

# Reading Group Discussion Guide: Daniel Scratch: A Story of Witchkind

By Don Jones (Book One)

This guide is designed to help your reading group explore the key themes, philosophical ideas, and world-building elements of the novel.

## Part 1: Novel Overview and Initial Reactions

### Synopsis & Background

"Daniel Scratch: a story of witchkind" introduces a richly imagined fantasy world focused on the concept of 'witchkind' and the power of will. The story follows Daniel, who is thrust into a reality where he must navigate his newfound abilities, the ethical demands of wielding power, and the mysteries of the witchkind lineage.

- **Genre:** Thoughtful Fantasy, Young Adult/Adult Crossover
- **Key Comparisons (from reviews):** Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*.

### Initial Thoughts (Round Robin)

1. What was your overall first impression of the novel? What one word or short phrase would you use to describe the book?
2. Which character did you connect with the most, and why?
3. The novel has a unique voice and incorporates fictional Lithuanian-inspired words. How did this linguistic choice affect your reading experience? Did it enhance the sense of an ancient, secret world?

## Part 2: Core Themes and Philosophical Questions

### Theme 1: The Nature of Power and Will

The novel centers on the concept of power being intrinsically tied to one's will and understanding of the self.

4. How does the book define the power of "witchkind"? Is it a magical system, a philosophical principle, or both?

5. What are the key differences between the "Witchkind" and "Dark Witchkind" in the story? Are these designations based on the source of their power, or how they *choose* to use it?
6. Discuss the notion that true power requires self-control, sacrifice, and ethical understanding. How does Daniel struggle with this concept throughout the story?
7. The story suggests that power is simply a neutral tool, and the user's intent determines its morality. Do you agree with this philosophy, or is some power inherently corrupting?

## **Theme 2: Identity, Lineage, and Destiny**

Daniel's journey is largely about discovering who he is and where he comes from.

8. How important is lineage (the "story") to Daniel's identity? Could he have achieved the same level of power without knowing his family history?
9. Daniel often resists the idea of a predetermined "destiny." What elements of his story suggest he has agency and free will, and what elements suggest he is being guided by fate?
10. The process of becoming "witchkind" seems to involve a profound shift in perception. How is the world different through Daniel's newly awakened eyes?

## **Theme 3: Mentorship and Learning**

Daniel receives guidance from several figures who shape his understanding of the world.

11. Compare and contrast the different mentors or guides Daniel encounters. What unique lesson did each person teach him?
12. If you were Daniel, which mentor's advice would you follow most closely, and why?
13. Discuss the challenges of learning an immense power without a formal, structured school. What are the advantages and disadvantages of Daniel's solitary, trial-and-error learning process?

## **Part 3: Structure, Style, and World-Building**

### **World-Building and Setting**

14. The book establishes a modern setting that is intertwined with a secret, ancient world of witchkind. How effectively does the author blend these two realities?
15. What aspects of the witchkind world (e.g., rules, objects, locations) would you like to see explored in more detail in future installments?

## Narrative Voice and Pacing

16. The narrative often employs a philosophical and reflective tone. Did you find this style engaging, or did it slow down the pace of the action for you?
17. The final confrontation or major plot turn: Were you satisfied with the way the novel built to its climax and resolved the primary conflict?
18. Reread the first and last paragraphs of the book. Do they serve as effective bookends? What mood or feeling do they create for the reader?

## Part 4: Beyond the Book

### Follow-Up Discussion and Predictions

19. If a second book were to begin immediately, what pressing question or conflict do you predict Daniel will face next?
20. The book is compared to *A Wizard of Earthsea*. If you have read Le Guin's work, discuss the similarities in the handling of power, responsibility, and the philosophical depth of the magic system.

### Creative Activity

- **Quote Selection:** Ask everyone to come prepared with their favorite quote or a passage that they found particularly profound or descriptive, and discuss why it stood out to them.
- **"What is Your Will?"** Based on the novel's concept of power being linked to a fundamental will, discuss what each of you believes your own deepest, most fundamental 'will' or core truth might be.

### Suggestions for Your Next Discussion:

- Would you like to analyze a specific scene for its ethical implications or dialogue?
- Do you want to brainstorm three possible titles for the next book in the series?
- Should we look for similar thematic elements in another fantasy novel, such as one of the works mentioned in the initial reviews?