



***Wicked* by Gregory Maguire**

William Morrow, HarperCollins, 2004

ISBN: 9780063398344 (Paperback)

*Age Range: Adult

BOOK SYNOPSIS

The *New York Times* bestseller and basis for the Tony Award–winning hit musical, soon to be a major motion picture starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande.

With millions of copies in print around the world, Gregory Maguire’s *Wicked* is established not only as a commentary on our time but as a novel to revisit for years to come. *Wicked* relishes the inspired inventions of L. Frank Baum’s 1900 novel, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, while playing sleight of hand with our collective memories of the 1939 MGM film starring Margaret Hamilton (and Judy Garland). In this fast-paced, fantastically real, and supremely entertaining novel, Maguire has populated the largely unknown world of Oz with the power of his own imagination.

Years before Dorothy and her dog crash-land, another little girl makes her presence known in Oz. This girl, Elphaba, is born with emerald-green skin—no easy burden in a land as mean and poor as Oz, where superstition and magic are not strong enough to explain or overcome the natural disasters of flood and famine. Still, Elphaba is smart, and by the time she enters Shiz University, she becomes a member of a charmed circle of Oz’s most promising young citizens.

But Elphaba’s Oz is no utopia. The Wizard’s secret police are everywhere. Animals—those creatures with voices, souls, and minds—are threatened with exile. Young Elphaba, green and wild and misunderstood, is determined to protect the Animals—even if it means combating the mysterious Wizard, even if it means risking her single chance at romance. Ever wiser in guilt and sorrow, she can find herself grateful when the world declares her a witch. And she can even make herself glad for that young girl from Kansas.

Recognized as an iconoclastic tour de force on its initial publication, the novel has inspired the blockbuster musical of the same name—one of the longest-running plays in Broadway history. Popular, indeed. But while the novel’s distant cousins hail from the traditions of magical realism, mythopoeic fantasy, and sprawling nineteenth-century sagas of moral urgency, Maguire’s *Wicked* is as unique as its green-skinned witch.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"An outstanding work of imagination."

– *USA Today*

"I knew that Gregory Maguire had come up with a genius idea the moment I heard about *Wicked*. It’s a book that has changed a lot of lives, including mine."

– Stephen Schwartz, composer and lyricist of *Wicked: The Musical*

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"Maguire did something truly remarkable with this novel, in managing to inhabit, enlarge, deepen and find new dimensions in a world that had been invented by another writer, and in doing so make something entirely new. It's an astonishing achievement."

– Philip Pullman

"Listen up, Munchkins. Stop your singing, stop the dancing. The Wicked Witch is no longer dead. But not to worry. Gregory Maguire's shrewdly imagined and beautifully written first novel, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, not only revives her but re-envisioned and redeems her for our times."

– Newsday

"At the heart of this remarkable, unforgettable novel is a wildly original premise—one that only a writer with Gregory Maguire's intellect and daring could have dreamed up: that the Wicked Witch of the West was a real woman, with an actual name, and her own story to tell. It was radical when Gregory first wrote it, and remains radical. It has the power to reshape one's view of the world."

– Winnie Holzman, co-writer of *Wicked: The Musical*

"Gregory gets the complications and uniqueness of women very well."

– Kristen Chenoweth

"Long before there was any thought of a musical, I read *Wicked*. I felt a quiet joy that sisterhood had made its way to the Yellow Brick Road. What happens when a witch, green or otherwise, gets to tell her own story instead of being vilified and misrepresented by dominant cultural authority? We witches know how that turns out!"

– Holly Near

"Save a place on the shelf between Alice and *The Hobbit* -that spot is well deserved."

– **Kirkus Reviews**

"A magnificent work, a genuine tour de force."

– Lloyd Alexander

"Gregory Maguire has taken this figure of childhood fantasy and given her a sensual and powerful nature that will stir adult hearts with fear and longing all over again."

– New Orleans Times-Picayune

"Gregory Maguire's shrewdly imagined first novel ... is part fantasy thriller, part psychological study, part political cautionary tale. It's all fascinating. And it's impossible to deny the magic of Gregory Maguire."

– New York Newsday

"I fell quickly and totally under the spell of this remarkable, wry, and fully realized story. Maguire's adult fable examines some of literature's major themes: moral ambiguity, the nature of evil, the bittersweet dividends of power, the high costs of love. Elphaba—the Wicked Witch of the West—is as scary as ever, but this time in a different way: She's undeniably human. She's us."

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"It is for good readers who like satire, and love exceedingly imaginative and clever fantasy."

– School Library Journal

"It is to [Maguire's] everlasting credit that he has succeeded so admirably that his book stands as an independent and inspired whole; it is also very close to being an instant classic.... Maguire has hit a home run his first time at bat. That *Wicked* is a first novel is remarkable because it is so fully realized, so rich and involving. It is the most seamless interweaving of fantasy and reality since John Crowley's peerless *Little, Big*, written in poetic language as graceful as a Ray Boldger tap-dance."

– School Library Journal

"It's a staggering feat of wordcraft, made no less so by the fact that its boundaries were set decades ago by somebody else. Maguire's larger triumph here is twofold: First, in *Elphaba*, he has created (re-created?

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renovated?) one of the great heroines in fantasy literature: a fiery, passionate, unforgettable and ultimately tragic figure. Second, *Wicked* is the best fantasy novel of ideas I've read since Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* or Frank Herbert's *Dune*. Would that all books with this much innate consumer appeal were also this good. And vice versa."

– *Los Angeles Times*

"Maguire combines puckish humor and bracing pessimism in this fantastical meditation on good and evil, God and free will, which should...captivate devotees of fantasy."

– ***Publishers Weekly***

"Very close to being an instant classic ... Maguire has hit a home run his first time at bat."

– Memphis Commercial Appeal

"*Wicked* is a punchy allegory that alludes to everything from Nazi Germany to Nixon's America. It's delightfully over-the-top at times, mixing serious metafiction with subtle humor and even (gasp) witch sex."

– Boston Phoenix

"... [a] magical telling of the land of Oz before and up to the arrival of Dorothy and company.... A captivating, funny, and perceptive look at destiny, personal responsibility, and the not-always-clashing beliefs of faith and magic. Save a place on the shelf between *Alice* and *The Hobbit* –that spot is well deserved."

– ***Kirkus Reviews***

"A fantasy novel that reads like Graham Greene at his best."

– San Jose Mercury News

"Amazing novel."

– John Updike, *The New Yorker*

"An outstanding work of imagination."

– *USA Today*

"Children—children of all ages, as Maguire reminds us in this splendid novel—need witches. Gregory Maguire has taken this figure of childhood fantasy and given her a sensual and powerful nature that will stir adult hearts with fear and longing all over again. It's a brilliant trick - and a remarkable treat."

– The Times-Picayune

***A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

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