

The Reading Guide

Reading Group Questions

1. The nature of good and evil is carefully explored in *Wicked*. How does Maguire incorporate this theme. Do you think he is successful?
2. *Wicked* shows us the darker side of Oz. Does this affect your view of the film, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*?
3. The case of Nature vs Nurture is rife throughout *Wicked*. How much does Elphaba's and Nessarose's upbringing affect who they are to become?
4. Oz closely explores how society treats those who are different. For example, the oppression of the Animals, skin colour and ethnic origin all play a significant role. Amongst your group, discuss one of these roles in detail.
5. Explain how Maguire has satirised aspects of contemporary society within *Wicked*. What examples can you find within the book?
6. The role of religion and magic are closely entwined in *Wicked*, yet magic is considered the more sinister. Why do you think this is? How does Maguire achieve this?
7. Elphaba continually fights against fate to choose her own path. Do you think she succeeds?
8. Why do you think Dorothy is used to end Elphaba's life? Do you think the two could be reconciled or is what they come to represent in society too radically opposed?
9. Explain Elphaba's aversion to water. Why is this of significance?

Suggested Reading:

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz – Frank L Baum

Other titles in the Oz series – Frank L Baum

Gulliver's Travels – Jonathan Swift

The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen - Rudolph Erich Raspe

Grimm's Fairy Tales - The Brothers Grimm

Steppenwolf - Herman Hesse

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About the Book

When Dorothy triumphed over the Wicked Witch of the West in the classic novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, we heard only one side of the story.

But what of her arch-nemesis, the mysterious witch?

Long before Dorothy drops in, a girl is born in Oz with emerald green skin. Elphaba, who will grow up to become the infamous witch, is a smart, prickly and misunderstood creature who challenges all our preconceived ideas about the nature of good and evil.

Taking readers past the yellow brick road and into a phantasmagoric world, Gregory Maguire's novel is a rich and triumphant feat of imagination and allegory.

About the author

Gregory Maguire is a bestselling author who has earned rave reviews and a dedicated following for *Wicked*. He received his doctorate in English Literature from Tufts University, and has taught at Simmons College and other Boston area colleges.

He has also served as an artist-in-residence at the Blue Mountain Center, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Hambridge Center. Gregory has lived in Dublin and London, but now makes his home near Boston, Massachusetts, with his partner, their two sons and daughter.