

Lloyd Alexander's
The Book of Three:
A Discussion Guide

David Bruce

Dedicated with Love to Caleb Bruce

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
Lloyd Alexander's <i>The Book of Three</i>	3
Introduction to Lloyd Alexander's <i>The Book of Three</i>	7
Chapter 1: The Assistant Pig-Keeper	10
Chapter 2: The Mask of the King	16
Chapter 3: Gurgi	19
Chapter 4: The Gwythaints	22
Chapter 5: The Broken Sword	26
Chapter 6: Eilonwy	28
Chapter 7: The Trap	31
Chapter 8: The Barrow	33
Chapter 9: Ffleuddur Fflam	35
Chapter 10: The Sword Dyrnwyn	38
Chapter 11: Flight Through the Hills	43
Chapter 12: The Wolves	46
Chapter 13: The Hidden Valley	48
Chapter 14: The Black Lake	52
Chapter 15: King Eiddileg	56
Chapter 16: Doli	60
Chapter 17: The Fledgling	63
Chapter 18: The Flame of Dyrnwyn	66
Chapter 19: The Secret	69
Chapter 20: Welcomes	74
Entire Novel: <i>The Book of Three</i>	77
Appendix A: Bibliography	78

Appendix B: Paper Topics (Perhaps for Older Readers)	79
Appendix C: Sample Short Reaction Memos	82
Appendix D: What are Clichés, and How Can I Cure Them?	83
Appendix E: Write Your Own Similes and Metaphors	86
Appendix F: One Secret of Writing Well is Writing Vividly	88
Appendix G: About the Author	89
Appendix H: Some Books by David Bruce	90

Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I enjoy reading Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three*, and I believe that it is an excellent book for children (and for adults such as myself) to read.

This book contains many questions about Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three* and their answers. I hope that teachers of children will find it useful as a guide for discussions. It can also be used for short writing assignments. Students can answer selected questions from this little guide orally or in one or more paragraphs.

I hope to encourage teachers to teach Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three*, and I hope to lessen the time needed for teachers to prepare to teach this book.

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Lloyd Alexander's *Book of Three*

Alexander, Lloyd. *The Book of Three*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, c. 1964.

Parents looking for a way to encourage children aged 10 and up to entertain themselves may wish to introduce them to Lloyd Alexander's Prydain Chronicles, a series of five novels and one book of short stories dealing with the mythical kingdom of Prydain, which resembles the Wales of medieval times.

The obvious place to start is at the beginning, which in this case would be the first novel: *The Book of Three*. (*The Foundling and Other Tales of Prydain*, which gives some of the background to the Chronicles, is best read after the novels, in my opinion.) However, these are stand-alone volumes, so readers can start with whichever book they want to read first. The genre of the Prydain Chronicles is fantasy, so magic will be a part of the chronicles, although its use by the human characters is limited.

Boy readers will most likely identify with Taran, the young hero of the chronicles, who lives at Caer Dallben, where he longs for adventure but instead has the duty, along with the bald-headed and stout Coll, of taking care of Hen Wen, a pig with oracular powers. (Strange as an oracular pig sounds, Hen Wen has a basis in Welsh mythology.) Because of Taran's desire for adventure, honor, and high titles, he is given a title of his own: Assistant Pig-Keeper.

Taran lives during interesting times — another way of saying that he lives during a time of danger, when Prydain is threatened by forces of evil emanating from Annuvin, a land ruled by the evil Arawn, master of the Black Cauldron, which turns dead warriors into fighting zombies. When Hen Wen senses the forces of evil, she runs away, leading Taran

to run after her and experience the adventure he has so longed for.

During Taran's adventure, in which he seeks Hen Wen and tries to warn the Sons of Don — the good guys — of a sneak attack emanating from Annuvin, he runs across a number of beings who become both friends and companions in the fight of good versus evil.

First he meets Prince Gwydion, a warrior whose travel-stained cloak does not meet with Taran's approval — Taran's idea of a prince is someone who dresses in fine and grand clothing — but who Taran soon realizes is immensely brave and immensely competent and who Taran soon realizes is a true prince. (Fans of the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* movies can think of Viggo Mortensen as perfect for the Prince Gwydion character should a new movie be made from this book.)

The next major character whom Taran meets is Gurgi, who seems to be part human and part animal. He is capable of speech, but is covered with hair. Oddly, only one of his species seems to exist. The major characteristics of Gurgi are a fondness for food and a habit of using alliteration and rhymes in his speech. For example, Gurgi is very much concerned with “crunchings and munchings.”

Girl readers are likely to be much interested in Eilonwy, a princess with limited magical powers. Her major magical item is a golden ball that can cast light. In other words, Eilonwy has a magic flashlight. Eilonwy will develop into a love interest in the Prydain Chronicles, although in this first novel, Taran thinks of her as a little girl — a characterization that Eilonwy vehemently disagrees with.

Quickly, readers will notice that Eilonwy is very blunt in her speech to Taran. When Taran calls her a little girl after she has told him that she is not a little girl, she tells him, “But I

am not a little girl. Haven't I just been and finished telling you? Are you slow-witted? I'm so sorry for you. It's terrible to be dull and stupid." A little later, she asks, "I don't mean to hurt your feelings by asking, but is Assistant Pig-Keeper the kind of work that calls for a great deal of intelligence?"

Another characteristic of Eilonwy's speech is her use of original comparisons. At one point, when Taran is surprised, Eilonwy tells him, "You should really see your expression. You look like a fish that's climbed into a bird's nest by mistake."

Much of the delight of reading the Prydain Chronicles centers on the relationship between Taran and Eilonwy, which can be rocky, as very often Eilonwy will decide that she is not speaking to Taran, although very quickly she will reverse herself and start speaking to him.

Other major characters are Fflewddur Fflam, a wandering would-be bard and sometimes ex-king with a magic harp whose strings break when Fflewddur exaggerates, as he so frequently does to make his stories better, and Doli of the Fair Folk, whose face becomes blue during his many unsuccessful attempts at turning himself invisible.

The Book of Three is an entertaining page-turner, with many chapters ending in cliffhangers. It is also filled with humor. (Dallben, an elderly enchanter, meditates, a job so exhausting that he can do it only while lying down with his eyes closed. He meditates especially after meals.)

It is also a book that educates while telling an exciting story. Taran learns such lessons as not to judge the bravery of a man by how much hair he has on his head or by the clothing he is wearing, and Taran learns the importance of home. In the Prydain Chronicles, Taran grows.

The entire series is highly recommended and award winning. In 1969, the fifth novel in the series, *The High King*, won the

Newbery Medal, which is given for the best American contribution to children's literature in a certain year. In 1966, the second novel in the series, *The Black Cauldron*, was a Newbery Honor Book (runner-up to the Newbery Medal winner).

By the way, the Disney movie titled *The Black Cauldron* should probably be avoided although it got the voice of Eilonwy exactly right. At least, read the books — the movie is based on the first two Prydain books, *The Book of Three* and *The Black Cauldron* — first.

If your 10-year-old-and-up child has not already been introduced to the Prydain Chronicles, now may be the perfect time for them to make the acquaintance of Taran, Eilonwy, Fflewddur Fflam, Gurgi, Prince Gwydion, and the other residents of this mythical, magical kingdom.

Introduction to Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three*

Who is Lloyd Alexander?

Of course, Lloyd Alexander is the author of *The Book of Three* and the other books of the Prydain Chronicles. He has written many, many well-loved books of children's literature.

An excellent source of information about Lloyd Alexander comes from this website maintained by Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers:

<http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-alexander-lloyd.asp>

In the article on this website, Mr. Alexander talks about his early life:

My parents were horrified when I told them I wanted to be an author. I was fifteen in my last year of high school. My family pleaded with me to forget literature and do something sensible such as find some sort of useful work. I had no idea how to find work useful or otherwise. In fact I had no idea how to become an author. If reading offered any preparation for writing there were grounds for hope. I had been reading as long as I could remember. Shakespeare, Dickens, Mark Twain, and so many others were my dearest friends and greatest teachers. I loved all the world's mythologies; King Arthur was one of my heroes; I played with a trash can lid for a knightly shield and my uncle's cane for the sword Excalibur. But I was afraid that not even Merlin the enchanter could transform me into a writer. (kidsreads.com)

Fortunately, he became a writer, and fortunately for fans of the Prydain Chronicles, he discovered mythology. Again, Mr. Alexander says, "It was as if all the hero tales, games,

dreams, and imaginings of my childhood had suddenly come back to me” (kidsreads.com). The Chronicles of Prydain are set in a land loosely based on Wales.

Mr. Alexander identifies the special concern in his writings:

My concern is how we learn to be genuine human beings. I never have found out all I want to know about writing and realize I never will. All that writers can do is keep trying to say what is deepest in their hearts. If writers learn more from their books than do readers, perhaps I may have begun to learn. (kidsreads.com)

What are the Prydain Chronicles?

The Prydain Chronicles are a series of books that Lloyd Alexander has written about the mythical land of Prydain, which resembles Wales.

In the Prydain Chronicles, the main character, named Taran, grows to adulthood. These are the books in the series:

The Book of Three (1964)

The Black Cauldron (1965; a Newbery Honor book)

The Castle of Llyr (1966)

Taran Wanderer (1967)

The High King (1968; A Newbery Medal book)

The Newbery Medal goes to the author of the most distinguished American contribution to children’s literature in a certain year. Runners-up are given Newbery Honor status.

In addition, Mr. Alexander wrote a prequel to the Chronicles of Prydain:

The Foundling: and Other Tales of Prydain

Mr. Alexander died on May 17, 2007.

Note: Of course, I am relying on the teacher to make this material age-appropriate should the teacher use any of the material in this discussion guide. Also, of course, it is important for the teacher to make reading this children's novel enjoyable. Let us remember what Lucy Mangan, a *Guardian* columnist and a person who loves to read, wrote about Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Michelle Magorian's *Good Night, Mr. Tom*, "But as someone who still cannot fully enjoy *Pride and Prejudice* for the ghosts of annotated underlinings that still appear before my GCSE-affrighted eyes 20 years on, I beg you — please, please offer Magorian's masterpiece to your readers before their teachers do, and let them feel the joy."

Source of Quotation: Lucy Mangan, "No 34: Goodnight Mr Tom by Michelle Magorian (1981)." *Guardian* (UK). 12 June 2009

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/jun/13/book-corner-goodnight-mr-tom>>.

Chapter 1: The Assistant Pig-Keeper

What is Prydain?

Prydain is a mythical kingdom that resembles Wales.

Some of the characters in the Chronicles of Prydain come from Welsh mythology; however, the main characters, Taran and Princess Eilonwy, come from Lloyd Alexander's imagination.

These characters come (roughly) from Welsh mythology:

Dallben the enchanter

Hen Wen, the oracular pig

Prince Gwydion

What does “caer” mean? What is a “cantrev”?

“Caer” is a Welsh term that can be translated as a royal residence. Often, it can be translated as castle, palace, or fort. It can be the home of a king, or it can be a fortification.

We discover the meaning of the word “cantrev” on p. 13. A cantrev is a small kingdom. In Prydain, a High King rules the cantrevs.

What do we learn about Taran in Chapter 1?

We learn that Taran is hasty and impetuous.

Evidence: He wants to make a sword, so he grabs some hot metal and starts pounding away at it, not even realizing that the metal is the wrong kind for a sword.

Evidence: He wants to look at *The Book of Three*, so when Dallben is meditating (asleep), he grabs it, and it burns his fingers.

We learn that Taran dreams of being a warrior.

Evidence: The war leader Prince Gwydion mightily impresses Taran.

Evidence: Taran wants to learn how to fight with swords.

Taran is on the verge of being a man.

Evidence: Dallben says to Taran, “You are barely on the threshold of manhood ...” (15).

We will see Taran fighting with swords in this novel. That is a characteristic of adventure novels written for children: The child heroes often do feats of arms that would be impossible for children in real life.

Taran is somewhat unhappy with his life. He wishes to do great things.

Taran, of course, is an Assistant Pig-Keeper. His main duty is to take care of Hen Wen, the oracular pig. He would prefer to be a war leader.

Taran has a good family life.

No women are in Taran’s household, although he will meet a girl later. Clearly, Dallben and Coll take care of and love Taran.

What do we learn about Coll in Chapter 1?

Coll is stout and bald-headed.

Coll is knowledgeable about the arts of peace — and of war. He is a blacksmith. He knows about the metal for making swords. Coll does teach Taran a little about the art of fighting with swords.

Coll gives Taran the title of Assistant Pig-Keeper. Since Taran is the Assistant, that makes Coll the Chief Pig-Keeper.

Clearly, Coll cares for Taran.

What do we learn about Dallben in Chapter 1?

Dallben is in part a humorous character. He meditates after breakfast and later in the day. Because meditating is so exhausting, he does it lying down with his eyes closed. (In other words, he takes a nap.)

Dallben is 379 years old, and he has a white beard that mostly covers his face. (Prydain is a magical place, after all.)

Dallben is a wise enchanter.

Dallben loves Taran and looks after him.

Dallben realizes that Taran is growing up.

Dallben is on the side of good, as are Coll and Taran.

What is *The Book of Three*?

The *Book of Three* is a magical book. It holds wisdom. It is enchanted. When Taran tries to sneak a look at it, it burns his fingers. Dallben has to tell Taran to have Coll treat his fingers; otherwise, his fingers may blister.

In *The Black Cauldron*, we find out more about *The Book of Three*. In *The Foundling: and Other Tales of Prydain*, we also find out more about *The Book of Three*.

What does the “three” refer to? In *The Black Cauldron*, we find out that *The Book of Three* used to belong to three enchantresses. Perhaps that is where the “three” comes from.

What do we learn about the Horned King in Chapter 1?

The Horned King is on the side of evil.

No one sees the Horned King's face; instead, they see the antlered mask he wears.

No one knows the Horned King's name.

The Horned King is reputed to be as powerful as — or more powerful than — Gwydion.

What do we learn about the High King in Chapter 1?

Prydain is a small kingdom. It is divided into many smaller kingdom called cantrevs.

Still, one king who is called the High King rules Prydain.

Gwydion is the High King's war leader.

Math is the High King.

Prydain has its own mythology. The Lady Don had as her consort Belin, King of the Sun. From the Summer Country they migrated to Prydain. They have built a stronghold called Caer Dathyl, which lies in the North. The Dons protect Prydain against evil. Math is a descendant of the House of Don.

What do we learn about Prince Gwydion in Chapter 1?

Gwydion is on the side of good.

Gwydion is the War Leader of Math, the High King.

Taran admires Gwydion and wishes that he could also be a war leader.

Gwydion is powerful, but his enemies may be even more powerful.

What do we learn about Hen Wen in Chapter 1?

Hen Wen is a special pig; she is an oracular pig, which means that she can foretell the future in some way. (The process involves letter sticks.)

Hen Wen is the only oracular pig in Prydain.

Hen Wen has a good life. She sleeps until noon, then moves to a shady spot and lies down. Taran scrubs her every second day.

How does Taran get the title of Assistant Pig-Keeper?

Taran longs to make a name for himself. He wants to be somebody. Therefore, Coll gives him a title: Assistant Pig-Keeper.

Actually, the title seems to be fairly meaningless. Taran will continue to do what he has always done: help Coll to take care of Hen Wen.

However, the title denotes humility. Taran will mostly avoid the excesses of pride as he grows up — and definitely after he grows up.

What is your opinion of the way that Chapter 1 ends?

Chapter 1 ends with things happening. The bees swarm although it is not their time to swarm. The chickens attempt to fly away. Hen Wen panics and runs to the forest.

Obviously, the animals are afraid of something.

Taran runs after Hen Wen to find her in the forest.

This chapter ends in a bit of a cliffhanger.

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 1. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Coll speaks of “the three foundations of learning: see much, study much, suffer much” (18).

Taran learns a very little about fighting with swords from Coll.

Dallben and Coll are teaching Taran.

Taran may be learning not to be hasty. His attempt to make a sword fails utterly.

Taran learns not to attempt to sneak a look at *The Book of Three*.

Taran certainly has potential. He tries to stop Hen Wen from running away, and he runs after her to find her in the forest.

Taran does admire heroism on the side of good. He has good role models, although he wants to grow up too fast.

Chapter 2: The Mask of the King

What do we learn about the Masked King in Chapter 2?

In Chapter 2, we see the Masked King when Taran runs across him.

We learn that his followers are evil. One of his followers slashes Taran with a sword across his back.

We learn that the Masked King is seeking Hen Wen, the oracular pig.

What do we learn about Prince Gwydion in Chapter 2?

Prince Gwydion has many good qualities.

He takes care of Taran and recognizes that Taran has been slashed with a sword across his back.

Gwydion is an adult man. He is a war leader, and he acts and looks like a war leader. Taran is surprised to see Gwydion in a travel-stained cloak, but of course that is exactly what he ought to be wearing.

Gwydion occasionally works alone. Of course, at times Gwydion is a leader, but on this quest, he is alone (until he runs across Taran).

Gwydion has a prince's sword. That is how Taran recognizes who Prince Gwydion really is.

Gwydion recognizes that there is a proper time for things to be done.

Taran is eager to get back on the trail of Hen Wen, but Gwydion points out that it is night, and no one can find and follow a trail at night.

Gwydion is brave. He values his life, and he would not risk it unnecessarily, but he vows to fight the Horned King — a fight that only one warrior will walk away from.

Gwydion is not overly proud. He values his life highly, but he does not believe that his life is worth more than another man's life.

More evidence that Gwydion is not overly proud: He wonders if Taran is supposed to help him in his quest — or if he is supposed to help Taran in Taran's quest.

Gwydion knows both Coll and Dallben.

What are Arawn and Annvin?

We have found out a little about them in Chapter 1 as well as in this chapter.

Arawn: the bad guy of the novel. He threatens the land of Prydain.

Annvin: a place of evil, where Arawn rules.

What is Melyngar?

Melyngar is Gwydion's horse.

Melyngar is a white horse.

Who is helping whom in whose quest?

This is something that Gwydion wonders about. Gwydion, of course, is seeking Hen Wen, as is Taran. Both have quests.

Perhaps each is helping the other in the other's quest.

Students may want to ask themselves what is their own quest.

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 2. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Taran learns — or could learn — many things in this chapter:

- A prince does not always wear fine clothing and look like a prince in a book of fairy tales. Sometimes a prince can look like a traveler.
- Taran could learn that there is a proper time for doing things. For example, you can't track at night, so you ought to wait until daylight so that you can see to track the pig.
- Gwydion tells Taran, "The task counts more than the one who does it" (29). In other words, the important thing is to find Hen Wen; it really doesn't matter whether it is Taran or Gwydion who finds the pig.
- Taran could learn that many people — including a certain Assistant Pig-Keeper — have quests.
- Taran learns that both good and evil exist in this world.

Chapter 3: Gurgi

What do we learn about Prince Gwydion in Chapter 3? What reasoning does he show?

Taran learns to respect Prince Gwydion. Taran was disappointed to see him wearing a coarse jacket, but Gwydion is highly competent at tracking. Nothing escapes his eyes.

We learn that Gwydion knows quite a bit about Coll and Dallben.

Gwydion reasons well. He knows that Hen Wen will stay away from Annuvin because of bad things that happened to her there. Therefore, he knows one direction in which Hen Wen will not run.

In addition, Hen Wen will not go to another evil place: Spiral Castle, where Queen Achren lives. So that is another place where Prince Gwydion knows not to look for Hen Wen.

What does Taran learn about Coll and Hen Wen in Chapter 3?

Hen Wen once lived with a farmer who did not know her powers.

Hen Wen was captured by Arawn's men and taken to Annuvin, where bad things happened to her.

A mighty warrior rescued her. That man was Coll (who is bald headed). Bards sing epic poetry about this rescue and this rescuer.

Who is Queen Achren?

Queen Achren is as evil as she is beautiful.

One of her literary ancestors is probably Morgan le Fay of the King Arthur myth.

Her castle is called Spiral Castle. Hen Wen will stay away from this castle.

Write a short character analysis of Gurgi based on what you learn in Chapter 3.

Gurgi smells like a wet wolfhound.

Gurgi is a fantastic creature — apparently, he is both animal and human. He can talk, but he is hairy and his feet are flexible.

Gurgi is always hungry, it seems. He always wants “crunchings and munchings.”

Gurgi seems to pity himself a lot.

Gurgi is superficially threatening. He hints that he would like to eat Taran, but Prince Gwydion points out that Gurgi is more of a nuisance rather than anything else.

Gurgi does know what is going on in the forest. He is aware of the Horned King and his warriors, and he knows that they are searching for Hen Wen.

Gurgi has a characteristic kind of speech.

What is characteristic about Gurgi’s speech?

Gurgi’s speech has two notable characteristics:

1) Occasional Rhyme.

Ex: “crunchings and munchings” (38 — and many other pages).

2) Occasional Alliteration.

Ex: “swimmings and splashings” (40).

Of course, as we will see later, Gurgi will sometimes use rhyme and alliteration in the same phrase.

Definitions:

Rhyme: identical end sounds of two words (*cat* and *hat*)

Alliteration: identical consonant sounds at the beginning of words (*cat* and *cape*, *hat* and *help*)

What do we learn about Dallben in Chapter 3?

Prince Gwydion says that Dallben is sly and knows what is happening around Caer Dallben. The fire that Gurgi talked about must have a trap that Dallben set up for the Horned King and his warriors.

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 3. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Taran is learning not to judge by appearances.

Coll is bald (and stout), but he is a hero. Prince Gwydion points out that you can't tell how brave a man is by looking at how much hair is on his head.

Prince Gwydion wears a coarse jacket and a travel-stained cloak, but he is worthy of respect. His eyes miss nothing while he is tracking Hen Wen.

Taran should be learning to obey Prince Gwydion. Prince Gwydion told him to stay close behind him, but Taran lagged behind. This allowed Gurgi to jump on him.

Chapter 4: The Gwythaints

What are Gwythaints?

Gwythaints are dangerous and carnivorous birds that serve the forces of evil — at least usually. They have been trained by the evil Arawn in Annuvin to be his flying spies and messengers. Prince Gwydion tells Taran that the gwythaints are called “the Eyes of Annuvin” (45). He adds:

“The errand of the gwythaints is less to kill than to bring information. For generations they have been trained for this. Arawn understands their language and they are in his power from the moment they leave the egg.” (46)

Who are the Cauldron-Born?

The Cauldron-Born were once living men. However, Arawn steeped their bodies in a cauldron to bring them back to a kind of life.

The Cauldron-Born are Arawn’s slaves, and they do his bidding.

The Cauldron-Born lose power the further they go from Annuvin and the longer they stay away from Annuvin.

Arawn sometimes sends the Cauldron-Born out of Annuvin to perform tasks for him.

The Cauldron-Born are warriors.

The Cauldron-Born are silent.

The Cauldron-Born now have no memory of themselves as living men.

What is foreshadowing?

The 6th edition of *A Handbook to Literature* by C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon defines “foreshadowing” in this way: “The presentation of material in a work in such a way that later events are prepared for” (201).

Here are a couple of other definitions:

Foreshadowing is the use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in literature.

Source:

http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/foreshadowing.html

Definition: A literary device used to hint at events that will follow later in the story, sometimes generating feelings of anxiety or suspense. Anton Chekhov once said that “if there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it must fire in the last.” That remark captures the essence of foreshadowing.

Source:

<http://contemporarylit.about.com/library/bldef-foreshadowing>

What do we learn about Medwyn in Chapter 4? (By the way, this is foreshadowing.)

Medwyn is a character whom we will see later. Thus, the talk about him here is foreshadowing what will happen later.

Medwyn is a mythological character.

Gwydion has heard of him, but has never seen him. Other people have sought Medwyn, but they have been unable to see him.

Medwyn is ancient, and he lives in the foothills of Eagle Mountains.

Medwyn knows and understands animals.

What do we learn about Gwen the Hunter in Chapter 4?

Gwen the Hunter is riding now.

Gwen the Hunter serves a master whom Gwydion does not know.

Gwen the Hunter rides alone with his dogs, and slaughter follows. (This means that war is coming to Prydain.)

The hunting horn of Gwen the Hunter is a warning to men: Watch out! War is coming!

Gwen the Hunter knows when war is coming.

The echoes of Gwen's hunting horn are worse than the sound of the hunting horn itself. They can cause men to lose hope and give up because the good things in life seem to be forgotten. Men who listen to the echoes wander hopelessly over the earth.

Write a short character analysis of the Proud Walkers based on what you learn in Chapter 4.

The Proud Walkers are the warriors of the Horned King.

They hark back to ancient times when men were cruel and "no more than savages" (52).

They dance a dance of war.

What is the purpose of the baskets?

Men are in the baskets, which are then set on fire, killing the men inside.

The baskets are an old method of executing men.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 4?

The end of Chapter 4 is a cliffhanger.

Gwydion has discovered that the cantreves of the south have joined the Horned King and that there will be war.

Gwydion needs to return to Caer Dathyl immediately to warn the kingdom, but instead five mounted warriors begin to charge him and Taran and Gurgi.

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 4. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Taran certainly learns about evil by seeing the men executed when the baskets are set on fire.

Taran learns by listening to Gwydion, who tells him about Medwyn and Gwen the Hunter and the Proud Walkers and the Cauldron-Born and Gwythaints.

Taran learns to be cautious. He jumps into a bush where Gurgi is hiding because he is afraid that whoever or whatever is in the bush is a threat to Gwydion. (Gwydion tells Taran to be more cautious, but he acknowledges that Taran is brave.)

Gwydion tells Taran that he “scorn[s] the help of no man” (50). This is an important lesson.

Gwydion tells Taran that he must be responsible for his own actions after Taran does not tell Gwydion that he could not swim before crossing the river and after Taran blames Gwydion's horse, Melyngar, for sitting on him while crossing the river (43). Presumably, Taran learns that learning to swim takes time and effort.

Chapter 5: The Broken Sword

What magical powers does Prince Gwydion have?

Prince Gwydion has learned some magic from Dallben. Earlier, to make a point to Taran, Gwydion made a weaving of grass. In Chapter 5, Gwydion uses the weaving to neutralize an enemy warrior. He flings the weaving into the man's face, and the weaving grows and binds the man.

What do we about Prince Gwydion in Chapter 5?

We certainly learn that Prince Gwydion is a good and brave warrior. Gwydion fights several warriors in Chapter 5, and he fights well despite being outnumbered and eventually defeated.

Prince Gwydion is a caretaker of Taran. Gwydion knows that he cannot defeat the Cauldron-Born, so he tells Taran to flee. (Taran is both stubborn and brave, so he stays and tries to fight.)

Later, in the castle of Queen Achren, Gwydion knows that she is trying to get information from Taran — it is a trap. Gwydion knows that Queen Achren is evil. Gwydion is defiant in her presence.

How well do the Cauldron-Born fight?

The Cauldron-Born fight well. Prince Gwydion drives the point of his sword deep into the heart of one of the Cauldron-Born, but since the Cauldron-Born are already dead, the wound has no effect on him.

The Cauldron-Born fight silently. This is something that Taran finds upsetting. It is eerie.

What do we learn about Queen Achren in Chapter 5?

Queen Achren has a forebear in Morgan le Fay. Queen Achren is beautiful, with silver hair, but she is evil through and through.

Queen Achren pretends to be nice to Taran to get information from him, but when Gwydion points out that she is evil, she says that Taran is of no consequence, dead or alive.

Queen Achren breaks Gwydion's sword, and she intends to have him tortured until he begs for death.

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 5. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Taran learns more about evil. Certainly, Queen Achren is evil through and through.

Again, Taran learns not to judge by appearances. Queen Achren is beautiful, but she is evil.

Perhaps Taran learns to obey Gwydion's orders. Gwydion ordered Taran to flee; Taran did not flee, and so he was captured.

Chapter 6: Eilonwy

What has apparently happened to Prince Gwydion?

Taran is in one dungeon, and Prince Gwydion is apparently in the other dungeon. (Queen Achren is so evil that she needs two dungeons.) At least he is still alive, as Queen Achren could have had him killed immediately if she had wanted to.

Eilonwy is the character who lets us know about the other person in the other dungeon.

What do we learn about Eilonwy in Chapter 6?

Eilonwy, of course, will be an important character in the Prydain novels.

Eilonwy has a “light and musical” voice (65), “intensely blue eyes” (64), “long hair of reddish-gold reaching to her waist” (69), a “delicate, elfin [face] with high cheekbones (69). She wears a “short, white robe [...] girdled with silver links” (69). She wears around her neck a “crescent moon of silver hung from a fine chain” (69).

Eilonwy has as ancestors the Sea People. We will find out that Eilonwy is a princess.

Queen Achren is supposed to be Eilonwy’s aunt, although Eilonwy sometimes questions that.

Eilonwy’s speech is distinctive, as is her relationship with Taran.

Eilonwy is a fighter. She ends up biting Queen Achren.

Eilonwy rescues Taran and then the prisoner in the other dungeon. She is familiar with the tunnels beneath the castle.

Eilonwy is not materialistic, but she has a special bauble.

What are some characteristics of Eilonwy’s bauble?

Eilonwy's bauble is a golden ball, and it provides light when she needs it. In other words, she has a magic flashlight. (Of course, Eilonwy is a sorceress-in-training.)

Eilonwy can lose her bauble as when it slips from her hand.

What is characteristic about Eilonwy's speech?

Eilonwy uses a lot of comparisons in her speech, and she is very outspoken. She occasionally questions Taran's intelligence.

When Taran calls Eilonwy a "[l]ittle girl" (65), she replies,

“But I am not a little girl. [...] Haven't I just been and finished telling you? Are you slow-witted? I'm so sorry for you. It's terrible to be dull and stupid. What's your name? [...] It makes me feel funny not knowing someone's name. Wrong-footed, you know, or as if I had three thumbs on one hand, if you see what I mean. It's clumsy ...” (65).

Eilonwy asks Taran, “I don't mean to hurt your feelings by asking, but is Assistant Pig-Keeper the kind of work that calls for a great deal of intelligence?” (66).

When Taran asks her what she is doing here, Eilonwy tells him, “I said I live here. [...] It must take a lot of explaining before you understand anything” (70).

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 6.

Eilonwy is very outspoken. She occasionally questions Taran's intelligence. Their relationship is part of the humor of the novel.

She asks Taran if intelligence is a quality needed by Assistant Pig-Keepers, implying that Taran is not all that intelligent.

Eilonwy is a girl, although she objects when Taran calls her a “[l]ittle girl” (65)

Eilonwy is a helper; she tears a strip of cloth from her dress to bind Taran’s wound (71).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 6. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

The main thing that Taran learns in this chapter is the existence of Eilonwy. She is a remarkable character, and she will be an important character throughout the chronicles of Prydain.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Taran and Eilonwy will be married at the end of the five books that make up the Prydain Chronicles.

Chapter 7: The Trap

How does Taran escape from his cell?

Taran is afraid that Eilonwy will not return to help him; fortunately, she does.

Taran is sitting on the stone that operates as a kind of trap door that leads to a secret tunnel. Eilonwy has to tell him to move off the stone because he is too heavy to lift. This is part of the humor of the novel.

Eilonwy has released the other prisoner (whom she supposes to be Prince Gwydion). She has also released Prince Gwydion's horse, Melyngar.

How do Taran and Eilonwy end up in an underground chamber?

When Queen Achren discovers that Taran is missing (as presumably is the other prisoner), she sends guards out looking for them. This causes a lot of shaking, and the shaking loosens a part of an old tunnel, and it collapses into another tunnel. While fleeing, Taran falls into the hole and lands in the other tunnel.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 7.

Eilonwy makes another notable comparison in Chapter 7. She tells Taran, "I wish you'd stop worrying. [...] You sound as if you were having your toes twisted" (78).

Eilonwy makes another comment about Taran's presumed lack of intelligence. She says that Taran's companion would hide if Queen Achren's warriors came looking for him, then adds, "Of course, if he's an Assistant Pig-Keeper, too, it's hard to guess how his mind would work" (81).

In addition, Eilonwy says to Taran, “But it’s very thoughtful of you to say that. It shows a kind heart, and I think that’s so much important than being clever” (77).

The relationship is not very good at this point. Taran gets mad at Eilonwy when she joins him in the other tunnel. Taran is afraid that they are trapped there, but Eilonwy is positive that the tunnel will lead somewhere new that is better than where they are now. (However, on page 77, she said that some of the tunnels didn’t go anywhere at all.)

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 7. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Taran’s education is mainly about Eilonwy. He learns that she kept her word about getting him out of the dungeon.

Chapter 8: The Barrow

What do Taran and Eilonwy find in the barrow?

In the barrow is a king, presumably the king who built Spiral Castle. Also there are a couple of dead warriors (of course, the king is dead, too), weapons, and lots and lots of treasure.

Both Taran and Eilonwy get swords. Taran takes the sword of a warrior, while Eilonwy takes the sword of the king — she reasons that it is probably the best sword.

By the way, a barrow is a burial mound; often they contain burial chambers.

What happens to Spiral Castle?

Spiral Castle ends up collapsing upon itself. It is utterly destroyed.

Presumably, magic plays a role in its destruction. It is surrounded at one point by blue fire.

This is a significant defeat for Queen Achren, who could be buried under the rubble.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 8? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

This chapter has a surprise ending. Taran has been expecting to see Prince Gwydion. However, the man he sees is not Prince Gwydion. Instead, the man is a stranger. Taran has never seen the man before.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 8.

The relationship does progress.

Eilonwy believes that Taran saved her life. As she was leaving the tunnel, the scabbard of the sword she was

carrying got caught on something. Taran was able to lift her from the tunnel before it collapsed. On page 91, we read:

“Thank you for saving my life,” said Eilonwy. “For an Assistant Pig-Keeper, I must say you are quite courageous. It’s wonderful when people surprise you that way.”

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 8. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Again, Taran learns the most about Eilonwy and Spiral Castle. He learns that Spiral Castle has the barrow of the king who apparently built it hidden underneath it.

Eilonwy, of course, is charming, although Taran may not realize that yet.

Performing actions results in education. Taran rescues Eilonwy; he is learning to be a hero. He rescues Eilonwy when the scabbard of the sword she is carrying gets caught on something.

Also, of course, Eilonwy rescues Taran and the mysterious stranger by getting them out of the dungeon.

Chapter 9: Fflewddur Fflam

• What do we learn about Fflewddur Fflam in Chapter 9?

Fflewddur Flam is

tall and lanky, with a long, pointed nose. His great shock of bright yellow hair burst out in all directions, like a ragged sun. His jackets and leggings were patched at knees and elbows, and sewn with large, clumsy stitches — the work, Taran was certain, of the bard himself. A harp with a beautiful, sweeping curve was slung from his shoulders, but otherwise he looked nothing at all like the bards Taran had learned about from *The Book of Three*. (97-98)

Fflewddur Flam makes a great deal of sense sometimes. He tells Taran that Prince Gwydion would want to hear Eilonwy's explanation. He points out that Taran ought not to so hard on a "winsome lass" (95).

The American Heritage College Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition, 2002) defines "winsome" as "Charming, often in a childlike or naive way."

Fflewddur Flam is a bard, and as such, he is interested in glory. When he hears of the uprising of the Horned King, he is ready to attack. For a moment, Taran is ready to attack, too, but he realizes that to do so would get him and Fflewddur Flam killed.

What apparently has happened to Prince Gwydion?

Prince Gwydion is presumed to be dead, having apparently perished in the collapse of Spiral Castle. However, his corpse is not found, so this is not completely certain.

What do we learn about Gurgi in Chapter 9?

Gurgi continues to be interested in food.

Gurgi continues to be aware of what is happening in the region. He has seen the army of the uprising.

Gurgi may be a bit of a coward, having run away (to get help, he says) when trouble arose. Later evidence will show that Gurgi is not a coward.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 9.

Their relationship is rocky. Taran at first thinks that Eilonwy is a traitor because she rescued Fflewddur Flam instead of rescuing Prince Gwydion. Of course, this is not Eilonwy's fault.

Eilonwy cries, something she hates to do because it “makes her nose feel like a melted icicle” (96). She also objects to Taran calling her names and says “that’s like putting caterpillars in somebody’s hair” (97).

Still, although she says that she no longer wants to help Taran, she stays with him. When he says that he doesn’t blame her for not wanting to help him anymore, she says, “Well, you don’t have to agree with me so quickly,” then she follows him (97).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 9. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Taran does some silly things in Chapter 9. He attacks Fflewddur Flam for no reason other than that he is angry that the bard is not Prince Gwydion. This is foolish.

He also calls Eilonwy a traitor for not rescuing Prince Gwydion even though he had not given her enough

information — even the prince's name — to make sure the prisoner in the other dungeon was Prince Gwydion.

However, Taran does some things right. He listens to Fflewddur Flam when Fflewddur Flam tells him that Prince Gwydion would ask Eilonwy for an explanation of what happened in the rescue. He apologizes to Eilonwy. He gives Eilonwy a cloak so she can be warm when she goes to sleep. He wants to get away from Spiral Castle because he is afraid of Queen Achren. He holds the first watch.

At the end of the chapter, Taran is longing for Caer Dallben. This is good because he is valuing peace over war. He would prefer pulling weeds in the garden to gaining glory by fighting in a battle. He also realizes that he faces a decision. He has to decide what to do. Should he follow his own quest and try to find Hen Wen, or should he follow Prince Gwydion's quest and warn the House of Don about the uprising of the Horned King?

Chapter 10: The Sword Dyrnwyn

What do we learn about the sword Dyrnwyn in Chapter 10?

Dyrnwyn is the name of the sword that Eilonwy took from the dead king in the barrow under Spiral Castle.

We learn that it has a symbol of power on the scabbard.

We learn that Taran would like to draw the sword, but that Eilonwy won't let him because of the symbol of power on the scabbard.

Also on the scabbard is an inscription in the Old Writing (106).

Eilonwy is not able to read all the writing on the scabbard — some of it has been scratched off. At first, Eilonwy is not able to make out the writing. She says, “I can almost make it out, but not quite, and there's nothing more irritating. It's like not finishing what you started out to say” (106). Fortunately, Eilonwy soon is able to read the writing.

We learn that only someone of royal blood can draw and use it. The writing on the scabbard says:

DRAW DYRNWYN, ONLY THOU OF ROYAL
BLOOD,

TO RULE, TO STRIKE THE ... (107)

“Royal blood” does not refer only to having royal relatives. Eilonwy says,

“Royal blood is just a way of translating; in the Old Writing, it didn't mean only having royal relatives — anybody can have those. It meant — oh, I don't know what you'd call it. Something very special. And it seems to me that if you have it, you don't need to wonder whether you have it.” (108-109)

What is characteristic about Fflewddur Fflam's speech?

The main characteristic of Fflewddur Fflam's speech is exaggeration. (This is closely related to the behavior of his harp.)

He is a kind of bard — an unofficial bard — who exaggerates his exploits (according to him, he does this for purely dramatic effects).

He is also a king. He says he is king of a vast realm, but he is really king of a small and dreary realm.

He pretends to be able to read the writing on the scabbard, but he really can't.

He says that he did well in the bardic exams, but he failed them.

He says that he has cut his way through walls of warriors, but that is another exaggeration, as the behavior of the harp shows.

Describe Fflewddur Fflam's harp.

The harp has many strings, and they break whenever Fflewddur Flam exaggerates, as he so frequently does.

Fflewddur Flam says that he “might, ah, readjust the facts; purely for dramatic effect, you understand” (111). Every time he readjusts the facts, one or more strings on his harp break.

By the way, readjusting the facts is something that most or all writers do. A writer can tie up loose ends that might stay untied in real life. A little exaggeration can make a story better, so if you ever write an autobiographical essay, feel free to exaggerate (or lie) a little.

Fflewddur Flam says that he spends more time fixing the strings than playing. This seems to be true.

How did Fflewddur Fflam become a bard? Is he a good bard?

Actually, he is not a bard — at least an official bard — because he failed his bardic exams.

He is actually a king, but he dislikes being a king, so he became a bard.

Apparently, he is not a good bard because he failed his bardic exams and because Queen Achren put him in the dungeon because she did not like his playing.

The Chief Bard, Taliesin, gave him the harp, although Fflewddur Fflam is not so sure that he did him a favor by giving him the harp.

Is Taran sexist?

A sexist is usually a person who thinks that boys are better than girls. (A sexist can also be a person who thinks that girls are better than boys.)

The American Heritage College Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition, 2002) defines “sexism” in this way:

1. Discrimination based on gender, esp. against women.
2. Attitudes, conditions, or behaviors that promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender.

Is Taran sexist? Yes. He doesn’t want Eilonwy to go with him to warn the warriors of Don, apparently because she is a girl.

He also talks about her to Fflewddur Fflam as “this girl” and “a girl” (114) — something that infuriates Eilonwy, as she prefers to be called by her own name. She says being called

“a girl” and “this girl” is “like having your head in a sack” (114).

Eilonwy does show a lot of spirit in this chapter. She says that she “shall be conducted where I please!” (114). She also threatens Ffleuddur Fflam with his own harp.

However, eventually Taran decides that there is safety in numbers and all three of them ought to travel together to warn the warriors of Don of the coming war.

Earlier, Taran told Eilonwy, “Instead of a sword, you should be carrying a doll” (109).

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 10.

Their relationship in Chapter 10 is not so good. Taran displays some sexist traits, and Eilonwy becomes angry at him, as she so frequently will in this series of novels set in Prydain.

On the other hand, earlier, Eilonwy told Taran, “For an Assistant Pig-Keeper, I think you’re quite remarkable. I even think you’re the nicest person I’ve ever met in my whole life. It’s just that I’m forbidden to let you have the sword and that’s that” (109).

Still, when Taran doesn’t want her to go with him, Eilonwy says, “And if a certain Assistant Pig-Keeper — I won’t even mention *his* name — thinks otherwise, he’ll be even more mistaken!” (115).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 10. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Taran should learn to refer to Eilonwy by her own name instead of calling her “this girl” or “a girl” (114).

Taran does learn to be in charge. He is the leader of this band, even though Ffleuddur Fflam is apparently an adult and older than Taran. Ffleuddur Fflam says that he will follow Taran because Taran is “acting for Lord Gwydion” (115).

Chapter 11: Flight Through the Hills

Is Taran a good leader in Chapter 11?

Taran is a good leader in Chapter 11.

One negative is that he has a hard time understanding Fflewddur Fflam's scratched-on-the-ground map. However, he listens to the bard's words and they make sense to him.

Taran chooses a path that seems safest. He does not want his band to go close to Annuvin or the Horned King.

Taran is the one who notices that the Cauldron-Born are following the band.

Taran is clearly the leader. He gives orders, and they are followed.

Taran takes care of Eilonwy. When she is tired, he puts her on the horse Melyngar.

Both Taran and Fflewddur Fflam give up their food for Eilonwy. (They give up Gurgi's food, too — without consulting him.)

Taran refuses to kill Gurgi or to leave him behind. He is valuing Gurgi's life highly, as all of the band could be captured and killed if they are slowed down enough by Gurgi. Still, if Taran errs, he errs on the side of mercy.

Taran does not take Gurgi's share of the food when Gurgi offers it to him.

Taran fills Gwydion's leather water flask, and he and Gurgi search for food.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of Taran's band in Chapter 11?

For much of the chapter, Gurgi is a strength. Gurgi's physical strength does not flag, and his matted hair keeps the insects off him. Gurgi finds food — a honeycomb. Gurgi is able to climb a tall tree and see that the Cauldron-Born are still following them. However, Gurgi becomes somewhat of a liability when he falls and injures his leg.

Eilonwy is somewhat weak. She is tired and eventually has to ride on Melyngar.

Fflewddur Fflam is not able to forage for food, although he claimed to be able to. He is more merciful than he lets on to be. When Taran asks if he would have left the injured Gurgi behind or cut off his head, Fflewddur Fflam says that he would — and a thick string on his harp breaks.

Taran is a good leader.

One enormous strength is that all the members of Taran's band recognize that all of their lives are precious. No one gets left behind.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 11.

Taran takes good care of Eilonwy in Chapter 11.

Eilonwy is still taking care of the sword she got from the barrow. When Taran tries to take it from her (apparently so that she can rest better), she keeps it and tells him, "You never understand things the first time. [...] But I imagine Assistant Pig-Keepers are all alike. I told you before you're not to have it, and now I'll tell you for the second time — or is it the third, or fourth? I must have lost count" (121).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 11. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Mainly Taran learns to value peace and prosperity. Being the leader of this band is a grave responsibility.

The narrator tells us what Taran is thinking:

In Caer Dallben, he had dreamed of being a hero. But dreaming, he had come to learn, was easy; and at Caer Dallben no lives depended on his judgment. He longed for Gwydion's strength and guidance. His own, he feared, was not equal to his task. (119)

Taran and all the members of Taran's band know that all of their lives are precious. No one gets left behind.

Chapter 12: The Wolves

Is Taran a good leader in Chapter 12?

Taran is brave, and he is willing to give up his life for others. He is willing to fight the Cauldron-Born with Fflewddur Fflam, knowing that they cannot win, but nevertheless he is willing to fight the Cauldron-Born and give his life so that Eilonwy and Gurgi have a chance at escaping.

Taran does what he can to take care of Gurgi. From Coll, he learned how to use some medicinal herbs, and he uses those medicinal herbs to take care of Gurgi.

Taran gives some praise to Eilonwy. Of course, she gets easily offended, and is soon offended again, but praising her is something good that Taran does.

Taran has the idea to give Melyngar her head so that the horse can find her way home.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of Taran's band in Chapter 12?

Fflewddur Fflam is a great help as he knows the region and is able to tell Taran where they ought to go.

Eilonwy is brave and is willing to attempt to use magic against the Cauldron-Born, although her attempt fails.

At this point, Gurgi is very ill and unable to help.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 12? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

Wolves have been following the band. Taran is afraid that the wolves are waiting for Gurgi to die so that they can eat him.

At the very end of Chapter 12, a wolf springs, apparently at Taran. The reader will definitely keep on reading.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 12.

The relationship is rocky. For the first time, Eilonwy refuses to speak to Taran, although she quickly speaks to him again. This is going to happen often in the Prydain Chronicles.

Clearly (in my opinion, and of course I know that Eilonwy and Taran will get married eventually), Eilonwy likes Taran and wants him to like her. She wants to be liked for herself and not for her magic, or for carrying swords and such.

Eilonwy praises Taran for his idea about letting Melyngar have his head so that the horse can find its way back home.

Eilonwy kicks Taran in the shins early in the chapter, while she is attempting to perform magic against the Cauldron-Born.

Taran realizes that Eilonwy has a sharp tongue.

Taran tells Fflewddur Fflam that he “can’t make sense out of that girl. [...] Can you?” (130). The bard replies, “Never mind. [...] We aren’t really expected to” (130).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 12. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Of course, Taran will never learn everything. Taran tells Fflewddur Fflam that he “can’t make sense out of that girl. [...] Can you?” (130). The bard replies, “Never mind. [...] We aren’t really expected to” (130).

One thing that Taran has known about before, but sees in action in Chapter 12 is that the Cauldron-Born cannot stay too long or too far away from Annvin. A fight is about to break out, but the Cauldron-Born are forced to head back to Annvin.

Chapter 13: The Hidden Valley

What do we learn about Medwyn in Chapter 13? What wisdom does he have?

Medwyn's wisdom lies in caring for (and talking to) animals and in preferring peace over war.

Medwyn is a mythic figure. One myth that seems to apply to him is the myth of Noah. The skeleton of a ship is seen in the valley. This ship carried two of every animal at a time of great flooding.

Medwyn has many names.

Medwyn is barefoot but is not troubled by stones, etc. He has a long beard that reaches his waist. His hair flows to his shoulders. He is old.

Medwyn has a hidden valley. Animals flee to it in times of danger. Men are not ready for the valley, so it is hidden from most of them. The bees and chickens of Caer Dallben fled to Medwyn's hidden valley.

Medwyn has many guests. For example, he had bears as guests for breakfast. (Part of the humor in the novel is that the bears left a mess.)

Medwyn wears a band of gold across his forehead.

Medwyn is a little like a grandfather. He pays attention to names, but is sometimes unsure if he has the right name.

Medwyn seems to be a vegetarian. He gives milk and cheese to his guests, as well as honey and fruit. Apparently, he eats eggs, as he is concerned that Dallben and Coll will be without eggs because their chickens are now in the hidden valley.

Medwyn wears a brown robe and has white hair. He is an enormous man.

Describe Medwyn's valley.

The valley is a valley of peace and beauty.

The valley has lots of food.

The valley contains the skeleton of a ship.

The valley is hidden so that men can't reach it (except in extraordinary circumstances) and ruin it.

Animals flee to safety in the hidden valley in times of danger.

What do we learn about Gurgi in Chapter 13?

As we know, Gurgi is a strange creature. According to Medwyn, Gurgi is halfway between being an animal and being a human. Medwyn says,

“Gurgi's misfortune is that he is neither one thing nor the other, at the moment. He has lost the wisdom of animals and has not gained the learning of men. Therefore, both shun him. Were he to do something purposeful, it would mean much to him.” (146)

As we know, Gurgi was willing to give up his life so that the others could be saved.

What is the difference between wisdom and learning?

I imagine that wisdom has to do with ethics. Learning can teach us new ways of torturing people and animals; wisdom can tell us not to torture people and animals.

Which myths are recounted in Chapter 13? What is their purpose?

Two major myths are recounted in Chapter 13. One myth is about a lame ant. Its purpose is to teach us neither to refuse to give help to someone (or something) who (that) needs it,

nor to refuse help from someone (or something) who (that) offers it to you when you need it.

In this myth, Gwythyr sees a fire threatening an anthill. He puts out the fire. The ants then help Gwythyr with a task he has been given. He is supposed to gather nine bushels of flax seed. The ants gather bushels of flax seed, but an evil man who has given Gwythyr the task says that the nine bushels are one flax seed short. With time running out, a lame ant carrying one flax seed arrives, completing the task.

The second myth is similar to that of Noah and the ark. In this myth, the Noah figure is Nevvid Nav Neivion, which seems to be another name for Medwyn.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 13.

The focus of this chapter is not on Taran and Eilonwy; rather, the focus is on what Taran learns from Medwyn.

We do learn that Eilonwy likes fawns. She is happy when she sees a fawn in the hidden valley, and she says that “it makes you feel all tingly, as if you were touching the wind” (142).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 13. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Medwyn helps to educate Taran. Medwyn tells him, “Every living thing deserves our respect [...] be it humble or proud, ugly or beautiful” (145). Medwyn even pities the gwythaints because he knows their story. They were once free birds, but they were tortured into submission by Arawn.

Medwyn also tells Taran, “Neither refuse to give help when it is needed [...] nor refuse to accept it when it is offered” (146).

Medwyn also tells Taran, “I have studied the race of men [...] I have seen that alone you stand as weak reeds by a lake. You must learn to help yourselves, that is true: but you must also learn to help one another” (147-148).

Taran finds himself wishing that he could be weeding the vegetable garden at *Caer Dallben*. That seems pleasant now (in contrast to the journey he is now taking), although previously he had despised the work.

Chapter 14: The Black Lake

What do we learn about Fflewddur Fflam's harp?

Fflewddur Fflam has been carrying around his harp (and repairing its strings) for a long time, but he has never played it. Eilonwy says, "That's like telling somebody you want to talk to them, and when they get ready to listen, you don't say anything" (156).

When he does play the harp, something different comes out from what he expected. He wanted to play something lively, but what came was a tune that made the band long for home (except for Gurgi, who lives in the fearsome forest — but Taran says that he can live at Caer Dallben).

In other words, the harp basically plays itself. When Taliesin gave it to Fflewddur Fflam, apparently he knew that Fflewddur Fflam was such a bad bard that he needed a harp like this.

Is Taran a good leader in Chapter 14?

Taran makes one mistake. He does not follow the instructions given to him by Medwyn. Medwyn wanted the band to stay in the mountains, but Taran decides to take a short cut between mountains (apparently a valley in which is located a black lake). Eilonwy tells Taran when he doesn't follow Medwyn's instructions, "If you don't listen to what somebody tells you [...] it's like putting your fingers in your ears and jumping down a well" (160).

As we will see, this is a lucky mistake, as it leads to finding Hen Wen and to the friendship with Doli and the Fair Folk. Also, Fflewddur Fflam thinks that Taran has a good idea as he thinks that it will save time.

Eilonwy uses a lot of similes in her speech. What are similes?

Of course, Eilonwy makes a lot of comparisons in her speech. Those comparisons tend to be similes.

A simile is a comparison in which two things are directly compared because they are alike. It uses words such as “like” or “as.”

Discuss some of Eilonwy’s comparisons and similes.

The band eats a meal at Medwyn’s. Fflewddur Fflam thinks that he is eating venison, but Medwyn points out that actually it is vegetables. Eilonwy points out, “You wouldn’t expect him to cook his guests, would you? That would be like asking someone to dinner and then roasting him” (150-151).

Fflewddur Fflam has been carrying around his harp (and repairing its strings) for a long time, but he has never played it. Eilonwy says, “That’s like telling somebody you want to talk to them, and when they get ready to listen, you don’t say anything” (156).

After Fflewddur Fflam plays the harp, Eilonwy says that it made her think of the sea, although she hasn’t been there since she was a little girl. Taran thinks that she is still a little girl, so he snorts (157). Eilonwy says about the tune, “It was a sad tune [...] But the odd thing about it is, you don’t mind the sadness. It’s like feeling better after you’ve had a good cry” (157).

Taran makes one mistake. He does not follow the instructions given to him by Medwyn. Medwyn wanted the band to stay in the mountains, but Taran decides to take a short cut between mountains (apparently a valley in which is located a black lake). Eilonwy tells Taran when he doesn’t follow Medwyn’s instructions, “If you don’t listen to what

somebody tells you [...] it's like putting your fingers in your ears and jumping down a well" (160).

What are clichés?

Eilonwy's comparisons and similes are usually apt and original. Eilonwy avoids clichés, which are expressions that have been overused and are no longer vivid.

Which clichés do you know?

With luck, students will come up with many clichés:

as dead as a doornail

as quiet as a mouse

avoid him (or her) like the plague

Often, clichés are outdated. How many students have seen a doornail or a person with plague?

See the end of this discussion guide for sample activities regarding clichés, similes, metaphors, and writing vividly.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 14? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

This is another cliffhanger. Taran and his companions are caught in the waters of the black lake and are being pulled down. Taran is convinced that he will drown.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 14.

As always, their relationship is a little rocky.

The band eats a meal at Medwyn's. Fflewddur Fflam thinks that he is eating venison, but Medwyn points out that actually it is vegetables. Eilonwy points out, "You wouldn't expect him to cook his guests, would you? That would be like asking someone to dinner and then roasting him. Really,

I think bards are as muddled as Assistant Pig-Keepers; neither one of you seems to think very clearly” (150-151).

When Taran decides to risk the mountains rather than follow the Horned King (because it is quicker and perhaps less dangerous, or at least a different kind of danger), Eilonwy says that she thinks that Taran is improving (154).

After Fflewddur Fflam plays the harp, Eilonwy says that it made her think of the sea, although she hasn't been there since she was a little girl. Taran thinks that she is still a little girl, so he snorts (157).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 14. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Two things are evident in Taran in Chapter 14:

1. Free will.
2. A longing for home.

Taran has the choice to stay in Medwyn's valley. Medwyn sees something in Taran — although his “heart is young and unformed” (152) — that invites him to let Taran stay in the valley. However, Taran has already made up his mind to warn the Sons of Don about the upcoming war and danger, and he will not stay in Medwyn's valley and let his companions do alone the hard work of warning the Sons of Don. This is Taran's decision. Of course, because it is his decision, he can reverse his decision, but he chooses not to.

Again, we have the longing for home that we have seen before. Early in the novel, Taran longed for adventure and thought poorly of weeding the vegetable garden. Now, he realizes the hard work of adventure and would like to be home.

Chapter 15: King Eiddileg

Who are the Fair Folk?

The Fair Folk are fairies, basically.

The Fair Folk are small, and they have magical powers.

We will find out later that Doli acquires the power to become invisible.

The Black Lake is a kind of trap. When human beings come that close, they are too close, and the Black Lake captures them by drawing them down to an underground cavern.

The Fair Folk are essentially comedic. The Fair Folk who capture the band of companions decide to let them keep their swords because Eilonwy slaps and kicks one of them.

The Fair Folk have tunnels and mines all over Prydain.

Before the race of men came, the Fair Folk ruled Prydain. The humans, however, drove the Fair Folk underground and plundered their treasures.

What do we learn about King Eiddileg in Chapter 15?

King Eiddileg is the King of the Fair Folk. He is in charge of administrative matters, which he regards as being important work. Eilonwy, however, can't see that any work is being done at all.

He is dwarfish figure. He has rings on his fingers, and he wears a robe colored a "garish red and green" (165).

He made some improvements to the Black Lake.

He is stout.

He has magical powers. When Taran and Fflewddur Fflam draw their swords, King Eiddileg freezes their muscles so that they cannot move.

Describe the relationship between human beings and the Fair Folk.

The relationship can be kind of testy. We may see a little of that with Eilonwy (before she finds out that they are in the presence of the Fair Folk). When the band is captured, Eilonwy slaps and kicks. She succeeds in holding on to her sword (and the other swords are left alone). The Fair Folk individual who captured her ends up with a black eye.

Humans give the Fair Folk lots of names, such as “the Fair Folk, the Happy Family, the Little People,” etc. (166-167). King Eiddileg considers these names “insipid” and “irritating” (167).

Another name humans have given the Fair Folk is the “Children of Evening” (168).

In addition, humans don’t thank King Eiddileg or the Fair Folk for the nice things that the Fair Folk do, such as sing in the evening.

And when a human finds a Fair Folk, the human will try to make the Fair Folk lead them to buried treasure or grant them three wishes. (The humans do this by squeezing the Fair Folk.)

Is Taran a good leader in Chapter 15?

Taran made a mistake in Chapter 14 when he decided to take a short cut instead of listening to Medwyn. (Of course, it has happy results, as we find out.)

In Chapter 15, Taran admits that he made a mistake earlier. This is a sign of a good leader. Taran also says that he will find a way out. This is another sign of a good leader.

While King Eiddileg is complaining, he mentions that he has lost weight. Of course, King Eiddileg is stout, so Taran

wonders what he looked like before he lost weight. Wisely, Taran decides not to ask this question.

Taran speaks eloquently to King Eiddileg when he tells of the danger from Arawn.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 15? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

We have another good ending here. Gurgi arrives and announces that he has found Hen Wen, who is present in this realm.

The reader will definitely keep reading.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 15.

As always, the relationship between Eilonwy and Taran is a little testy. Eilonwy says in answer to King Eiddileg's question about why the band is present in the realm of the Fair Folk, "Because an Assistant Pig-Keeper led us on a wild-goose chase" (166).

When complimenting King Eiddileg, Eilonwy says, "I think it's amazing what you've been able to do. You must be extremely clever, and any Assistant Pig-Keepers who happen to be in this throne room might do well to pay attention" (170).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 15. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Taran definitely learns about the Fair Folk. He also learns where Hen Wen is.

Taran is willing to admit when he has made a mistake. He knows that he should have followed Medwyn's directions instead of trying to follow a short cut.

Taran acts like a leader. After admitting his mistake, he says that he will find a way out of the place where they seem to be trapped.

Taran knows when to keep his mouth shut. He does not ask the stout King Eiddileg what he looked like before he lost weight. In this instance, Taran has tact — something that Eilonwy often lacks.

Chapter 16: Doli

What do we learn about King Eiddileg in Chapter 16?

King Eiddileg can be devious, although he is basically harmless. He did not tell Taran and his band about Hen Wen.

We discover that the Fair Folk can be dangerous to their enemies. Henchmen of the Horned King were after Hen Wen, and the Fair Folk took care of them.

Eiddileg is concerned about honor and honesty. Taran does not think it honorable and honest of Eiddileg not to mention Hen Wen, and Eiddileg turns Hen Wen over to Taran and his band.

Eiddileg is a dwarfish figure, and when Eiddileg agrees to help Taran and his band, Eilonwy bends over and kisses the top of his head. This greatly pleases Eiddileg.

What do we learn about Doli in Chapter 16?

Doli is grumpy. This is one of his major characteristics. However, he will become a friend to Taran and the members of Taran's band.

Doli wants to be able to turn himself invisible, but he cannot. Doing so makes his face turn red, then blue. (And when he finally learns how to turn himself invisible — later — he hears an unpleasant buzzing in his ears.)

Doli is an excellent guide. Eiddileg volunteers him to be a guide for Taran and his band. This does not make Doli happy. He is always — he feels — being singled out for unpleasant tasks such as cutting (carving gems) or decorating blades or footing arrows (182).

By the way, a footed arrow is made of two different kinds of wood that have been fastened together.

Doli's name comes from Latin. "Dolor" in English means grief or pain.

Is Doli a good addition to Taran's band?

At least in part, yes. He is a good guide.

Doli does bring out the best in Taran and Taran's band. They do their best to make him feel not bad about not being able to turn himself invisible. Taran says that if he could carve gems and do the other things that Doli can do, he would not feel bad about not being able to turn himself invisible.

Fflewddur Fflam lies and says that he can't see Doli. (We do have some foreshadowing here — Fflewddur Fflam says that Doli seemed blurred around the edges. This sets the stage for later, when Doli really can turn himself invisible.)

Eilonwy also tries to comfort Doli, using one of her charming similes. She says "It's silly [...] to worry because you can't do something you simply can't do. That's worse than trying to make yourself taller by standing on your head" (183).

Identify some of Eilonwy's comparisons.

When Doli tries but fails to make himself invisible, Eilonwy says, "I wish you'd stop that. It makes me feel as if I'd drunk too much water, just watching you" (181).

Later, Eilonwy tries to comfort Doli, using one of her famous similes. She says "It's silly [...] to worry because you can't do something you simply can't do. That's worse than trying to make yourself taller by standing on your head" (183).

What do we learn about Gurgi in Chapter 16?

We learn that Gurgi is fitting in well with the companions in Taran's band.

He has learned from Taran how to build a fire, so he is making himself useful.

In addition, he divides the food into equal portions, without saving an extra portion for himself to eat later. This surprises all the companions.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 16? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

Again, we have an interesting ending. The band hears a noise, which turns out to be coming from a gwythaint.

Discuss the relationship of Taran and Eilonwy in Chapter 16.

The focus of Chapter 16 is on the Fair Folk; however, Eilonwy and Taran both show a concern with honesty and honor, fairness and justice. When King Eiddileg threatens to keep Hen Wen, Eilonwy objects, “You gave me your word. The Fair Folk don’t go back on their word” (176).

And when King Eiddileg says, “There was no mention of a pig, no mention at all” (176), Taran agrees, but then he says, “But there is a question of honesty and honor” (176).

All ends well, of course. King Eiddileg and the Fair Folk are good, and Hen Wen joins Taran and Taran’s band. And Eilonwy rewards King Eiddileg with a kiss on the top of his head.

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 16. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Mainly, Taran learns about the King Eiddileg and Fair Folk. They are competent, and they are concerned with fairness.

Taran also learns more about Gurgi, who is behaving very well and sharing food fairly.

Chapter 17: The Fledgling

What do we learn about the fledgling in Chapter 17? (What is a fledgling, anyway?)

The fledgling is a young gwythaint. It is hurt. It is in a thornbush and has been hurt by the thorns, but in addition an eagle has probably challenged it, as several of the gwythaint's feathers are torn out and it has blood on its back.

The fledgling learns to trust Taran and Eilonwy, but not Fflewddur Fflam. Taran and Eilonwy spoke out in support of helping the gwythaint, but Fflewddur Flam did not. The fledgling lets Taran and Eilonwy feed it.

Taran takes care of the fledgling. It grows better, and eventually it bursts out of its cage and takes to flight.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition, 2000) defines “fledgling” in this way: “A young bird that has recently acquired its flight feathers.”

Why does Taran decide to help the fledgling?

Basically, the fledgling needs help and so Taran decides to help it.

In addition, Medwyn has told him to have kindness for all creatures.

In addition, Taran has learned the history of the gwythaints from Medwyn. The gwythaints used to be as free as any creatures but they were tortured into submission by Arawn. In addition, they are trained when young to be loyal to Arawn.

What are the attitudes of the other members of Taran's band toward the fledgling?

The fledgling learns to trust Taran and Eilonwy, but not Fflewddur Fflam. Taran and Eilonwy spoke out in support of helping the gwythaint, but Fflewddur Flam did not. The fledgling lets Taran and Eilonwy feed it.

Gurgi and Melyngar are afraid of the fledgling.

Hen Wen is unafraid of the fledgling.

Doli wants to kill the fledgling.

Fflewddur Flam supports killing the fledgling.

Is Taran a good leader in Chapter 17? Which mistakes (or seeming mistakes) does he make?

Taran makes (perhaps) a couple of mistakes in this section of the novel. The Horned King catches up to Taran and his band of companions because Taran took time to help the fledgling. If he had not helped the gwythaint, he and his band of companions would have been well ahead of the Horned King, according to Doli.

Also, Taran does not keep a watch on Hen Wen. Because Hen Wen is afraid of the Horned King, she runs away, and at the end of the chapter, she is hiding. Taran does not know where she is hiding.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 17? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

Once again, we have an ending that will make the reader keep on reading. The band of companions hears a hunting horn, and Fflewddur Fflam says, "When Gwen the Hunter rides [...] death rides close behind" (197).

What kind of relationship do Taran and Eilonwy have in Chapter 17?

As always, the relationship is a little testy. Doli mentions fools and Assistant Pig-Keepers in the same sentence and Taran says, “Doli is right. There’s no difference between a fool and an Assistant Pig-Keeper” (193). Eilonwy replies, “That’s probably true” (193). This answer, of course, does not cheer up Taran.

However, Eilonwy adds, “But [...] I can’t stand people who say ‘I told you so.’ That’s worse than somebody coming up and eating your dinner before you have a chance to sit down” (193).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 17. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Medwyn has told Taran to have kindness for all creatures. Taran shows that he has learned this lesson by caring for the fledging young gwythaint.

Chapter 18: The Flame of Dyrnwyn

Is Ffleuddur Fflam a good war leader?

Absolutely. We should notice that no harp strings break in this chapter.

Taran draws his sword at the beginning of the chapter when the scouts of the Horned King find them. Ffleuddur Fflam points out that now is the time for arrows — which can kill at a distance. The time for swords is later, when the scouts have drawn closer. This makes sense. Why not kill one or a few of the enemy before they reach you? This will put the odds more in your favor.

In addition, when one of the scouts rides behind them, Ffleuddur Fflam has the companions fight back to back. Again, this is good strategy.

Ffleuddur Fflam is able to guess what the enemy will do. After two of the four enemy warriors have been killed, the others ride off. Ffleuddur Fflam is aware that they will return with reinforcements.

Ffleuddur Fflam also does not want Taran to separate himself from the others to look for Hen Wen. At a time like this, you want all your warriors to be ready to fight.

Ffleuddur Fflam also keeps his eyes on the prize. The most important thing at this point is to warn the Sons of Don before the Horned King attacks. Let Hen Wen look after herself; chances are, she will hide herself well and be safe.

Ffleuddur Fflam also lets Taran, the leader, make the decisions, although Ffleuddur Fflam does give advice. Should the band risk being discovered if there is a chance that they can warn the Sons of Don before the surprise attack? Taran decides to journey in the valley, putting the

band in the vanguard of the Horned King's army. (The vanguard is the front part of the Horned King's army.)

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition, 2000) defines "vanguard" in this way: "1. The foremost position in an army or fleet advancing into battle. 2a. The foremost or leading position in a trend or movement. b. Those occupying a foremost position."

Is Taran a good leader in Chapter 18?

Taran draws his sword too quickly at the beginning of Chapter 18. This may be inspiring, but Fflewddur Fflam has the correct idea: fight with bows and arrows first, then fight with swords.

Should the band risk being discovered if there is a chance that they can warn the Sons of Don before the surprise attack? Taran decides to journey in the valley, putting the band in the vanguard of the Horned King. Still, he thinks he has failed the next morning when the valley is filled with the Horned King's warriors.

Nevertheless, Taran decides to go to Caer Dathyl and make a last stand there. He does, however, want Doli to take Eilonwy and Gurgi to safety. Doli refuses to do so, preferring to fight with Taran. Immediately, enemy warriors discover the band.

Taran shows a lot of bravery in Chapter 18. He stands up against the Horned King, attempting to draw the sword carried by Eilonwy to do so. He also pushes Eilonwy to better safety in the trees (204).

What do we learn about the Horned King in Chapter 18?

Certainly, the Horned King is dangerous. He attacks Taran.

The Horned King appears to be afraid of Dyrnwyn when he sees its scabbard.

The Horned King can be defeated, apparently. The horns turn into crimson streaks; the mask melts at the end of Chapter 18.

What is your opinion of the end of Chapter 18? Is the reader likely to keep on reading?

Again, we have an exciting conclusion. Taran falls unconscious just as the Horned King seems defeated. (The Horned King can be defeated, apparently. The horns turn into crimson streaks; the mask melts at the end of Chapter 18.)

What kind of relationship do Taran and Eilonwy have in Chapter 18?

Taran pushes Eilonwy to better safety in the trees (204).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 18. How does Taran's education progress (if it does)?

Taran continues to be a leader and a hero. He shows a lot of bravery in Chapter 18. He stands up against the Horned King, attempting to draw the sword carried by Eilonwy to do so. He also pushes Eilonwy to better safety in the trees (204).

Chapter 19: The Secret

Has Ffleuddur Fflam fought well? Was he afraid?

Ffleuddur Fflam has fought well. He tells of his fight, and Taran expects that the strings of his harp will snap, but they don't, so we know that Ffleuddur Fflam is telling the truth.

However, when Ffleuddur Fflam says that he was not afraid, a string snaps, and Ffleuddur Fflam admits to Taran that he was terrified.

This is an important part of Taran's education. A person can do brave things — Ffleuddur Fflam protected Taran and Eilonwy — yet still be very afraid.

Also, Gurgi and Doli fought well.

Doli is impressed with the way that the others fought. He says, "Never thought any of you had any mettle to show [...]. Took you all for milksops at first. Deepest apologies" (210).

What is Dyrnwyn?

Dyrnwyn is a magic sword. It belonged to the king who built Spiral Castle, home of Queen Achren.

It is a weapon of power. As soon as Eilonwy saw it, she understood that Prince Gwydion ought to have it.

A person of noble blood must draw it. Taran's arm is burned when he tries to draw the sword.

Why isn't Taran a prisoner?

The good guys won the battle and killed the Horned King.

Why didn't Prince Gwydion die when Queen Achren's castle fell?

Prince Gwydion was not in the castle when it fell. Queen Achren had him taken somewhere else to be tortured.

By withstanding the torture, Prince Gwydion was able to learn many things, including the speech of birds and animals.

What new things do we learn about Queen Achren?

Queen Achren ruled Prydain before Arawn arrived. She helped Arawn, then he betrayed her. This means that she does not like Arawn.

She was willing to put Prince Gwydion on the throne, but she was not able to bribe him with power and with the promise of eternal life.

Why did Queen Achren's castle fall?

The loss of Dyrnwyn destroyed Spiral Castle.

What happened to the fledgling?

The fledgling gwythaint found Prince Gwydion and gave him news about Taran, the companions, and Hen Wen.

So Taran's mercy worked out well for the cause of good.

What happened to Hen Wen?

The fledgling told Prince Gwydion about Hen Wen.

Hen Wen became aware of Prince Gwydion's presence and sought him out to give him the information he needed to destroy the Horned King. That information was the Horned King's secret name.

Why did the Horned King die?

Prince Gwydion learns the Horned King's secret name. This gives Prince Gwydion the means to destroy the Horned King.

Which gifts does Prince Gwydion give the companions at the end of Chapter 19? How well are they chosen?

Fflewddur Fflam

Fflewddur Fflam gets one string that shall never break.

Doli

Doli gets the power to be invisible.

Eilonwy

Eilonwy gets a ring.

Taran

Taran gets what he asks for: to return home.

Gurgi

Gurgi gets a never-empty (magical) purse of food.

These gifts are well chosen.

In Chapter 20, we also find out that Gwydion gives the companions horses. Taran gets the best horse: a “gray, silver-maned stallion, Melynlas, of the lineage of Melyngar and as swift” (220).

Discuss Eilonwy’s comparisons and similes in Chapter 19.

Eilonwy makes a few of her similes in Chapter 19.

When Taran wakes up, she tells him, “You should really see your expression. You look like a fish that’s climbed into a bird’s nest by mistake” (206).

She also says about her staying by Taran’s side while he slept, “You can’t imagine how boring it is to sit and watch somebody sleep. It’s like counting stones in a wall” (206).

Not all of Eilonwy’s comparisons have exactly the right word, as she admits. She talks about the Horned King’s men

“running away, like a herd of rabbits — no, that isn’t right, is it?” (209).

What kind of relationship do Taran and Eilonwy have in Chapter 19?

While Taran is asleep, Eilonwy stays by his side, although she admits that watching somebody sleep is boring. This shows that she cares for him.

Still, the relationship can be somewhat testy as well as funny. When Taran wakes up and wonders if he is in Annuvín, Eilonwy says, “That’s exactly the sort of question you might expect from an Assistant Pig-Keeper” (206-207).

At one point Taran tells Eilonwy to stop chattering, then later he tells her to speak “very slowly” (208) and tell him what happened. Eilonwy says, not unreasonably, “How — can — I — tell — you — anything [...] if — you — don’t — want — me — to — talk?” (208).

A really funny bit occurs when Eilonwy tells Taran what happened to Hen Wen. She says, “She’s a very intelligent pig [...]. Oh, she does get frightened and lose her head once in a while, I suppose. And she can be very stubborn when she wants, which sometimes makes me wonder how much difference there is between pigs and the people who keep them. I’m not mentioning anybody in particular, you understand” (209).

Discuss the theme of education in Chapter 19. How does Taran’s education progress (if it does)?

Fflewddur Fflam has fought well, yet he admits (after a harp string breaks) that he was terrified the entire time. This is an important part of Taran’s education. Being brave and being afraid can happen at the same time. Sometimes, being brave is doing the right thing despite being afraid.

Prince Gwydion tells Taran, “Once you have courage to look upon evil, seeing it for what it is and naming it by its true name, it is powerless against you, and you can destroy it” (216). This is an important lesson. Apparently, once you truly realize that something is evil, you can fight against it.

At the end of the chapter, Taran says what he has learned in this novel: “In spite of all that has befallen me, I have come to love the valleys and mountains of your northern lands. But my thoughts have turned more and more to Caer Dallben. I long to be home” (219).

Chapter 20: Welcomes

Who has behaved well in *The Book of Three*?

Taran says that he has “no just cause for pride” (222) and that other people did very good things, but Dallben points out the good things that Taran did. (See next question.)

These are good things that the companions did:

Gwydion

Destroyed the Horned King.

Hen Wen

Revealed the Horned King’s secret name to Gwydion.

Gurgi

Found Hen Wen.

Gurgi, Fflewddur Fflam, and Doli

Fought well.

Taran

According to Taran, what he did mainly was to make mistakes.

Does Taran have just cause for pride?

Taran says that he has “no just cause for pride” (222) and that other people did very good things, but Dallben points out the good things that Taran did.

Dallben tells Taran, “Though what you say may be true, you have cause for a certain pride nevertheless. It was you who held the companions together and led them. You did what you set out to do, and Hen Wen is safely back with us” (222).

What kind of relationship do Taran and Eilonwy have in Chapter 20?

Pretty much the same.

Clearly, they like each other. Taran wants Princess Eilonwy to stay at Caer Dallben, and Eilonwy wants to stay there.

However, Taran does not ask Eilonwy if she wishes to stay there — instead; he tells her that she is to stay there. (He has asked Dallben if it is OK.) Eilonwy says to Taran, “I suppose [...] it never occurred to you to ask *me*” (224). When Taran says that he didn’t think, Eilonwy replies, “You usually don’t” (224).

Fortunately, Eilonwy has already decided to stay at Caer Dallben.

By the way, Eilonwy makes another of her remarkable similes when she says, “Caer Dallben is as lovely as you said, and you should be glad to be home [...]. It’s like suddenly remembering where you put something you’ve been looking for” (221).

What has Taran learned in *The Book of Three*?

He has learned to value home.

He has learned that Coll is a great hero.

Dallben tells him, “As I told you, there are times when the seeking counts more than the finding” (222). In addition, Dallben says, “Does it truly matter [...] which of you did what, since all shared the same goal and the same danger? Nothing we do is ever done entirely alone” (223).

Taran learns that he has grown. He returns to Caer Dallben and thinks that it has changed, but he has changed, not it. He worries “if I am to be a stranger in my own home” (223). But Dallben tells him, “No, that you shall never be. But it is not

Caer Dallben that has grown smaller. You have grown bigger. That is the way of it” (223).

At the end of *The Book of Three*, Taran is still a kid, but he is much more like Prince Gwydion — a true hero — than he was at the beginning of *The Book of Three*.

Taran has learned many other things that are mentioned in this discussion guide.

Which other characters, if any, have changed?

Other characters have not changed, although Taran has learned more about them.

This can be a weakness of children’s literature: Not many characters change.

Eilonwy turns out to be a princess. Taran is an Assistant Pig-Keeper. Are these facts likely to have an effect on any future relationship between the two?

Yes. Taran will worry about this.

However, the two do get married in the fifth and final volume of the Prydain Chronicles.

What is your opinion of the end of *The Book of Three*? Is the reader likely to keep on reading the second volume in the series, *The Black Cauldron*?

I think that readers will keep on reading. The relationship between Taran and Eilonwy will continue to develop.

Entire Novel: *The Book of Three*

• What is your favorite of the comparisons that Eilonwy makes?

Readers' opinions will vary.

Which characters are stereotypes, if any?

Gurgi is the most original character.

Doli is unusual in his comic inability to turn himself invisible.

Nearly every character is a variation of a stereotype.

Prince Gwydion is the most stereotyped character.

Based on your reading of this novel, what are the limitations of children's literature?

Probably limited character development.

Children's literature will seldom deal with sex.

Appendix A: Bibliography

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Appendix B: Paper Topics (Perhaps for Older Readers)

For these topics, use the MLA format and include a Work(s) Cited List. Your audience is either your teacher for this course, or the readers of a WWW site that discusses and evaluates children's literature.

- Discuss an important theme in *The Book of Three*. For example, you can discuss one of these themes: education, friendship, good versus evil, relationships between the sexes, leadership, and death.
- Discuss how Lloyd Alexander handles characterization. For example, how does Mr. Alexander differentiate his characters' use of language? Do any characters develop? Which characters, if any, are stereotypes?
- Discuss what a young reader could learn from this book.
- *The Book of Three* contains fantastic elements such as magic and myth. Do they serve a useful purpose, or is their use a detriment to the book?
- Discuss the satiric elements of *The Book of Three*.
- How would you answer the question that Lloyd Alexander asks in his Author's Note? He writes, "The chronicle of Prydain is a fantasy. Such things never happen in real life. Or do they?"

Appendix C: Short Reaction Memos

The questions in this short guide to Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. See below for the assignment and a sample short reaction memo.

How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?

You will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer.

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For an example of a short reaction memo, see below.

To: David Bruce
From: Jane Student
Re: *The Book of Three, Ch. 2*
Date: Today's Date
Words: 252 271

What do we learn about Prince Gwydion in Chapter 2?

Prince Gwydion has many good qualities.

He takes care of Taran and recognizes that Taran has been slashed with a sword across his back.

Gwydion is an adult man. He is a war leader, and he acts and looks like a war leader. Taran is surprised to see Gwydion in a travel-stained cloak, but of course that is exactly what he ought to be wearing.

Gwydion occasionally works alone. Of course, at times Gwydion is a leader, but on this quest, he is alone (until he runs across Taran).

Gwydion has a prince's sword. That is how Taran recognizes who Prince Gwydion really is.

Gwydion recognizes that there is a proper time for things to be done.

Taran is eager to get back on the trail of Hen Wen, but Gwydion points out that it is night, and no one can find and follow a trail at night.

Gwydion is brave. He values his life, and he would not risk it unnecessarily, but he vows to fight the Horned King — a fight that only one warrior will walk away from.

Gwydion is not overly proud. He values his life highly, but he does not believe that his life is worth more than another man's life.

More evidence that Gwydion is not overly proud: He wonders if Taran is supposed to help him in his quest — or if he is supposed to help Taran in Taran's quest.

Gwydion knows both Coll and Dallben.

Appendix D: What are Clichés, and How Can I Cure Them?

What are Clichés?

According to Maxwell Nurberg, clichés “are generally fixed idiomatic phrases, some of which may have originally been valid, fresh, and colorful but through constant use have become about as personal as a rubber stamp or a mimeographed love letter.”

Cliché examples: Right off the bat. As quiet as a mouse. Avoid him (her, or it) like the plague.

Write five clichés:

How Can I Cure Clichés?

1) Simplify the cliché.

For example: “A bolt from the blue” equals a shock.

“Right off the bat” means quickly.

“As quiet as a mouse” means quiet.

Take three of the clichés you have written above and simplify the phrase.

2) Give the cliché a “twist” that changes the meaning of the phrase.

For example:

“Live and let live” can be changed to “Live and let die.”

“Better late than never” can be changed to “Better late than later.”

Can you twist any of your clichés and give it an alteration that changes the meaning of the phrase?

3) Make up an entirely new image or phrase — one you have never heard before, but one expresses the same idea.

For example: Mark Twain could have written, “Miles Hendon was shocked.” Instead, Mark Twain wrote this:

Miles Hendon “felt much as a man might who had danced blithely out to enjoy a rainbow, and got struck by lightning.”
— From Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Pauper*

Can you make up an entirely new image or phrase, one you have never heard before, but one that expresses the same idea as one of the clichés you wrote down earlier expressed?

Source: This activity is based on a pdf file from
<library.cn.edu/wacn/pdfs/clichfix.pdf>.

Appendix E: Write Your Own Similes and Metaphors

Definitions of Similes and Metaphors

Source of Definitions:

<http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/literacy/PC_met.htm>

A simile is where two things are directly compared because they share a common feature. The word AS or LIKE is used to compare the two words. E.g. As cold AS a dog's nose.

A metaphor also compares two things, but it does so more directly WITHOUT using AS or LIKE. E.g. The shop was a little gold mine.

Examples of Metaphors and Similes

- What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset. — Crowfoot, *Blackfoot warrior and orator*, 1890
- The human language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out a tune for a dancing bear, when we hope with our music to move the stars. — Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*
- A book is like a garden carried in the pocket. — Arab Proverb
- A clear conscience is a soft pillow. — German Proverb
- Anger is as a stone cast into a wasp's nest. — Malabar Proverb
- Fortune is a woman; if you neglect her today, do not expect to regain her tomorrow. — French Proverb
- Gray hairs are death's blossoms. — English Proverb

Note: Do not feel that you have to use similes and metaphors in your paper. If they will improve your paper, use them. If they won't improve your paper, don't use them.

Exercise

Example:

(About a baseball player) He was as hitless as

(About a baseball player) As hitless as the Ramones.

As bald as _____

As crazy as _____

As cool as _____

Come up with a few other similes and metaphors of your choosing.

Appendix F: One Secret of Writing Well is Writing Vividly

One secret of writing well is writing vividly. For example, you could write, “We had always heard that nuns are mean,” and then stop. Or you can write like this:

We had all heard horror stories about the nuns who taught at the Catholic school, how they used yardsticks like broadswords and dipped the edges in salt so they would hurt more and didn’t care if you bled as long as you didn’t drip on the floor. Whenever I had seen nuns, they always seemed quiet and almost nice, but there were Catholic boys so mean they scared bad dogs, and these boys would cross the street and hide in back of a garbage can in terror when they saw Sister Eunicia walking by. — Gary Paulsen, *How Angel Peterson Got His Name and Other Outrageous Tales About Extreme Sports*, p. 57.

Take one of the following sentences and write vividly about that topic.

- My friend was a daredevil.
- My friend was the best-looking boy in high school.
- My friend was the worst driver in the state.

Appendix G: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer’s Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare’s Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

Appendix H: Some Books by David Bruce

Discussion Guides Series

Dante's Inferno: A Discussion Guide

Dante's Paradise: A Discussion Guide

Dante's Purgatory: A Discussion Guide

Forrest Carter's The Education of Little Tree: A Discussion Guide

Homer's Iliad: A Discussion Guide

Homer's Odyssey: A Discussion Guide

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Discussion Guide

Jerry Spinelli's Maniac Magee: A Discussion Guide

Jerry Spinelli's Stargirl: A Discussion Guide

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal": A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Black Cauldron: A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Book of Three: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper: A Discussion Guide

Nancy Garden's Annie on My Mind: A Discussion Guide

Nicholas Sparks' A Walk to Remember: A Discussion Guide

Virgil's Aeneid: A Discussion Guide

Virgil's "The Fall of Troy": A Discussion Guide

Voltaire's Candide: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Discussion Guide

William Sleator's Oddballs: A Discussion Guide

(*Oddballs* is an excellent source for teaching how to write autobiographical essays/personal narratives.)

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The New Inn: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings

Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose

The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling

From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica

George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling

George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling

George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling

George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling

George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling

George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling

The History of King Leir: A Retelling

Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose

Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose

Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica

The Jests of George Peele: A Retelling

John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English

John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling

John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling

John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling

John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling

John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling

John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling

John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling

King Edward III: A Retelling

The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling

Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling

The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling

Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling

The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems

Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose

- William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose

Children's Biography

Nadia Comaneci: Perfect Ten

Personal Finance

How to Manage Your Money: A Guide for the Non-Rich

Anecdote Collections

250 Anecdotes About Opera

250 Anecdotes About Religion

250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2

250 Music Anecdotes

Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Boredom is Anti-Life: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes

Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Music, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Relationships: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Sports, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Television and Radio: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 1: 250 Anecdotes
The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
Maximum Cool: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Politics and History: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Religion: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Reality is Fabulous: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes

Seize the Day: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

