book and what kind of book it is. Your thesis will be a statement about the quality of the book in terms of what it tries to do and who, if anyone, would enjoy it, learn from it, or be interested in it and why. Here are some examples:

- Readers who enjoy science fiction may find Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* to be an interesting exploration of the role of gender in our society—if they can get past the difficult vocabulary and unusual storytelling devices.
- Harry Potter fans may find Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* more difficult than their favorite books, but a little extra effort will pay off in a greater understanding of the issues our own society faces.
- If you like light sabers, space battles, and bug-eyed monsters, stay away from Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* because it doesn't have anything remotely similar. On the other hand, if you like slow, highly detailed novels with lots of serious principles and no action, this novel might be just the thing.

You may find that after you begin writing and analyzing, your opinion changes. If so, just rewrite your working thesis.

## Writing

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### Activity 44

#### Composing a Draft

The most important concern for the first draft is to get your ideas and arguments down on paper.

Your introduction should contain some basic information about the book and your thesis statement.

Typically, the next section of a book review will include some general information about the setting of the novel, the characters, what the characters are trying to do, and the plot. This overview may remind you of a book report, but you should be careful not to give away the ending of the book or anything that may diminish the reader's enjoyment of the book if he or she decides to read it.

The paragraphs that follow should discuss the theme of the novel and the main points you want to cover from the list you have already made. These points should support your thesis statement about the novel. Illustrate and support your points with quotations and paraphrases from the novel itself.

In the conclusion, you might remind the reader of some of the best or worst aspects of the novel and mention something one might learn from reading the novel. You might also make a final recommendation to read, or not read, the book.

### Activity 45

#### Organizing the Essay and Developing the Content

With your first draft in front of you, think about the following questions:

##### Introduction

- Do you need a question, a surprising statement or some other “hook” to get the reader’s attention?
- This is an essay for a general audience, some of whom may not have read *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Does your introduction have the essential background information that the reader needs to understand what you are talking about?
- Does your introduction provide a context for understanding the thesis statement?
- Is your thesis clearly stated? Could some people disagree with it?
- Have you given the reader some idea of how you are going to develop the review?

##### Body

- Do you have at least two or three paragraphs that support the thesis statement?
- Do you have topic sentences that present each main point?
- Are the main points supported with evidence (i.e., facts, arguments, quotations, or paraphrases from the book)?

## Activity 45 (Continued)

- Are there any paragraphs that include different points of view or address counter-arguments? Do you address those points of view:
  - By refuting them?
  - By acknowledging them but showing how your own argument is better?
  - By granting them altogether but showing they are irrelevant?

### Conclusion

- Do you have a final paragraph (or paragraphs) that includes a solid argument to support the thesis and indicates the significance of the argument—the “so what” factor?

## Revising and Editing

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### Activity 46

#### Revising the Draft

With a partner, or in a small group, go through the following checklist for your draft:

#### Book Review Revision Checklist

1. Does the introduction contain basic information about the book?
2. Is there a thesis that makes a statement about whether or not the book is worth reading and for whom?
3. Is it clear that this is a positive, negative, or mixed review?
4. Does the next paragraph provide information about the setting, characters, and plot?
5. Are there any “plot spoilers” that give away too much information and spoil the book for the reader?
6. Does the essay discuss at least two main points about the book?
7. Are assertions about the book supported with evidence from the text?
8. Does the conclusion sum up the main points and make a recommendation to the reader?
9. Does the reader have enough information at the end to make an informed decision about whether or not to read the book?
10. Are any sentences unclear or confusing to the reader?

You may also want to have a friend from another class who had not read the book comment on your draft. Revise your draft to correct any problems that became apparent during this process.

### Activity 47

#### Editing the Draft

Now that the content is in place, it is time to work with the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics of your draft to make sure that your essay conforms to the guidelines of standard written English.

See Activity 26 for “Editing Guidelines for Individual Work.”

## Activity 48

### Reflecting on the Writing

Think about the following questions:

1. Writing often helps us focus our thinking so that we learn about things that we might not have otherwise noticed. What did you learn about *The Left Hand of Darkness* from writing this paper?
2. Working systematically through a writing process can help improve writing skills. What skills do you think you improved by writing this paper?