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The Ropemaker

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Editor's Choice:

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Dickinson adds another to the growing pile of blockbuster fantasies for the market that emerged in the wake of Philip Pullman's **Northern Lights**, and that bridges teenage and adult readers. Dickinson has been working this vein for a while now and, in his earlier four-book epic, **The Kin**, there was, perhaps, the realisation of a freedom to go more boldly and range more widely than ever before. **The Ropemaker** is not on the same scale. Its use of a journey through alien lands, in conflict with malevolent forces, some of them unknown, to an uncertain end, is an expansive variation on familiar Dickinson preoccupations. That said, you will not find it done better. There are few writers, whether for adults or children, who have his facility for embedding magic in worlds with credible social and cultural dynamics, whose strangeness is more fascinating than the operation of magic itself. In **The Ropemaker**, magic whirls about as a natural force waiting to be harnessed for good or ill, while the representatives of a threatened mountain valley journey in search of a renewal of the protection that has kept them safe from invasion for generations. Within an inventive and dramatic narrative, Dickinson plays not only with the nature of time but also, through his characterisation, notions of gender and age and, crucially for the story, the power and nature of special gifts.

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