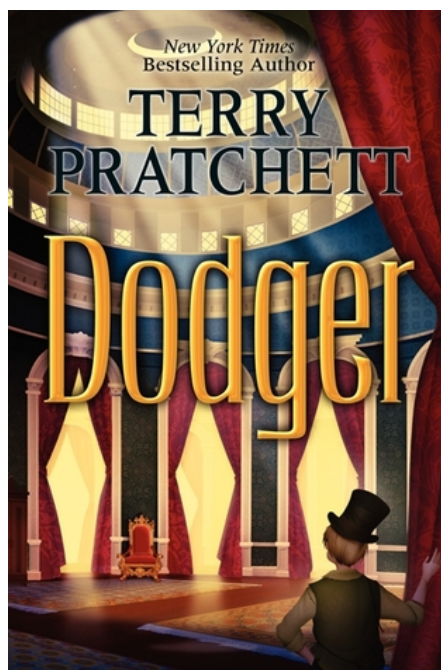




Dodger

Terry Pratchett

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Dodger

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Dodger Terry Pratchett

A storm. Rain-lashed city streets. A flash of lightning. A scruffy lad sees a girl leap desperately from a horse-drawn carriage in a vain attempt to escape her captors. Can the lad stand by and let her be caught again? Of course not, because he's...Dodger.

Seventeen-year-old Dodger may be a street urchin, but he gleans a living from London's sewers, and he knows a jewel when he sees one. He's not about to let anything happen to the unknown girl--not even if her fate impacts some of the most powerful people in England.

From Dodger's encounter with the mad barber Sweeney Todd to his meetings with the great writer Charles Dickens and the calculating politician Benjamin Disraeli, history and fantasy intertwine in a breathtaking account of adventure and mystery.

Beloved and bestselling author Sir Terry Pratchett combines high comedy with deep wisdom in this tale of an unexpected coming-of-age and one remarkable boy's rise in a complex and fascinating world.

Dodger Details

Date : Published September 13th 2012 by HarperCollins Publishers

ISBN : 9780062009494

Author : Terry Pratchett

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Humor

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From Reader Review Dodger for online ebook

Kirsty says

As a huge Pratchett fan, I thoroughly enjoyed Dodger - a non-Discworld tale of an heroic tosher working in the squalor of Dickensian London who saves a mysterious girl from a savage beating one stormy night. And so begins a quite fantastical tale involving Sweeney Todd, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli and other historical figures as our hero seeks to save a damsel in distress and prevent an international incident and an improbable war.

The author's style has changed noticeably during the course of his last few books, presumably because he has had to adapt the way he writes since he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. His characters are more verbose and tend to moralise and monologue which can make the text feel stilted at times, and the puns don't flow as thick and fast as they did in his older books. Despite this, Dodger is still pure, enjoyable Pratchett. Heroes triumph and villains are despatched in short order. All in all a very amiable and uplifting book.

Marta Álvarez says

Un libro con un estilo divertido (¡es Terry Pratchett!) y una trama de aventuras/misterios que no está mal... Pero si algo cautiva en Perillán es su descarado y extrañamente honesto protagonista, y su ambientación, el Londres victoriano más crudo y sucio que no deja ser, a su manera, un personaje más de esta historia.

Kaethe says

I love clever stories about clever young people forming convoluted plots and tricking people. When an author manages to give me that, Charles Dickens as a newspaperman, Sweeney Todd, the drains of London, Jews escaped from the pogroms of Russia (including Karl), a noisome dog named Onan, and more, well, I'm pretty much beside myself with glee through the whole thing. A big old sack of awesome. And now, I've got to get a hold of Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor, Vol. 3.

Still need convincing: not since Dickens has anyone written about slums with the clear understanding that real people do actually live in them, people who get on with their lives as best they can. Contrast this with say The Bonfire of the Vanities with its racism and sexism and general mean-spiritedness.

Library copy.

Crispitina30 says

Se terminó... :(

Un largo bloqueo lector y un seguido de problemas personales han hecho que tardara un mes en leerlo, pero, ahora que lo he terminado, me da muchísima pena separarme de esta historia. Ha sido toda una **aventura victoriana llena de valores** y que demuestra que, **incluso en el mayor ambiente de miseria, podredumbre**

y desesperación, existe gente buena en el mundo.

Debo decir que **algunas partes del argumento me ha costado entenderlas**. También me ha parecido que **no tiene tanto humor como otros libros del autor**, o quizá sea yo que no he captado todas las referencias (soy bastante joven y tengo mucho que aprender), pero aún así tiene **momentos y frases capaces de sacar una sonrisa a cualquiera**.

Y cómo no, **Perillán y Simplicity son OTP total**. Hacía tiempo que una pareja literaria no me encandilaba tanto. Me encantan, de verdad.

Gracias por tanto, maestro Pratchett.

Char says

Dodger by Terry Pratchett, narrated by Stephen Briggs
I listened to this on audio, and I dug the narrator. I dug him a lot!

This book was funny and fun. A lot of the humor was laugh out loud funny and a lot of the fun was in spotting the real folk amidst all the fictional characters.

I had a blast listening to this and if I could afford it, I would listen to the entire Discworld series narrated by Mr. Briggs. Alas, I cannot, so I guess I still have to read them.

Shovelmonkey1 says

Terry Pratchett saved me just as I was blundering into my teenage years and wondering how to make the leap from books designed for little kiddiewinks to the adult side of the library where all the books were hefty and hardback and full of secret promise. I am so old that the whole concept of the tweenager did not yet exist and so you were faced with the stark choice Enid Blyton or Jackie Collins when you wandered into a library. Of course there was Judy Blume but her books take about five minutes to ingest and that included at least three minutes wondering why you needed a belt to wear sanitary protection... apparently JB was writing in the days of pre self-adhesiveness?!

Before I started in the Pratchett I'd already flirted with the writing of Stephen King, Dean R Koontz, Wilbur Smith and Shaun Hudson. I was about eleven and once I'd started learning things that were probably a bit beyond my ken at that point (Snuff movies in the book Dead Heads for example) I felt it was time to try and find a safe non sexy, non murderly half-way house for junior teens. Et voila, up steps Pratchett.

Most of Pratchett's books are aimed at adults but they're written in such a way that they're easily accessible to those making the kid reads to adult reads transition without too much mental scarring (see above re snuff movies). And so my love of Pratchett and the colourful historically and culturally skewed other-worldness of the Discworld has sustained me well into my adult years.

Dodger was no different although it did take a little longer to get into, perhaps suffering from a slight dilution in Pratchettyness because it is closer to the real world being set in Dickensian London, rather than

the streets of Ankh-Morpork. Dodger is a loveable rascal who earns a living as a Tosher, a subterranean coin collector - a sort of drain pirate who is constantly seeking buried treasure. Unfortunately in a London drain the treasure tends to be buried in poop rather than dreamy golden sand but treasure is still treasure.

An unexpected encounter leads to Dodger rescuing a damsel in distress and as events unfold, Dodger finds himself the unlikely hero in a number of unusual scenarios and the subject of much public interest, particularly from Sir Robert Peel (twice PM and infamous adversary of Ben Disraeli, not to mention founder of the modern police force) and Charles Dickens (um, if you're not sure who he is then I think you might have taken a wrong turn here on goodreads... were you perhaps looking for an online shopping website or skysports?)

Despite the occasional nod to the darker side of poverty stricken life in London, the Pogroms in Europe and those that end up face down in the Thames, this was generally a light hearted jaunt through the streets and sewers of old London town. The spark of the Discworld was lacking but another diverting read from Pratchett nonetheless.

Ben says

There's some pleasure to be had in Terry Pratchett writing about actual *London*, instead of Ankh-Morpork, but this is weak stuff.

There are also some points for Terry's basic humanity and his fondness for reformers like Charles Dickens and Henry Mayhew. But every character who isn't an historical person falls utterly flat: the cheeky Cockney rascal, the canny Jewish elder, the smelly dog, there's even a reference to a whore with a heart of gold, I think.

A rare, unexpected moment that works makes us sympathize with a tortured Sweeney Todd, traumatized by the battlefields of the Napoleonic Wars.

But it all falls to bits on the plot, and especially the love interest. Terry knows how to write women characters, a bit, even if he often resorts to stereotypes. He's better than this. But the character in "Dodger" is a barely-conscious McGuffin, a featureless blonde "reward". She doesn't really have a name, she's just there to be beaten or rescued or occasionally to simper over the protagonist.

K. says

Trigger warnings: assault, miscarriage, violence, mental health, death.

21/3/2018

4.5 stars. On reread, I'm bumping this down half a star, simply because I knew what to expect and the presence of the various historical figures didn't make me giggle uncontrollably the way it did the first time around.

Still, it perfectly captures early Victorian London. Dodger is an absolutely FANTASTIC character - he's an

antihero through and through, treading the moral grey zone between doing the right thing and doing the right thing FOR HIM. The supporting cast are delightful, the setting is gloriously depicted, and the writing is Pratchett's typical blend of hard hitting truth and hilarity.

In short, it's absolutely fantastic, though it was a slower read for me this time around, which led me to knock off that half a star.

2/12/2012

Plot summary: Early in Queen Victoria's reign, a young man named Dodger saves a girl from a fierce beating. Little does he know that this act will see him climb the social ladder and raise him from obscurity to fame. Pursued by unknown parties and with support from a wealth of colourful historical characters, Dodger must find a way to help the girl, or risk death.

Thoughts: I loved this. It's not particularly surprising - I'm a sucker for almost anything Victorian. It was very different from Discworld, so if you go into it expecting something similar, I imagine you'll come out very disappointed. Instead, you'll find a world filled with a fantastic mix of fiction and reality, with a young Charles Dickens featuring prominently. I particularly loved the little moments when Pratchett included the titles of Dickens' future works in the story - Bleak House, Great Expectations, Our Mutual Friend - and gave the character of Dickens a little "Oooh, I must write that down" moment each time.

Other real life people/well known characters who make appearances/are mentioned:

- Sweeney Todd
- Henry Mayhew
- Benjamin Disraeli
- Angela Burdett-Coutts
- Joseph Bazalgette
- Karl Marx
- Ada Lovelace
- Robert Peel
- Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

Dodger is a fantastic character - a brilliant mix of Dicken's Artful Dodger and Pratchett's own creation. The inclusion of toshing adds a nice "worst jobs in history" touch that many readers would have had no prior knowledge of.

It's that typical Pratchett mixture of serious issues told in a humourous way, and I loved every second of it.

Meikoyim says

My first ever Terry Pratchett.

I know, I know, I'm behind in the game, what with Discworld taking up half (well, quite a sizeable proportion at least) of my to-read list.

Dodger is the story of a nobody with a gallant heart, and with wits about him as people living on the streets in the days of Victorian London would have to have in order to survive. It is about his past as well as his future, about the change that befell him one stormy night.

I must say I enjoyed the read rather more than I would have expected.

Big names in literature often lead to my hesitation in picking the works up, despite having heard countless recommendations. But this was approachable, and quite easy to lose oneself into.

I enjoyed the little cameos thrown in as well, I suppose you could sum this novel up as about a nobody being at the right place at the right time, doing and/or saying the right things, and thus getting to know the right people.

A bit of a play of fate, if you will.

And whilst the currency gave me a headache and the slang usage took some getting used to, I must confess I spent a lot of time afterwards on the internet and more specifically wikipedia looking at titbits and detailed (albeit maybe not entirely accurate) accounts on the historical personnel that played a role in this book.

I doubt there will be another volume in the story of Dodger, though I certainly wouldn't mind reading more about him, both before and after the incidents described in this book.

I suppose I shall await someone someday making a tv movie out of it instead.

Erastes says

Wasn't sure what to expect, to be honest - I thought it was a Discworld novel, with Dickensian overtones with an Ankh-Morpork Dodger character so it was a pleasant surprise to find it set in actual Victorian London(although, as Pratchett himself says, a London with a bit of a shine on it.)

I was seriously impressed by the writing and to me it seemed as though Pratchett has been leading up to this book via the YA books, particularly Maurice, and the Watch novels. There are undertones of much of Nobby Nobbs, Vimes and others but they are nothing much more than ghosts which leave no trace in this interesting world. Flavourings, but nothing more.

Dodger is a great character and I hope that Pterry visits him again soon - he's certainly left the door open for that to happen - the kind of "hero" that's the opposite side of Vimes in many ways, but still still a hero for all that. The kind of man who will set fire to a stables, but will gently take out all the horses and put them somewhere safe before doing so. The man who will rob a embassy of everything his sticky fingers can get on, but never consider himself a thief, for that is behind him.

He's a Tosher, which was someone who would "mine" the sewers for the coins and jewellery that would be swept away and got stuck in the ancient brickwork. He's good at it, and makes a decent living. He does border on the Gary Stu, it has to be said. He's good at everything he tries his hand at, disguise, toshing, theifing, and even wins the heart of a good woman despite his tendency to smell of poo (i'm sure lye soap doesn't remove all the smells.)

I got slightly bored at times when we are told over and over again how he's a dodger, a tosher, a geezer, a cove and what all these terms mean, and I wasn't really convinced of the INSTA-LOVE between Simplicity and himself. i can see what he saw in her, but the other way, was so easy to swallow.

The only part I didn't like at all was the section involving Sweeney todd. Pratchett does say that the story is a historical fantasy, rather than a historical novel, but in his afterword he goes into detail telling the reader who existed - Robert Peel, Disraeli, Charles Dickens and others and he never mentions Todd which might lead some readers to believe that, like the other characters mentioned, Todd existed when he didn't. I liked the

writing and the plotting of that section, and I liked the way that Todd was portrayed and the reasons behind his murderous bent of mind, but I simply thought that including him was a mistake. But each to his own.

all in all though I really enjoyed the book, and would give it four and a half, if the rating system allowed me to do it.

Carly says

“People are what they do, and what they leave behind.”

If you're ever in the mood for a cute, light, fluffy, heartwarming story, then you should really think about picking up *Dodger*.

The book's eponymous protagonist is an orphaned street urchin who lives in Victorian London and works as a “tosher”—that is, someone who goes into the sewers to find treasures in the trash. When he pops out of a sewer to be “*the knight in soaking armor*” to a lady in distress, he suddenly finds that one small act of kindness will change his life in ways he could not have imagined.

Dodger is quite different from the typical Pratchett book, and not just because it doesn't take place in a flat world travelling on the back of a giant turtle. It's a gentler story than his other books, even including his young audience books like *Amazing Maurice* or *Wee Free Men*. The plot and humour are a bit softer around the edges, and while Pratchett's love of footnotes and wordplay are still apparent, they're a little less incisive. Even so, there were a few quotes that stood out in my memory:

“I recall, if you go around telling people that they are downtrodden, you tend to make two separate enemies: the people who are doing the downtreading and have no intention of stopping, and the people who are downtrodden, but nevertheless -- people being who they are -- don't want to know. They can get quite nasty about it.”

The plot itself rather reminds me of the vintage heartwarming variety of nineteenth- or early twentieth-century children's stories--*Cheaper by the Dozen*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Little Princess*, *Enchanted Castle*--that sort of thing. Like those stories, *Dodger* isn't particularly suspenseful--it's clear from the first scene that Dodger will triumph over all adversity--but it's fun watching him stumble into serendipitous good fortune. Almost all of the characters are nice people, and they're not just nice; they're the type of people you'd enjoy being around. I especially loved Solomon, Dodger's housemate and unofficial guardian. Much of the enjoyment of the story comes from watching how circumstances conspire to bring about favourable outcomes for the protagonist. It's the type of book that brings an unconscious smile to your face.

Some of my favourite parts of the story were the cameos from various famous Victorian figures, both historical and apocryphal. The book is practically a Who's Who of famous and infamous Victorians. As one might expect, a certain Charles Dickens plays a prominent role, but we also have everyone from Robert Peel to Angela Burdett-Coutts to Benjamin Disraeli to Henry Mayhew to the Queen herself. (Guess whether or not she is amused.) Jack the Ripper appears to be active, and Dodger runs across a shellshocked barber named Sweeney Todd. Solomon has a tendency to tell stories about the friends he met on his travels, including a guy named Karl who had an obsession with proletariats.

This isn't a great choice if you're in the mood for suspense or shock or enlightenment, but if you're looking for a light, fun, and above all, cute story, then *Dodger* is well worth a look.

Patrick says

A couple weeks ago, I was having a real pisser of a day. Then I remembered there was a new Terry Pratchett book out and things didn't seem so bad anymore.

When I first started to read it, I got two surprises. The first was that it wasn't a Discworld book. Which I'm fine with, given how much I loved Nation.

The other surprise was the language of the book. To be completely honest (and I'm really embarrassed to admit this.) when I started reading the book, I thought that Terry's Alzheimer's had finally progressed to such a degree that it had **really** damaged his ability to write at the sentence-level.

About two pages in, I realized he was actually mimicking Victorian prose, which is a lot different than his usual breezy style of writing. Once I realized that, it only took about three pages to get used to the new style and enjoy it. After that I didn't find the language clunky at all.

In brief, all Pratchett's usual wit, cleverness, and humor is here. There's also the added benefit of seeing Victorian London through Dodger's eyes, and while Pratchett romanticizes it somewhat, he obviously knows the time period well.

Andrea says

It is impossible for me to read a new Terry Pratchett independently of the memory of the last 30 years of reading each eagerly awaited book, one by one, with utmost delight.

It is impossible for me to read a new Terry Pratchett without my vivid recollection of him, eyes twinkling from under the brim of his hat, as he signed my precious books, and answered my breathless "Mr (it was ages ago) Pratchett, thank you so much for all the hours of reading pleasure" with "Madam, thank you so much for all your money."

It is impossible for me to read a new Terry Pratchett without seeing the elephant in the room of the Alzheimers' PCA variant, looking for its heavy footsteps possibly crushing the words on the page, and remembering how I sobbed when I saw his soul-bearing BCC documentary about the cruel reality of his disease.

What I'm clumsily trying to say is that it's impossible for me to now separate the man from his writing, and to separate his writing from my own life. He is his writing, it is the expression of his philosophy and his social conscience. His writing has been a constant presence for more than half my life. Discworld has been the stage for his social commentary, one that has always resonated with my personal values. One with a special humour, Monty Pythonesque and quintessentially British in flavour.

Dodger is very similar, but uses Victorian London as a backdrop to highlighting the sweeping social changes of the times; the contrast between classes; and the striving of a few more privileged persons to understand the marginalised and deprived sectors of society. It is fun, it is a romp, it has wit and wisdom and eloquence. It is thoroughly researched and authentic in setting (with artistic licence) and language (modern USA persons are going to struggle with many of the words!).

Sir Terry is definitely still with us, the elephant is browsing quietly.

I wish you well Sir Terry, you are a treasure, and my life is very much richer for your contribution and your continued presence.

Eleventh says

1.5 stars.

So it wasn't *horrid*. But I didn't really care for it either.

First off, this must be said, it didn't feel like a Terry Pratchett book. At all. No zany magic that makes no sense (which was fine). None of his trademark humor (which was not). No likable characters. Just a mystery novel that didn't even *feel* like a mystery. Boo.

The cover: IT LIED. It promised a cute and fun mystery with an adorable small boy main character. Not a bit.

Dodger was okay. His character was really rather boring. And do I need or want boring characters? I think not.

Plus, it was insinuated that he got around a bit. Ugh. Really?

Simplicity. Could you have been more of a non-entity love interest? Probably not. And I felt that (view spoiler)

I wasn't feeling the love. They just ...were. Also, (yes, they attempted to fix this at the end and her husband was trash) she was still married at the end.

Being set in London at the time that it was, there was, of course, some crude comments and innuendo, though not overly so.

There were a few moments where I applauded Dodger's ingenuity. But, ultimately, I was never intrigued. Never cared what did or did not happen to the characters. Never laughed. So...

I truly was not impressed with this one.

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Daniel (Attack of the Books!) Burton says

The most unexpectedly fun read of the year is Terry Pratchett's *Dodger*. With an unmatched skill, Pratchett shows himself to be a writer akin to Mark Twain and as adept in the historical world of 19th century London as he is in the imaginary world of Ankh-Morpork.

A month ago or so, Britt came home with a book on CD for a road trip.

"It's called *Dodger*," she said as we set off down the road. "By some guy called Terry Pratchett."

"Discworld?" I asked from the driver's seat.

"Disc-what?" she said. "No, it's won some award." She flipped to the back. "It looks like is about Charles Dickens...and Sweeney Todd?"

"Hm...I wonder if it's the same Pratchett."

She popped in the first CD, and we began one of the most unexpectedly enjoyable books of the year. And yes, it is the same Terry Pratchett of Discworld fame.

In a departure from the comings and goings of the denizens of Ankh-Morpork, Pratchett delves into the world of Dickens' London, when the sun never set on the British Empire, but the streets stunk and the poor lived a miserable life.

The story opens on a dark, wet night(almost the cliched "a dark and stormy night" but Pratchett never lets you see it) as a carriage comes careening through the streets, carrying a damsel in distress, under threat of death. Out of the darkness comes *Dodger*, a whirl-wind beating off thugs and saving the day.

And we're off. Little more than a child of the streets, *Dodger* falls for the girl in the carriage, and soon find himself on a path carrying him directly away from the sewers and into the halls of Parliament, the rich, and the powerful. Including appearances--and more--from Charles Dickens, Sweeney Todd, Benjamin Disraeli and others, *Dodger*, and its title character, take the reader on a clever and delightful ride, full of the language, color, and flavor of 19th century England.

I've read several of Pratchett's previous novels, including from the Discworld novels and his *The Long Earth* (with Stephen Baxter) and *Good Omens* (with Neil Gaiman). With *Dodger*, though, Pratchett proves his skill as a wordsmith and story-teller. Constantly colorful and always witty, *Dodger* is fun, inventive, and thoroughly enjoyable.

If you've never read Pratchett before, *Dodger* is a great place to start.

Starswirl the Bearded says

First, a disclaimer: As virtually a life-long Pratchett fan, I would probably buy anything he publishes. If he were to release a book titled *World of Poo*, I would probably...oh. Nevermind.

The point I'm making is that I can't be objective when it comes to this author - the Discworld books are too much a part of my life; I cried while watching TP's deeply personal euthanasia documentary; I know certain Discworld characters better than I know members of my extended family.

But this is a review of *Dodger* - not an essay on why I love DW - so here it is:

Though colourful and engagingly written, this isn't a very good book.

It isn't awful, and there is plenty of fun historical trivia, but I wouldn't recommend it. Instead I would steer newbie readers to the City Watch, William dW or Moist vL episodes of Discworld.

The most glaring problem here is the Godmode-Gary Stu-like protagonist. In the space of approximately a week, the teenage 'tosher' (sewage scavenger) with questionable personal hygiene:

- 1) receives not one, but two, fairy-godfather like make-overs and is accepted by the cream of London society at a fancy soiree
- 2) wins the heart of a beautiful, multilingual Princess (despite barely exchanging three sentences). Middle aged women are also apparently magnetically drawn to the young urchin - throwing themselves at the teen, demanding kisses in exchange for their assistance
- 3) displays the fighting skills of Greebo: the skinny teenager easily outmanoeuvres the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, and professional assassins
- 4) is recognised as a national hero and showered with money by grateful citizens, who provide free coach rides in exchange for his autograph
- 5) meets Queen Victoria (probably the most powerful person in the world at that time) - and is accepted as virtually her equal. Although, to be fair, this occurred several months after his ascension to national hero

The other problem that I have is the use of real historical figures, such as Dickens, Mayhew, Disraeli, Robert Peel etc. I got the impression that Sir Terry included people he respects and admires, and perhaps this is part of the problem: overlooking the implausibility of these gentleman all happening to take an interest in Dodger during a single week, the characters never really came to life for me. I got the impression that I was reading about cardboard placeholders for the real men, rather than the living, breathing and flawed characters that inhabit TP's other novels.

And this brings me to my next issue, which is possibly controversial: the historical figures were all middle-class or wealthy do-gooders, concerning themselves with charity towards the deserving poor. There was no mention of working class figures of the industrial era organised labour movement - the movement that would culminate in arguably the biggest ever shift in British society: the post-war Labour victory that led to the NHS, radical redistribution of wealth, the grammar schools and free University education - all of which would have fundamentally shaped TP's childhood and adult opportunities.

Perhaps it isn't surprising that these working class heroes - who were fighting for a fairer society for *everyone* - were not included. Because *Dodger* is fundamentally a rags-to-riches tale, where the audience is asked to empathise with and applaud Dodger's rise to join the upper classes, while throwing out the occasional sixpence whenever he feels a twinge of guilt. Appropriately, the book ends with the new Sir Dodger engaged in the robbery of a priceless historical treasure: a tiara once belonging to Marie Antoinette. No, he is not intending to sell it, and distribute the money to the many starving orphans/girls driven to prostitution who populate the book: in an *Animal Farm* like ending, Dodger is stealing Marie Antoinette's tiara for his new wife, a former Princess. Great lesson for the kids, Terry.

Despite the above issues, this could have been an engaging read if the antagonists had been more fleshed out: something that Pratchett is normally incredibly good at. If we had been introduced to the Outlander and her (possibly conflicted?) henchman earlier, and been led to feel truly terrified and slightly awed by the assassin's ruthlessness and cunning, as well as sympathy for her henchman, it might have broken up the Gary Stu-ness of the tale (it might also have given us a true sense of fear for Dodger and Simplicity). Additionally, it would have been a chance to show us early Victorian Britain through the eyes of an outsider.

Lastly, wtf was up with Dodger's mentor, Solomon? When we first meet him, he is apparently so down-at-heel that he lives in a slum, and eagerly awaits Dodger's scavenged scraps of meat: a few chapters later and it turns out that he is known and well spoken-of by the most influential and wealthy people in the country - he exchanges a secret handshake with Prince Albert, and shares a laugh with him regarding their mutual acquaintance...the King of Sweden. Willing suspension of disbelief can only be stretched so far.

Ultimately, this can be viewed as either a competently written, watered-down Dickens fanfic (Dodger's real name is 'Pip Stick'... he grew up in a workhouse... etc. etc.) or a not very successful attempt to deconstruct the Dickensian novel.

It can also be viewed as an inspirational tale for children, which teaches them to, um, steal from the innocent for personal gain, vandalise the property of people who happen to be from the same country as one bad apple, and elope with a girl you hardly know - who happens to have lovely hair. And not to bother with school, or even basic literacy - because crime is so much more rewarding...

And yet, despite all of the above (and my disappointment in 'Snuff', for fairly similar reasons) I'll continue to buy any new Pratchett novel in the hope that it contains some of the old Discworld magic - moments of which, though few, were still present here. Which is probably what his publishers are banking on.

At least there was less scatology in this one.

Tfitoby says

Without wanting to get in to yet another debate with 30 something adults about the legitimacy of said adults reading novels meant for tweens is there another author working in the YA field who treats said YA's with as much respect and intelligence as Terry Pratchett? I seriously doubt it. If there were I wouldn't hold the publisher manufactured genre in such contempt.

Dodger is most assuredly a YA novel, a softening of Pratchett's usual intelligent discussion of humanity and witty banter but not to the extent that it is painful to read for those of us with a more adult reading level. Taking his most wondrous creation of Ankh-Morpork back to its roots, the documented reality of Victorian London, and exploring the origin and nature of many of his past favourite protagonist/heroes once more, this time in the form of the cheeky geezer, tosher extraordinaire Dodger. Dodger follows the well trodden path of Vimes, Carrot and most recently Moist von Lipwig from inauspicious beginnings through a series of sticky adventures to come up smelling of roses; I don't think it is a coincidence that Pratchett often writes mysteries as they are perfectly suited to the somewhat grey heroes he likes to create.

In this adventure Dodger saves the life of a damsel in distress one stormy London night and sets in motion a series of events that will change both of their lives forever, taking in several historical figures along the way. Sir Robert Peel, Henry Mayhew, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Babbage, Joseph Bazalgette, Angela Burdett-Coutts and V&A themselves are amongst the celebrity cameos shoehorned in to the story all of which

irritated the cynical side of me, who will usually abhor this kind of shortcut to bond with a lazy reader, but Pratchett goes about it in such a way that it is both entertaining and educational, they are there for a reason not just because it's cute and gimmicky; whereas the first appearance of a certain Mister Charlie Dickens made me groan quite loudly in exasperation and sadly it never felt important to the plot that this particular character be Charles Dickens, in my opinion there is never really a reason for using Dickens or Poe amongst others in your fiction but the author should at least make proper use of the baggage such a famous historical figure carries, and for once Pratchett disappointed on this count.

As with almost all Pratchett novels this is a wonderfully entertaining and fast paced read that surely will not disappoint anyone, Dodger is another first class example of a master storyteller in full command of his abilities. Once more two middle fingers are being stuck up firmly in the face of the disease currently at battle with Terry Pratchett and long may they continue to do so.

Arun Divakar says

The Darwinian maxim of *survival of the fittest* is almost chanted like a mantra by a lot of people I know. In the world in front of our eyes, no other principle is put to use with such effortless ease as this one. An erstwhile boss of mine used to call such a skill in the corporate world as 'street-smart' which at an early stage of my career I found to be a rather plain usage. But as time went by, I understood the need for such a survival skill and just why is it that he called it so. Dodger is the story of a person who has this skill honed to the finest and he swims with sharks in the murky underworld of Victorian London.

There is nothing refreshing about the plot and there are no surprises in store either. A damsel in distress is saved by a dashing ruffian in the form of Dodger who helps her through all the difficulties in life and they lived happily ever after. See, I told you so ! So why bother reading it ? For Terry Pratchett of course ! I stuck to the tale only for Pratchett and while the general plot was plain as paper, Pratchett excels in the bildungsroman he inserts into the main plot. The other interesting aspect is that of the rest of the cast. Let me take a few names : Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Dickens, Sweeney Todd are but some characters that grace this tale and rescue it from being a cliché.

Pretty well written but not one of Pratchett's great works.

Huw Evans says

This is an excellent book, if a rather perplexing one. The story is set in Victorian London and thereby lies some of my confusion. Firstly, it very bravely sucks real figures of the time into the storyline (e.g. Dickens, Mayhew, Burdett-Coutts, Peel) which is potentially dangerous. Secondly, everybody knows that Pterry writes about Discworld so I found myself constantly expecting to encounter the denizens of Ankh-Morpork at every turn. There are so many parallels between Victorian London and A-M that the two are effectively interchangeable so it paid to keep my feet very firmly in the world of Queen Victoria, not the Patrician.

Dodger is a tosher, a searcher of sewers to find valuables that have fallen into the system. Fortunately for the squeamish this is set before Bazalgette redeveloped the system and the majority of human waste is collected in cesspits, emptied by the nightsoil men with their honey wagons. He survives on his wits and his ability to find enough money to feed himself. He is the archetypal diamond in the rough. One night he emerges from his toshing to witness an assault and to drive off the assailants, which sucks him into a scandal that, potentially, has international ramifications.

As with all Pratchett's writing the book should be judged on the quality of the language. He excels himself, using the street slang of the time, giving the book a Dickensian feel but retaining a Pratchett style. All his real life characters respond to the author's direction without a murmur, allowing the plot to proceed at pace. By the way, look out for the Housekeeper who is a direct descendent of Mrs Malaprop or Mr Dogberry.
