

Assassin's Apprentice Study Guide

Assassin's Apprentice by Robin Hobb

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Plot Summary

Fitz's earliest memory comes from when he was six years old. He is dropped off at a fortress by his grandfather, who is tired of struggling to provide for the boy. The grandfather tells the guard that the boy is the bastard son of Prince Chivalry. The grandfather is tired of struggling to provide for the boy and says that Chivalry can care for the boy now. Chivalry's stableman, Burrich, takes charge of the boy and cares for Fitz in his own apartment in the stables. Burrich gives the boy the name Fitz.

Fitz's life takes a series of twists and turns as he struggles to find his place in the world. As the illegitimate son of a prince, the royal family does not recognize Fitz. When Chivalry abdicates his right to the throne and move to a far outpost, the townsfolk view Fitz as the reason they have lost a favored ruler. Fitz also finds opposition within the palace walls from the Queen and Chivalry's youngest brother, Regal. Fortunately, King Shrewd halts Queen Desire and Regal in their wish to dispose of the boy. The king sees an opportunity in the boy and proposes to succor him within the royal household in order to keep Fitz from becoming a usurper to the throne.

As part of his care under Shrewd's watchful eye Fitz receives lessons in horsemanship, swordsmanship, and eventually becomes apprentice to Chade, the royal assassin. Fitz enjoys these duties, particularly the time spent around the stables. Fitz exhibits an uncanny ability to communicate telepathically with animals. He naturally forms close bonds quickly with animals and utilizes his skill to his advantage several times throughout the story. Fitz also finds pleasure in brief excursions to the nearby town of Buckkeep to fetch supplies for Chade or the royal scribe, Fedwren. Once the excitement over the boy's existence subsides, Fitz finds the town a fascinating place. He makes friends there and is intrigued by the various items he is sent to bring back to the keep.

Because of his status as the illegitimate son of King Shrewd's oldest heir Fitz is unable to avoid becoming involved in political affairs. Fitz accompanies Princes Verity and Regal when they travel to discuss politics in neighboring towns. Most often, his role is to gather information and report to Chade, but there is always the additional responsibility that if he uncovers any suspicious activity he is to assassinate whoever is causing the problem. Fitz must decide for himself at each juncture which course of action will prove most profitable; whether to obey orders or handle the situation on his own and risk his own life.

The story is about Fitz's struggle to find a place to belong. This first book in the trilogy presents only a brief section of Fitz's life at Buckkeep and introduces many loose ends that puzzle the reader. Like Fitz the reader must weigh each event and decide whose side they are on and what course of action they would choose.



Chapter 1, The Earliest History

Chapter 1, The Earliest History Summary

Fitz's earliest memory comes from when he was six years old. He is dropped off at a fortress by his grandfather who is tired of struggling to provide for the boy. The grandfather tells the guard that the boy is the bastard son of Prince Chivalry. The grandfather is tired of struggling to provide for the boy and says that Chivalry can care for the boy now. Chivalry's stableman, Burrich, takes charge of the boy and cares for Fitz in his own apartment in the stables. Burrich gives the boy the name Fitz. Fitz enjoys sleeping in the stables and becomes very close to the animals he finds there.

One night Fitz overhears Burrich, Prince Verity, and Prince Regal talking. Regal and Queen Desire want Fitz killed but King Shrewd will not allow it. The King wants to wait and see what becomes of the boy. Regal is concerned about the line to the throne and is afraid that the people will like Chivalry more for his "normal" thoughtlessness. Burrich defends the boy and Chivalry.

A few weeks later, the company leaves for Buckkeep where King Shrewd resides. Fitz never gets the opportunity to meet his father since Chivalry abdicates his right to the throne and moves before Fitz arrives at the keep. As the older Fitz looks back on these early events, he realizes that he is a catalyst for many things that will follow.

Chapter 1, The Earliest History Analysis

Chapter One introduces most of the major characters in the story. The reader realizes immediately that the bastard boy is not going to have an easy life and that the rest of the story will describe his struggle to remain alive. Even before Fitz arrives at Buckkeep, his life is in danger from the Queen and Prince Regal. The discussion Fitz overhears between the king and Regal alerts the reader to the fact that there is something amiss within the royal family.

Fitz refers to himself as a catalyst but in this opening chapter, the only change he has managed to affect does not seem to be for the better. Indeed, his life has been seriously jeopardized by the grandfather who no longer wishes to care for the boy. However, there is a glimmer of hope in the boy. He has the ability to communicate with animals, and although some people view this as a negative quality, the reader may sense that Fitz's power will later prove useful not only to himself but to the royal family.



Chapter 2, Newboy

Chapter 2, Newboy Summary

Fitz meets Cob upon arriving in Buckkeep. The town is bustling with people and while waiting for Cob to fetch some food from the kitchens, Fitz draws the attention of passers-by. A crowd gathers as a man heckles Fitz with questions about his illegitimacy. Fitz and Nosy, a pup from Burrich's stables, flee the torture. They take refuge under a building until nightfall. That night they encounter Burrich who tells Fitz the state of court affairs.

The next day, Fitz and Nosy escape the keep and explore the town of Buckkeep further. Fitz meets a band of children who call him Newboy and befriends a young girl named Molly. Fitz learns that despite her small size Molly is a city scraper. Her father comes after her and tries to beat her. Fitz strikes the man with a club and ends the attack. For many days after this, Fitz spends his time in the town with the children. He learns to make a small living doing chores for shopkeepers, and picks up lessons on various trades and human nature.

One day as Fitz is cavorting around the town he runs into Burrich. Burrich is disappointed with the boy's behavior, and puts an end to Fitz's days of playing and pilfering. Burrich then tells Fitz that Nosy will have to go away because the boy has become too close to the pup. Fitz begins to view Burrich as a warden and not a friend.

Chapter 2, Newboy Analysis

Fitz has been thrust into a new way of life and it is one he neither is accustomed to nor prefers. When the new world closes in around him, he seeks refuge where he is most comfortable. The rag tag band of town children naturally accepts a lone boy and his dog. These children are no different from Fitz and he finds comfort in the normalcy of their daily lives. Fitz could have easily maintained an existence among the town folk if Burrich had not come looking for the boy. Burrich's duty is first to the king, and while the stable master may not care much for the boy, he will do whatever is expected of him. Once Fitz is removed from town his life takes another new turn within the keep walls.



Chapter 3, Covenant

Chapter 3, Covenant Summary

Fitz becomes Burrich's shadow. He learns to assist with the stable master's chores. Fitz still manages to steal time in town and over time people become accustomed to the sight of Chivalry's bastard son. Fitz also learns to avoid the Queen and Regal, but Verity shows mild affection towards his nephew. Cob begins to be jealous of Burrich's affection for Fitz.

One day just before Fitz's tenth birthday, he over hears King Shrewd talking with Regal. The King catches sight of Fitz and counsels Regal to make something of the boy before it is too late. Regal fails to understand his father's words. The King continues to suggest that Fitz could be molded into a useful diplomatic weapon; otherwise, the boy could later pose a threat. Shrewd then gives Fitz a pin and claims him as part of the family. Regal disapproves and states that the Queen will also disapprove.

Fitz now spends his mornings learning the art of horsemanship and his afternoons studying the finer points of court life. He eats at the table instead of the kitchen and he sleeps in a room in the keep instead of the stables.

Chapter 3, Covenant Analysis

Now that his days of freedom in the town are over, Fitz must learn a skill that will be useful to the keep. Since Burrich has been put in charge of the boy he sets Fitz to learning how to run a proper stable. Burrich knows no better and figures that this is the best place for an unwanted illegitimate child. Fitz could probably have continued working in the stables if King Shrewd had not seen him in the kitchens. When the king finally lays eyes on the boy, he suggests that Fitz be given better training. Shrewd views the boy as both a potential threat and a possible ally. The outcome depends on the way the boy is treated at this young age. The new lessons Shrewd provides for Fitz are meant to give the child a taste of court life and create an appreciation for the king so that in the future Fitz will not decide to turn on Shrewd. Fitz is still too young to understand much of what is happening to him or the underlying motives associated with the king's actions.



Chapter 4, Apprenticeship

Chapter 4, Apprenticeship Summary

While being measured for new clothes, Fitz learns that Chivalry gave up the throne for the sake of his barren wife. He also learns that Lady Patience was the one who caused Burrich to be left behind because she could not stand the sight of Chivalry's man.

When the new sets of clothes arrive, one of them bears the emblem of a buck's head with a red line through it. Burrich says this indicates that Fitz is of the noble line but still a bastard. Burrich tells Fitz to choose a new name and crest if he prefers and present them to King Shrewd. Fitz mulls this over but feels it would be better for the King, Chivalry, or even Burrich to name him. Burrich tells Fitz to find a name that fits.

One night, Fitz is awakened by a strange man, who asks the boy to follow him. Fitz finds himself in a room full of scrolls and tapestries. The man's name is Chade and he is another teacher but one who must remain secret. Fitz is to learn the art of assassination from Chade.

Chapter 4, Apprenticeship Analysis

Fitz learns a lot in this chapter. He learns more about the man who fathered him and his wife. The new knowledge makes him feel sorry for Burrich at being left behind by the master he loves. The new information about Chivalry also makes him question the crest, which adorns his newly sewn clothing. Fitz feels no connection to his father and objects to being given a crest that identifies him in any way with the prince. However, when Burrich suggests that he devise his own crest and pick a new name for himself, Fitz cannot handle that idea either. Fitz is slowly starting to consider himself as a person and ponder what sort of life he wants to lead. This early questioning will prove useful later but for now only serves to frustrate the boy further. On top of all this commotion, a strange man who tells him that Fitz will now receive training to be an assassin awakens Fitz in the deep of night. Fitz has yet to decide what he wants from his life and now he is being told what he will do.



Chapter 5, Loyalties

Chapter 5, Loyalties Summary

Chade continues to teach Fitz through a series of tasks and games. Each lesson teaches Fitz how to identify herbs, befriend people to garner information, to move stealthily, and how to kill a man almost silently. Fitz learns to follow orders without asking questions.

One of Fitz's tasks involves removing a secret message from Regal's chamber before the Prince sees it. The message comes from a visiting dignitary, Lady Dahlia. Fitz completes the task but never learns what was contained in the message. He does observe that Lady Dahlia suddenly takes an interest in court politics and her actions to upset the Queen.

Chade then entices Fitz with a challenge. The task involves stealing an item from King Shrewd's personal chamber. Fitz is appalled at the notion and refuses to accept the task. Chade becomes angry at Fitz's refusal and sends him away. Chade accuses Fitz of assuming that the older assassin desires to commit treason. For days after words, Fitz stumbles through his chores and lessons as he struggles with Chade's challenge.

Fitz is finally brought out of his malaise when Burrich leaves a hound with the boy. Eventually Fitz must let the dog outside and the act of caring for the runt puppy returns some life to Fitz. That night Fitz cries for the loss of his friendship with Chade. He awakens to find Chade comforting him. Chade explains that King Shrewd himself issued the challenge in order to test the boy. The following day Shrewd invites Fitz to breakfast. Shrewd explains that he was wrong to test Fitz in such a way. Before he leaves, Fitz openly steals a knife from Shrewd's table. He later drives the knife into Chade's mantel.

Chapter 5, Loyalties Analysis

Fitz asks no questions as Chade begins training him as an assassin. Chade's teaching methods are fun and Fitz enjoys the games Chade devises to teach him various things. Being trained as a killer seems to appeal to Fitz. The best-trained killers move without being detected and for a bastard boy going unnoticed is desirable. So far, Fitz has not been faced with a difficult decision and he has blindly followed orders.

However, Fitz must consider where his loyalties lie when Chade asks him to steal something from King Shrewd. Fitz trusts Chade but the king has made a special covenant with the boy that Fitz feels he cannot break. The test comes too early in Fitz's training and the stress of such a decision causes him to become ill. Fitz's bond with animals draws him out of his depression. Fitz draws strength from the warmth and trust of animals entrusted to his care. Fitz is further revived when he learns that Shrewd himself issued the challenge. The king's request has thrown Fitz into a tailspin and

shaken the foundation of their covenant. Fitz has little trouble stealing the knife from King Shrewd and does so in plain view to reinforce his anger with the ruler.



Chapter 6, Chivalry's Shadow

Chapter 6, Chivalry's Shadow Summary

One winter day several years later, Fitz is at lessons when his teacher, Master Fedwren, offers him the chance to apprentice with him over the summer. As a scribe, Fitz would be able to travel outside of Buckkeep and have the opportunity to learn a respectable trade. Fedwren cautions that Fitz should consider the future when Chivalry's shadow no longer protects him.

Chade does not like Fedwren's proposition. He fears that Fitz's life would be in danger outside the keep. Chade then explains the unrest between the people of the land and the danger posed to a bastard traveling among them. Fitz sees his chance of freedom slipping away.

The next day Fedwren sends Fitz into town on an errand to buy supplies. In town, he runs into his old friend, Molly Nosebleed. The two old friends talk as they walk along. Molly asks Fitz if he could read something for her and he agrees. Of the five tablets she gives Fitz, four are recipes but the last one is a short piece from Molly's mother about the girl's birth. Molly learns that her true name is Nosegay not Nosebleed and is elated at the discovery.

On his way, back to the keep in the dusk, Fitz encounters Verity and Regal riding hard from the docks. They pull up sharply when they see Fitz. Verity tells the boy that the ship brought word of Chivalry's death. After the two prince's ride away, Fitz considers running away but he ends up trudging back to the keep.

Chapter 6, Chivalry's Shadow Analysis

As a trained assassin, Fitz will forever be tied to the King and his successors. Fitz will have no freedom, no say in how his life will go, and no chance to explore the world on his own terms. This outlook seems particularly bleak and undesirable to a young boy. Therefore, when Fedwren offers Fitz the chance to leave Buckkeep as a scribe, the boy's spirits are lifted. Fitz is further placed in a difficult position when Chade voices his concern about the plan and news arrives that Chivalry is dead. Chivalry's presence no longer exists to protect Fitz from those who would see the boy killed. If Fitz were to venture out on his own, even with Fedwren, he would be exposed to all those who despise him. By staying within the keep and continuing to train with Chade, Fitz at least ensures that King Shrewd will protect him.



Chapter 7, An Assignment

Chapter 7, An Assignment Summary

Burrich takes the news of Chivalry's death extremely hard. He cuts his own and Fitz's hair short as a sign of mourning. Regal rebukes Burrich for such an action. Fitz has trouble understanding why Burrich has trimmed his hair after the fashion of a boy mourning his father. Chade counsels Fitz that Chivalry has acted very much like a father who cares for his own son. Chivalry's abdication cost him his pride but saved Fitz's life. If Chivalry had openly claimed Fitz, then both of their lives would have been in danger.

As Chade continues to talk about Chivalry, Fitz comes to realize that he is being trained as an assassin in order to sway people to the king's point of view. Chade also reveals that he thinks someone within the keep murdered Chivalry. Fitz listens as Chade talks and begins to suspect that the queen is behind Chivalry's murder.

During the summer, tensions run high, as Outislanders wage a series of attacks on the ports surrounding Buckkeep. The people become increasingly less supportive of Verity as the raids continually strike undermanned towns.

Fitz is soon given the assignment of accompanying Verity on a political voyage. In preparation for the mission, Fitz must learn proper court etiquette. Fitz begins to drowse off as Burrich drones about proper conduct. Slowly, Fitz realizes that Burrich is worried about Fitz's safety. Fitz learns from Chade that his mission while accompanying Verity is to spy on the man the Prince meets with, Kevlar. If the man is found to be a traitor, then Fitz is to kill him but the decision is his own.

Chapter 7, An Assignment Analysis

Fitz is continually confronted with who he is. Although he feels no connection to his father, Fitz cannot fully forget that he is a prince's son. Indeed, he should not forget this fact. To forget who he is would mean certain death because if Fitz no longer cares then neither will those who seek to wipe the boy's existence from everyone's memory.

As Fitz trains with Chade and talks to Burrich, he comes to realize that there is much more happening inside the keep than he realizes. The suspicion that someone murdered Chivalry near them and Burrich's concern for Fitz's safety while away from the fortress awaken Fitz. Up until now, he has moved about the world in a stupor doing as he is told and questioning very little. However, on the eve of his first real world mission Fitz begins to see that he must be more aware of his surroundings and his involvement with them.



Chapter 8, Lady Thyme

Chapter 8, Lady Thyme Summary

Fitz spends the journey to Kelvar's stronghold running errands for Lady Thyme. She is an elderly woman who demands a lot and barks orders. Lady Thyme goes about covered in clothes so that her countenance is barely visible, but everyone knows of her and tries to stay as far away from her as possible.

Fitz begins to spy on Kelvar the first evening at dinner. From the actions of Kelvar's wife, Fitz learns that the Lord is too smitten with his young bride to properly take care of his duchy. Lady Grace is outfitted in such finery that Fitz surmises the money that should be spent on much needed repairs has instead been spent on Kelvar's wife.

Chapter 8, Lady Thyme Analysis

Fitz has little time to enjoy the journey to Kelvar's stronghold since he is kept busy performing ridiculous tasks for the mysterious Lady Thyme. Lady Thyme presents an opportunity for Fitz to exercise his observation skills but he fails to acknowledge the test and concerns himself with fulfilling his chores as quickly as possible in order to be free of the demanding woman.

Fitz quickly begins to gather information upon his arrival at Kelvar's home. Now free of the nuisance of Lady Thyme Fitz is free to engage in what he views as his primary mission. He puts his keen observation skills to work and discovers that the lord is so smitten with his new bride that he is oblivious to the disrepair and trouble plaguing his lands. Fitz so far is doing well in his task but he still faces the decision of whether the man deserves to be killed or not.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Fitz awakens in the middle of the night and is hungry. He goes to the kitchens where he encounters a woman who appears to be a handmaiden with an ill dog. Fitz helps the dog by removing a bone from its throat. In the process, Fitz realizes that the woman is really Lady Grace. He also recognizes from her speech that she is not from a highborn family. Fitz takes the opportunity to appeal to Grace's desire to be seen as royalty by her people. He beseeches her to speak with Kelvar and counsel him to operate and maintain the watchtowers. Lady Grace leaves the kitchens apparently happy that her dog has been saved and excited by Fitz's plan.

Fitz is awakened in his chamber after what seems like only a few minutes of sleep. A messenger has come to summon him to Lady Thyme's bedside. Fitz hurries to the old woman's bedside. There he finds that Lady Thyme is really Chade. Chade tells Fitz to get ready for they must travel back to Buckkeep that night. A Red Ship Raider attack has taken place at Forge, a town not far from Buckkeep. The Raiders have taken hostages and demand gold from the King. Chade must discover how they knew Verity was away and try to smooth matters over.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Fitz is able to avoid making the difficult decision to murder Kelvar or not when he encounters Kelvar's wife in the kitchens. His skill with animals endears the woman to him and from his brief meeting with her he is able to discover several secrets about Grace. These observations aide him in negotiating a deal with Lady Grace, without her detecting the motives behind his actions. Fitz simultaneously saves the life of Lord Kelvar, arranges a positive outcome to the political unrest that Verity has come to discuss, and increases the value of Lady Grace in her people's eyes. Fitz is turning into a better negotiator than a killer.



Chapter 10, Revelations

Chapter 10, Revelations Summary

For the next several days, Chade and Fitz travel by boat and then under the cover of darkness until they reach Forge. When they come to the village, they discover that the Raiders' ship has sailed out of port. This event causes Chade to wonder how the raiders knew about local currents and tides and why they chose to raid that particular town anyway.

As Chade and Fitz enter the town, they find it pillaged apparently abandoned. However, the hostages are found safe inside a burned out building. Fitz senses something strange about the people as he watches them fight over remnants of the village. Suddenly Fitz grabs the reins of Chade's horse and spurs them quickly out of town. The only explanation that Fitz can offer Chade regarding his odd behavior is that the survivors seemed not human and he feared they would try to kill himself and Chade.

Soon Fitz and Chade come upon the tail end of the rest of the fleeing villagers. One man recognizes Chade as the Pocked Man and begins shouting curses at the pair. Chade and Fitz flee the villagers who soon give up their pursuit. After obtaining a safe distance between the villagers and themselves, Chade and Fitz discuss the seriousness of the situation. The Red Ship Raiders have the power to capture villagers and return them in an unnatural state of being. To choose between this oddity and death seems equally difficult. Chade and Fitz return to Kelvar's keep where they learn that Lady Grace has become well loved due to her wise counsel to her husband regarding the watchtowers. The towers are now being well manned and provisioned. Chade decides to teach Fitz the Skill because the growing evil requires weapons of all kinds to be honed.

Chapter 10, Revelations Analysis

Fitz's ability to sense the inhuman-like qualities of the returned hostages seems linked to his ability to communicate with animals. The returned hostages function below even the basic feelings of animals. Fitz's ability to connect mentally with animals has aided him yet again. Chade seems to sense that Fitz has an uncultivated power to communicate with beings beyond the means of speech. He proposes to have Fitz trained in the Skill. Again, there seems to be a failure by others to recognize Fitz's inherent talent. The boy already exhibits a strong ability of his own and yet Burrich counsels Fitz to abandon it and Chade wishes to turn the power into something slightly different. For all the two older men encourage Fitz to be observant, they seem incapable of acknowledging what is right under their own noses. Fitz has just saved Chade's life when the assassin would have walked into an ambush and the solution Fitz suggested to Lady Grace works better than he hoped at returning the watchtowers to useful weapons.



Chapter 11, Forgings

Chapter 11, Forgings Summary

At Buckkeep, word trickles in of other towns that have been raided. One town paid the ransom only to have body parts wash up on shore the next morning. Another town readies itself for the return of the hostages by shackling them and placing the returned hostages back in their homes. The hope is that the hostages will recover from the "Red Ship sickness" but after several weeks, the hostages are just as wild.

Towns begin to take matters into their own hands since King Shrewd takes no official action. The lack of a royal decree on the matter results in a division among the townships and decreased loyalty to the king. Shrewd fails in his duty to his people while Verity lacks the leadership abilities to rally the towns. Since the Queen's death, Regal has been babied by his father and empowered by visits to his mother's people. Chade feels that even a slight showing of leadership would rally the people together but none of the people in power seem capable of making such a move.

Fitz spends many evenings in town with Molly. He senses something between them but Molly does little to make Fitz certain that she feels the same way. After one particular spent walking the coast with Molly, Fitz returns to the keep to find a highborn lady eating in the kitchens. The woman does not stop Fitz from eating a late dinner but she watches him closely. Fitz finally takes his leave of the strange woman without ever learning her identity.

Chapter 11, Forgings Analysis

King Shrewd is perhaps too cautious. His inaction regarding the continued Red Ship raids is tearing apart his kingdom and may soon cost him another son. Verity struggles to force his father to action but the old man seems surprisingly unwilling to act in his people's best interest. The kingdom seems to be breaking down and very few are moving to repair the problems.

Fitz is still too young and ignorant to grasp the severity of the situation. He continues to visit Molly in town. He is a young man falling in love but uncertain about himself and how to approach the girl who holds his attention. In his trips to town Fitz is a normal youth growing up alongside the members of his peer group. The truth of his life is forgotten and he is able to leave behind his role as an assassin's apprentice. However, Fitz's hesitation in speaking to Molly indicates that he is aware that something larger than him looms nearby. His life is not his own and because of this reality he is unable to be with Molly.



Chapter 12, Patience

Chapter 12, Patience Summary

Fitz encounters the mysterious lady the next day as he stumbles home drunk. In his besotted state Fitz tells the woman that he is of royal blood. The following day Fitz and the woman meet in a corridor where she berates his appearance and hounds him with questions. Fitz finally escapes her and hurries to meet Burrich who has been out of town for a month. While Fitz gives his report, Burrich realizes that Fitz has unknowingly encountered Chivalry's widow, Lady Patience.

Chade is not excited by the news of Patience's arrival at the keep. He tells Fitz about Chivalry's decision to marry the eccentric girl. Chade is surprised that Patience has taken such a liking to Chivalry's bastard. The Lady has requested that Fitz be taught like a proper prince and after much arguing Shrewd assents. While this will take time away from Fitz other lessons, he will now be trained in the Skill. Chade speaks wistfully of his own unfulfilled desire to learn the Skill and Fitz realizes that Chade too is a bastard. Chade readily admits that he is Shrewd's older half-brother.

Galen will be the one to teach Fitz the Skill. Galen is an odd man who most people do not like to be around. He is very loyal to Queen Desire and Regal. Often the younger prince and his counselor dress alike. Galen does not like Fitz and is only teaching him because Shrewd demands it.

Chapter 12, Patience Analysis

In a rather bumbling, teenage manner, Fitz has managed to introduce himself to Chivalry's widow. His drunken and slovenly appearance does not paint a positive picture for Lady Patience. This woman has spent many years being angry and jealous of the boy and now that she is face-to-face with him, she must be severely underwhelmed.

Fitz has been raised by men for the majority of his life. Now that Lady Patience has returned to Buckkeep, she takes on a mothering role towards Fitz. Their relationship is cautious, as if Patience fears that she will break her last remaining tie to her late husband.



Chapter 13, Smithy

Chapter 13, Smithy Summary

Fitz is told to spend his mornings doing as Lady Patience sees fit. On his first morning in the Lady's chamber, she presents him with a puppy as a pet. Patience then asks Fitz to tell her about himself. Lady Patience desires to know Fitz's name and as usual, he gives her the response of "Boy". She is not satisfied with this answer and deems to call him Thomas, Tom for short.

Fitz resolves to hide the puppy from Burrich for as long as possible. He encounters the Fool who suggests that the pup be named Anvil or Forge or Smith. The Fool cautions Fitz that he will have to decide whether the gifts Patience gives him will create a bridge or a wall between them. Fitz suddenly asks the Fool if he knows Chade. The Fool responds that Fitz would be wise to keep his tongue. The Fool also reveals that Patience only hated Fitz for a few months but her real jealousy was toward Fitz's mother.

One evening Lady Patience's maid, Lacey, comes to Fitz's chamber. She suggests that Fitz learn to play an instrument or do something that might delight Patience. After she leaves, Fitz thinks about her comment and proposes to paint a picture of Smithy, the puppy. The next day Patience is doubly excited by the painting. First, she is interested to hear about Fedwren and his love of paper. Secondly, Patience is overcome with emotion for Fitz and exuberantly wraps him in a hug. She then flees to her personal chamber and the lesson is quickly concluded for the day.

Chapter 13, Smithy Analysis

The relationship between Patience and Fitz is like that of an adoptive parent with a newly adopted older child. There does not seem to be any real love between them at this point. Fitz views his time with Patience as one more lesson he must endure. She does not know particularly how to handle Fitz and tries to ply him with gifts. In return, Fitz is just as unsure of himself around the Lady. He tries to accomplish everything that she asks of him but cannot find anything that seems to please her.

Patience does give Fitz two important things. First, she re-establishes his ties to the animal world by presenting him with Smithy. Secondly, she advances his studies and encourages his learning of the Skill. Patience herself is described as an eccentric woman. Her interests lie outside the realm of courtly affairs and she prefers to indulge herself with learning about herbs and spending time in the wild. Although it is yet fully uncovered there seems to be a stronger connection between woman and boy than anyone realizes.



Chapter 14, Galen

Chapter 14, Galen Summary

Fitz and Lady Patience settle into a comfortable acceptance of one another. She sends him on errands and through these trips; Fitz comes to learn a great deal. Fitz learns more about plants and about the art of tattooing. The frequent trips to town also allow Fitz more time to spend with Molly who helps him navigate the merchant stalls.

The night before the lessons with Galen begin, Fitz is summoned by Burrich. Burrich tells Fitz that Galen has warned Burrich against counseling the boy while he learns the Skill. Burrich then haltingly tells Fitz to beware of the Wit. Burrich has already told Fitz not to become too engaged in the art of being close to beasts and now worries that if Fitz shows this proclivity it may harm his lessons with Galen. Burrich tells Fitz that Galen once murdered a young girl who had the Wit. Burrich counsels Fitz to show Galen that he is a prince's son.

The next morning Fitz arrives at the Queen's Garden for his first Skill lesson. There are several other children in attendance but only Fitz and Verity's son, August, are thick with royal blood. Galen arrives and instructs the children to clear all the beautiful statuary and plants off to the side. Galen tries to intimidate the children into giving up early, but when none budes, he puts them through a series of rigorous exercises. The next day is much the same. Fitz is beaten for sneaking food from the kitchen and is unable to defend himself by noting that the food is for Smithy. That night the Fool brings food and water for the pup. The Fool says he will care for the puppy while Fitz is at his lessons but he draws the line at cleaning the dog's messes. The Fool suggests that Fitz consider where he will draw the line.

Chapter 14, Galen Analysis

Fitz's Skill training is something akin to being in the Army with an extremely harsh drill sergeant. Galen's method of teaching rival torture tactics; he berates the students and breaks them down mentally in order to gain control over them. The reader may find it interesting that training for a skill that brings people closer together involves deprivation of all creature comforts. Galen strips the garden of its beautiful statuary and denies his students food, clothing, and restful sleep.

Fitz is completely alone through this insufferable trial. Burrich is under strict instructions not to interfere with Galen's teaching. Even Chade is unable to reach out to lend aide to Fitz. The training is a time for Fitz to come to terms with himself and his place in Shrewd's household. In many ways, it is a ritual induction into manhood.



Chapter 15, The Witness Stones

Chapter 15, The Witness Stones Summary

The days of instruction under Galen continue; each one worse than the day before, but slowly Fitz comes to believe the belittling comments spoken by Galen. After several months only eight candidates remain. Galen begins meting out small luxuries: being allowed to wear shoes or an extra handful of dried fruit with a meal. Galen also touches the students with the Skill for the first time. When Galen touches Fitz for the first time, the master appears to be afraid of what he sees in the boy. From then on Galen becomes even harsher towards Fitz.

One day Galen instructs the students that they are ready to reach out with their Skill to him. When it is Fitz's turn, he manages to creep into Galen's mind and scare the instructor. Galen then falls on Fitz, beating him to a pulp and almost strangling the boy. Fitz finds himself alone on the tower top and decides that he would be better off dead. Burrich, the Fool, and Smithy find Fitz still lying on top of the tower. Burrich takes Fitz to his own room in the stables and nurses the boy's wounds. Burrich is upset at Galen's treatment of the boy and does not understand the Skillmaster's methods.

After several days recuperating in Burrich's room, Burrich tells Fitz that it is time for him to return to his lessons with Galen. Fitz tries to argue his way out of going back to the tower top but Burrich will hear none of the boy's protests. Even the Fool prods Fitz to return and face Galen again. The Fool also relates how Burrich took Galen to the Witness Stones. There Burrich challenged the Skillmaster to an unarmed battle to determine if Galen had cause to strike Fitz.

Chapter 15, The Witness Stones Analysis

Galen is an unrelenting taskmaster. Like anyone who is continually mocked by an authority figure, Fitz eventually comes to believe the statements Galen makes about him. Despite Galen's demeaning comments, Fitz continues to suffer through the training. He is determined to excel in this task and prove to everybody that he is worthy of being Chivalry's son.

However, it seems that Fitz cannot master the art of communicating with people using only his mind. His ability to sense animals does not translate over to people. Each time Fitz tries to reach out as Galen instructs them, he senses only slight feelings but never a complete thought or the presence of another person. He is capable of experiencing some sensations and Galen recognizes that the boy has a certain degree of power the first time Galen Skills to Fitz. Galen is so overcome by the power emanating from Fitz that he seeks to kill the boy. Galen realizes that Fitz is much stronger than even the boy believes and his power is greater than Galen's. Fitz further proves that he is of much

stronger character and skill than Galen by returning to the tower for lessons after his recuperation.



Chapter 16, Lessons

Chapter 16, Lessons Summary

This chapter opens with a history of the Skillmasters and how they used to be formed into Coteries. One of the most famous coteries killed themselves by using their powers to such a degree that it drained their life force. After this, the formation of coteries was abandoned for a time until Galen assigned his students into new coteries.

Fitz is the first student to arrive on the tower top the next day for lessons. All the other students cast stares of hatred on Fitz. Galen arrives and is visibly shaken when he sees Fitz standing before him. Galen is covered by bruises from his encounter with Burrich. His wounds serve as visual evidence of his guilt at the Witness Stones. Galen no longer cracks his whip at the students and he releases the children from their lesson hours earlier than usual. As each student leaves, Galen briefly reaches out to them with the Skill, but Fitz doubts if Galen even tries to touch him with the Skill.

Following this brief lesson, Fitz and Smithy go for a walk down to the town and find Molly. While the two walk together, Molly tells Fitz about the local gossip regarding Verity's upcoming wedding. Fitz is disappointed by the news that Regal will be choosing Verity's bride. The conversation turns to the type of woman Fitz wants to marry. Fitz senses that Molly wants him to express his feelings for her but he allows the moment to pass by.

Word spreads that a bride has been found for Verity among the hill people; a move that would help secure inland boundaries. This news does not distress Fitz as much as the whispers that Verity suffers from some type of depression or drunkenness. While Fitz contemplates all that is happening in the keep, Galen makes an announcement. The students will be stranded in the woods and will return only after receiving a summons from Galen. Those who sense the message will find their way back to the keep in time for Springseve and be presented to King Shrewd as a Coterie.

Chapter 16, Lessons Analysis

Fitz returns to his lessons with Galen but things are much changed. Galen no longer tries to cow his students with fear and abuse. Galen's only course of action against Fitz is to ignore the boy. Although Galen says that he is reaching out to Fitz with the Skill, it is highly likely that Galen is doing any such thing. Galen never intended to teach Fitz how to Skill; he only agreed to be his instructor because the king commanded it. Galen only exhibits more animosity towards the boy because of his encounter with Burrich. Fitz is able to counter Galen's hatred simply by showing up everyday for another lesson.

Fitz continues to move towards manhood during his outings with Molly. He cannot come to terms with the feelings he has for the girl. Their conversation about marriage makes Fitz uneasy because he senses that Molly wants him to say something to her about his



feelings. Fitz is still struggling with who he will become and does not feel free to drag Molly down a potentially dangerous road. Fitz will soon be confronted with making a significant life choice once Galen announces the coterie trial. Fitz is sure that he will fail the test but he must go through with it because he has committed himself to the completion of this venture.



Chapter 17, The Trial

Chapter 17, The Trial Summary

For a day and a half, Fitz is carried blindfolded on a swaying litter to the spot where he will have to wait for Galen's summons. After the horses leave, Fitz sets about gathering his bearings. He climbs a hillside and observes that he is situated above the town of Forge and will have to go through the city's center in order to return to Buckkeep.

Fitz dreams that he is back in the stables as one of the animals. As he lies in the hay, he sees men falling down the stairs. Shortly after that, Fitz feels a knife going into his side and realizes that Burrich has been attacked and Smithy has been injured trying to save the stable master. Fitz awakens and realizes that he has seen actual events in his dream. He gathers his things and decides to return to Buckkeep even though he has not received Galen's summons.

When Fitz moves through Forge, he is wary of remaining forged hostages. Four forged villagers follow Fitz trying to catch him. He manages to avoid them by battling them with a stick and distracting them with his cloak. After evading the forged ones, Fitz comes upon a Red Ship docking at Forge to refill their water casks. Fitz waits for darkness before making his way out of the city. He engages three of the original forged villagers on the other side of the village. This time as he battles them Fitz senses Smithy slipping away. Fitz's anger fuels his attack on the villagers and he feels no remorse at leaving their broken bodies on the roadside.

Fitz arrives in the stables to find Burrich a mangled mess. Burrich tries to assure Fitz that Smithy died quickly but when Fitz corrects him, Burrich realizes that the boy used the Wit again. Burrich is angered by Fitz's actions that caused him to fail the trial. The stable master tells Fitz that he wants nothing more to do with him. Fitz has been abandoned by Burrich, Smithy is dead, and Molly has chosen a different suitor. Unable to cope with his current situation Fitz turns to drinking.

Chapter 17, The Trial Analysis

Fitz has failed Galen's unfair trial, but he has succeeded in becoming a man. Fitz left Buckkeep under the impression that he was being tested on his ability to Skill, but the truth is that he has learned a more important lesson and moved into manhood. Fitz's decision to leave before he received a summons or to wait longer for a summons was motivated as much by his dream as his lack of faith in Galen. Fitz has learned to read people and he knows that Galen does not intend to send a message to Fitz. Galen does not want Fitz to become a part of his coterie; it would be disastrous for his plans. Fitz has chosen wisely and conducts himself, as a true man should.

Fitz's actions are not rewarded as he expects. Burrich is glad to see the boy alive again but disowns Fitz when he realizes that the boy used the Wit to see what was happening



to him. Burrich's dislike of the Wit is unexplained. The reader may be frustrated with the stable master's lack of understanding and explanation of his feelings. The Wit has helped save Burrich's life but the man only sees it as an evil thing that Fitz should avoid. Not only has Fitz lost Burrich but his lack of action has prompted Molly to seek love with someone else. Fitz has succeeded in becoming a man but his life will be no easier because of it.



Chapter 18, Assassinations

Chapter 18, Assassinations Summary

Burrich has disowned Fitz and the boy has little to fill his days. After several months, Chade finally summons Fitz to his hidden chambers. Chade charges Fitz with delivering food and medicine to Verity who has become very ill recently. Chade worries that Verity is using the Skill too much and notes that Galen's newly formed Coterie are useless.

One day Fitz watches over Verity as the prince sleeps. When Verity awakes, he talks to Fitz but Fitz realizes that no speech passes between them. The two have communicated through the Skill. Verity tells Fitz that the boy does possess the aptitude to Skill but that Galen has scared him from recognizing his abilities. Verity says that if he had the time he would teach Verity the Skill. Fitz offers his strength to Verity and Verity uses the Skill to drain the boy. Verity then tells Fitz to report to King Shrewd that Verity no longer wishes to have Fitz serve him. Verity also tells Fitz that his name is FitzChivalry Farseer and it is recorded in the books as such.

Fitz is summoned to King Shrewd's chamber for breakfast. There he finds Shrewd and Verity arguing over Verity's marriage. Regal has selected a mountainfolk woman named Kettricken for Verity to wed. Shrewd insists that the wedding take place just before harvest but Verity refuses to leave Buckkeep at that time of year. After Verity storms out of the room, the King informs Fitz that whenever Verity does ride to take his bride Fitz will accompany him.

Chapter 18, Assassinations Analysis

Fitz has failed Galen's Skill test to become part of the King's coterie. In the process, he has lost his friendship with Burrich and Chade ignores the boy for several months. Fitz made the decision he felt was best but it has cost him an awful lot. Whatever respect he could have gained as a member of the king's coterie vanished when he chose to return to Buckkeep of his own accord. It is highly probably that Galen never intended to contact the boy and hoped that the remote location would prevent Fitz's return. Fitz continues to prove his integrity by following through with his decision to try to aide Burrich.

Fitz's personal strength is tested again when he offers to help an ailing Verity without fully understanding what he is offering. The encounter shows Verity that Fitz has a proclivity for the Skill if only he received proper training. Galen is an unfit master who did not desire to truly teach. When Fitz provides strength to Verity it creates a connection between the two that will later prove important. Perhaps Fitz will master the Skill and become an important advisor to Verity.



Chapter 19, Journey

Chapter 19, Journey Summary

As the time for Verity's nuptials draws nearer, the attacks by the Red Raiders increase. It is eventually decided that Regal will journey to the Mountain Kingdom in Verity's stead and accept Princess Kettricken's for his brother.

Fitz's days become his own again and in a moment of loneliness, he seeks out the Fool. Fitz climbs to the Fool's tower chamber and is shocked by what he sees. The Fool's room is awash in flowers and a cradle with a life-like doll stands in the room. Fitz quietly leaves the room and hopes that the Fool will not find out that he entered the chamber.

Prior to Fitz's journey to the Mountain Kingdom, he meets with Chade. They discuss the mission King Shrewd has charged Fitz with: killing Prince Rurisk, Kettricken's brother. Chade also tells Fitz that King Shrewd will find Fitz expendable if times call for it. Lady Patience summons Fitz to her chamber and presents him with a blue stone earring for his trip. The morning of the trip the Fool gives Fitz a powerful cathartic herb and warns him not to eat or to eat very little on the journey to avoid poisoning. The journey itself is mostly uneventful. The only notable aspect of the trip is that Burrich is part of the traveling party, although he does not interact with Fitz at all.

Chapter 19, Journey Analysis

Fitz's discovery of the Fool's chamber only serves to create more mystery and ambiguity around the odd character. The reader probably will not connect the doll in the cradle with Fitz but a later chapter mentions a dream Fitz has about the Fool in which the Fool says he is responsible for keeping the boy alive. This connection occurs to the reader only in retrospect and may not even be a connection at all. However, no other explanation is offered in the story and since the Fool and Fitz maintain a certain friendship there could be something important about Fitz's discovery.

The journey will be much more than a reconnaissance mission for Fitz. He has been charged with making his first kill. It seems odd that such an important task would be given to Fitz for his first assassination but Chade is confident in the boy's abilities. The mission also causes Fitz to contemplate his own role in King Shrewd's home. Although the king has made sure that the boy is well cared for and charged him with apprenticing with Chade, the king's motives are not necessarily clear. After all the man is shrewd and he could have placed Fitz in such a position in order to kill him off with the least amount of suspicion.



Chapter 20, Jhaampe

Chapter 20, Jhaampe Summary

The town of Jhaampe consists of a series of mostly temporary structures. The people of the region are nomadic and so they carry their homes with them. The permanent buildings strongly resemble crocuses and are covered in brightly hued hides. An area has been set aside for Fitz's company but the large number of gifts brought for the new bride requires a large train of people to carry them from the encampment uphill to the town.

Once settled in a chamber within the royal palace Fitz changes into an outfit provided by Mistress Hasty at Buckkeep. His personal crest has been changed from a buck with a bar across it to a charging buck. Fitz is then introduced to the Prince and Princess. He feels a certain uneasiness from Rurisk. Kettricken acknowledges that she has heard of Fitz and that he is the one who travels with Lady Thyme and is being trained as a poisoner. Fitz reels from this revelation but is quickly diverted by the Princess and a discussion of the surrounding environment.

Fitz tells Kettricken about Verity. She is surprised by the things Fitz says about her new husband. Regal has not painted such a positive picture of his brother. Kettricken then wonders if Regal has also spoken incorrectly about other things, particularly Fitz. As the Princess talks Fitz is overcome with waves of dizziness and realizes that he has been poisoned. He begs tiredness and retires to his chamber where he ingests the herb the Fool gave him. Fitz then makes provisions for sustaining himself for the length of his stay. He also wonders what other methods will be used to try to kill him when he is found still alive.

Chapter 20, Jhaampe Analysis

Princess Kettricken is a very abrupt woman. She wastes no time confronting Fitz about his intentions to kill her brother. The princess appears to be unaccustomed to handling delicate court matters and her blunder with Fitz could have been costly. Fitz should have sensed an uneasiness from the princess but his attention is focused on Prince Rurisk. His mistake nearly costs him his life when the princess slips him a deadly herb. Kettricken would make an excellent assassin.



Chapter 21, Princes

Chapter 21, Princes Summary

The morning after Fitz is almost poisoned Prince Rurisk rushes into Fitz's chamber. Rurisk tries to get Fitz to drink an antidote to the poison but Fitz refuses saying that he has already purged the poison from his system. Rurisk then explains that Kettricken was the one who tried to poison Fitz because she feared for her brother's life. Rurisk asks Fitz to convey a message to King Shrewd. He wants Shrewd to know that he desires a fruitful union between the two kingdoms. Fitz silently agrees to carry the message to Shrewd.

Later in the day while Rurisk escorts Fitz around the keep, they come upon Nosy in the stables. Fitz is surprised to see the puppy he thought Burrich had killed long ago. Fitz approaches Burrich about the surviving animal and Burrich is surprised that Fitz thought the stable master could have killed an innocent animal. Fitz tries to make amends with his old friend but Burrich refuses to reconcile since Fitz will not give up communicating with animals.

Fitz is summoned to Regal's chamber that night. The prince demands that Fitz make a full report to him. After Fitz tells him about the attempted poisoning, Regal wants to know how Fitz plans to murder Rurisk. Fitz tells Regal that he does not yet know how he will kill the prince and Regal dismisses him with instructions that the Prince will orchestrate the method of Rurisk's assassination.

Chapter 21, Princes Analysis

Fitz makes several important discoveries in this chapter. The first occurs during the meeting with Rurisk. The prince is concerned for Fitz's well-being and pays the boy a visit to lend him a recovery aide. However, there is a well-deserved wariness between the two as Fitz works to sense Rurisk's true intentions. Rurisk appears to be open and honest in his dealings with Fitz. Fitz takes notice of the prince's manner and returns it in the next chapter. Rurisk's kindness and openness now places Fitz in a difficult position between the foreign prince and his own uncle.

The second discovery made is that Nosy is alive and well. Burrich did not dispose of the puppy as Fitz suspected but sent the dog to be raised by Rurisk. The reader may wonder if Burrich is wiser than he lets on and knew that someday the two households would be united. Burrich of course would never admit to such a thing. The realization that Nosy is still alive softens Fitz's demeanor towards the stable master and he attempts to reconcile with Burrich.



Chapter 22, Dilemmas

Chapter 22, Dilemmas Summary

The short passage at the beginning of the chapter describes a dream Fitz has about the Fool. The Fool talks about keeping Fitz alive and standing at a crossroads. The message seems to be that Fitz is the key to the survival of the Six Duchies.

Fitz awakens the morning after his meeting with Regal and reviews all the recent events in his mind. He decides that he must get a message to King Shrewd and seeks out August, one of the coterie, to Skill to the King. August grudgingly agrees to the task but says that the King wishes for Fitz to do as Regal says. August refuses to contact Shrewd again. Fitz doubts that August even tried to Skill to the King.

That night Fitz reports to Regal's chamber where one of the prince's men gives Fitz poison to put in Rurisk's wine. Fitz leaves but silently returns and listens to the conversation taking place in Regal's chamber. He realizes that Cob is being told of the plan and will be sent to catch Fitz in the act so that Fitz can be killed for treason. Fitz gathers supplies before going to Kettricken's chamber. He asks the princess if she will uphold her vow to marry Verity even if her brother is killed. Kettricken says she is bound to the Six Duchies. Satisfied with her answer Fitz moves on to Rurisk's chamber.

Fitz openly places the poison in Rurisk's cup. Kettricken bursts into the room and becomes frustrated by the jovial banter between assassin and prince. Shortly after Kettricken's arrival, Cob rushes into the room shouting about treason. Fitz admits to doing as Regal bid him just as Rurisk goes into convulsions. It is then that Fitz realizes that Regal had poisoned the wine in Rurisk's room anyway and that the prince is dying. Cob moves to capture Fitz but in the ensuing struggle Fitz stabs him with a poison-tipped knife. Kettricken then throws a water casket at Fitz rendering him unconscious.

When Fitz awakens, he finds himself fettered. Fitz falls asleep and dreams about Verity, Shrewd, and a discussion between Galen and Regal. Galen counsels Regal to kill all those who pose a threat and wed Kettricken as his own wife. Regal does not care for the mountain girl but Galen says that she only needs to live long enough to produce an heir. Fitz wakes up again in intense pain. He reaches out and senses Nosy who soon makes his way to Fitz's prison. Not long after Nosy arrives so does Burrich. Burrich brings Fitz back to his senses and the boy reveals that Regal plans to kill Verity.

Chapter 22, Dilemmas Analysis

Fitz must decide what action he will take in Jhaampe. He has been given orders to assassinate Prince Rurisk but in his heart, Fitz feels that Rurisk would make a good ally for Verity against the Red Ship Raiders. By openly placing the poison in Rurisk's cup Fitz does not disobey orders but also avoids killing the prince. However, Fitz has been fooled by Regal. Regal never intended to trust the boy to carry out such an important



task. Indeed Regal has never trusted Fitz to do anything. Fitz maintains loyalty to King Shrewd but Regal's mind has been poisoned by his own mother and he only seeks to gain for himself.

Fitz has been unable to consciously use the Skill but in his dreams, he is able to see beyond himself to Regal's chambers. Once Fitz realizes what is about to take place he is able to seek out Nosy who brings Burrich to help. Fitz's ability to use the Wit seems to be just as important as the Skill. The reader finds it difficult to understand Burrich's disgust with the practice. Each time Fitz summons an animal with the Wit he saves himself or another from danger.



Chapter 23, The Wedding

Chapter 23, The Wedding Summary

Fitz and Burrich try to devise a plan to thwart Regal's plans. They are surprised by the arrival of Jonqui who brings Fitz news that Kettricken has invoked a mountain people law that allows Fitz to return to the palace without fear of retribution. Jonqui also states that she knows Fitz is not Rurisk's murderer but whoever is must be stopped.

Upon their return to the palace, August enters Fitz's room to summon the boy for Regal. Burrich says he will bring Fitz to Regal as soon as they have finished eating. Before they go to Regal, Burrich insists that Fitz try to Skill to Verity. The attempt fails and they leave to find Regal in the steam baths. Burrich is clubbed over the head and believed dead. Regal then begins to undress Fitz so that it will appear that the boy drowned while taking a steam. Fitz is too weak to defend himself but when he is pushed down near Burrich he feels the stable master's breath and realizes Burrich still lives.

Fitz struggles for air in the deep pool. His muscles refuse to work as he wishes them too. Fitz tries the Skill and feels a faint response from Verity. Fitz can see Galen reaching out to drain the remaining strength from the already weak Verity. Fitz sends a warning to Verity and then gathers his own dwindling strength and gives it to Verity. Verity overcomes Galen and then sends a message to August. He tells August to inform Regal that his half-brother is dead but to do so discreetly because not many people knew that Galen and Regal were both Queen Desire's sons.

Verity then turns his attention to Kettricken and assures her that he knew nothing of Rurisk's murder. Finally, Verity shoves Fitz away so that the boy's strength will not be completely used up.

Chapter 23, The Wedding Analysis

This chapter is the climax of the book. Here is where Fitz will either be successful in Skilling or fail to protect Verity. The slight reconciliation between Fitz and Burrich suggests to the reader that the two of them will surely succeed together.

Reinforcements arrive in the person of Jonqui, who refuses to believe that Fitz murdered Prince Rurisk. There are several distinct disadvantages stacked against Fitz and his friends. First, they are still not sure what exactly Regal has planned for the wedding ceremony and secondly, Fitz has been beaten by Regal's men and is extremely weak.

Fitz is a success because he finally believes in his own abilities. His refusal to give up on the Skill speaks to the strength of his character. Fitz has previously told Verity that he is the king's man and he now lives up to that statement. Verity recognizes this when Fitz reaches out to him and ensures the boy's survival by releasing Fitz from the Skill before

the boy loses all his strength. Fitz's actions fulfill the Fool's prediction from the previous chapter.



Chapter 24, The Aftermath

Chapter 24, The Aftermath Summary

Jonqui finds Fitz laying near Burrich's body and secrets them in a hidden chamber. She nurses them slowly back to health. While Fitz recovers, the Mountain people spend a month in mourning for Rurisk. After this time, Kettricken bids farewell to Fitz and travels to Buckkeep. Regal accompanies her much cowed by Verity's Skilled message. Burrich recovers and returns to the stables in Jhaampe.

Fitz contemplates his return to Buckkeep. Eventually Burrich, Fitz, and one other make the long journey back to Buckkeep. Verity has placed Regal on a tight leash. The promised wood for ships is sent from the Mountain people to King Shrewd. The re-fortification of the Six Duchies begins as the ships effectively ward off the Red Raiders.

The final paragraph of the chapter tells how Fitz was rescued from the bath. Nosy gave his life to save the boy who first cared for him as a puppy. Fitz's hands bear the scars of the teeth marks, which drug him from the water.

Chapter 24, The Aftermath Analysis

This chapter neatly wraps up all that has happened throughout the story. Fitz's interruption of the marriage ceremony has thwarted Regal's plans and saved Verity's life. Kettricken has been reconciled to Verity and the reader can assume that they will have a happy and profitable marriage. Both Fitz and Burrich have been saved although Nosy was sacrificed in the rescue.

The chapter is almost too short of an explanation for the events following Fitz's near drowning. So much has happened in the course of the story that the rapid re-fortification and defeat of the Red Raiders seems too easily accomplished. Similarly, Regal is quickly cowed by the death of Galen and it seems implausible that all his malicious plans are so easily forgotten.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

A boy prompts Fitz to put up his writing and rest. As a line of ink spills across the page, Fitz remembers the numerous ways he killed people over the years. A nagging pain reaches out to him and he asks the boy to fetch two leaves of the Chyurdan herb that relieves pain and yet kills with three leaves.

Epilogue Analysis

The epilogue brings the reader back from the past into the present. Fitz has been writing this whole story instead of living it as the reader read. The young boy's prompting suggests that Fitz has been sitting at his writing table for far too long and should get some movement before he becomes stiff. The list of people that that Fitz has killed over the years indicates a long hard life and quite possibly the pain he suffers from is the result of one or more encounters as an assassin. The return to the present day and an older Fitz closes the beginning chapter of his life.



Characters

Fitz

Fitz is the main character of the story. It is Fitz who narrates the book and who writes the brief historical passages that open each chapter. As a narrator, Fitz is presumably older and reflecting on the events of his life. The bulk of the action is performed by a much younger Fitz, starting at about age six and covering a span of approximately ten years.

Fitz is the bastard son of Prince Chivalry and an unnamed peasant woman. He has been cast out of the family home by his grandfather and dumped at the doorstep of King Shrewd. Fitz does not fit particularly well anywhere. He is no longer wanted by his mother's family and his father cannot recognize that he has an illegitimate heir without jeopardizing both of their lives. Fitz feels some comfort in the stables but he is soon removed from that safety zone and placed in the middle of court life. The town of Buckkeep is not a safe haven until the news of his existence dies down and is replaced with the more disturbing gossip of raiders. Fitz is given the opportunity to experience several different ways of life - working with Burrich, apprenticing with Fedwren, learning the Skill, and training as an assassin - but Fitz does not excel at any of these occupations.

Fitz refers to himself as a catalyst. Indeed, without him, Verity would have died and Regal would have married Princess Kettricken. However, Fitz spends so much of the story moving between roles that it seems he has little time to effect any meaningful changes. Fitz has merely begun to find his niche in Buckkeep and the royal family. The true transformation is only hinted at in this first book.

Burrich

Burrich is Chivalry's right-hand man up until the Prince abdicates his right to the throne. Burrich is then reduced to King Shrewd's stable-master. Burrich also assumes responsibility for Fitz when the boy is dropped off by his grandfather.

Burrich is a mysterious man. He walks with a limp and he keeps mostly to himself. At times, he appears to be Fitz's closest friend but just as quickly, Burrich will shoo the boy away and refuse to associate further with him. Burrich cares for Fitz and tries his best to teach the boy how to behave properly. Burrich also teaches Fitz how to care for the horses and hounds but refuses to allow Fitz to work with the hawks. Burrich encourages Fitz when the boy is given the opportunity to learn the Skill but rebukes the boy for practicing the Wit. The contradictions in Burrich remain unexplained by the end of the book and the reader may be severely confused about the man's loyalties and motives.



Chivalry

Chivalry is the oldest of King Shrewd's sons and next in line for the throne. He abdicates his position when the existence of Fitz, his bastard son, is made known. Chivalry does not figure largely in the story in a physical manner but his spiritual presence weighs heavily on the minds of all involved. Chivalry dies, and it is suspected that he was murdered, rather early in the story.

Verity

Verity is King Shrewd's middle child and the one who stands to inherit the throne following Chivalry's abdication and subsequent death. Verity seems to be very much like his older brother and his father. Verity is polite to Fitz and even appears to have a small amount of affection for the boy. Verity tries to find a workable solution to the Red Ship Raiders but his lack of experience and the fact that he must still obey the wishes of his father make his efforts almost worthless. Verity is strong in his use of the Skill and uses his ability to ward off as many attacks as possible. The connection between Verity and Fitz saves Verity's life and almost costs Fitz his. Verity is eventually married to Princess Kettricken of the Mountain Folk. Their union brings about a profitable solution to the raids for both kingdoms.

Regal

Regal is the third son of King Shrewd and the half-brother of Chivalry and Verity. Regal is a very cold, heartless man who takes after his mother, Queen Desire. He cannot stand the sight of Fitz and wishes that the child be disposed of instead of fostered in the Keep. Regal does not understand his father's decision to keep Fitz alive and tries to make the boy's life miserable. Regal spends much of his time gallivanting about the countryside entertaining other nobles. Regal is the one who steps in and offers to find a suitable wife for Verity but the offer is laced with deception. In truth, Regal plans to kill his older brother in order to take control of the kingdom. The reader may suspect that Regal is the mastermind behind Chivalry's death, the Red Ship Raiders, and the attack on Burrich, but no concrete proof is provided in the story.

King Shrewd

King Shrewd is the king of Buckkeep. He has three sons, Chivalry, Verity, and Regal, and is married to his second wife, Queen Desire. Shrewd is a very cautious and calculating ruler. When the Red Ship Raiders begin to attack his coastland towns, he is slow to react. Shrewd's motto seems to be "Wait and see before taking rash action." Shrewd takes notice of Fitz and recognizes that the boy is Chivalry's son. The King requests that Fitz sleep and eat within the royal chambers and arranges for Fitz to be trained as an assassin by Chade.



Chade

Chade is the current assassin in King Shrewd's employ. He leads a very secret life and many people do not know of his existence. If anyone does know about Chade, it is only in his disguised persona of Lady Thyme. Everyone tries to avoid the demanding and disgusting woman and so Chade's identity is never revealed.

Chade has many secrets. Another of which is his relationship to King Shrewd: he is Shrewd's illegitimate half-brother. Perhaps this is the reason that Chade was made an assassin and maintains such a strong loyalty to the King. Chade is charged with training Fitz as an assassin. The role seems perfect for bastard sons as King Shrewd notes when he tells Regal that it is better to keep Fitz close than to allow him to range free.

Molly

Molly Nosebleed is a young girl that Fitz meets during his first few weeks at Buckkeep. She is a town scraper and is able to hold her own against much bigger and older opponents. Molly eventually grows up and runs a candle shop in town. Fitz seems to be in love with her but he never speaks of his feelings to Molly. Molly eventually closes her shop and moves to another town.

Nosy

Nosy is the runt puppy that Fitz makes a connection with shortly after his arrival at Buckkeep. When Burrich discovers Fitz's ability to read the dog's feelings, the stable master gets rid of the dog. Fitz believes the puppy has been killed but when he arrives in Jhaampe, he finds the dog full grown and living as Prince Rurisk's personal hound. Nosy dies while saving Fitz from drowning.

Smithy

Smithy is the puppy given to Fitz by Lady Patience. Fitz and the dog have a very strong connection. Smithy is stabbed by Cob during an attack on Burrich and eventually dies because of his wounds.

Galen

Galen is the current Skillmaster in King Shrewd's employ. He strongly dislikes Fitz and does everything he can to make the boy's life miserable. Galen even tries to kill Fitz during a Skill training session. It is later revealed that Galen is not only weak in his use of the Skill but he is the illegitimate son of Queen Desire. Therefore, his close relationship with Regal makes sense since they are half-brothers.



Queen Desire

Queen Desire is King Shrewd's second wife and the mother of Regal. She despises Fitz and does not go out of her way to make the boy feel welcome at all. The Queen and Regal seem to be at the root of many of the problems plaguing Shrewd's kingdom, although their plots are not clearly revealed in the book. She dies of poisoning that appears to be the result of her own hand.

Lady Patience

Lady Patience is the eccentric wife of Prince Chivalry. She is unable to bear any children of her own. When Lady Patience returns to Buckkeep following Chivalry's death, she takes an intense interest in Fitz and his learning. She secretly cares for the boy and is not angry at his existence but jealous that he is not hers. Lady Patience sees to it that Fitz learns some of the finer points of court life, but since her own propensity is for herbs and nature, she also tries to teach him of these things.



Objects/Places

Buckkeep

Buckkeep is the royal seat of King Shrewd, the current ruler of the Six Duchies. It is here that the majority of the action in the story takes place. Buckkeep is comprised of a keep or castle-like fortress where the royal family resides and a nearby port town also called Buckkeep. Fitz is brought here after being deposited with some of Chivalry's men in an far outpost.

The Skill

The Skill is a type of mind reading or mind control. Those who have the ability to use the Skill can communicate with others at great distances. The Skill can also be used to trick enemies during battle. Verity uses the Skill to deter and trick the Red Ship Raiders. Fitz is to be trained in the Skill in order to be of assistance to Shrewd and Verity but fails in his training. However, Fitz is strong in what Burrich refers to as the Wit. There seems to be little difference between the two except that one works with humans and the other with animals. Burrich also notes that there is a negative connotation surrounding the Wit and tries to impress this upon Fitz so that the boy will not use the Wit anymore.

The Wit

The Wit is very much like the Skill. It is a way of communicating with animals and sensing their beings. Fitz is very capable at using the Wit and is able to call upon it when Smithy is hurt and dying. Fitz also uses the Wit to call Nosy to him when he is drowning in the steam baths. Burrich detests Fitz's use of the Wit and tries repeatedly to get the boy to stop practicing it.

The Six Duchies

The Six Duchies are ruled by the Farseers. The first king was named Taker who came from the Outislands. Buckkeep is part of the Six Duchies and is currently the seat of power. The royalty of the duchies maintain a tradition of naming their sons and daughter names that shape the rest of their lives and are usually associated with a certain virtue.

Red Ship Raiders

The Red Ship Raiders come from the Outislands and wreak havoc on the coastal towns. There seems to be some connection between the raiders and Regal's suspicious actions. The raids take place on unmanned ports or when Verity or Shrewd are away from Buckkeep. The raiders demand ransom but if it is paid, return only pieces of the



captives. When the ransom is not paid then the captives are returned "forged" and are usually put to death by loved ones who cannot cope with the demented people.

Forged

Forged is the name given to those who have been taken captive and then released by the Red Ship Raiders. The name comes from the town of Forge where the first captives were returned in this odd state. The raiders are able to affect some sort of mind control over their captives that renders them useless and inhuman when returned to society. The people who have been Forged have no feeling left towards their families and usually engage in hostile and self-sustaining behaviors. The final solution for Forged people is death.

Buckkeep Town

Buckkeep Town is situated on the shores of the sea. It is a small port town that does a good deal of trading business. Fitz enjoys the freedom he experiences whenever he visits town and is always eager to go back in order to see Molly.

Chade's Apartment

Chade's apartment is a secret chamber somewhere in the depths of Buckkeep. No one but Fitz and King Shrewd seem to know the location of the chamber or even of Chade's existence. Chade keeps potions and scrolls cluttered about his room. It is here that Fitz reports to Chade about his dealings around the town and the keep, and where Fitz trains to be an assassin.

The Kitchens

The kitchens of Buckkeep are a refuge for Fitz. He prefers to eat alone in the warmth of the kitchen instead of at the bustling royal table. Fitz also encounters two interesting women while dining in the kitchens. He first meets Lady Grace and is able to effect a manageable solution to a diplomatic problem. His second meeting is with Lady Patience, who later takes him under her wing to teach him proper court conduct.

Jhaampe

Jhaampe is a town in the territory of the Mountain People. It is here that Regal finds Princess Kettricken and chooses her to be Verity's bride. Fitz and a large company from Buckkeep travel to Jhaampe for the "wedding" of Kettricken to Verity. During his stay in Jhaampe Fitz is almost poisoned and is blamed for the murder of Kettricken's brother, Prince Rurisk.



Themes

Importance of Names

Names are very important to society in this story. Royals are named according to a long-standing tradition in which the name reflects an attribute or virtue that the holder will hopefully someday embody. King Shrewd is a very calculating, cautious man who prefers to take action only after weighing out all the possible outcomes. However, not all people conduct themselves in accordance with their name. Regal, for example, does not act like well born royalty. His mind has been poisoned by the corrupt wishes of his mother, Queen Desire, and he seeks only to pleasure himself.

Fitz's name remains ambiguous for most of the story. His grandfather refers to him only as "boy" and it is Burrich who gives him the name of Fitz. The reader may have to take a moment to research the meaning behind "Fitz", but will find out that it means "the son of." So when Verity says that the boy's name has been recorded as FitzChivalry Farseer, it means that for all of history Fitz will legally be known as Chivalry's son. It is notable that Verity tells Fitz about the recording of his name after Fitz has failed Galen's Skill trial. The significance of the timing shows that Fitz's true test was one of manhood and not to become apart of Galen's coterie. If Fitz had known earlier that he had been given a proper name then he may not have had the courage to return to Galen's tortuous lessons or forsake the Skill trial for his friends. Fitz earns his name in a way that most people do not. Instead of being saddled with the pressure of living up to a name from birth, Fitz proves that he is deserving of being Chivalry's son.

Importance of Loyalty

Loyalty is certainly a top priority within a kingdom. Loyalty is not guaranteed by birth lines. In fact, broken loyalties often arise from disgruntled family members. The arrival of Fitz throws Shrewd's seemingly peaceful household into a frenzy. Regal questions the prudence of letting an illegitimate child live. As far as Regal is concerned Fitz poses a threat to the foundation of the kingdom. A bastard cannot be trusted to be loyal to a family that refuses to acknowledge him. Regal does not understand that the king believes loyalty can be learned or even forced.

However, Fitz is the embodiment of loyalty. He has a special connection with animals and that relationship has taught him the truth of loyalty. An animal will trust and serve those who care for and respect it. Animals are capable of sensing ill intentions. When Burrich is attacked, the attacker is able to sneak past Smithy because the person has established a level of security with the dog. In many ways, this is the same situation with Regal and King Shrewd. Shrewd would be unlikely to suspect one of his sons of treason because there is a level of trust and loyalty.



Fitz has never had anyone be loyal to him except the animals and that is why he maintains such a strong bond with them. Fitz learns how to be loyal from the stable hounds and how to be disloyal from the royal family. Every time Fitz follows the teachings of the animals, he ends up advancing his personal position although he loses much in the process.

Servitude

In many ways, Fitz has been in a position of servitude since he came to Buckkeep. Everything Fitz does in his earlier years at Buckkeep is done without questioning the motives of the person issuing the orders. He does not question his training as an assassin, he works diligently alongside Burrich, and he sleeps in the castle as King Shrewd commands even though he does not prefer it. The reader may suppose that Fitz's automatic obedience of all these directives is a result of his position as a bastard. However, Fitz's early diligent submission makes him a greater person in the end.

Fitz's compliance allows him time to learn about people; to gain a greater understanding for the world around him. He slowly learns for himself what is important and what is not. Fitz becomes like the rulers of Jhaampe who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of their people. When Burrich and Smithy are in grave danger Fitz does not hesitate to rush to their aid even though it jeopardizes his own future. Similarly, he quickly moves to save Verity at two different junctures. Without understanding, what he offers Fitz gives Verity all his strength. He knows only that it is required of him although not asked of him. He gives of himself freely and without question. Fitz acts in the same manner while drowning in the steam baths and Verity is being murdered by Galen. In many ways, Fitz is the culmination of all his predecessors: Chivalry, Shrewd, and Verity.



Style

Point of View

The story is told in the first person. The story comes from the memory of Fitz and he is recounting his life as if he is now a much older man hoping to set down his experiences before he passes away. The use of the first-person allows the reader to become closely associated with the story and take part in Fitz's trials as he grows up the bastard son of a murdered prince. One unique aspect of the story is the inclusion of The Skill and The Wit. Both of these devices are very similar, the reader may suppose they are one in the same although the narrator makes a distinction, and they allow Fitz to enter the minds of the people and animals around him. What is special about this story element is that the reader can identify with a dog or a horse so that the animal is just like a human character. This is a special attribute of Fitz's and the reader is able to share it as well.

Setting

The story takes place in the Middle Ages when rule by kings and the caste system were at their height. The book does not state that the story takes place in any particular country but the reader can imagine a landscape very similar to England. Towns are spread apart but take advantage of natural defenses like seaside cliffs and mountains. The reader gets the sense that the country where Buckkeep is located may be an island nation, especially given the reference to Outislanders.

The majority of the story takes place in and around the stronghold of Buckkeep. The primary settings of most of the action are within the keep itself and the nearby town of Buckkeep. The Keep refers to a castle-like structure where the King, his family, and his entire staff reside. The Keep appears to be self-sufficient and any supplies that may be required are easily fetched from Buckkeep Town. The town is located by the sea and is a thriving port town. Merchants hold shop in a type of town square and there are numerous shops in among the houses of the common people. There are gardens and towers and plenty of hidden rooms in the Keep to amuse Fitz.

Fitz has a few favorite venues throughout the story. The stables are a constant place of refuge and comfort. The kitchens also provide a certain measure of warmth and privacy that appeals to Fitz over the stuffiness of the court table. Fitz finds freedom in Buckkeep Town. In the town, he makes friends who know nothing about his past and accept him as one of their own. He also enjoys his errands for Chade and Fedwren because he has the opportunity to learn about plants, people, and animals in town. Fitz appears to have a special connection to the stables and the town; however, as the pace of events picks up he loses both of these safety nets.



Language and Meaning

For the most part the language of the story is straight forward and easily understood. The reminiscences that begin each chapter often add insight onto the events that unfold in that chapter. However, taken as a whole the beginning paragraphs sometimes seem out of place and the reader may feel that the author had an excess of information that needed a spot somewhere. For instance, the background information on the Pocked Man at the beginning of Chapter 11 is interesting but does little to increase the reader's understanding of Chapter 11 or even of the story as a whole.

As with many of the beginning paragraphs, much of the information that makes up the story seems extraneous. The Red Ship Raiders seem to be abandoned by the end and nothing more is made of the Forgings. Likewise, Fedwren at first seems to be like a character that the reader will want to remember for a future encounter, but he is mentioned only in passing a few more times by Fitz. Perhaps many of these particularities will be ironed out in the next two installments of the trilogy. However, that also presents a small problem since the epilogue seems to conclude the book with a resounding finality.

Structure

The story is told in twenty-four chapters plus an Epilogue. Each chapter, with the exception of the epilogue, is denoted by a number and a title. The titles provide a brief caption about what the chapter will be about. Each chapter begins with a brief quote or passage that is set off in italics. These passages appear to be part of a book or history being written by Fitz. For most of the chapters, the introductory paragraph gives a piece of information that is relevant to the chapter or expounds on some bit of information only hinted at in the previous chapter. Some of the opening passages seem to be of little use to the reader and serve only as interesting tidbits about the history of Buckkeep.



Quotes

"That initial week with Patience was a trying time for both of us." Chapter 13, p. 227-8

"But I won't clean up his messes." He paused at the door. "That's where I draw the line. You'd better decide where you will draw the line." Chapter 14, p. 249

"Of the Chyurdan Herb carryme, their saying is, "A leaf to sleep, two to dull the pain, three for a merciful grave." Chapter 21, p. 380

"The art of diplomacy is the luck of knowing more of your rival's secrets than he knows of yours. Always deal from a position of power." Chapter 23, p. 412

"I'd give you my strength, Verity. If I could." Chapter 18, p. 332

"When the man reached a hesitant hand to gently touch her cheek, Molly was suddenly a woman, one I did not know." Chapter 17, p. 313

"Sometimes, you are so like him that...' She choked. 'You should have been mine! It isn't fair, you should have been mine.'" Chapter 13, p. 233

"Hard times are here, boy. And I wonder if they will ever pass." Chapter 10, p. 185

"Fitz fitz fice fitz. Fatz sfitz." Chapter 7, p. 132

"He had mastered some trick of inflection that let all know when *boy* meant "boy" and when it meant "the bastard"." Chapter 6, p. 103

"No wonder he couldn't look at me without resentment. He hadn't sired the bastard that had been his downfall. For the first time since I had known him, my wariness of him was tinged with pity." Chapter 4, p. 82

'Instead of a discontented bastard who may be persuaded to become a pretender to the throne, he will be a henchman, united to the family by spirit as well as blood. A bastard, Regal, is a unique thing.' Chapter 3, p. 50



Topics for Discussion

Pick out several characters and discuss how well they do or do not uphold the virtues of their names.

At the end of the book, Burrich is upset that Lady Patience has given Fitz an earring that once belonged to Chivalry. Why would this action make Burrich so angry?

Fitz is known by several names throughout the story: Boy, Fitz, Thomas, and FitzChivalry. Discuss Fitz's evolution in respect to these evolving names.

Why do you think the seamstress changes the emblem on Fitz's clothing from a buck with a red line through it to a buck charging?

Fitz never gets the opportunity to tell Molly how he feels. Is this fair to Fitz or should he have taken the risk, especially in light of the path his life takes?

The Elderlings, or gods, of Fitz's people are mentioned several times but rarely called upon. Is there a spiritual element to the story or are El and Eda merely long lost ideals?

Fitz refers to himself as a catalyst early on in the story. What change does Fitz effect or is this an ill-fitting comparison?