



The Fifth Season

N.K. Jemisin

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THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS. AGAIN.

Three terrible things happen in a single day.

Essun, masquerading as an ordinary schoolteacher in a quiet small town, comes home to find that her husband has brutally murdered their son and kidnapped their daughter. Mighty Sanze, the empire whose innovations have been civilization's bedrock for a thousand years, collapses as its greatest city is destroyed by a madman's vengeance. And worst of all, across the heartland of the world's sole continent, a great red rift has been torn which spews ash enough to darken the sky for years. Or centuries.

But this is the Stillness, a land long familiar with struggle, and where orogenes -- those who wield the power of the earth as a weapon -- are feared far more than the long cold night. Essun has remembered herself, and she will have her daughter back.

She does not care if the world falls apart around her. Essun will break it herself, if she must, to save her daughter.

The Fifth Season Details

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Author : N.K. Jemisin

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From Reader Review The Fifth Season for online ebook

Althea Ann says

OK, I'm going to have to shell out for my WorldCon membership just so I can nominate this book for a Hugo.

I recently noticed that Nora Jemisin's Goodreads profile lists her "influences" as Tanith Lee & Ursula K. Le Guin. I'm not sure if she put that in there or someone else did - but those just happen to be two of my most favorite authors; and yes, I can see the 'influence' on this book.

Previously, I've only read Jemisin's Hundred Thousand Kingdoms - her first book. It was good enough that I bought the sequels - but I haven't gotten around to reading them yet. 'The Fifth Season' really demonstrates that her writing has matured since then.

The premise itself involves a familiar fantasy scenario (although, technically, this is really "science-fantasy"): innate 'magical' abilities that are hated and feared by the local population; an institution devoted to collecting and training talented individuals. There's some Wisdom of the Ancients, some post-apocalypse, some questing, some Wizard Battles. This book will appeal to anyone who loves all of these things. However, the writing and the non-stop originality of the book lift it head-and-shoulders above many other iterations of these tropes.

There are three threads of the story. It's nearly immediately clear that they do not all take place concurrently, but it's only gradually revealed how the events of each reflect upon and are related to the others. The unfolding of the tale is done masterfully.

In the first strand of this braid, Essun, a mature woman, is introduced by the side of her young son's corpse. It turns out that the boy was revealed to be an orogene. (orogeny [aw-roj-uh-nee, oh-roj-] 1. the process of mountain making or upheaval.) Geologic upheaval is what people born with this ability can do, using only their minds. Unfortunately, it can be a hard ability to control - those with the ability tend to use it unconsciously, whenever they feel threatened or angry. Even a minor offense or accident can end up causing massive death and destruction. So it's understandable that people with this ability are hated and feared. It's also obvious, from nearly page 1, that in a world that is as geologically unstable as this one is, one prone to periodic apocalyptic eruptions that cause years-long, civilization-destroying winters (the 'fifth seasons' of the title), that the orogenes could be the key to survival itself.

Essun knows that it was her husband, the boy's father, who killed him. She also knows that the boy's abilities came from her - she also is an orogene. Traumatized and furious, she sets off on a quest for revenge - and to also possibly find her surviving child.

But there is one other thing that Essun knows. A recent geologic upheaval was worse than any other in recorded history. It might not yet be clear to everyone, but this could very well be the true end of the world.

In the second strand of the braid, we meet the young girl Damaya. She also has just been revealed as an orogene, due to the results of a playground spat. While her family didn't kill her, they immediately repudiate and imprison her - and sell her to a Guardian, who plans to take her to what sounds a lot like a college for wizards, where orogenes will be trained to protect and serve, rather than to destroy.

In the third piece of the story, we meet the initiate Syenite, an orogene sworn to the service that we just saw Damaya entering. The obedience required of Syenite, and the responsibilities demanded from her, throw our perspective on the whole institution she serves into quite a different light.

And of course... this is just the beginning. There are also aliens! Pirates! Geode cities! Floating obelisks! More!

My one slight criticism of the book (and this is me as a non-parent) is there there is quite a lot of dead-child-as-motivation. I'm just generally not a fan of child-motivations in general. But this is done well enough for me to excuse it. The depictions of trauma are realistic and believable; the characters all really came to life for me.

There's also a definite sequel on the way... and all I can say is: I can't wait!

March 2016: as promised, nominated for Hugo.

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

4.5 stars. What you know for sure is that you're not a child. You don't want to know what would happen if you were (**this world is nasty**). But you walk. Restlessly, you walk. At this point you're not sure it means something. You go on, though, because you're intrigued. Orogene, guardian, pirate, commless, you're part of the humanity anyway (**they don't think you are**). You're no stranger to rules (**death awaits if you are**) yet life destroys them at times (**this is the way the world ends, again**). Sometimes you wish info-dumping existed (**confusion is you**) but not anymore (**you just wait, it makes sense**).

(Friends do not exist. The fulcrum is not a school. Grits are not children. Orogenes are not people. Weapons have no need of friends.)

They lied, didn't they? (**of course they did**) The rage (**or is it revenge**) threatens to close your throat at any moment but you are strong, so go on, go on, just a little longer.

"Perhaps you think it wrong that I dwell so much on the horrors, the pain, but pain is what shapes us, after all. We are creatures born of heat and pressure and grinding, ceaseless movement. To be still is to be... not alive."

You're not sure how it happened but you laugh. It's a strange thing, that laugh. It takes you by surprise (**the tears are never far**).

**"But this is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
This is the way the world ends.
For the last time."**

You understand, finally, and you're amazed (**it hurts, though**).

Edit 31/07/17 : The Fifth Season was even better the second time around, but I should have seen it coming : a story so intricate really screams *reread me, reread me* with pleading eyes. August 15th can't come soon enough.

For more of my reviews, please visit:

J.L. Sutton says

From its ominous opening, "This is the way the world ends. Again", N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season* offers an original and amazingly immersive experience! Jemisin's world-building exists side by side with a world teetering on the brink of destruction. But this has happened before. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanoes have wreaked havoc on the Stillness, the super continent and only land mass of this world. Previous generations/civilizations have been unable to avoid the destruction. The powers (magical abilities) of Orogenes are refined in specific schools and attuned to these natural disasters. They might not be able to prevent the world from ending. (Or maybe they can?) Still, in a society with radically different customs, beliefs and social structures, Jemisin's characters (specifically her strong heroines) stand out and make this a truly enjoyable read! But what's with the floating obelisks? I will definitely have to continue reading *The Broken Earth Series*.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

UPDATE: \$2.99 on Kindle US today. 7-20-17

I mean wow! This book is totally out there. There were a few things I didnt like but overall it was pretty amaze balls!

This world Jemisin created is like nothing I have read before. I love there are groups of people with powers. The book is dark with sparks of hope here and there. And I still can't get over what happened to Essun's son. That has stuck with me through the whole book.

At first I was afraid I wasn't going to understand anything in the book but to my surprise my little brain cells pretty much understood the whole thing.

This is the first book I have read by Jemisin and I'm very happy that I enjoyed the book! She can weave a tale, that is for sure.

It seems like everyone and their cousin has read this book so I'm not going to write an in depth review, you can go read all of the wonderful ones out there.

In closing, if you have been putting off reading this book, don't put it off any longer! She was the winner of the 2016 Hugo Award for a reason =]

Em says

no offense to me or anything but what was I thinking not picking up this book sooner especially that I've learned it has POC and queer representation and also "**for all those who have to fight for the respect others are given without question**" is hands down one of the best dedications that I have ever read

Nnedi says

A beautiful haunting tale told in the way that I love, with little regard for the linear illusion of time. And the voices, oh the three voices.

Petrik says

4.5/5 Stars

I will not start my review for this book with some praises. Don't get me wrong, this is an amazing book (*oh shit I just did*), but I'd like to start this review instead by saying patience is virtue is apt here.

“For all those that have to fight for the respect that everyone else is given without question.”

This book and my review will be dedicated to all of you.

The Fifth Season, the first book in the Broken Earth trilogy is, in my opinion, a book that will truly require some patience for you to read. It took me around 80 pages to get used to everything in the book and truly start getting invested in it. That's quite a lot of pages needed, sure there's a great reason for this but in my opinion sacrificing the first 20%, even if the culmination of it was great. I'm not surprised if a lot of people DNF this book just from the 20%, I almost DNF it myself, it's also the only reason why this book didn't receive a full 5 stars rating from me. But trust me; you won't regret reading this through to the end.

Think of a jigsaw puzzle. You start with the big picture, the box or cover of the puzzle. In the case of this book, you started with the passage “This is the way the world ends for the last time”, but you have no idea how it happens and what's going on, what's the catalyst? To process this, it's really easy, read the book. You'll probably think at this point “you don't say?” but once you started, you'll probably think of DNFing quickly. Like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, it's easy to do it, you just need the patience to fit all the pieces. Brandon Sanderson praised Jemisin highly in her writing and storytelling and you know what? He's right. Jemisin stated that The Broken Earth trilogy is the most challenging books she ever wrote, just from the first book I can already see why. I can't imagine how much research and planning were done for the creation of this book. I think of the plot of this book as an intricate story that gets better and easier to read the more you progressed, just like how assembling jigsaw puzzle started overwhelming but gets easier and more addictive the more you progressed.

Jemisin has also done a stellar job in her characterization. Essun, Damaya, and Syenite have become one of the best written female characters I've ever read. Their journey, struggle, background, personality,

determination are all written in a way that will make you truly care about them.

Picture: Essun by Miranda Meeks (*The cover of Fifth Season limited edition by Subterranean Press*)

Not only that, the side characters here are also unique and equally engaging. For those of you who are begging for diversity in their read, rest assured that you'll find them here. You want LGBT? Oh, you'll get it, a lot, with a passage like a "cock rubbing on oily cock", I don't think you can ask for more in that aspect. People of color? Brown, black, white, it's there and they're all well written.

Taking place in a world called The Stillness; Jemisin's world-building is wonderful, vivid, and atmospheric. Accompanied with a rich history and an intricate magic system called Orogene, which deals with the manipulation of thermal, kinetic energy to address seismic events, almost everything about this book is Earth shatteringly good. One thing to note though, most of the terminologies here isn't explicitly explained. You have to understand what the names are through the context provided by the narration. If you're impatient in trying to understand the terminologies, you can just go straight to the back of the book to read the detailed explanation, there's a whole detailed section there.

Before I close my review, I must tell you about the prose here. The way this book is written is a complete culture shock to me, especially Essun's POV. It's the first time I read a combination of 2nd POV narrative, done in present tense, and combined with an omniscient element so it took me a while to get into it. Damaya and Syenite's POV are easier to read as they were done in 3rd person and present tense. It felt odd at first, but after the first 20%, it became so addictive to read. Jemisin's prose is beautiful and enchanting, and definitely suitable for the story she's telling here.

By the end of this book, I arrived at the conclusion that The Fifth Season is one heck of a start to a trilogy. It's superb, highly original, and also a fantastic mix of high fantasy and sci-fi that can only be achieved by top-tiered authors. This book has won tons of awards, look them up if you want, there are too many to list here. However, let me tell you that those awards are truly well deserved.

You can find this and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at BookNest

Rick Riordan says

I picked this one up because I greatly enjoyed Jemisin's Hundred Thousand Kingdoms, but this novel was even better. Jemisin blew me away with her world-building and beautiful writing. It's the tale of an alternate earth called the Stillness, which is plagued by constant seismic activity. This leads to frequent near-extinction events called "Fifth Seasons" that keep humans on their toes. The evidence of past civilizations litters the planet -- ruined cities, incomplete 'stonelore' handed down from earlier generations, and strange obelisks that float through the atmosphere like low-altitude satellites and serve no apparent purpose. The civilization that we meet in this book, the Sanze Empire, has survived for centuries by harnessing the power of orogenes -- people born with an innate ability to control their environment. The orogenes can stop earthquakes or start them. They can save cities, or drawn power from living creatures and "ice" them. Their powers are terrifying yet essential, so the empire develops a caste of Guardians who have the power to neutralize the orogenes when necessary. The orogenes are held in contempt and called "roggas" by ordinary humans. Despite all their power, they cannot control their own lives. They are either hunted down and destroyed or sent to the Fulcrum to be trained and used by the empire. Imagine Hogwarts, if Hogwarts treated its students like chattel. The world Jemisin creates is as horrific as it is brilliant.

My advice is to give the book at least fifty pages before passing judgment, because it takes a while to understand what is going on. There is a lot of terminology to get used to, and the book is told in three intertwining narratives that at first don't seem to match up, but once you get into the world and into the story, it is a fantastically rewarding read. I can't say much about the plot without giving away some of the wonderful surprises, but if you want to read about a truly dystopian world that holds a mirror to the darkest of human motivations, this novel will haunt you long after you finish it.

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

—for all those who have to fight for the respect others are given without question.

From reading [this dedication](#), I knew this would be a special book, and I was... right.

Uh, okay, I feel like the fact that this series won a Hugo award [two, actually - and it'll probably win a third] does show some degree of quality. But that won't stop me from getting into the details of why this book works so well!!

First of all, the writing is fucking gorgeous, but doesn't take itself too seriously - there's a sardonic tone that makes it effortlessly lovable. I... love the writing of this book. It's so crisp, without wasted words, but so gorgeous.

The worldbuilding here has totally been praised by everyone for being so creative and detailed, and it is. But I admit, I tend to be really intimidated by worldbuilding-heavy books, so can I just say - this should not intimidate. Despite the level of detail and complexity, the broad plot is very unconvoluted.

The plot, in general, is awesome. There are several kickass plot twists [one that literally caused me to scream out loud]. While there's not necessarily always something going on, there's always lingering tension; this world is dangerous, and we feel that, in every beat of the book.

Oh, and the characters are just the best. There are three povs within this book, and I love all of them.

►Essun [You] - an older orogene whose husband killed their young son after he showed signs of power. Her story is told in second person narration. She falls in with two mysterious people, Hoa and Tonkee, while looking for her daughter Nassun.

►Demaya - a young orogene taken from her parents to the Fulcrum. Her plotline is perhaps the most horrifying of them all. That hand scene haunts me I have not been so horrified by any scene in a long time.

►Syenite - a young orogene who has grown up at the Fulcrum. Syenite is my f a v o r i t e; her storyline with Alabaster is just the best. I am such a slut for enemies-to-friends who sass each other.

I was just thinking this recently after reading *This Savage Song*, but it bears repeating: a book using a enemies-to-besties friendship as its key dynamic is everything I have ever wanted and I am blessed. Alabaster and Syenite, y'all. Holy fuck. I want to read 300000000 pages of them being deep-level best friends with a romantically-overtone but still deeply platonic bond. I would die for them. They are e v e r y t h i n g.

But I think what really, really makes this book work, on a deep level, is the thematic core. *The Fifth Season* is a book about oppression. In a world that barely thinks of you as human, how can you garner the respect you deserve? And in the end, when you're forced to fight for the respect others will receive without condition, when you're shown from the beginning your inherent inferiority, how can you find a sense of

being?

And in a book driven by an all-black cast, and several queer leads [perhaps the most prominent two side characters are a gay man and a trans woman] this feels especially significant. As a story about how we can be taught to believe in ourselves only as cogs in a great wheel, it is utterly gut-wrenching.

I don't know where this series can even go from here, but I'm so excited to find out. I am in shock at everything here and completely in love.

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Cezara says

Yes, 5 full stars for this one because it's everything I want in a fantasy book. I will explain.

I don't read fantasy and sci-fi because I like magic or space ships or laser swords or what have you. I read fantasy and sci-fi because I want to see something new, and there's no other genre that allows this much freedom of imagination, this much flexibility and bending of reality and this much room for "what ifs". The genres are ripe with tropes and cliches even so, and I'm at that point where it pains me to have to read again through a story about the noble hearted what's-his-face who saves the land of medieval-Europe-plus-elves-and-dragons with the help of the wise mentor and the pretty princess. Show me something else, something truly weird, I say! And N. K. Jemisin delivered.

Let there be a world wracked by earthquakes and volcano eruptions, she says, restless and hostile. Let there be apocalypse-level events every hundred years or so. Let this world be inhabited by people who believe the Earth hates them, who value survival above all else, and have organized their society around making sure some of them will make it through the years of darkness, and famine, and poisonous air and water that follow such geologic disasters. Let there be among them those who have the power to control the earthquakes, to start and stop them at will, and let that society hate them, while doing their best to exploit them at the same time. Let there be another sentient species, strange creatures of stone whose motivations are unknown, who share this world with humans.

Then come the the details. The mysterious ruins of the many civilizations that came before this one, some considerably more advanced. Their artifacts endure to this day, their purpose unknown and maybe unknowable now that their makers have been dead for thousands of years. The harshness and ruthlessness of a society living on the brink of extinction, where value is based on usefulness and where, come Seasonal Law, those deemed useless are left to die in the wastelands. The purely utilitarian approach to building in a world where a balcony is unquestionable proof of foolishness or privilege, where decorations are a waste of time and resources since they'll be wiped out in a few years without fail. The surprisingly advanced science, focused - unsurprisingly - on geology, chemistry and physics. The hatred and exploitation of the orogenes, those who have power over the earth itself, by a society that both fears them and desperately needs them if it is to survive. The secrets and the lies and the rewriting of history and the suppression of lore by those who want to keep the orogenes willing slaves. The horrifying abuse, and the inescapable brainwashing, but the training and education too. A system meant to make them more powerful and more powerless at the same time so that it may better make use of them.

And then Jemisin pushes further. She goes so far out of the medieval Europe setting that she ends up on the Equator. She makes the other sentient race truly alien, as a different sentience should be, lest you end up with just stranger looking humans. She makes the humans different races, and *gasp* doesn't put the paler one in

charge. Just as the characters span the gradients and combinations of human races, they span human sexuality too, from straight to gay with blurry boundaries all over the place. There's love and family and sex, but they're not the kind of relationships you're used to. Why should they be? This is not our world with some magic, mythical creatures, and sword fighting mixed in. This is something else. Something new.

And yet, as you read, you get the feeling that this *could* be our world with some magic and some mythical creatures mixed in. You get the feeling that it *was* this sort of world at some point, and then something maybe went wrong, and everything had to change, to adapt, and this is the inevitable result. The world is strange, but it's not strangeness for strangeness's sake. It all makes sense, everything fits together, and while you can see that some things could be different, you understand perfectly well why they're not. It's like a gnarled and twisted tree growing on a rocky windswept mountain top. It's not like other trees, but not because someone decided to take an ax to it and make it as different looking as possible. No, once the seed was planted, there simply was no other way it could grow.

I can't say more, especially about the characters and the story line, without spoilers, even though I feel I could rant about this book for days on end. Go read it. I can't begin to imagine the level of skill required to create a world so different, and then make it feel so real. N.K. Jemisin deserves your attention.

Bradley says

Edit, 10:52 pm, tonight. :) N.K. Jemisin is the WINNER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! :) :) :) Was there any doubt?

Old Review (from a few hours ago):

Re-Read 8/20/16, the day the Hugo Awards Ceremony is to take place for the novel I voted for. :) Coincidentally, I'll be reading the sequel tomorrow. :)

So was it as good as I remember? Actually, better. But that's mostly because I'm in on the trick and the secret of the MC is laid bare and the whole novel then becomes a character exploration for me as well as a jaw-dropping mountain-load of quakeworthy World Building and awesome implications.

Since I first read this, I read her trilogy and loved it, but what can I say? I still loved this one even more. It speaks to me right down to the absolutely horrible revelations, the personal impacts, the hopes, the fears, the successes... oh, especially the successes... and of course, the question of WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON. :)

To say this book is full of questions is to say that a Jane Austen book is full of lace. It's kind of obvious. The question is: What the hell is the lace up to?

Jemisin is fantastic for mythology and mythology building, but what is best about this book is the sense of long history and cycles and the deep feeling like it is all headed somewhere huge. And it is. Just let me ask you... What DID happen to the moon? ;)

If you haven't read this yet, then you're a fool. :) It's deeply textured in all ways, and it's not just the fact that the gods are chained or that we killed Father Earth's only child. It's pretty obvious that this is a deep time future Earth, too, and everything seems to seriously point toward a mind-blowing explanation beyond recurring extinction events. :) Which happen anyway, so yeah, let's get down to the real reasons, shall we?

WHY. :) Oh so yummy. :)

Looking forward to the awards ceremony tonight. Let's see if my top choice made it! :)

Original Review:

This is my first N. K. Jemisin, and I'm truly ashamed that I hadn't gotten around to her writing before now. I'm just putting that out right away, because this shame is all my own, and it is deep.

Secondly, this feels like an intensely personal novel, to me, and for me, although maybe nobody will ever know why, except me. The way she treats the volcanoes and the earthquakes make me seethe with jealousy and rage, because it is just so damn good.

And thirdly, I'm stuck straddling the line between how much I enjoyed the POV developments and how they eventually revealed something truly great by the end and how much I wish I had known the secret from the very start. It wouldn't have taken much. Just another line following each heading. There would have been no confusion, no mystery. But no, it is as it is, and I'm very likely going to have to reread the novel to pick up any possible failings of my inconsiderate attention span before I dive into the second novel that follows this.

So what am I trying to say, here? That I'm a miserable failure who is taking this novel way too seriously and admits that he may have missed too much on the first read because the novel was too dense for his little brain? Possibly.

But what I'm really saying is that this novel has skyrocketed to one of the topmost favorite novels that I've ever read, that I'm squeeeing about it, and that I think I've just found my newest favorite author of all time.

I like to think that I'm fairly well read. I like to think I have a fairly discriminate palate that shows in my reviews, even if they don't always show in something as simple as a star on a bar. I like to think that I can pick out works of deeply fine quality and works that have obviously been borne quite bloodily from an author's head, like Athena, only with much more gore. This is one of those damn fine novels that just REEKS of imagination, forethought, CRAFT, and one hell of a fine setup, a fine conclusion, and finally, a fantastic and sharp new setup.

I remember the moon. I thought of it throughout this novel. Its having been missing throughout all these damn cataclysms caused me as much grief as the idea that the Fifth Seasons are actually huge diebacks on the Earth, recurring endlessly ever since we killed the moon in some mysterious and immense SF past. We have people with amazing powers, almost godlike in scope, having undergone so much social and historical upheavals, themselves, that no one even knows their history any longer, or why they chose to chain themselves.

We have our main character and her shadow, (view spoiler) developing to a final convergence that is a truly wonderful reveal, while leaving us with even greater questions and a truly immense possible conflict. As if supervolcanoes and earthquakes and their control or release weren't enough conflict, right? We've the makings of one of the biggest revenge stories I've ever had the pleasure to read.

It's almost as if I'm reading a quality SF novel that has been allowed the freedom to go Super Sayan on me.

And so my jaw drops.

Am I utterly amazed after reading this? Yes. Hell yes.

Do I have any reservations with the author's writing, timing, storytelling, subject, characters, or reveals? No.

Hell no.

I do want to say one thing after reading the afterward, though. Thank you, Ms. Jemisin for not giving up on this amazing novel. All of your blood, sweat, and tears have brought forth something truly great. I am indebted to you, personally, for changing my life and my expectations about what can actually be pulled forth from a great novel. You did something Big. Thank you!

Update 4/27/16

And so now we learn that this novel has been nominated for both the 2016 Hugo and the Nebula! By my review above, I'm pretty certain I've expressed how much I love this book, and that has not changed one bit. If I was in a position to scream from my soapbox to say to the Nebulas that this is the clear winner, I would. As it *is*, I CAN scream from my soapbox to the Hugos and say it. :)

I mentioned in my review for *The Aeronaut's Windlass*, another book that also got the Hugo nomination for this year, that there really should be two separate categories for Standalone Novels and another for Novels in a Series, because most series novels have the luxury of taking things extremely slow and build character, setting, and plot in such long sweeping epics that when we look back on them, they fairly overwhelm us if they've done their job right.

Standalone novels can do the same thing, of course, but they have to do so economically and usually with a great deal of panache and brilliance and editing that probably makes it an entirely different kind of beast from the series novels. At this point in the SF/F genres, we have amazing examples of both and we're getting crowded in one single category that more often than not has to artificially balance series novels 3 out of 5 in 2016, crowding out a plethora of brilliant standalone novels.

I'm fairly naturally prejudiced to separate these two forms in my head, because I'm totally invested in the characters and settings in the series, while I'm learning everything new for the first time in the standalone.

When I think of the Hugos, I generally think of standalone novels, but I *know* it isn't true. I've recently finished reading all the Hugo winners and a very significant portion of the nominations all the way back to the start of the award. Still, I feel a bit prejudiced. I want excellent standalone novels to be recognized as such, uncontaminated by preconceptions.

BUT. I also have to make a decision based on just how F***ing Awesome a book is, too, and *The Fifth Season*, even if it is the first in a new series, is F***ing Awesome.

I'm sure a lot of people felt the same way about *Ancillary Justice* when it came out, and I can't say that was the wrong choice for that year, either. :) Good is Good is Good is Good.

So regardless of whether the category should be split up or not, out of all the choices we're presented, I think *The Fifth Season* should shake the whole ceremony up. :)

Melanie says

This book is beautiful, this book is smart, this book is oh so heartbreaking, and this book is a masterpiece. This is one of those books that make you feel absolutely guilty for giving out five stars to other books. This book is unlike anything I've ever read, but it felt so seamlessly woven. This book mirrors the society we live

in today and makes you think about all those uncomfortable topics you'd rather ignore and pretend do not exist. This book has the best representation I've ever read in a SFF novel. This book is deserving of all the hype, all the praise, and every ounce of love it's received. This book easily is now one of my favorite books of all time.

“Let's start with the end of the world, why don't we?”

This story is set in a world called the Stillness, where earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other terrible things impacting the earth are constantly happening, but there are people who are able to manipulate the earth to ease them. These people are called orogenes and even though they are continually saving the world they are constantly oppressed slaves. This world has convinced everyone that orogenes are dangerous and need to be controlled at all costs. It is illegal to harbor orogenes and you must turn them in, even if they are your family. The price of hiding a orogene is great and most people are not willing to pay it. If a orogene isn't killed by their community before they are turned in, they are taken to a training school called the Fulcrum where they are deemed worthy enough to train

Everyone in the Stillness is trying to survive the world's unforgiving environment. This planet is beyond unstable, because of Fifth Seasons that happens sporadically, but almost wipe out the planet each and every time. The people in this world are scared that a new Fifth Season is about to begin. And just so you understand the severe of the living conditions during a Fifth Season, here are some examples:

- **Choking Season** - with volcanic eruptions which caused ash that, if it didn't kill you from breathing it in, the lack of sunlight for five years would try to.
- **Acid Season** - with plus-ten-level earthquakes, which caused many volcanoes that caused the water to become acidic.
- **Boiling Season** - with hot spot eruptions that began underneath a great lake and made millions of gallons of steam which triggered acidic rain.
- **Fungus Season** - with volcanic eruptions during monsoon season which made for perfect fungal spreading that wiped out major food supplies.

These are just a few of the season, and without orogenes this world wouldn't be able to keep a new Fifth Season at bay. This book follows three different girls who are each struggling to survive this horrible world and struggling with their own individual journeys:

► **Essun** - An older woman whose husband has killed their young son, because he showed that he was a orogene. He inherited his powers from Essun, but they were keeping it hidden from their community. Essun is now off to find her husband who fled after the murder and took their daughter with him.

► **Damaya** - A small girl who realized she was a orogene after an accidental attack. Her family is isn't willing to pay the price of harboring her, especially since her community now knows what she is. Her parents call the authorities and she is going to be taken to the Fulcrum, where they can train and use orogenes if they are trainable and submissive.

► **Syenite** - A young woman who has lived the majority of her life at the Fulcrum being trained. At the Fulcrum, as you increase your learning and abilities you will earn rings that signify your power and allows you more privileges. Syenite has four rings, which is impressive in its own way, but she is now assigned to breed with the only ten ring around, so she can give the Fulcrum her child in hopes that it will be very powerful and very trainable.

“Orogeny is damned useful, Syenite is beginning to understand, for far, far more than just quelling shakes.”

Yet the side characters are amazing, too. Hoa, Alabaster, Tonkee, Innon, all of them, along side these three women, worked their way into my heart. This whole dystopian world that only wants to kill itself worked its way into my heart. This story is and these characters are truly one of a kind.

This book perpetuates so many healthy ideas absolutely seamlessly:

- This book is unapologetically black and it's something of beauty.
- This book is about systematic oppression, set in an expertly crafted SFF novel.
- This book has one of the best polyamorous relationships I've ever read.
- This book has bisexual and gay representation that was perfection.
- This book has a wonderful transgender side character who everyone accepts without question.
- This book even celebrates found families and the importance of finding your own people that will love and accept you unconditionally.

“Home is what you take with you, not what you leave behind.”

This book creates so many parallels to the world we live in today. This book, hopefully, will make you think about your internalized racism and the prejudices that you hold without even realizing it. The reason so many of us think the way we do today, in 2017, is because our world has told us to think this way without even being given a chance to think differently. This book even has a fictionalized slur for orogenes that made my stomach turn every time I read it. This book is raw and painful at times, so very painful, but it's such an important story. And I'm still unsure if I've ever read anything as sad as the node maintainers in all of my life. *The Fifth Season* isn't just an amazing SFF novel, it's a parallel to our world today, and I recommend everyone not only read this novel, but to open their eyes while reading this novel.

N.K. Jemisin did all this and wrote one of the best SFF stories I've ever read in my life. She deserves every award she won for this masterpiece, if not more. This book is deserving of all the hype, all the praise, and every ounce of love it's received. This book easily is now one of my favorite books of all time and I can't wait to read *The Obelisk Gate*.

“This is what you must remember: the ending of one story is just the beginning of another.”

Also, please go watch the best review of *The Fifth Season* ever created, by my all time favorite Booktuber, Adriana, from perpetualpages! Their review brings me to tears every time I watch it, and I hope my review plus theirs will make you pick up this powerful and important book with one of the best stories ever written.

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Buddy Read with Gelisvb ♥

Twerving To Beethoven says

8:36pm, Sunday, August 21st, 2016. Noosa Heads

"The Fifth Season" won the Hugo for best novel.

And I'm like...

Aye, anyway... I guess if I say it's an utter load of wank, nobody will notice.

I honestly tried, without prejudice, and - go figure - failed. DNF.

Not only is this book written in present tense - which bugs the ever loving fuck out of me -, it's also written in second person which is *possibly* even worse, it just kicks my feeble, tiny, weak brain in.

I gave it a go a few months ago because of the hype and the praise, and 50 pages in or so, I was this close to tossing the bastard on the barbie and calling it all the known names on earth. I eventually didn't burn the steaming pile, and gave it to a friend of mine who - ha! - equally loathed it.

I reckon it's probably my issue. I mean, there are way too many enthusiastic reviews on GR, y'know. What can I say? I still think "The Fifth Season" is a waste of trees.

Lyn says

Really good.

N. K. Jemisin's 2016 Hugo Award winner's world building is as good as Frank Herbert or Ursula LeGuin and with magic rules as well thought out as Brandon Sanderson and with an intimate talent for complex characterization as good as Octavia Butler.

All comparisons aside, Jemisin's work is wildly original and she has created a far future fantasy that provokes thought and entertains. Evoking Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*, this is far, far in the future (if it is even Earth) where some people, Orogenes, have wild earth moving kinetic powers.

And there are aliens.

In metaphor, Jemisin describes the Orogenes as both imaginatively powerful but also hated and used as slaves. In this way Jemisin uses her impressively intricate narrative to also explore themes of individuality and the One versus the Many. This allegory is especially noteworthy in our post 9/11 world where powerful individuals can affect change as much or more than a sovereign nation.

Also interesting was her use of the second person narrative structure in alternating sequences. Really don't see that much.

Jemisin's intricate use of tectonically powerful super humans, shunned by the rest of mankind, is also a fitting and resonant metaphor for our own responsibilities to our faltering world. The author uses the Orogenes complicated plight to reveal failings in our responsibility to our Mother Earth (interestingly changed to Father Earth in her story).

Recommended.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosantum.com/2015/07/20/b...>

This book had the distinction of being on both my most anticipated SFF lists for 2014 and 2015, due to the publisher's decision to push its release date back a year in order to give N.K. Jemisin more time to work on the sequels. So it was with no small amount of excitement when an advance copy finally made it into my hands. Proof that it was really happening.

And oh boy, was it TOTALLY worth the wait.

Initially though, my feelings were mixed after the first few chapters. There was that cryptic prologue, with its smattering of information about the world (then right away saying that none of these places or people I just read about actually matter – wait, what?) as well as the curious narrative style, including one character whose chapters were written entirely in the second person. That choice eventually makes sense, by the way, but at first I really wasn't sure what to make of the book.

But then gradually, everything started to come together. I watched as connections were made, questions were answered, and blank spaces were filled in. The final result was this unique and wholly imaginative novel that delighting me to no end. The world-building elements which so confounded me at the beginning of the book eventually became clear, and I came to recognize the sheer ingenuity behind it.

The Fifth Season takes place on a continent known as The Stillness, ironically named given the instability of its geology and tectonics. The world would have fallen to pieces many times over if not for the Orogenes, a group of people with the powers to manipulate earth energies and shape the land. In reality though, The Stillness has actually gone through multiple apocalyptic events called "Seasons", each one characterized by its specific end-of-the-world effects. It's the norm for this world, but Orogenes do what they can to make it better, preventing many earthquakes or volcanic eruptions by catching anomalies in time before they can cause widespread destruction.

Yet for all that they do for humanity, Orogenes are feared, shunned and subjected to hostility and violent treatment. Their powers can be as unstable and catastrophic as the disasters they try to prevent, especially if the individual cannot learn control. Orogey is also unpredictable. There's a genetic predisposition for it, though theoretically anyone can be born an Orogene, so children discovered with the trait are immediately taken away for harsh and rigid training. However, there are also the unfortunate ones that don't even make it that far before they're murdered by their scared or panicky neighbors – or even by their own parents.

Essun experienced this in the worst way possible, coming home one day to find the lifeless body of her young son, beaten to death by her husband. An Orogene in hiding, Essun realizes with grief and horror what must have caused the father to kill the boy. Now Essun fears for the life of her daughter whom her husband has kidnapped, and she is determined to go after them. This is her story, a heartbreaking and beautifully written narrative of a woman's journey taken upon for love and revenge. Jemisin may have created a world here full of mind-blowingly fantastical elements, but she hasn't left us wanting in the character department either, giving us an emotionally raw, very human tale.

I have to say the characters are truly wonderful. The Fifth Season follows three perspectives: Essun, a rogue Orogene whose only quest now is to get her daughter back; little Damaya, taken away by an Orogene handler called a Guardian to Yumenes where she will be trained to control her powers; and Syenite, a young woman

paired with a more experienced mentor in order to learn from him and breed with him, ensuring that the next generation will have talented Orogenes to keep The Stillness safe. All three threads are so engaging and poignantly detailed, each one giving the reader a distinct reason to care about these strong yet conflicted characters. It was also wonderful to see the bigger picture they formed in the end.

Finally, I have a confession to make. While this is my first Jemisin novel, years ago I actually started to read *A Hundred Thousand Kingdoms* around the time it came out, but for whatever reason I put it down and didn't get a chance to pick it up again. I have every intention of going back to the book one of these days, but for obvious reasons I didn't count it as being "read". I did, however, feel like I got enough to get a feel for her writing, and now reading *The Fifth Season* in 2015, I can see how far her skill has come since her debut. With such rich world-building, relatable characters and compelling storytelling, I just knew I had to see all that through to the end, and the conclusion was a real surprise, both marvelous and disquieting.

I'm so glad I read this. *The Fifth Season* is the first novel of *The Broken Earth* trilogy, and it's a strong introduction to a brand new world featuring some very fascinating, very special characters. Highly recommended. It's definitely not going to be an easy wait for the next book.
