

The Story

Was the Wicked Witch of the West really wicked or the innocent victim of a corrupt regime?



Photograph by Matt Crockett

When Dorothy famously triumphed over the Wicked Witch of the West in **L. Frank Baum's** 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz', we only ever heard one side of the story.

Gregory Maguire's "outstanding novel" (Independent), 'Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West', ingeniously re-imagines the Land of Oz, creating a parallel universe to the popular story that was first published in 1900.

Wicked tells the incredible untold story of an unlikely but profound friendship between two young women who first meet as sorcery students at Shiz University: the blonde and very popular Galinda Upland and a misunderstood green girl named Elphaba Thropp.

Elphaba has suffered prejudice and discriminatory behaviour all her life, due to the colour of her skin. Yet she aspires always to do good and, together with Galinda, embarks on a journey to meet the 'Wonderful Wizard' to win justice and freedom for the increasingly oppressed animals of Oz. But on discovering the truth behind their harassment and persecution, Elphaba and Galinda's friendship reaches a crossroads, and their lives take very different paths. Galinda's unflinching desire for popularity sees her seduced by power while Elphaba's determination to remain true to herself, and to those around her, will have unexpected and shocking consequences for her future.



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The leaders of Oz seek to urgently distract their citizens from the truth that Elphaba has uncovered at the heart of their corrupt regime and the innocent outsider is all-too-easily condemned as a “wicked witch”.

theguardian

The perfect political allegory for our times.

At the heart of ‘Wicked’ is a green heroine attempting to bring truth and compassion back to a land racked by fear. The ‘Wonderful’ Wizard of Oz and his regime cronies have created a ruthless and effective scare campaign against the land’s minority group. The Wizard says it’s all in the name of social harmony. Nothing brings people together like “a really good enemy”. Its heroine, Elphaba, is alarmed to discover the persecuted animals of her world are losing their ability to speak. Her goat professor finds the words “Animals should be seen and not heard” scrawled on his blackboard. Granted some face time with the figure at the centre of this mass hysteria, Elphaba discovers a man desperate to retain power. And when she directly asks the Wizard if he lied to the people, he replies: “Only verbally. And besides, they were the lies they wanted to hear...”.

Politics is always a game of moral compromise and Elphaba – long persecuted for the colour of her skin – is tempted by the Wizard’s invitation to take a seat in his leadership chamber. But ultimately, she commits to the path of rebellion and is framed by the authorities as public enemy number one.

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