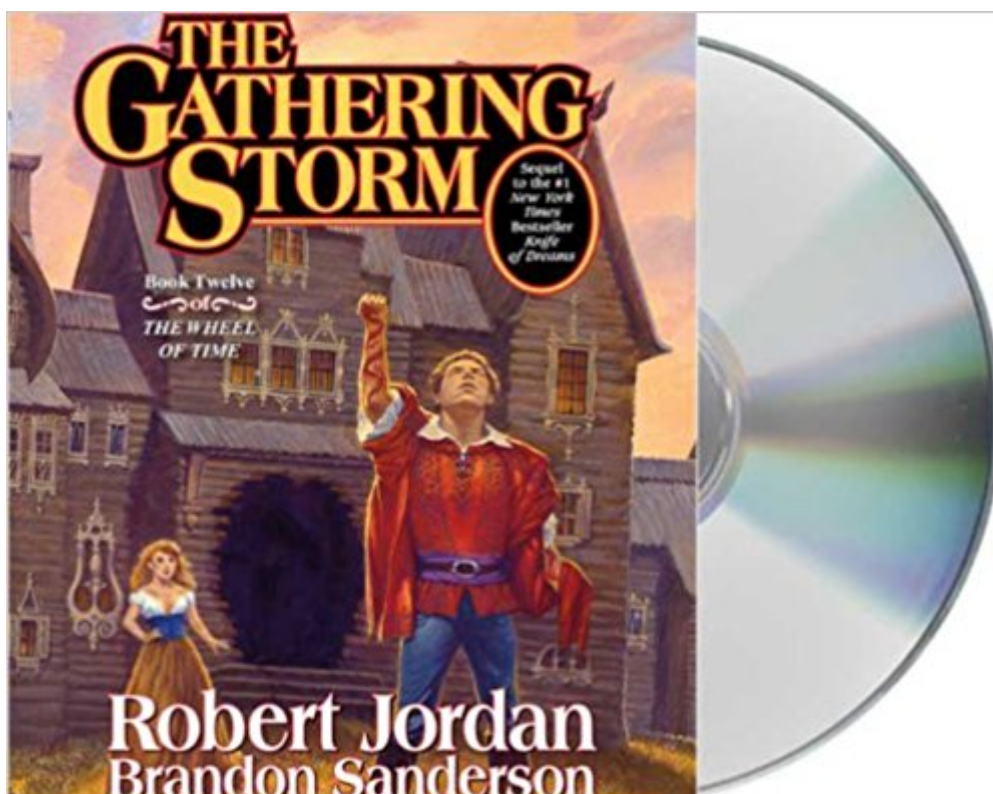


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The Gathering Storm (The Wheel Of Time, Book 12)



Synopsis

Tarmon Gai'don, the Last Battle, looms. And mankind is not ready. The final volume of the *Wheel of Time*, *A Memory of Light*, was partially written by Robert Jordan before his untimely passing in 2007. Brandon Sanderson, New York Times bestselling author of the *Mistborn* books, was chosen by Jordan's editor---his wife, Harriet McDougal---to complete the final book. The scope and size of the volume was such that it could not be contained in a single book, and so Tor proudly presents *The Gathering Storm* as the first of three novels that will make up *A Memory of Light*. This short sequence will complete the struggle against the Shadow, bringing to a close a journey begun almost twenty years ago and marking the conclusion of the *Wheel of Time*, the preeminent fantasy epic of our era. In this epic novel, Robert Jordan's international bestselling series begins its dramatic conclusion. Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, struggles to unite a fractured network of kingdoms and alliances in preparation for the Last Battle. As he attempts to halt the Seanchan encroachment northward---wishing he could form at least a temporary truce with the invaders---his allies watch in terror the shadow that seems to be growing within the heart of the Dragon Reborn himself. Egwene al'Vere, the Amyrlin Seat of the rebel Aes Sedai, is a captive of the White Tower and subject to the whims of their tyrannical leader. As days tick toward the Seanchan attack she knows is imminent, Egwene works to hold together the disparate factions of Aes Sedai while providing leadership in the face of increasing uncertainty and despair. Her fight will prove the mettle of the Aes Sedai, and her conflict will decide the future of the White Tower---and possibly the world itself. The *Wheel of Time* turns, and Ages come and pass. What was, what will be, and what is, may yet fall under the Shadow.

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Customer Reviews

“The narration of this work is truly miraculous. Kate Reading and Michael Kramer breathe emotion and veracity into a varied cast of characters, deftly teasing out their complex ambitions and motivations...Both narrators bring intensity and passion to this much-loved series, giving nuanced performances even to minor characters.” • AudioFile

Robert Jordan was born in 1948 in Charleston, South Carolina. He taught himself to read when he was four with the incidental aid of a twelve-years-older brother, and was tackling Mark Twain and Jules Verne by five. He is a graduate of The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina, with a degree in physics. He served two tours in Vietnam with the U.S. Army; among his decorations are the Distinguished Flying Cross with bronze oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star with "V" and bronze oak leaf cluster, and two Vietnamese Gallantry Crosses with palm. A history buff, he has also written dance and theater criticism and enjoyed the outdoor sports of hunting, fishing, and sailing, and the indoor sports of poker, chess, pool, and pipe collecting. Robert Jordan began writing in 1977 and went on to write *The Wheel of Time*®, one of the most important and best selling series in the history of fantasy publishing with over 14 million copies sold in North America, and countless more sold abroad. Robert Jordan died on September 16, 2007, after a courageous battle with the rare blood disease amyloidosis. Kate Reading is the recipient of multiple AudioFile Earphones Awards and has been named by AudioFile magazine as a "Voice of the Century," as well as the Best Voice in Science Fiction & Fantasy in 2008 and 2009. Her audiobook credits include reading for such authors as Jane Austen, Robert Jordan, Edith Wharton, and Sophie Kinsella. She has performed at numerous theaters in Washington D.C. and received a Helen Hayes Award for her performance in *Aunt Dan and Lemon*. Michael Kramer has narrated over 100 audiobooks for many bestselling authors. He read all of Robert Jordan's epic *Wheel of Time* fantasy-adventure series as well as Brandon Sanderson's *The Stormlight Archive* series. He received AudioFile magazine's Earphones Award for the Kent Family series by John Jakes and for Alan Fulsom's *The Day After Tomorrow*. Known for his "spot-on character portraits and accents, and his resonant, well-tempered voice" (AudioFile), his work includes recording books for the Library of Congress's Talking Books program for the blind and physically handicapped.

***“The end is near,” “The Wheel has groaned its final rotation, the clock has lost its

spring, the serpent heaves its final gasps.~*~This is the first book that was written after Robert Jordan's death by Brandon Sanderson. I got so emotional when I read the opening words in the Foreword.~*~I have not tried to imitate Mr. Jordan's style. Instead, I've adapted my style to be appropriate to The Wheel of Time. My main goal was to stay true to the souls of the characters. The plot is, in large part, Robert Jordan's, though many of the words are mine.~*~But this is a big project, and it will take time to complete. I beg your patience as we spend these next few years perfecting this story. We hold in our hands the ending of the greatest fantasy epic of our time, and I intend to see it done right. I intend to remain true to Mr. Jordan's wishes and notes. My artistic integrity, and love for the books, will not let me do anything less. In the end, I let the words herein stand as the best argument for what we are doing. This is not my book. It is Robert Jordan's book, and to a lesser extent, it is your book.~*~I'm just going to give props to Sanderson for taking over such a massive epic fantasy. It couldn't have been easy and yet I think that he did a fantastic job with this book. Yes there are some differences in the writing styles and a few of the characters change a smidge more than expected but overall it is amazing how well he did. The Best Parts:~*~" - The better pacing of the story. I don't know if this is because we are coming to an end and so all the foundations that RJ set down and the arcs he built up are finally starting to tie together or if Sanderson's style of writing has led to it but the pacing of this huge book is fantastic. I've been reading this series for a year now just a few chapters a day and this was the first time that it was actually really hard to put the book down after 2-3 chapters.~*~ - Verrin just WOW. Look I've gone back and forth on Verrin and her goals in this series. Which team is she playing for? What is that woman up to? Can we trust her or is this just another Aes Sedae Plot? Do I like her, do I hate her??? Well I'm just going to say that whatever I was thinking what was actually true was SO MUCH BETTER.~*~ - I'm going to give huge props to Egwene. She is really proving to be a very competent Amerlyn and I'm really interested in what she is going to do after this book. She could be the greatest Amerlyn in history if she keeps this up.~*~ - Min is always one of my favorite characters and I really like to believe that she and Rand are the true soulmate match and he is just going to sperm donor it up for Elayne and Avienda they are a cuter couple together than with Rand. I think this book shows just how much Min gets Rand and how she is the one that is going to support him through this huge undertaking. But Rand in most of this book was bleak and we find out why.~*~"œI continue to wonder,' he said, glancing down at Min, 'why you all assume that I am too dense to see what you find so obvious. Yes, Nynaeve. Yes, this hardness will destroy me. I know.' ...You all claim that I have grown too

hard, that I will inevitably shatter and break if I continue on. But you assume that there needs to be something left of me to continue on. ...That's the key, Nynaeve. I see it now. I will not live through this, and so I don't need to worry about what might happen to me after the Last Battle. I don't need to hold back, don't need to salvage anything of this beaten up soul of mine. - The meeting with the Seanchen. Look I didn't think that it would go well but Rand meeting Tuon well I've been waiting for it for so long and now it has happened and I'm not sure where all the chips are going to fall. I semi-see both sides BUT the Seanchen collar and subjugate those who have the one power and I don't see that being something that Rand will ever tolerate. - I loved all the different crazy happening with pockets of power. It is just amazing all the different ways the dark one is touching the land and how it is affecting different people in different places. The Town that Matt went to for instance well that is a huge disturbance and a very cool idea. - Last but not least Terminator Rand is dead. Look he has been pretty moody and bleak for the last few books and I get why but it was so nice to finally FINALLY have some resolution with that voice in his head. I'm glad that we got that out of the way. It has been an emotion trip with Lews Therin in Rand's head but we definitely got some great resolution on that story arc and I'm really happy with it.

The Worst Parts: (they aren't really bad they are just different) BS did a great job with this but there are going to be a few things that are different that you notice.

- 1 "Robert Jordan's humor was more situational and Brandon Sanderson's is more banter/wit type. I liked this change since I appreciate the banter/wit more than situational comedy. Still it is noticeably different especially in Mat's character and Telmanus. Not really good or bad just different.
- 2 "I think that RJ's villains are a bit more subtle and Sanderson's are more in your face. Elida is a prime example. She was a bit cruel before but in this she was flat out cray-cray
- 3- The flow of the story is a bit different. I like the change up and faster speed of things but you can definitely tell that someone else is driving the car now.

Overall: This world/story have been amazing and I'm really glad we are wrapping everything up and going into the last battle. It is time and I do think looking at the last 2 books I read that it was probably worth some of the slow meandering of books 8-10 to get to 11-14. But I'll know better if that is true at the very end.

The Gathering Storm is the twelfth volume in The Wheel of Time series and the first released since Robert Jordan's unfortunate death in 2007. Jordan spent his final months amassing and dictating a significant amount of notes, outlines and chapter summaries for another writer to use to finish the series. Previously, Jordan had indicated he'd wipe his hard drive to stop someone else completing

his work, but with him being so close to the end of the story he changed his mind, trusting his wife and editor, Harriet, and his publisher Tom Doherty to find a writer capable of finishing the series well. In theory, it should have led to disaster: typically one writer finishing a series begun by another is an atrocious idea that only leads to very bad books (note the vomit-inducing new Dune novels and the ill-advised Amber continuations). The only example I can think of this working was when Stella Gemmell completed her late husband David's final novel in fine form, but the amount of work required to bring *Wheel of Time* to a conclusion required an altogether different level of commitment and effort from Brandon Sanderson. Almost unbelievably, Sanderson has pulled it off. In his introduction he hopes the differences between his style and Jordan, whilst unavoidably noticeable, will be comparable to a different (but still good) director taking over your favourite movie series but all the actors remaining the same. This isn't a bad analogy at all, and whilst there are a few moments in *The Gathering Storm* where you think, "I don't think Robert Jordan would have done things quite like that," there's never a moment where you think, "He definitely wouldn't have done that at all!" which is vital. Another concern was that originally these last three books were supposed to be one volume, *A Memory of Light*, and Sanderson actually wrote the bulk of the text under the impression it was going to be probably split in two. The decision to split the book in three instead resulted in much recrimination, although at 800 pages in hardcover (and assuming the second and third come in at a similar size) and well over 300,000 words, tying it with *Knife of Dreams* as the longest book in the series since *Lord of Chaos*, it's clear this could never have been done in just two books either. One problem with this split was that since Sanderson hadn't been writing with three books in mind, *The Gathering Storm* would feel incomplete or unsatisfying on its own. This is not the case at all. In fact, *The Gathering Storm* has the most cohesive through-line in story, character and theme of any book in the series since *The Shadow Rising*, and possibly out of all of them. The structure of the book focuses on two primary storylines: Rand's deteriorating mental state as he struggles to bring Arad Doman into the confederation of kingdoms sworn to him, and Egwene's efforts to unite the White Tower and end the civil war within the Aes Sedai that has raged for the past seven and a half volumes. Other characters and stories appear briefly, such as Perrin and Tuon, and Mat has a slightly bigger role, but other major characters and storylines do not appear at all. The recently-quelled civil war in Andor and the Mazrim Taim/Asha'man plotlines are notable by their absences. Instead, this part of the story focuses on two of the central protagonists, Rand and Egwene, and the experiences they go through to achieve their goals. The novel could almost be called *The Long Night of Rand al'Thor* as the series' central figure is dragged through the wringer, going to very dark places indeed as he struggles to understand his own role in events and how he is

to achieve the things he must do to save the world. On the other hand, Egwene is shown to have already passed through her moments of doubt and misjudgement in previous volumes, and in this book her story focuses on her battle of wills with Elaida to restore unity to the Aes Sedai. This contrast of darkness and light and putting two central characters squarely back in the limelight (previous volumes have sometimes devoted way too much time to tertiary characters of limited importance) is a highly successful move, allowing some interesting thematic elements to be touched upon. Whilst the reader may have guessed that Rand is severely traumatised from everything that has happened to him in the previous books, it isn't until this volume that we realise just how badly things have affected him and we see just how hard and how determined he has become. An interesting analogy that is not touched upon is what happened to Aridhol to defeat the Shadow in the Trolloc Wars, where it became harder and more ruthless than the enemy and eventually consumed itself in insanity and rage. This is a powerful and intense story, something that has been building for the entire latter half of the series, and it's a demanding tale that you probably wouldn't want to dump on a new author in ideal circumstances. But Sanderson picks up the ball and runs with it. Rand's characterisation is completely spot-on and consistent with earlier appearances, and Sanderson does a monumental job with this storyline. He also does superbly with Egwene's story, which culminates in one of the most spectacular action set-pieces in the series to date (and I suspect something that could dislodge Dumai's Wells or the Battle of Cairhien as many reader's favourite action sequence in the whole series). A whole myriad of lesser characters is also well-handled, such as Siuan, Tuon and the various Aes Sedai, but Gawyn becomes a bit of a fifth wheel with not much to do, which is odd given he has a much bigger presence here than he has in some considerable time. Other reviewers have suggested that Sanderson struggles with Mat, and unfortunately this is true. Not fatally so, but for everything Mat does that is 'right' to his character, he'll typically do something incongruous and uncharacteristic a few pages later. Sanderson also never really gets into the swing of his speech pattern or sense of humour either. He's readable, but it's the only part of the book where the change in authors feels jarring. Luckily, it's not a large part of the book and hopefully Sanderson will be able to work more on this area for the next book, *Towers of Midnight*, where Mat is expected to play a much bigger role in events. *The Gathering Storm* (****) is a very fine book, one of the strongest instalments of the whole series and easily the best book published in *The Wheel of Time* for fifteen years. Whilst some of that achievement must go to Brandon Sanderson for his sterling and jaw-dropping work on the book, it is clear that Robert Jordan had planned these events with a watchmaker's precision, setting them up through lines of dialogue and minor twists of characterisation stretching right back to the second volume of the

series, and the overwhelming feeling upon reaching the end of the novel is that he was an extraordinarily clever writer and plotter, for all of the flaws that have cropped up along the way. The book is available now in the UK and, with the worst cover in the history of modern publishing, in the USA. Towers of Midnight will follow in one year's time, with A Memory of Light to follow a year after that.

For some reason Sanderson feels the need to re-explain every character or group that has already been long established. Many of the characterizations seem to contradict the previously established work of Robert Jordan. Some of the characters seem to have radically different personalities. For example the Aiel, who now seem like the poorly written Indians characters from old western movies. I must admit that a few characters feel very close to their Jordan written versions. Unfortunately they are all too few. The book feels like was stretched too far with unnecessary explanations of long established characters. There are eleven previous books, not two or three. If the reader is unfamiliar with these main characters by now, they never will be. If these explanations are for new readers, they'll catch on. Or they should start with a book earlier in the series. It often felt like Sanderson was trying to put his own spin on well established characters. It feels like (without having yet read the final two volumes) that this needless fluff could have been cut and the series could have ended with only one more book. I don't know if this was an opportunity for greater profit by stretching it out for another volume or some primitive fear of ending the series at thirteen books. At the end of the day these last three books are the only way to see how Robert Jordan planned the main events to unfold and conclude. As such they are worthy of being read, even with the shortcomings they might poses.

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