

The Black Cauldron Study Guide

The Black Cauldron by Lloyd Alexander

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Plot Summary

Gwydion, Crown Prince of Prydain, begins a mission to steal the Black Cauldron from the evil sorcerer Arawn, who rules over the neighboring land Annuvin. Arawn uses the cauldron to create evil and deathless warriors. Gwydion's plan fails because the cauldron has already been stolen. Taran and his friends decide to search for the cauldron. They come to the Marshes of Morva, where Taran is forced to sacrifice a prized possession to gain the cauldron. They begin to transport it back to Caer Dallben, but the cauldron is stolen by Ellidyr, one of their companions who is desperate for glory. They are all caught by King Morgant, who covets the power of the cauldron for himself. Ellidyr realizes he has acted badly, and so sacrifices his own life to destroy the cauldron. King Morgant is defeated by Gwydion's army.

Taran is working as an Assistant Pig Keeper when Gwydion and other men arrive at the farm to discuss their plan to steal the cauldron. Taran is included, but he is to remain back from the fight with Ellidyr and Adaon. Eilonwy, Taran's friend and scullery maid at the farm, is furious that she has not been included. When Taran, Ellidyr and Adaon remain behind to guard the horses, Eilonwy and Taran's friend Gurgi join them, refusing to be left out. That night, however, the group is attacked by Arawn's Huntsmen and they are forced to flee. Fflewddur Fflam the bard and Doli the dwarf join them, and explain that the plan has failed because the cauldron has already been stolen.

The companions take shelter in one of the wayposts of the Fair Folk. There they find out that the Black Cauldron is actually in the Marshes of Morva. They decide to go after it. However, Ellidyr, anxious for glory, abandons them to try to find the cauldron on his own. Later, they are attacked once again by the Huntsmen, and Adaon is fatally wounded. He gives Taran his brooch. Taran soon finds that the brooch has magical powers bestowing wisdom and understanding. He uses the brooch to guide them all safely to Morva.

At the marshes they find the cauldron in the hands of its original owners, the three enchantresses Orgoch, Orwen, and Orddu. Taran is forced to sacrifice the brooch in order to win the cauldron. However, the cauldron proves to be very difficult to destroy. Orddu explains that it can only be broken if a person willingly climbs in, knowing they will not climb back out alive. Taran and his companions decide it would be best to take the cauldron back to Caer Dallben and let Gwydion decide what to do with it. They tie it to their horses and begin to carry it back to the farm.

However, when they are crossing a river, the cauldron slips and becomes stuck in the mud. At this point, Ellidyr finds them. Taran asks for his help, but Ellidyr refuses to give it unless they agree to let him have all the glory for finding the cauldron. Taran agrees, though he is upset about it. Ellidyr helps to drag the cauldron up onto the bank, but then decides that Taran and his friends mean to break their oath. He wants all the honor for himself, so he turns on them and tries to kill them. Taran falls into the river and is swept away, and the others run from Ellidyr. Ellidyr gets away with the cauldron.



As the friends are returning home, they run into King Morgant's camp. Morgant intercepted Ellidyr and now has him and the cauldron. King Morgant has become a traitor, desiring the power of the cauldron for himself. He ties them up and tries to persuade Taran to join his side. Taran refuses, and Morgant says he will kill them and force them to be Cauldron Born warriors enslaved to his will.

Just as things are looking really bad, Doli arrives, turning invisible to sneak in and undo their bonds. Ellidyr, anxious to redeem himself for his bad behavior earlier, runs out of the tent and throws himself into the cauldron. The cauldron is destroyed. Gwydion and King Smoit's men arrive and defeat Morgant, and the realm is saved. Taran realizes that friendship and a good, peaceful life can be more important than honor and glory. He happily returns home with his friends.



Chapters 1-2, The Council at Caer Dallben, and The Naming of the Tasks

Chapters 1-2, The Council at Caer Dallben, and The Naming of the Tasks Summary

Taran, Assistant Pig Keeper at Caer Dallben farm, goes on a quest with his friends to steal the evil Black Cauldron from Arawn, Death Lord, who is using it to create zombie-like minions who cannot be stopped. However, the cauldron has already been stolen, and Taran and his friends decide to search for it. They find it in a marsh, guarded by three witches who exchange it for Taran's magical brooch. Taran and his friends are taking the cauldron back to Caer Dallben when an ambitious young man called Ellidyr takes it from them, wanting the glory for himself. They are all captured by Morgant, a king who covets the power of the cauldron. Ellidyr feels sorry for his arrogant behavior and sacrifices himself to destroy the cauldron forever.

Taran is working as Assistant Pig Keeper at Caer Dallben when visitors begin to arrive. A very rude and arrogant youth called Ellidyr tells him that he is the prince of Pen-Llarcaw and tries to order him around. Taran and Ellidyr take an instant dislike to each other. Taran answers Ellidyr's rudeness with defiance and Ellidyr beats him up.

The other visitors include Gwydion, who is the Crown Prince of Prydain, the land in which the story is set; King Smoit, the ruler of a smaller kingdom within Prydain, who owes allegiance to Gwydion; King Morgant, another ruler of a smaller kingdom within Prydain that is allied to Gwydion; Adaon, son of the Chief Bard Taliesin; Doli, a dwarf who has helped Taran in previous adventures; and Fflewddur Fflam, a bard who has helped Taran before. They have all come for a council to discuss the threat of the evil sorcerer Arawn. Dallben, a good sorcerer who lives at the farm where Taran works, begins the meeting. Dallben explains the threat of Arawn and his Cauldron-Born warriors. These are undead warriors created in his Black Cauldron, which cannot be killed. They are therefore very dangerous and a huge threat to Prydain. Gwydion tells the others that he plans to steal the Black Cauldron from Arawn and destroy it.

The others agree to help, and Gwydion tells them the plan. They will travel to Dark Gate, the entrance to Arawn's land, and then Doli, who has the power to turn invisible, will sneak in. He will open the door for Gwydion and his men, including Fflewddur Fflam, and they will all then take the Black Cauldron. Meanwhile, King Morgant and his men will attack Dark Gate to distract Arawn. King Smoit is to stand ready with his warriors in case they need to retreat to his land. However, if all goes well they will take the cauldron to Caer Dallben. The third group, consisting of Taran, Ellidyr and Adaon, will wait near Dark Gate to guard the pack animals and wait further orders. Both Taran and Ellidyr are upset about this, as they would rather go with Gwydion or fight with King Morgant.



Dallben gives Taran his first sword, and Taran goes to Eilonwy, a princess who helped him in previous adventures and now lives at the farm as a scullery maid, to ask her to gird it on him. This is an old tradition. Taran tells her about Gwydion's plan and she is excited until she realizes that she is not part of it. She yells at him for getting her hopes up, and he runs away.

Chapters 1-2, The Council at Caer Dallben, and The Naming of the Tasks Analysis

The first two chapters introduce the main characters of the novel. Taran is a teenager of about fourteen years, who works as a helper on the farm of a man called Coll. Taran's master is a sorcerer called Dallben who also lives on the farm. Taran's main duty involves looking after the oracular pig Hen-Wen, for which he was given the title 'Assistant Pig-Keeper' by Coll to help him feel more important. Hen-Wen has the power to foretell the future, but since she is a pig she cannot speak the prophecies. Dallben has invented a method of communicating with her by using enchanted sticks, but he is the only person able to do so. In some ways Taran's job is important, as Hen-Wen's predictions can help the kingdom, but it is not particularly glamorous or glorious. Although Taran learned to be satisfied with home and with a more simple life at the end of the previous novel, *The Book of Three*, he has begun to long for more once again. He wants to feel like he is someone more important, and worries about his honor. He would rather be a hero or a warrior than a simple Assistant Pig-Keeper. He is also very concerned with the idea of becoming a proper man. He thinks that in order to grow up and become a man, he needs to prove himself in combat and win honor for himself. Taran's urge to prove himself and to be a man causes him to sometimes act a little rashly. Throughout the book he will learn that war is not as glorious as he thought, and that there can be honor in a simple life after all. He will learn that growing up and becoming a man is actually about maturing and finding out what is important in life, not about being the best fighter or winning the most honor. This is one of the main themes in the story.

Despite Taran's mistaken ideas about glory and honor, he is a well-meaning, kind and honest boy. He is anxious to be a good person and to make friends with others, and tries to reach out to other people. When Ellidyr makes it clear that he does not like him, Taran keeps trying to bring him round, despite Ellidyr's bad attitude. He attempts to make friends with Ellidyr over and over again, and tries to patch things up when Ellidyr is upset. He shows that he can be very tenacious and determined. He might not be strong like Ellidyr, or a skilled fighter, but he has a much better attitude. However, in some ways Taran and Ellidyr are very similar. Both are overly concerned with their honor and with the glory of war, and both are very naive. Both of them think they have life all figured out, and both have so much to learn. Both of them think that they need to prove themselves and are desperate to do so. Ellidyr, unlike Taran, is willing to do anything to gain honor and glory, whereas Taran is still able to stop and think about what is right. He will not put his honor and his ambitions above his friends, and listens to his



elders when they tell him that he is acting badly. Ellidyr will not listen to anyone, and seems to think that he is better than everyone else.

Eilonwy is a young girl who also lives at Coll's farm, working in the scullery. Eilonwy is actually a princess who Taran found at the evil enchantress Achren's castle in the previous novel. Eilonwy hated her aunt Achren, and was happy to help Taran escape from her clutches. At the end of their adventure she came back to the farm with Taran and was happy to live a simple life there with him. In these chapters she comes across as an eager, determined and fiercely independent girl who will not let others boss her around. She wants to join Taran when he goes with the others on the quest to steal the Black Cauldron, and is extremely cross when she realizes that she will be left out. She is not concerned with honor and glory like Taran and Ellidyr, but simply wants adventure. She wants to go with her friends and help them, and hates to feel as though she is missing out on anything. She is brave and cheerful, and obviously values her friends highly. She seems to like Taran more than just a friend, but he is completely oblivious to this.



Chapters 3-4, Adaon, and In The Shadow of Dark Gate

Chapters 3-4, Adaon, and In The Shadow of Dark Gate Summary

Taran has been put under the leadership of Adaon and as they ride towards Dark Gate, he gets to know him better. Adaon seems to be a wise and friendly man, and Taran soon decides he likes him. Adaon tells him that in his dreams he has seen grief for Taran and a dark beast tormenting Ellidyr. He says that his dreams always come true.

As they are travelling along a narrow trail, Ellidyr pushes ahead, insulting Taran. Taran is annoyed and tries to push back ahead, but his horse slips down the slope. Ellidyr saves him, and Taran tries to thank him, but Ellidyr is not interested in making up.

Doli goes invisible and brings them news that the Huntsmen of Annuvin are around. They are mortal warriors, but they grow stronger whenever one of them is killed, making them almost impossible to defeat.

As the others continue their journey, Adaon, Taran and Ellidyr stay behind to guard the rear. They set up camp for the night. As Taran is keeping watch, he hears a noise in the bushes and Eilonwy and Gurgi appear. They have followed them from Caer Dallben and do not wish to be left out of the quest. They refuse to leave, and Adaon says they can wait for Gwydion.

Suddenly Fflewddur and Doli arrive, telling them that they have orders to fall back. They explain that the plan failed because the cauldron was not there. Someone else had stolen it before they could! Adaon points out that this is bad because the cauldron could have fallen into evil hands. Before they can discuss things further however, they are attacked.

Chapters 3-4, Adaon, and In The Shadow of Dark Gate Analysis

These chapters introduce the character of Adaon and explore Ellidyr's character in a little more detail. Adaon is a quiet and reflective man who seems to be very attuned to the world. He is mostly serious, though he is friendly to Taran. He is focused on the mission at hand and will not allow the other boys' grievances and ambitions to get in the way. He puts both of them back in their place, and though Ellidyr does not like this, he appears to at least respect Adaon a little. Adaon also seems to be slightly prophetic as he has dreams that predict the future, usually in a cryptic manner. This is what allows him to say that he sees grief in Taran's future, and that Morgant will come into danger. This also leads him to observe that Ellidyr is plagued by a 'black beast' that causes him



constant harm. Despite Adaon's obvious pleasure in small things, love of music and the world around him, he seems to be a very sad man. He has left his fiancée to come on this mission, and clearly longs to return to her. However, there seems to be more to his sadness than this. Perhaps he has seen his own future and knows that there is tragedy ahead for him. All of Adaon's dreams, his observations, and his sadness, foreshadow the difficulties that the characters will face later in the story.

Adaon mentions that Ellidyr has a 'black beast' following him, which will plague him for his whole journey, digging its sharp claws into him and harming him. Ellidyr is scathing of this, thinking that Adaon is talking about a literal monster, and not believing that this will come true. However, Adaon is not referring to a real black beast. The black beast is a metaphor for the desperation, anger and resentment that Ellidyr carries around with him. Ellidyr is angry that he has been looked over so much in life. His older brothers have inherited everything, leaving him without a kingdom, a title, riches, or anything else. Because of this he feels the desperate need to prove himself, to become a hero and make a name for himself, and to win honor. He actually has very little self-worth, and covers this up with an insistence on his own importance. He sees himself as above others, because he believes that this is his right. He feels as though he has been cheated of this. He resents anything that he sees as an attempt to steal honor from him, or anything that seems to put him down. He sees Taran as an arrogant young boy who is beneath him in every way, and yet who is trying to steal Ellidyr's honor and make himself more important than him. Ellidyr's paranoia and resentment make it impossible for him to make friends or get close to anyone. They also make it impossible for him to be happy. This is what Adaon means by the black beast. Ellidyr's resentment and desperation drives him all the time, like a beast piercing him with its claws. Like the beast, it is actually harming him, and he will not be happy until he is free of it. Unfortunately Ellidyr does not understand this, and cannot see the beast for himself. He will never be able to shake these negative feelings until he realizes that they are negative.

Taran and Ellidyr are once again too concerned with their personal honor and glory to approach their current situation sensibly. On the narrow path towards Dark Gate, Ellidyr pushes past Taran, intent on going first because he sees himself as more important. Taran is annoyed and pushes his own horse forwards to stop Ellidyr getting ahead. The horses collide and lose their footing, and Taran's horse slides down the slope. Taran falls off, and Ellidyr grabs him and hauls him back up. Although Ellidyr started this, Taran allowed himself to lose his temper and respond. Taran acted foolishly too, as he should not have tried to struggle on the narrow path. As he points out to Fflewddur, he is just as much to blame as Ellidyr. It is only after he falls and almost comes to disaster that Taran realizes his mistake. The fact that he is able to admit his mistake and feel sorry for it, and to thank Ellidyr for saving him, shows that he has not been completely consumed by his desire for honor. He does understand what is really important. Later, he proves this by pointing out that although they could not have the honor of stealing the cauldron, in the end it is what is best for Prydain that matters and not their personal ambition. Ellidyr, too, seems to feel some dismay at the fact that he nearly killed Taran, but he does not learn from his actions as Taran does. He shows that he does not really mean harm and is not a bad person, as he only intended to push past Taran. However, his



shock does not last long, and he quickly hides any sorry feelings he might have had. For Ellidyr, the need to remain aloof and above Taran takes over from what is really important. Although both of them are similar in their desire for honor, it is Ellidyr who is consumed by it, which is why it is Ellidyr that carries the burden of the 'black beast.'



Chapters 5-6, The Huntsmen of Annuvin, and Gwystyl

Chapters 5-6, The Huntsmen of Annuvin, and Gwystyl Summary

The group is attacked by the Huntsmen of Annuvin. Ellidyr saves Taran and slays one of the Huntsmen, and immediately the other Huntsmen grow stronger. Taran reminds them to defend themselves but not kill any of the Huntsmen. Suddenly, the Huntsmen are attacked by an invisible assailant, and Taran realizes that Doli has joined the fight. Adaon shouts for them all to mount their horses and escape.

They ride hard, but are pursued by the Huntsmen, who are very swift even on foot. Eventually they manage to lose them, but Adaon insists that they need to keep moving. As they reach a tangled bit of the forest, Doli suddenly looks pleased and tells them that there are Fair Folk here. He goes over to a tree and yells into a hole in its trunk. A voice calls back, telling them to go away.

Doli argues with the voice, and eventually a miserable looking creature lets them into a secret lair hidden in the embankment. The creature is called Gwystyl, and he is the guardian of this waypost for the Fair Folk. Gwystyl is at first reluctant to let them all in, but Doli argues with him and berates him for his lack of hospitality, telling him he is supposed to be ready for emergencies. Gwystyl gives in and lets them all inside. Adaon explains their mission and what happened to them and Taran tells Gwystyl that the cauldron had already been stolen. Gwystyl says that he already knows.

Chapters 5-6, The Huntsmen of Annuvin, and Gwystyl Analysis

In the fight against the Huntsmen, Ellidyr shows his strength and skill in battle. He saves Taran's life and manages to slay one of the Huntsmen. He is clearly a good warrior and a useful member of their party, but is completely overcome by his arrogance. He cannot even accept praise from Taran for his valor in combat. He refuses to take the compliment and insults Taran by suggesting that his life is hardly worth saving, and so is only a small debt. This is partly because Ellidyr considers himself so much above Taran that he does not want to enter into any kind of friendship with him, but also partly because Taran's praise makes him uncomfortable. Ellidyr sees Taran as a rival, and would never praise anything he did. The fact that Taran can see past his dislike of Ellidyr to give him praise where it is due, shows that Taran is a better person than Ellidyr. This is not a reminder that Ellidyr likes being given.



Later, Ellidyr once again shows that he is blinded by his pride and his ambitions. He wants to stop and face the Huntsmen. He wants to fight them, despite the fact that he knows killing them will only make the others stronger. Because of this, the Huntsmen are practically impossible to kill, and Ellidyr would just be going to his death. Although he sees this as the honorable thing to do, it is really not at all sensible, and will not achieve anything in the long run. It is obvious that the companions should run and hide, in order to be able to fight another day and to help track down the cauldron. They will be no use to Prydain if they are dead. Unfortunately, Ellidyr cannot see this, as he is too obsessed with proving himself. He cannot put the good of Prydain above his own concerns, and would see this as cowardice if he did. Ellidyr is still very naive and has a lot to learn. Taran is able to see the bigger picture, and understands why they need to run from the Huntsmen. This is just another reminder that Taran is managing to grow up in ways that Ellidyr cannot.

For Taran, the glorious quest that he had imagined is not turning out to be quite what he had thought. First, he was left behind by Gwydion from the main assault, and longed to join the actual fighting. He wanted to prove himself in combat. Now, he has had a taste of what real fighting is like. He now realizes that it is not glorious and adventurous, but frightening. Facing danger is a lot more daunting in reality than it is in Taran's imagination. He has faced the Huntsmen, men who are almost impossible to kill, and almost died in the fight. He was afraid for his own life and for his friends. Instead of fighting heroically, they were forced to flee, and are now hiding out in a bolt hole. This is what war is really like. It involves real danger, fear and a desperate struggle to survive. It is not about noble heroics, but about doing whatever is necessary at the time, including fleeing and hiding. Taran sees the sense in this even if Ellidyr does not, and is coming to understand that real life is different from stories. Taran is growing up and is showing that he is able to put his own concerns aside for the sake of others and the kingdom.



Chapters 7-8, Kaw, and A Stone in the Shoe

Chapters 7-8, Kaw, and A Stone in the Shoe Summary

They question Gwystyl about what he knows, but he refuses to tell them anything. His crow, Kaw, however, suddenly speaks, saying the names Orgoch, Orddu and Orwen. The crow also says the name Morva. Gwystyl explains that Orgoch, Orddu and Orwen are witches who live in the Marshes of Morva, and that it is they who have the cauldron. The companions then argue about whether it would be better to go straight to Morva to search for the cauldron, or back to Gwydion to tell him the information. Eilonwy points out that it is Adaon's decision, as he is the leader, but Adaon insists that Taran choose. Taran decides to go to Morva, and the rest say that they will go with him. Gwystyl gives them magical powder to cover their tracks from the Huntsmen, and they set off.

As they are riding, Taran asks Adaon what he dreamed of himself. Adaon says he saw himself in a sunlit and peaceful glade. Eilonwy is reassured, as this is a beautiful image, but Taran still feels anxious.

Ellidyr's horse, Islimach, begins to limp. Taran manages to soothe her and remove a stone from her hoof. Ellidyr is furious, and accuses Taran of trying to steal his horse as well as his honor. Taran is taken aback by this attitude. The next morning, Ellidyr is gone, and Taran realizes that he has left to try to get the cauldron himself.

They set off again, but are soon found by the Huntsmen. They stand to fight them, but Adaon is wounded in the battle.

Chapters 7-8, Kaw, and A Stone in the Shoe Analysis

When Kaw reveals the location of the cauldron, Taran and the companions are faced with a difficult choice. They can either take this news back to Gwydion, or try to find the cauldron themselves. Doli and Eilonwy want to return to Gwydion, and Fflewddur Fflam wants to go to the marsh to retrieve the cauldron. Fflewddur is always anxious for adventure, and seems to feel a similar need to prove himself as Taran and Ellidyr. Ellidyr, of course, wants to retrieve the cauldron, but he wishes to do so alone and keep all the glory for himself. Taran wants to get the cauldron, as he sees this as the most honorable path, but he agrees with Eilonwy and Doli that it is more sensible to take the news to Gwydion. Gwydion is the leader of the expedition, and he will be able to come up with a sensible plan and send lots of men to retrieve the cauldron. As a small group, they have little chance of succeeding on their own. However, if they delay by going back to Gwydion, there is a chance that Arawn, or someone else, might get their hands on the cauldron. At first, Taran is willing to put aside his personal pride and honor to carry out the more sensible option, which is to return to Gwydion. When Ellidyr says that he



will go to find the cauldron regardless of their decision, however, Taran changes his mind. He cannot bear the thought of Ellidyr getting all the glory for himself. Taran gives a good reason for going for the cauldron, as they cannot risk it falling into enemy hands, but the reader suspects that he is being driven more by his personal feelings than by what is really for the best. Eilonwy certainly thinks he is being driven by his honor again, and Taran begins to doubt himself too. As he wonders if he made the right choice, he comes to regret his decision. He does not want his pride to be the reason his friends come to harm. This shows that although Taran can be a little selfish and hot-headed, he is still a good person, and not consumed by his ambitions as Ellidyr is.

While Taran begins to regret being driven by his pride, Ellidyr's behavior only gets worse. Ellidyr is furious that Taran decided to retrieve the cauldron, thinking that he is trying to steal his glory. When Taran manages to get a stone out of Islimach's hoof, instead of being grateful Ellidyr loses his temper. He reveals himself to actually be very jealous of Taran. Taran is a brave young boy with good friends and a bright future. He is searching for his honor just as Ellidyr is, and wants to prove himself too. Ellidyr does not have any friends and nothing to call his own except his horse. He is searching for his honor and desperate to prove himself, but Taran seems to be getting in the way. Ellidyr does not have friends like Taran, or even a position in life. Taran might only be an Assistant Pig Keeper, but it is a title and a place in life that Ellidyr does not have. Ellidyr has never felt like he belonged anywhere, which is why he is so desperate to prove himself and force others to respect him. All that Ellidyr really has in the world to call his own is his horse, and now Taran has encroached on this too. By getting Islimach to accept him, and helping her when she was in distress, Taran stepped into Ellidyr's role and made him feel useless. This is why Ellidyr accuses him of trying to steal his horse as well as his honor. This seems to be the final straw for Ellidyr, who leaves the camp that night. He has gone to search for the cauldron on his own, letting his pride lead him into recklessness.

Despite Ellidyr's arrogant and unfriendly behavior, Taran continues to try to reach out to him. He is annoyed by Ellidyr's reaction when he helps his horse, but he still tries to get Ellidyr to join them for a meal. Whereas the other companions are sick of Ellidyr and want nothing to do with him, Taran has not given up on him yet and still hopes to bring him around. He still shows him friendship and kindness. This is because Taran has begun to understand what Adaon means by the 'black beast' that grips Ellidyr and drives him. He realizes that he has acted similarly at points, and that allowing pride to get the better of him has made him selfish. He recognizes this in Ellidyr and realizes that they are not so different. Taran has come to regret his rash decision to go after the cauldron, as he sees that he was driven by his concern for glory rather than by what is right. He is now more sympathetic to Ellidyr because he understands what drives him. He knows that this is not the right path, and he wants to help Ellidyr to understand what is really important. He wants to help Ellidyr to rid himself of the black beast. Adaon sees this and praises Taran for his patience and kindness.

Whereas Taran and Ellidyr both act badly in these chapters, Eilonwy shows herself to be very sensible, but also very brave. She wants to return to Gwydion, the safest and most sensible option, and is not at all concerned about her honor or about winning glory.



She thinks about what is best for everyone and for the kingdom as a whole. However, when Taran decides that he will go to find the cauldron, Eilonwy immediately says she will come with him. She will not let him go alone. She cares about her friends, and is determined to help them no matter what. She is a very caring and noble character. Both Taran and Ellidyr dismiss her for being 'just a girl,' but both could really learn a lot from her about the proper way to behave.

Adaon's strange behavior and the sense of foreboding that accompanies it foreshadows the tragedy that will come. Adaon insists that Taran choose whether to go for the cauldron or not, only saying that he cannot influence that decision. It seems that he knows more than he is telling. He tells Taran and Eilonwy his dream about himself, that he saw himself in a sunlit, peaceful grove. Eilonwy thinks this is a beautiful image, but Taran is not reassured, and the reader is left with the same sense of approaching doom. Again, the dream foreshadows the events to come. The final piece of foreshadowing comes when Adaon tells Taran to take his brooch if he should die. Clearly Adaon thinks his death is a strong possibility. The foreshadowing here reflects the idea of destiny or fate, which is a theme running through this story. Adaon often talks of destiny, and so do Taran and Gwydion. However, the idea of free will is also still important. A person may have a destiny to become something, to suffer, to take part in a quest, to meet someone, etc, but it is still their own actions that take them down a particular path. Taran had a choice whether or not to go to Morva, and now whatever happens will be because of his decision. However, whatever happens is perhaps also meant to be, which can offer the characters some comfort. This ambiguity between destiny and free will is something that each character has to work out for themselves.



Chapters 9-10, The Brooch, and The Marshes of Morva

Chapters 9-10, The Brooch, and The Marshes of Morva Summary

While Fflewddur and Doli fight the Huntsmen, Taran, Gurgi and Eilonwy manage to get away with Adaon. They stop in a protected glade, and Taran realizes that it is the glade from Adaon's dream. Adaon admits that he knew he would die. He gives Taran his brooch, then dies.

Taran sleeps and dreams of Ellidyr being harmed by a black beast. He then dreams of a river with Fflewddur's harp in it, and of being pursued by a bear and two wolves. He jumps into a pool of water but it turns to dry land under his feet. The bear and wolves jump after him. He wakes up.

Taran decides the three of them should continue the search for the cauldron, so they head out early the next morning. Taran soon finds that he is more attuned to the world around him, and knows things he didn't before. He smells water nearby, and guides them to a river to drink. There they find Fflewddur Fflam, who tells them that he and Doli escaped the Huntsmen, but they got separated and he does not know where Doli is.

The group continue on, and Taran spots a marsh bird overhead. He tells them that if they follow it they will find the marsh. They remark on how clever this is, and Taran realizes that it must be the brooch. Adaon's brooch is magical and bestows wisdom on its wearer.

Taran uses the power of the brooch to know that it will rain, then to know that their shelter is about to collapse. He successfully leads them to the marsh, but three Huntsmen find them, one in a bear skin and two wearing wolf skins. Taran realizes his dream from earlier is coming true. He tells the others to follow him, and gallops through the marsh, expertly leading them on a safe path over dry land. The Huntsmen follow, but they fall into a marshy area and are sucked under.

Taran stops them on an area of dry land. There is a small, decrepit cottage there. It looks abandoned, but Taran has an uneasy feeling about it. As they are looking through the window, a voice speaks from behind them, asking them how they would like to be turned into toads.



Chapters 9-10, The Brooch, and The Marshes of Morva Analysis

In these chapters, Taran discovers the magical powers of the brooch that Adaon gave to him. He realizes that it is the brooch that allowed Adaon to dream of the future. Besides this, the brooch also bestows wisdom on the wearer, allowing them to have a special awareness of the world around them. Taran experiences this as heightened senses, and a greater understanding of things. He can smell water and know that a river is near. He can see a bird and know that it is a marsh bird, and so conclude that following it will lead them to the marsh. He knows that it will rain, and senses that their shelter will collapse before it does. He can lead his companions safely across the marsh, tricking his enemies into drowning in the process. This is clearly a very useful brooch. Taran has managed to guide them and save them in ways he would never have been able to before. In fact, their quest would not have had a hope of succeeding without it.

The brooch's powers are not just useful for the mission, they also help Taran to feel more important and special. He enjoys being a somebody, being a hero and a leader. He can now aid the others in many ways, and enjoys their admiration. He can become someone like Adaon, a person who is wise and respected, and trusted to be a good leader. In addition to this, the brooch helps him feel more connected to the world around him, and he can really appreciate the beauty of nature. The brooch aids understanding, helping him to see the value in ordinary life and the natural world. Taran can now begin to understand what Adaon meant about the honor to be found in a simple life. With the brooch, Taran can be a hero, but he can also be a happier and more wise person. He can grow up and become a man and prove himself to Gwydion. He can gain everything he ever wanted. It is important to establish just how special the brooch is, and how important it is to Taran, so that the reader will appreciate Taran's sacrifice later.



Chapters 11-12, The Cottage, and Little Dallben

Chapters 11-12, The Cottage, and Little Dallben Summary

The companions are faced by a witch who turns Taran's sword into a snake. She threatens again to turn them into toads, and tries to persuade them that they would prefer this to being people. She calls to her sisters Orgoch and Orwen, and Taran realizes that these are the three enchantresses who have the cauldron.

The witches talk among themselves and mention turning Huntsmen into toads. Taran tries to persuade them that they should work together as they have a common enemy. They are not interested, and instead insist on knowing their names. Taran tries to lie but the witches know it, and he realizes that he may as well tell them the truth. When he mentions that he is from Caer Dallben, the witches recognize the name Dallben and are immediately friendly.

The witches bring the companions inside the cottage and give them food. They explain that they found Dallben in a wicker basket in the marsh when he was a baby. They looked after him, and he helped around the house. One day he was stirring a potion when he spilled some on his fingers and put them in his mouth. He swallowed a little bit of the potion, which immediately gave him wisdom. After that, they could not keep him with them anymore, so they gave him the choice of a harp, a sword, or The Book of Three. Dallben chose the latter.

Taran says that if they really do care about Dallben, they will help him. He explains about the Black Cauldron. The witches say that he must mean the Black Crochan, and explain that it was theirs to begin with. They lent it to Arawn, but he did not give it back when he was supposed to, so they stole it back from him. However, they refuse to let Taran have the cauldron and they quickly usher him and his companions out of their house.

Chapters 11-12, The Cottage, and Little Dallben Analysis

The idea of destiny comes up again in these chapters as Taran and his companions face the three enchantresses Orgoch, Orddu and Orwen. The three witches are not willing to listen to anything Taran has to say, and have already made up their minds to turn them into frogs. Taran tries a number of different tactics to get them to listen, but they are not interested. However, the instant he mentions Dallben they turn friendly and show the companions hospitality. Although the companions reached the marsh and the



cottage through bravery and determination, and through their own free actions, they would not have got any further if they had not used Dallben's name. This certainly seems like fate, as anybody else would have been turned into a frog, no matter what they did or said. They were clearly meant to come here and to succeed, where nobody else could have done so. It is not coincidence that Taran happens to know Dallben, and that he will later happen to have the exact thing needed to exchange for the cauldron. It was always Taran's destiny to come here, just as Adaon knew it would be. The witches confirm this much, telling them that there is a destiny laid on everything and everyone in the world. A person only has so much free will before fate takes over. There is a way in which things are supposed to happen, and nobody can fight this, not even the witches themselves.

In fact, the witches themselves seem to be very attuned to the workings of destiny. This is interesting, as they bare many similarities to mythological characters in several cultures who watch over the tides of fate. In Greek mythology there are three women who spin the thread of Fate, cutting the thread whenever a mortal's life comes to its end. In Norse mythology a similar role is carried out by the Norns. In many different mythologies the importance of fate and destiny is stressed, and even the gods themselves are subject to it and cannot change it. This is the case with Welsh mythology, the stories that the Prydain novels draw inspiration from. It is possible that Orgoch, Orwen, and Orddu are not simple enchantresses, but guardians and keepers of Fate.

The three witches tell the companions how they know Dallben. They looked after him when he was a young child, but when he accidentally spilled some potion on his fingers and put them in his mouth, he was granted magical powers of wisdom. This meant that he could no longer stay with them, so he went off into the world on his own. This is very similar to a Welsh legend about Gwion Bach, who later became the famous bard Taliesin, a name also used in this story. Here the reader can see how Lloyd Alexander has used elements of Welsh mythology but mixed them up in order to make them into his own story. The Chronicles of Prydain are not a retelling of Welsh mythology and should not be read in this way.

Dallben was given a choice by the witches, between a harp, a sword, and The Book of Three. The harp would have made him the greatest bard who ever lived, and he would have enjoyed great renown. The sword would have made him the ruler of all Prydain, and he would have had great power. The Book of Three would grant him all the knowledge in the world. Dallben chose The Book of Three, picking knowledge over fame and power. This is an important insight into Dallben's character. He was brought up by enchantresses, and so has come to value wisdom and learning over anything else. This is why he is disappointed in Taran when he seems to hold honor, glory and power above other things. With the Book of Three, Dallben gained knowledge of all things, and yet he chooses to live a very humble life on a simple farm. Coll has also chosen this life, despite having been a great warrior once. Adaon also spoke of the joy and honor found in a simple life, seeming to long for this over glory and battle. This is a recurring theme in this story, that power and glory do not bring happiness in the end. This is shown as a form of wisdom, as all the truly wise characters value a humble life



over a glorious one. However, the desire for absolute knowledge is in itself a form of great arrogance. By reading The Book of Three and learning everything there is to know about mankind and its actions, Dallben instantly aged. This is symbolic of all the worries and unpleasant truths in the world taking their toll on him. It is the burden of knowledge and wisdom; these things cannot be gained without some suffering and sacrifice. Although Dallben shows himself to have a good character by choosing knowledge over power and glory, he still has to pay a price for this. Nothing in the world comes for free, as Taran will find out in the next chapters.



Chapters 13-14, The Plan, and The Price

Chapters 13-14, The Plan, and The Price Summary

The companions go to the shed to discuss what they can do next. Gurgi goes off to find some straw to help keep them warm, but comes back agitated and excited. He takes them to the stable and shows them what he found. The Black Cauldron is sitting in the straw in the middle of the stable, in full view. They decide to return to the shed until night, and then come back for the cauldron when they are less likely to be seen.

When night comes, Taran goes over to the cottage and looks in to see if the witches are asleep. Instead of hags, however, there are three beautiful women inside. Eventually, the women go to sleep, and turn back into hags once more. Taran and the others hurry to the stable and grab the cauldron, but find that they cannot move. They are stuck to the cauldron.

Orddu comes to the stable and sees the companions stuck to the cauldron. She calls the other two witches. They explain that they left the cauldron there to see what the companions would do. Now they are willing to give it to them, but they must exchange it for something else. The witches suggest they give them the North Wind in a bag, or one of their summer days. Taran says that they cannot possibly give them these things. Taran offers his sword and his horses, but the witches are not interested. Gurgi offers his magical bag that produces food, and Eilonwy offers her jewelry and her magical bauble. Ffleuddur offers his magical harp. The witches do not want any of these things.

Chapters 13-14, The Plan, and The Price Analysis

As mentioned earlier, nothing comes for free, and the characters learn this when the witches ask for an exchange for the cauldron. In order to carry out their quest and fulfill their destiny, they must make a sacrifice and so prove themselves worthy. All the companions pass this test, showing that they are willing to give up anything, even their most prized possessions, to destroy the cauldron and save the realm. This is very noble behavior, proving each person's virtue and strength. First, Taran offers the sword he values, then the horses he has come to love. Gurgi offers a magical bag that produces food. This is prized by Gurgi because he has a great appetite and loves food, but also because it allows him to be a hero and to help his friends by providing them with food. It makes him feel important, as he showed earlier in the story when he was so proud of being able to provide dinner. Gurgi is a character who is often concerned with himself and can display quite a selfish streak, but here he is completely altruistic and noble. This seems to be partly because Taran was about to suggest his brooch, and Gurgi knows how important the brooch is to him. Gurgi shows here that he is not only a good person, but a great friend. He would rather give up his beloved possession than see his friend give up his.



Gurgi is not the only one willing to make a sacrifice. Eilonwy suggests her jewelry, which is all she has that reminds her of her past and her birthright. She also offers her magical bauble, which provides light when needed. Not only does it light the way, but it also makes things seem clearer and so can aid in a difficult situation when they might otherwise have not known what to do. Eilonwy carries this bauble with her everywhere and clearly loves it. Fflewddur is also willing to give up his prized possession. His magical harp was given to him by the Great Bard himself, who Fflewddur idealizes. It plays beautiful music, but the strings will break if he tells a lie. Fflewddur has never parted with it, despite the annoyance of the strings breaking constantly, because he loves the music it produces. The breaking strings also remind him to tell the truth, and force him to correct himself if he lies. This helps him to be a better person. In this way, the harp is actually very important to him, and much more than a mere musical instrument. It is touching that all these characters do not even hesitate for a second to offer up the things they love for their mission, and for Taran. All of them are capable of putting what really matters ahead of themselves and their personal concerns. This is a lesson that Taran has needed to learn at several points in the story, and his companions serve as excellent role models for him. Unfortunately the witches do not accept any of these offerings, and the reader knows that the only thing left to give is Adaon's magical brooch. Will Taran be able to live up to the example of his companions and sacrifice what he holds so dear?



Chapters 15-16, The Black Crochan, and The River

Chapters 15-16, The Black Crochan, and The River Summary

Taran offers up his brooch and the witches accept it in exchange for the cauldron. The companions take iron bars and hammers from the stables and attempt to destroy the cauldron, but all their strikes bounce off it. Orddu sees them and explains that there is only one way to break the cauldron. A living person must climb into it willingly, knowing that they will die if they do so. In order to destroy it, someone must give up their life.

The companions decide to take the cauldron back to Caer Dallben where Gwydion can plan how to destroy it. They tie it to the horses and trudge along with it, skirting around the swamp because they cannot be sure of finding a safe path without the brooch.

That night, Eilonwy tries to reassure Taran by telling him that he did a very noble thing and will be remembered as a hero for it. He should be proud. She also tells him that he did not really give up anything inside of him, as the powers of the brooch all came from the brooch and not from him.

The next day they set off again and Taran decides it will be safer to take a longer route through the forest, so as not to be seen by any of Arawn's monstrous birds, the gwythaints. They make a sling out of branches and vines to help transport the cauldron more easily.

They come to a river and there is nothing to do but try to cross it with the cauldron. They almost manage to make it to the other side when the cauldron lurches and falls into the water. Ffleuddur falls onto the rocks and breaks his arm. Taran tries to move the cauldron but it is stuck in the river mud.

Chapters 15-16, The Black Crochan, and The River Analysis

Taran shows himself willing to make a huge sacrifice for the sake of his mission, and for the good of the realm. He acts nobly and unselfishly, not hesitating over the need to give up his most prized possession but getting on with what needs to be done. The brooch allowed Taran to feel important and skilful, and to be a good leader. As Orddu points out, it could make him a great hero and very powerful. He might even rival his idol Gwydion. Not only would he be giving up all this, which he has longed for and dreamed about, but he would be exchanging it for something he only means to destroy. The Black Cauldron will not bring anything good for Taran. He will lose his brooch and gain nothing. However, the Black Cauldron needs to be destroyed for the good of



everyone, and Taran can see that it is the right thing to do. He has learned to put his personal glory and ambitions aside for the greater good, proving how much he has grown throughout the adventure. He also shows that he is a good friend by noticing his companions' willingness to sacrifice their possessions too. He tells them that he is glad they did not have to give up their things, and he seems to genuinely mean this. Through this episode he has come to really appreciate his friends and to realize how important they are to him. He puts their happiness above his own here, and the whole group seems to be bonded much closer because of this experience.

Eilonwy tries to comfort Taran by pointing out that none of the skills granted by the brooch came from inside him. In other words, he did not lose anything by giving up the brooch, except the brooch itself. If he had given up a summer's day, he would have lost a part of himself, which would have been much worse. If Taran had given up some of his own personal wisdom, bravery or valor, it would have also been a much worse sacrifice. What the brooch granted him was extra, and was nice while it lasted. When it is gone, however, Taran has not been changed. He is still Taran, and at least he can be happy knowing this. Eilonwy shows how astute and thoughtful she can be with this observation. Taran does not quite understand it fully, lamenting that he is once more only an Assistant Pig Keeper. What Eilonwy means, however, is that Taran should be proud to be an Assistant Pig Keeper, and should be proud to be who he is.

It is ironic that Taran is so upset by the loss of the brooch, yet does not see that many of the powers it granted are actually virtues he has possessed all along. Taran is brave and determined, just as much now as he was when he wore the brooch. With the brooch he took charge and proved to be a good leader. Here, he does exactly the same thing without the brooch. He decides it would be safer to travel through the forest, a very wise and sensible decision considering how vulnerable the party would be if spotted from the air. The others are happy to follow him and to take instructions from him. Taran also suggests making a sling to help transport the cauldron more easily, showing that he can be resourceful even without the brooch's prompting. By giving up the brooch in the first place, Taran has shown that he is noble and heroic, and that he understands what is really important. He has grown up a lot. All of these are virtues that he possesses, inside himself, and not granted by a magical brooch. As Eilonwy pointed out, these mean more because they are part of him. He has earned them, through his own learning, struggles and experiences. The brooch might have given him wisdom, but wisdom can also be learned, and is much better and worth more if gained in this way. Taran cannot see it yet, but he is and has been a hero all along.



Chapters 17-18, The Choice, and The Loss

Chapters 17-18, The Choice, and The Loss Summary

There is a rustling in the bushes and suddenly Ellidyr appears. He tells them that he has been looking for the marshes and has been chased by both Huntsmen and gwythaints. They give him food, and Taran tells him about the cauldron, asking for his help to get it out of the river. Ellidyr is furious that Taran has stolen his honor again. He refuses to help.

Suddenly, three gwythaints swoop down and spot the cauldron. Without attacking, they fly off. They are taking news of the cauldron to Arawn, and Taran knows they need to hurry. He asks for Ellidyr's help again, but Ellidyr says he will only help if Taran pays a price. He wants Taran and the others to tell Gwydion that Ellidyr was the one who found and fought for the cauldron. He makes them swear an oath to keep this promise. Eilonwy does not want to, but Taran persuades her it is for the best, as they need Ellidyr's help to get the cauldron back to Caer Dallben.

Ellidyr helps them to pull the cauldron from the river, but then wonders if Taran means to go back on his oath. He seems to decide that it would be easier to kill him, and attacks him. Taran falls into the river, knocks his head and falls unconscious.

He wakes up in front of a fire with Fflewddur, Gurgi and Eilonwy caring for him. They explain that Ellidyr tried to kill them too, but they ran away and found Taran downriver. Ellidyr got away with the cauldron.

They sleep in the forest and the next day, they continue on to Caer Dallben. Suddenly, they are surrounded by warriors, and Taran realizes with relief that they are the men of King Morgant. King Morgant explains that Gwystyl brought them news that Taran and his friends had gone after the cauldron, so Morgant and Gwydion split up to search for them. He says that Ellidyr arrived with the cauldron, but Eilonwy tells him the truth of how Ellidyr stole it from them. Morgant is inclined to believe them, and takes them to see Ellidyr. Ellidyr is unconscious and has been badly beaten. Taran reproaches Morgant for treating Ellidyr this way, and Morgant instructs his men to disarm them all and bind them.

Chapters 17-18, The Choice, and The Loss Analysis

To obtain the Black Cauldron, Taran was asked to sacrifice something very precious to him. The brooch could have given him so much, but he gave it up for the sake of the mission. Taran was upset about this, but comforted himself with the knowledge that he has done something honorable and will be remembered as a hero for it. His honor is still intact, and he can hope to win glory for what he has done. Even Eilonwy points out that



he still has his pride, even though he lost the brooch. Now, Taran is being asked for another sacrifice, but this time much worse. This time he does not have to give up a possession, but his own honor and pride. He has to let Ellidyr take all the glory and the praise for retrieving the cauldron, and he must promise never to tell anyone the truth. For Taran, who longs to prove himself, this is a much higher price than the brooch. In doing this, Taran would be a true hero, putting the mission above himself. However, he will never be known or remembered as a hero. Here, Taran has to look deep into himself and ask what he really wants. Does he really want to be a hero, or is what he really wants to be seen as a hero? Taran is proud, and his honor is very important to him. Can he put aside this personal concern for the greater good?

Taran proves that he can make this difficult decision, and in fact does not even hesitate to do so. He pays the price, sacrificing his honor and pride to save the realm. He is willing to let Ellidyr take all the credit for the things he has done, and the things he has had to suffer to achieve. This takes a great deal of maturity and goodness. Taran proves without a doubt that he has grown up, and that what he has grown into is a wise and a good man. However, Taran does not only make this difficult choice, he also manages to feel sympathy for Ellidyr, even after Ellidyr attacks him. He understands Ellidyr, and is uncomfortably aware of how similar the two of them really are. Ellidyr points out Taran's hypocrisy in berating him for caring about his honor, when Taran also cares about his. Taran has really taken this to heart, and sees that there is some truth in what Ellidyr says. He resolves to do the right thing, and never to put his pride before more important concerns again. He feels sorry for Ellidyr as Ellidyr has not been able to see the error of his ways and to change, as Taran has. Taran sees that the black beast which Adaon spoke of is actually Ellidyr's pride, and that it has finally taken him over and corrupted him.

In these chapters, Taran's brave, honorable, wise and good character is contrasted with Ellidyr's. Both boys may have begun their journey with similar naivety and too much pride, but they have ended up in very different places now. Taran has grown up and has come to see that battle and glory are not all he thought them to be. He values his friends much more now, and the idea of a simple life seems less dull. He has learned to put aside his personal pride and ambitions, and can even take a step back and feel sorry for his enemy. Ellidyr, on the other hand, has learned nothing from his adventures. He has only become more and more consumed by his pride and ambitions, allowing them to create strong resentments and anger. He has not been able to make friends and feels completely alone in the world. He puts himself and his honor above everything else. Whereas Taran has learned that sometimes being a hero means acting like a hero but never getting praise for it, Ellidyr only wants the praise and has not earned it with the actions. Now Ellidyr has gone completely over the edge, his pride and anger causing him to be paranoid about everyone and everything. He tries to kill Taran and attacks his companions. He is no longer an unpleasant and jealous boy, but has become very dangerous. This is what Adaon foresaw when he said that the black beast would consume Ellidyr one day.

Taran finally begins to see now that honor can be found and earned in many different ways. Adaon and Coll both believe that there is honor in living a simple life, and Taran at



last understands what they mean. He resolves that he will return to the farm and seek a different kind of honor. He will be a good person and lead a good, happy life. If the need for glory can lead to behavior and obsession like Ellidyr's, and if warfare and battle only leads to grief like the loss of Adaon, then Taran does not want them. He has not lost his pride by giving in to Ellidyr's demands. Taran is a hero, and he does not need anyone else to know this in order for him to be one. He can still be proud of himself and his role as Assistant Pig-Keeper. He realizes that he has been hypocritical, and that he gave in to the same failings as Ellidyr. He is now determined to be a better person. This is an important message running throughout the story. Honor does not have to come from battle or adventure, but can be found in a simple life as the best kind of people are those who are good and peaceful.



Chapters 19-20, The War Lord, and The Final Price

Chapters 19-20, The War Lord, and The Final Price Summary

Morgant ties up the companions. He explains that he has taken the Black Cauldron and intends to use it to create Cauldron Born warriors. He will use these to defeat Gwydion and become High King of Prydain himself. Morgant offers Taran a place in his army, but Taran refuses. He says he would rather go into the cauldron. Morgant tells him he knows how to destroy the cauldron, however, and will not let Taran do it. Instead he will kill all of Taran's friends and then put them in the cauldron to make them into Cauldron Born. He will kill Taran last.

Morgant leaves them tied up in a tent. They struggle to get free of their bonds but they cannot. Ellidyr wakes up and tells Taran that he is truly sorry for everything he did. They are still trying to undo their bonds when Doli comes into the tent, invisible. He unties them all and explains that he was on his way to Caer Cadarn when he saw Ellidyr with the cauldron and their horses. He went back to look for them but missed them when his pony ran off. He then found Morgant's camp and came to rescue them.

Taran tells Doli to free Ellidyr too, and he does. Just then, guards approach the tent and there is no way to escape. Ellidyr charges out of the tent and runs towards the cauldron. He fights past Morgant's men and jumps into the cauldron. The cauldron breaks.

Gwydion and his men charge into the clearing and attack Morgant's men. King Smoit attacks Morgant, and Morgant is defeated. Taran runs to Ellidyr's body and grieves over it. Ellidyr's horse Islimach sees her dead master and throws herself off a cliff in grief.

After the battle, Gwydion tells Taran that Ffleuddur explained to him everything that happened. He says that a barrow will be raised over Ellidyr and that he will be given proper honor for his heroic deed. He also says Morgant will be honored for what he used to be rather than what he became. Gwydion then says goodbye to Taran, who returns home with his friends.

Chapters 19-20, The War Lord, and The Final Price Analysis

King Morgant is now revealed to be an enemy, as he desires the cauldron for himself. He does not simply want to steal honor and glory like Ellidyr, but actually wants to use the cauldron to make himself more powerful. He will create Cauldron Born, which are undead creatures enslaved to his will. This is clearly very unnatural and evil, but Morgant does not seem to care. He only cares about his own power and control, and



wishes to put himself above Gwydion. For the sake of power he would turn against his own people and create civil war. This is contrasted with Ellidyr's actions. Ellidyr stole the cauldron and tried to kill Taran and his friends. In actions, he did much the same as Morgant. However, Ellidyr's intentions were always to destroy the cauldron, and he swears this to Taran. He was driven to bad deeds because of his desperation to be a hero, to be someone important. He was driven by selfishness and greed, but not evil. He would never have used the cauldron as Morgant is doing. Compared to Morgant, Ellidyr is not evil but simply misguided. This is important, as Ellidyr is later redeemed whereas Morgant is not.

The evil behavior of Morgant is the shock needed to show Ellidyr that his own actions were very wrong. He sees Morgant doing something similar to what he did to Taran, but for much worse reasons. Suddenly Ellidyr realizes that he became an enemy and he does not want to be one. He wants to be a hero. He now understands the meaning of the 'black beast' and feels terrible for everything he has done. He tells Taran this and begs his forgiveness. Taran understands and believes that Ellidyr never intended any evil in the same way as Morgant. He accepts Ellidyr's apology and tells Doli to untie him. This acceptance encourages Ellidyr to act like the hero he longs to be. He decides to redeem himself in the only way he knows how, and throws himself willingly into the cauldron. This is the sacrifice needed to break it. Here, Ellidyr shows himself to be a very brave and self-sacrificing person. He has finally decided to put the realm above his own personal concerns. In the end, he is a hero after all. In fact, Ellidyr pays the ultimate price, or the final price as Taran refers to it. Taran has had to give up a prized possession and then his honor. Both of these were hard to do, but at least Taran still has his life. Ellidyr gave up his life, the hardest thing of all to sacrifice. In the end, he did what even Taran and his friends were not willing to do. This is heroic and amazing, but also very sad, as it suggests that Ellidyr thought he deserved to die. He thought that the only way to make up for his actions was to pay this ultimate price, and clearly thought that he had nothing else to live for. Although Prydain has been saved by this noble action, Taran grieves. It is a bittersweet ending to the adventure.

The book ends with a discussion between Taran and Gwydion about the events of the story. Gwydion surprises Taran by honoring Morgant, despite his attempt to use the cauldron for evil. Gwydion tells him that morality is never simple, and that good people like Morgant can be corrupted by desperation and desire. Gwydion will honor Morgant for what he once was and Ellidyr for what he became. Both have been good men in different ways, and it is important to remember that along with the bad. Taran does not object, showing that he is now ready to accept that the world is not always what he thought it was, and that things are rarely ever simple. He is willing to accept Gwydion's wisdom in this rather than go about his own hotheaded way. Taran has learned and changed a lot in his adventures.

Taran and Gwydion explore the question of exactly what a hero is. Ellidyr was a hero for giving up his life, despite his earlier actions. Taran is a hero because of all that he has done. It is not skills and strength that make a person a hero, therefore, but actions and choices. Taran chose to give up the brooch for the cauldron, and Ellidyr chose to give up his life to keep Prydain safe. In the end, who they were and what they said was



never important, only what they did. Taran could never really have been a hero with the power of the brooch alone, no matter how wise and skilled it made him. Taran realizes this now, and does not feel sad about its loss any longer. Gwydion points out that Taran is a hero because of his deeds and not because of the brooch, and that this is better. Taran can at last agree, and can accept that he is a hero after all. He understands the world better and is a lot less naive. He has really grown up and he admits to Gwydion that it was not what he expected. There is a lot of grief and danger in life, but also a lot of goodness. It is important to cling on to the latter. Now that Taran has begun to understand these things better, he will have a greater appreciation for the simple pleasures of life. In particular, he has learned to treasure his friends. Without them, he could not have succeeded, and they also kept him strong and good. Ellidyr lost his way without friends, but managed to redeem himself with the support of Taran. Friends are vital to Taran. It is therefore appropriate that the story ends with Taran returning home with his companions.



Characters

Taran

Taran is the Assistant Pig-Keeper at a farm called Caer Dallben. He lives there with Coll, the farmer who owns the farm, and Dallben, a powerful sorcerer who lives at the farm. Taran does not know who his parents are. He was found as a baby by Dallben, and has been raised by him at the farm. In this story Taran accompanies Gwydion's quest to steal the Black Cauldron from Annvin. Taran is assigned to a group of three people, with Ellidyr and Adaon, who are to stay behind and watch the horses and the packs as Gwydion and the others go into Annvin. At first Taran is annoyed by this, as he is desperate to prove himself and to win glory and honor. However, he is soon drawn into the adventure when Huntsmen attack their group. They fight, Taran is almost killed, and then they flee. Taran finds that real battle is frightening and confusing, not at all glorious or exciting as he thought it would be. Later, Taran sees that war can also be tragic and sad. Adaon dies, and Taran is distraught. Adaon was a good friend to him, and Taran feels partly responsible for his death because he made the choice to continue on after the cauldron. Although he started off as a very naive boy, determined to prove himself a man, in growing up and becoming a man Taran learns that life is never simple and not like the stories. War is not glorious and honor can be found in many different ways. By the end of the story, Taran understands why other characters warned him not to be so eager to enter battle. He has grown up.

Taran begins the story with a prideful attitude. He is determined to prove himself, and is desperate to win honor and glory. He does not like being 'just' a pig keeper and wants to make a name for himself. He wants to be a hero, and to be respected and praised as Gwydion is. This desire causes him to act rashly and a little foolishly at times. He allows Ellidyr's insults to get to him, and fights with him at inappropriate times. When Ellidyr says he will go to find the cauldron, Taran cannot bear the thought of Ellidyr getting all the glory, so he also decides to go after the cauldron. This leads to Adaon's death. Throughout the story, Taran comes to see that his behavior is shameful and that he should not get drawn into fights with Ellidyr. He tries to reach out to him instead. Later he even feels pity for him. When Taran is asked to sacrifice the brooch, which could have made him a hero and given him the glory he wants so much, he does so without hesitation. He shows that he can put the mission and the greater good above his own pride and ambition. Later, he is asked to make an even bigger sacrifice, as Ellidyr makes him swear to give up all the glory of finding the cauldron. Again, Taran does so without hesitation. He knows what is important and will never put his pride above others again. He finally comes to understand that honor is not something that relies on what others think, but is something he must earn for himself through his actions and choices. He has earned honor, and has proved himself a hero, and he does not need glory for this to be true. He does not need to prove himself to anyone except himself. When he lets go of his pride in this way, he becomes a better person. He can begin to sympathize with Ellidyr and see him for the unhappy young man he really is.



Taran proves that he is noble and good through his deeds in the story, as well as brave and determined. He also shows that he can be kind and thoughtful, as he looks after his friends, tries to reach out to Ellidyr, and sympathizes with Ellidyr even when he turns against him. Taran also proves that he is a good leader, and that he learns from his experiences. He loves the wisdom and powers that the brooch bestows on him, but he does not realize that he actually possesses many of these skills himself. He is already a good leader, his friends respect him, he is resourceful and intelligent, and by giving up the brooch he proves himself a hero. He does not need the brooch at all. By the end of the story, Taran has changed a great amount. He is no longer the naive and prideful child he set out as, but has grown into a brave, thoughtful, kind-hearted and intelligent man. He has gained wisdom and honor. He now sees that a simple life can be an honorable one and that peace, happiness, and good friends are what is really important in life.

Eilonwy

Eilonwy is a princess who Taran encountered on a previous adventure. She had no interest in returning to her people and wished to live with Taran instead with whom she had made firm friends. Now she lives at Caer Dallben and works on the farm as a scullery maid. She seems to be quite happy with this simple life, although she loves adventure and is furious when Taran reveals that she is being left out of this one. She sneaks out and joins Taran anyway, and accompanies him for the rest of the quest. Eilonwy does not join the quest because she wants honor and glory like Taran, but because she wants to be involved. She hates being left out of anything, and is a very determined young girl. She also seems to like Taran as more than just a friend, and is determined to stay with him to support him and protect him.

In the story she shows herself to be very brave and willing to risk herself for the sake of others. However, she is also sensible, and will try to discourage others from taking needless risks. She is often the voice of sense, and though she is dismissed by Ellidyr and sometimes Taran for being 'just' a girl, they could all learn a lot from her. When they encounter the witches and are asked for an exchange for the cauldron, Eilonwy is willing to give up her ring and her bauble, two very precious possessions. She does this without hesitation, showing that she is able to value what is really important over her own desires.

Eilonwy is very emotional. She will often give in to sudden outbursts when she is upset or angry, and then apologize or go back on what she said in the same paragraph. Her emotions also make her very generous and kind-hearted; she is always on hand to offer encouragement, support, and comfort. When Taran gives up his brooch, it is Eilonwy who is able to make him see that he has not really lost anything because he is still a hero and still has his honor. She is a good friend to Taran and remains loyal to him throughout the story.



Ellidyr, Prince of Pen-Llarcaw

Ellidyr is the third son of a king and so has not inherited anything. He has two older brothers who received everything, and he feels as though he is constantly overlooked. He feels like he has been left with nothing, and seems to think this is very unfair. He therefore feels the desperate need to prove himself, and to win honor and glory in order to make a name for himself. He is determined to be respected and famed. He has no friends and no inheritance, and the only thing he really has of his own in the world is his horse Islimach. Islimach's bad temper reflects his own, as well as her distrust of others. She is a kindred spirit for him, and the only thing he really has to take pride in. When he sees Taran attempting to win honor for himself too, he immediately sees him as a rival and is antagonistic towards him. When Taran manages to get a stone out of Islimach's shoe, Ellidyr sees this as an attempt to steal his horse from him as well as the glory that he thinks should be his. He resents Taran and is obviously a little jealous of him. He leaves the group to search for the cauldron on his own, determined to have all the honor for himself. Later, when Taran finds the cauldron before him, Ellidyr is furious and turns to desperate measures. He steals the cauldron, making Taran swear an oath to say that Ellidyr found and fought for it. This attempt to take honor through deception only dishonors Ellidyr, but he cannot see this as he is blinded by his pride.

Adaon sees Ellidyr's pride, paranoia, and desperation as a 'black beast' that digs its claws into him constantly and will one day take him over. Ellidyr is scornful of this, thinking Adaon means a literal beast. He allows his pride and his resentment to grow and grow, until he actually becomes the enemy, stealing the cauldron and trying to kill Taran. This is the moment that his black beast takes over completely. Later, however, when Ellidyr is captured by Morgant, he understands what Adaon meant about the beast. He sees that he behaved appallingly, and apologizes to Taran. He tells him that he may have given in to pride, but he is not evil. He would never have used the cauldron itself and would have taken it back to Caer Dallben to be destroyed. This is the difference between Ellidyr and Morgant. Ellidyr is misguided and can be redeemed, whereas Morgant has turned too far down the path of evil, plotting to begin a civil war and kill his own people. At the end of the story, Ellidyr does redeem himself by jumping into the cauldron and sacrificing his own life to destroy it. Here, he finally puts the greater good ahead of himself, showing that he can be a hero. In doing this, he finally earns the honor that he struggled so hard to find. Throughout the book, Ellidyr's character arc takes him from companion to antagonist, to enemy, and finally to hero. This makes him a very interesting and ultimately pitiable character.

Fflewddur Fflam

Fflewddur Fflam is a bard that Taran met in a previous adventure when escaping from the evil enchantress Achren's castle. He is a very jolly, friendly man who loves adventure. He is a good friend to Taran and will accompany him on any mission. He shows that he trusts and respects Taran and is happy to follow him. He also proves his loyalty and noble spirit by offering to give up his own prized possession to aid the



mission. He is very brave and determined, and can sometimes be a little hot-headed, wanting to charge into danger without thinking.

Ffleuddur possesses a magical harp that plays beautiful music. Its strings break whenever Ffleuddur tells a lie or stretches the truth, which seems to be rather often. Ffleuddur is very flamboyant and can be a little boastful. He is always very enthusiastic and his presence helps to keep morale up even in difficult situations.

Adaon

Adaon is a thoughtful and taciturn man who is very skilled at surviving in the wild. He seems to be very attuned to the world around him. He has prophetic dreams, which are later found to be caused by the power of his magical brooch. It seems to be the weight of knowing the future that makes Adaon very quiet and reflective. Later, the reader finds out that he knew all along of his own death, which is why he always seemed so sad.

Adaon is a good friend to Taran and gives him his brooch when he dies. He sees the goodness in Taran, just as he sees the black beast inside of Ellidyr. He encourages Taran to reach out to Ellidyr and be patient with him, and helps Taran to become a better person. Adaon is a very wise man, who often speaks of the honor to be found in a simple, peaceful life. Later, Taran appreciates what he meant and realizes just how wise Adaon really was.

Doli

Doli is a dwarf who Taran met on a previous adventure. He made friends with Taran and his companions, and is now helping Gwydion on this quest. He has the power to make himself invisible, though it hurts his ears and fills them with buzzing to do so. Although Doli always seems grumpy, this appears to be a front that he puts up to disguise the fact that he is secretly very happy to be helping his friends. He seems to like praise, and enjoys playing the role of hero. He is brave and loyal, as well as a more grounded and sensible character than many others. Along with Eilonwy, he is often the voice of reason.

Gurgi

The author never fully describes who or what Gurgi is. He appears to be a hairy humanoid creature with long arms. He met Taran in a previous adventure and formed a strong bond of friendship with him. Now he sees Taran as his master and would do anything for him. He is incredibly loyal and affectionate. Although he is often frightened and values his own life greatly, he will risk himself for Taran and for the mission, proving his strength of character. Gurgi is a very likeable character, partly because of his odd, quirky way of speaking.



Gwydion

Gwydion is a famous hero and the Crown Prince of Prydain. The other kings rule over small areas or cantrevs, but all owe their allegiance to Gwydion. This is why King Smoit and King Morgant follow his orders. Gwydion is a brave, heroic, and wise man. He is determined to do what is best for the land and its people, which is why he has decided to arrange this risky quest to steal the cauldron. Gwydion shows that he is a strong character who can resist the temptation that the powerful cauldron offers, as he only wants to destroy it. Gwydion is a friend of Taran, but is not as close to him as his other companions are. Gwydion is an important man with a lot of responsibility, and so often remains a little aloof. He does not appear in this story much, except at the beginning and the end to impart a little of his wisdom to Taran.

Arawn

Arawn is an evil sorcerer and is also known as the Death Lord. He rules over a kingdom called Annuvin, and covets Prydain. He wants to take over Prydain and enslave its people. He is the main antagonist driving the plot, but does not actually appear at all in this story. He might be the evil force behind events, but it is ordinary people who have given in to their weaknesses who really cause the trouble and whom Taran and his friends must face.

Arawn's warriors are the Cauldron Born, who are undead soldiers created in the Black Cauldron, and the Huntsmen, fierce warriors whose strength is increased when one of them dies. Arawn is influenced by the character of the same name in Welsh mythology, who is the god of death. However, the Arawn in this story is not the same person and is not supposed to be a god.

Dallben

Dallben is a powerful sorcerer who lives at Caer Dallben. He is extremely wise and clever, but does not seem interested in worldly possessions, fame or power. His wisdom seems to have brought him to the same conclusion as other wise characters in the story, that a simple peaceful life is better than one spent battling for glory. Dallben gained his great wisdom by reading The Book of Three. This was given to him by the witches Orgoch, Orddu and Orwen, who looked after him as a baby. He was given the choice of a sword, representing power, a harp, representing renown, and The Book of Three, representing knowledge. He chose knowledge and the book. Dallben clearly values wisdom over almost everything else. He is a kind hearted man who looks after Taran as if he were his son and tries to guide him on the right path in life. Despite worrying about him, Dallben understands that Taran has to grow up on his own and experience the world for himself. Dallben cannot protect him forever.



Orddu, Orgoch and Orwen

Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen are three mysterious enchantresses living in the Marshes of Morva. They were the original owners of the Black Cauldron, which they call the Black Crochan. They lent it to Arawn, but when he did not return it they stole it back from him. At first they seem dangerous and evil, as they want to turn Taran and his friends into toads. Later, they are friendly when they find out that Taran knows Dallben, who they looked after as a baby. They are very quirky and strange, and seem almost crazy at times. Their speech to each other suggests that they often swap names and roles between them. They agree to give Taran the cauldron, but only in exchange for something precious. They take his brooch and then tell Taran how the cauldron can be destroyed.

Although the witches are helpful in the end, they are still very ambiguous characters. They even admit themselves that they are neither good nor evil, and do not care about things and people in the same way that others do. Instead they are concerned with how things are and how things should be, rather than what is good or bad. They seem to be very attuned to the destiny of things and people, and insist on upholding what is fated to be. At the same time, they put a great deal of importance on people's choices. It is possible that they represent some kind of guardians or controllers of fate. Whatever they are, it is clear that they are very powerful and dangerous. At night they seem to transform into beautiful young women, but appear as hags during the day. Their true identity and purpose is left a mystery.

King Morgant

King Morgant is the ruler of a cantrev loyal to Gwydion. At first Morgant appears to be a good man and a skilled fighter, but later proves himself to be a traitor. He captures Taran and his friends, and takes the cauldron. He means to use it to create his own army of Cauldron Born, and so defeat Gwydion and take his power. He does not seem to care that this will cause his own people to suffer. He has been overcome with the desire for power, and has obviously been harboring resentment towards Gwydion for some time. This is another example of how pride and ambition can lead a person to evil actions. King Morgant is defeated at the end of the story, but Gwydion insists on honoring him. He explains that Morgant was once a very good man, and that good and bad exists in everyone.

Coll

Coll is the owner of the farm Caer Dallben and works as a farmer there. He is a good friend to Taran, and acts as a father to him along with Dallben. He is a very honest, kind-hearted and brave man. He was once a hero and a great warrior, but chose a simple life over one of glory, as other wise characters in the story do. However, when the need is great, he agrees to go on the quest to help the kingdom, putting the greater good over his own desires. Coll only appears briefly in this story.



King Smoit

King Smoit is the ruler of a cantrev loyal to Gwydion. Unlike Morgant, Smoit remains loyal throughout the story. He is a very loud and exuberant man who enjoys fighting and adventure. He is concerned with honor and glory, which can cause him to be a little hotheaded, but will not put these above the leader that he respects.

Gwystyl

Gwystyl is the keeper of a way post for the Fair Folk, located near Annuvin. He seems like a weak, grumpy, and cowardly creature, who only reluctantly agrees to help the companions. However, this seems to be merely a front, as Gwystyl is actually a lot more intelligent and brave than he lets on. He seems to have been putting on an act in order to encourage Taran and the others down the path they took, leading to the destruction of the cauldron. When they leave on their quest, Gwystyl immediately seeks out Gwydion to let him know, which allows Gwydion to come to the rescue at the end of the story.



Objects/Places

The Black Cauldron/The Black Crochan

The Black Cauldron, also known as the Black Crochan, is a magical cauldron. It once belonged to the three enchantresses Orgoch, Orwen, and Orddu, who live in the Marshes of Morva. They lent it to Arawn, the Death Lord, who used it to create an army of undead, unstoppable warriors. This evil corrupted the cauldron, and now it is useless for anything except making more Cauldron Born warriors. When Arawn did not return the cauldron at the appointed time, the three witches stole it back from him. In this story, Gwydion arranges a mission to try to obtain and destroy the cauldron. Taran finds it in the Marshes of Morva, and exchanges his magical brooch for it. However, the cauldron can only be destroyed if a person willingly sacrifices their own life to do so. Ellidyr does exactly this at the end of the story and the cauldron is destroyed.

Adaon's Brooch

Adaon's brooch is a magical brooch that bestows wisdom on its wearer. Adaon gives this brooch to Taran when he dies. Taran soon finds that he can sense and understand things better with the brooch, and uses it to keep him and his companions safe. The brooch also grants him dreams of the future. Later, Taran is asked to exchange the brooch for the cauldron. This is a difficult choice, as the brooch would have helped Taran to become a great hero, something he strongly desires, but the cauldron needs to be destroyed for the sake of the whole kingdom. Taran chooses to sacrifice the brooch and its powers in order to carry out his mission. Afterwards, Eilonwy observes that Taran never really lost anything, as the talents and skills he displayed while wearing the brooch did not come from him at all but from the brooch. Later, Taran sees this too, and understands that he can be a hero without the brooch and that it is worth more this way as it comes from inside of him.

Eilonwy's Bauble

Eilonwy carries around a magical bauble, which seems to be some kind of gemstone or sphere of gold. With it she can create light in any situation where it is needed, and can also use it to illuminate a difficult problem, as things seem clearer to her when looked at in the light of the bauble. It will also show things that cannot normally be seen. This is something that she treasures greatly, yet she is willing to give it up for the sake of the mission, and for Taran.

Fflewddur's Harp

Fflewddur Fflam possesses a magical harp that plays beautiful music. However, every time Fflewddur lies or stretches the truth, a harp string breaks. Despite this annoyance,



Fflewddur values his harp greatly and cannot bear the thought of breaking it or losing it. When he falls in the river, he is more concerned about whether he has damaged his harp than whether he has broken his arm. Fflewddur Fflam loves his harp, but is still willing to give it up for the mission and to help Taran, showing what a noble and loyal person he is.

Melynlas

Melynlas is Taran's horse, sired by Gwydion's horse Melyngar. Melynlas is extremely precious to Taran.

Islimach

Islimach is Ellidyr's horse and she displays similar characteristics to her master. She is moody and spirited. She does not seem to trust anyone except Ellidyr. When she gets a stone in her shoe, Taran manages to calm her and get it out. Ellidyr sees this as an attempt to steal his horse, and so take away from him the only thing that is truly his. At the end of the story, Islimach jumps off a cliff when she sees her master's dead body, proving how strongly attached to him she is.

Lluagor

Lluagor is Adaon's horse.

Melyngar

Melyngar is Gwydion's horse, and the father of Taran's horse.

The Book of Three

The Book of Three is a book containing all the knowledge that can be known in the world. Dallben acquired it from the witches of Morva when he left their care. They offered him a sword that would make him a great ruler, a harp that would make him the greatest bard, or The Book of Three. Dallben chose the latter. By reading it, Dallben has gained great wisdom and understanding. However, it has also caused him to age prematurely as not all knowledge is pleasant or good.

Prydain

Prydain is the magical land in which this story is set. It is split up into smaller kingdoms called cantrevs that are ruled over by lesser kings. These kings owe their allegiance to the High King, who rules all of Prydain. The High King is currently a man called Math.



Once Prydain was ruled by the evil enchantress Achren, but the Sons of Don came to the land and liberated it from her. Now their descendents rule, including Gwydion who is the current Crown Prince and war leader. Prydain borders Annuvin, the Land of Death, which is ruled by the evil Arawn. Within Prydain is also the kingdom of the Fair Folk, which tends to keep itself separate from the world of men.

The Marshes of Morva

The Marshes of Morva is a swampy area in which the three enchantresses Orgoch, Orwen, and Orddu live in a small dilapidated cottage. This is where Taran and his friends come to try to retrieve the cauldron. It is a very dangerous place full of treacherous areas of sinking mud. Taran manages to cross safely when wearing Adaon's brooch, but after he has given it up he decides it would be wiser to skirt around the marsh.

Gwystyl's Waypost

Gwystyl's waypost is a shelter hidden in an embankment, close to the entrance to Annuvin. It is supposed to be a place where one of the Fair Folk can go to receive aid and hospitality in an emergency. Unfortunately, Gwystyl seems much less welcoming than he is supposed to be.

The Fair Folk

The Fair Folk are a magical race comprising of dwarves, elves, fairies, and other such creatures, who separate themselves from the world of men. They are normally not interested in becoming involved in mortal affairs, but they hate Arawn as much as the humans do. This is also why they help Taran in his mission. Doli is one of the Fair Folk.

Annuvin

Annuvin is an evil land bordering Prydain. It is ruled by Arawn, the Death Lord, who wants to rule over Prydain too. Prydain is therefore constantly engaged in war against Annuvin. In the first novel of this series, Gwydion fought Arawn's champion, the Horned King. In this story, Gwydion is determined to steal and destroy Arawn's cauldron, which Arawn uses to create his undead army.

Black Gate

Black Gate is one of the entrances to Annuvin. This is where Gwydion plans to begin the mission to steal Arawn's cauldron. He leaves Taran, Ellidyr and Adaon near Black Gate to guard their rear and their packs, and to be ready if they should be needed. This is where they are attacked by Arawn's minions called the Huntsmen.



Caer Dallben

Caer Dallben is a farm owned by Coll, named after Dallben, the powerful sorcerer who lives there. This is also Taran's home and where he carries out the role of Assistant Pig-Keeper. Eilonwy, who joined Taran in a previous quest, also lives here and works as a scullery maid. Caer Dallben is a peaceful place where its inhabitants can enjoy a simple life. At the beginning of the story, this is not enough for Taran, but by the end he has learned that honor can be found in this kind of life just as much as in glory and battle.

Caer Cadarn

Caer Cadarn is a town in King Smoit's realm where Gwydion sends King Smoit to wait with reinforcements in case they are needed.

Caer Dathyl

Caer Dathyl is the main city from which Prydain is ruled. This is where the High King Math lives and where Gwydion resides. This is also where the Hall of Lore and the Hall of Bards is located and where the Chief Bard lives.

Bard

A bard is a person who tells tales through music and song. A bard usually carries around an instrument with him. The bards are dedicated to learning as well as music, and the Hall of Bards in Caer Dathyl is a place where a great amount of information and records are kept. The bards are respected and loved in the land of Prydain, and a man could earn much glory for himself by becoming a great bard. The life of a bard is often one of wandering from place to place, and many bards seem to long for adventure. Ffleuddur Fflam refers to himself as a bard, but is technically not an official bard, since he did not pass his exams.

Cauldron Born

The Cauldron Born are the deathless warriors that Arawn creates using the Black Cauldron. He kills a man, or puts the body of a dead man into the cauldron, and they rise out of it as an undead soldier who cannot be killed. They are enslaved to the will of the person who made them, and so will follow his or her orders unquestioningly.

Huntsmen

The Huntsmen are warriors of Annuvin who become supernaturally stronger whenever one of them dies. This makes them almost impossible to stop. They are beast-like, wear animal skins, and can move incredibly fast. They are completely loyal to Arawn, but are



not mindless slaves like the Cauldron Born. They are very frightening and Taran and his companions find themselves having to flee when they face them.

Gwythaints

Gwythaints are monstrous birds who carry out the will of Arawn. They are strong, dangerous, and difficult to fight when they attack. They often carry out the role of spies for Arawn.



Themes

Honor and Pride

Honor is the main theme running throughout the story. There are several characters who are concerned with their own personal honor. Both Taran and Ellidyr are anxious to prove themselves and to win honor, and this often drives them to misguided behavior as they fight with each other at inappropriate times. Taran has worked on a farm and been in charge of a pig all his life. He sees this as an unadventurous and unimportant life and longs for something more. Coll gave him the title Assistant Pig-Keeper so that he could be proud of his role. This shows that from quite an early age he has longed for something more than his ordinary life. In the previous novel he set out on a quest and helped the great hero Gwydion, but returned to the life of an Assistant Pig-Keeper at the end. He now feels as though he is meant to be more than a farm-hand, and that if he could be an adventurer once then he can be one again. He longs to prove himself to Gwydion and to become a great hero like him. He wants people to talk about him the way they do about Gwydion to respect him and admire him. He sees this as a great honor, and is determined to win this kind of honor for himself. This causes Taran to long for battle, glory and adventure. He is very naive, and far too eager to run into danger without thinking things through properly first. He is also very touchy when Ellidyr questions his honor, insulting him for being nothing but a pig keeper. Taran allows Ellidyr to get to him, letting his wounded pride cause resentment. When Ellidyr fights with Taran, Taran fights back, even when it is not at all sensible to do so. He even endangers his own life when he pushes past Ellidyr on a narrow path. Although Ellidyr had pushed past Taran first, Taran is also at fault for rising to the insult and pushing back. He should have had more sense. Thankfully, Taran is also a thoughtful and perceptive boy, and he quickly sees that his behavior is shameful. He realizes that he is just as much at fault as Ellidyr, and reprimands himself for arguing back. Although Taran's over-concern with pride is a failing, it is one that he recognizes and is determined to change. Taran is not a bad person.

As Taran becomes more aware of his own prideful behavior, he does begin to change. He grows up quickly, and his adventures teach him to be less naive. He soon comes to realize that what he sees as the honorable action is not always the most sensible or the right thing to do. Taran gets much better at putting the greater good before his own personal ambitions and honor. When deciding whether to go back to Gwydion or search for the cauldron, Taran is at first inclined to agree with Eilonwy and Doli, and so take the information to Gwydion. However, when Ellidyr says that he means to get the cauldron, Taran cannot bear the thought of Ellidyr winning all the honor for the deed. He changes his mind and decides to go after the cauldron. This decision leads to the death of Adaon, and Taran regrets his rash decision. Later, when he has to give up his powerful magical brooch to get the cauldron from the three enchantresses, he does so without hesitation. This is a large step for Taran, as the brooch could have helped him to be a hero, to win fame and glory and to increase his honor. He could have had everything he



has always dreamed about. However, he puts the safety and the good of the land above his own ambitions and pride, showing that he can be a real hero.

Later, Taran is asked to make an even harder sacrifice. Ellidyr will only help them to move the cauldron from the river if Taran agrees to say that Ellidyr won the cauldron. In other words, Taran must give up his honor and glory and let Ellidyr take it instead. He will be a hero, but nobody will know it and everyone will think Ellidyr is the real hero. This goes against everything that Taran wanted at the beginning of the story, and yet Taran quickly makes the decision to go along with this. He knows that it is more important to destroy the cauldron, and so puts the mission ahead of his pride and his honor. Taran realizes that he has been a hypocrite to condemn Ellidyr for his pride when he suffers from the same failing. Taran has been too concerned about himself and his honor, and will not allow this to happen again. Ellidyr's example has been the final wake up call that he needed. This is the final proof that Taran has learned his lesson about the dangers of pride.

In behaving in this way, Taran proves himself to be more honorable than Ellidyr. Ironically, in giving up his glory, which Taran saw as giving up his honor, Taran has actually gained honor. His honor is not something that can be taken from him in this way, as it lives inside him and is increased by his actions. It is not fame and glory that give a person honor, but how they act and the choices they make, whether anyone else knows about them or not. Taran is an honorable person and a hero because he chooses to sacrifice his own desires for the greater good. In the end, no one, not even Ellidyr, can ever steal this honor from him. Ellidyr's actions in stealing the cauldron, instead of bringing him the honor he so desperately desires, only prove how dishonorable he is. Ellidyr has not learned that honor is based on actions. By the end of the story Taran comes to understand this, and is no longer upset by losing the brooch or by calling Ellidyr a hero. Taran has proved himself to himself, and that is all that is important.

Ellidyr begins the story with a similar prideful attitude to Taran, though Ellidyr is much more forceful and rude. Ellidyr is the third son of a king, and so has inherited nothing from his parents. His brothers have everything and he has nothing, and he sees this as very unfair. He already thinks that so much honor and glory in life has been stolen from him, which makes him paranoid that others are trying to do the same. This is why he lashes out at Taran for helping his horse and for wanting to go on the quest. Ellidyr thinks Taran is trying to steal what little remains to him. This is completely irrational, but understandable given Ellidyr's background. Ellidyr allows his pride to take over completely, and throughout the story his resentment and anger towards others only grows. He is absolutely desperate to prove himself, much more so than Taran, and this drives him to desperate acts. Adaon likens this to a 'black beast' clinging on to him and digging its claws into him. In this analogy, the black beast stands for Ellidyr's pride, desperation and resentment. These are the emotions that are driving him, just as Adaon observed that the black beast drives all that he does. Later, Taran comes to understand what Adaon means by this, and even feels sympathy for Ellidyr. Ellidyr is finally consumed by the black beast of pride and steals the cauldron from Taran, trying to kill him and his friends. Ellidyr regrets this action later and apologizes for it. He explains that he was driven by pride but not by evil. He wanted glory, not power, and would never



have used the cauldron himself as Morgant intends to. At the end of the story Ellidyr redeems himself by sacrificing his life to destroy the cauldron. He finally understands about the black beast and is determined to put the greater good above himself for once. By this action, he finally does win true honor for himself and becomes a hero.

Taran and Ellidyr are berated for their fixation on honor, but they are not the only characters who are concerned with it. King Smoit also speaks of honor, and is always inclined to fight rather than run away. He sees not fighting when the land is in need as being dishonorable, and is annoyed that Gwydion wants him to remain in reserve during the attempt to steal the cauldron. King Morgant also seems to be concerned with the honor of himself and others. He thinks that Taran and Ellidyr should be given a chance to win honor by fighting with his army. Of course, this is actually an attempt to win them over to his cause. As the reader finds out later, Morgant has been plotting against Gwydion and means to take the cauldron for himself to overthrow him. Morgant's need for power and glory has obviously gotten out of hand, causing him to turn to evil. This shows how too much ambition and pride can lead even a good man to evil actions, as it inspires feelings of jealousy and resentment. Morgant is a good example of what Ellidyr might become if he allows the 'black beast' of pride and arrogance to take over. Even Smoit, who remains loyal to the end, and Fflewddur Fflam, who is a brave and good friend to Taran, can be driven to rash or hot-headed actions through a need to take what they perceive as the more honorable action.

An important lesson in the story is that honor does not have to come from great deeds, battle, fame, and glory. Adaon talks of the honor to be won in a simple life, and later Taran comes to understand what he means. To live a good, peaceful life is to be a good, honorable person. Honor comes from actions and choices, and the choice to lead a life of simple goodness and honesty is an honorable one. This is shown as great wisdom as the wisest characters make this observation. It is ironic that Taran goes on a great adventure to seek his honor, and ultimately finds it in the same place he started.

Growing Up/Becoming a Man

At the beginning of the story Taran is preoccupied with the idea of becoming a man. In other words, he wants to show that he is grown up and should not be considered a child any longer. This is why he is so desperate to prove himself to Gwydion and the others. Several characters warn Taran that becoming a man involves grief and hardship, as well as good things, and that events might not be as simple as he imagines them. He should not be so rash and eager to enter danger in order to prove himself. He is still very naive, and imagines that his quest will involve heroics and glory. He does not consider that real battle might be frightening and upsetting, and that life is not always like a story.

Taran soon learns that the adventure will not go as he expected. At first he is told to remain behind to guard the horses and packs with Adaon and Ellidyr. This disappoints Taran, as he wishes to be involved in the battle. However, when the plan does not go as expected and they are attacked by Arawn's Huntsmen, Taran experiences how terrifying real combat can be. He is almost killed, and soon has to run for his life along with the



others. Later, in another fight with the Huntsmen, Adaon is wounded. Taran flees with him, but he dies soon after. Taran is distraught, as Adaon had been a good friend to him and he respected the man greatly. He feels partly responsible for Adaon's death, as he is the one who chose to search for the cauldron, leading them into the path of the Huntsmen. Already, Taran has experienced terror, real battle, death and tragedy, grief and guilt. Later, he is also called upon to make big sacrifices for the sake of the mission. He sees people at their worst, such as the jealousy and resentment of Ellidyr, and the power-hungry evil actions of Morgant. He sees what pride and ambition can lead people to do, and begins to realize that he shares some of these failings. At the end of the story he tells Gwydion that becoming a man means something very different from what he imagined. It means realizing what the world and life is really like and how people can act. It means seeing that there is danger and evil in people, and that even good people can be led to bad things by pride and ambition. Growing up has made Taran see the world in a different way. However, it does not necessarily have to be all bad. Gwydion points out that there is good in the world and in people, and that growing up makes Taran appreciate it more. Taran has learned the real value in a simple, honest life, and in good friends. This is what growing up is about.

Taran's experiences do not just make him see the world in a different way and understand that becoming a man can be hard. They also change him in important ways. Taran grows up a great deal throughout the course of the story, and though it does not happen as he expected, he does become a man by the end, as well as a better person. Through his adventures, Taran comes to understand the importance of responsibility. At first, he tends to put his own desire for honor and glory, and his own pride, above other concerns. Later, he sees the error in this and is determined to change. He manages to put the greater good above himself and his desires when he gives up the brooch, but it is not until he is asked to give up his chance for glory that he fully realizes the danger of his own pride. He sees that he has been guilty of the same failing as Ellidyr, and that in order to be a real hero he must put his pride aside. A hero does not have to have the praise of others to be a hero, and honor does not rely on anyone else but himself. Honor rests on his own actions and choices, and even if Ellidyr takes his glory, he cannot take his honor. In fact, by putting the good of the realm above himself, Taran is only increasing his honor, not losing it. By stealing the cauldron and being dishonest about his role in the quest, Ellidyr is losing honor, even if he does gain the glory. This is a very mature way to look at the situation, and when Taran finally understands this it shows that he has fully grown up. He now understands that he does not have to prove anything to anyone else. His actions make him a hero and so he is a hero.

Friendship

Taran begins the quest with good friends that he made on a previous adventure. These include Ffleuddur Fflam, the bard; Gurgi, a hairy man-like creature who is very attached to Taran; and Eilonwy, a princess who helped Taran to escape from an evil enchantress's castle. These companions are vital in helping Taran through his quest, and all show incredible friendship and loyalty to him. Eilonwy and Gurgi refuse to be left out when Taran is going into danger, and sneak out to join him anyway. They provide



help in fights, and more importantly companionship and support when Taran needs it. When they face the three enchantresses, all of them offer up their own prized possessions, showing that they are dedicated to the mission. They are also trying to prevent Taran from having to give up his brooch, putting his needs above their own. They prove how loyal and dedicated to him they are, and through this their bond is strengthened. When Taran does give up the brooch, they reassure him, and Eilonwy's advice and caring helps him through. When Ellidyr asks for a bigger sacrifice, Eilonwy and Fflewddur stick up for him against Ellidyr, but are also willing to support Taran in whatever he decides. They trust him to lead them, and they are willing to stand with him and die with him. Through this, Taran comes to really appreciate what friendship means, and how important good friends are.

Friends also help Taran to grow up and accept what is really important. Through their own willingness to self sacrifice, and their trust in him, he comes to see that he cannot put his own needs and desires above the mission. Their support helps him to cope with hardship, and inspires him to be a better person. This is something that Ellidyr is distinctly lacking. He has no friends, and no support at all. He has nobody to tell him when he is behaving badly as Eilonwy does for Taran; nobody who will support him unconditionally like Gurgi does; and nobody who shows deep trust in him as Fflewddur Fflam does. It is little wonder that Ellidyr finds it hard to change, and that he becomes so bitter and paranoid. Without friends he cannot break away from the 'black beast' of his obsession, pride and anger. It is only later, when he comes to regret his actions, that he tries to reach out to Taran. Clearly being a good person and friendship are closely linked. By the end, Taran comes to see that a simple life and good friends are what is really important in life, and that it is these things that are the path to real honor. It is therefore appropriate that the story ends with Taran returning home to his farm life with his friends.

Destiny

Destiny is a recurring idea in this story. Gwydion, Taran, and Adaon all talk of their destiny, and the three enchantresses Orgoch, Orwen and Orddu also mention destiny and fate. Adaon receives dreams, brought about through the power of the brooch, that prophecy the future in a cryptic manner. This shows that some things are set in stone and are meant to happen. However, Adaon also insists on Taran having a free choice when they are deciding whether to go after the cauldron or not. This shows that free will still exists alongside the idea of destiny. Perhaps, in some cases choice is necessary, but once the choice has been made, the consequences have already been laid out. Alternatively, it is possible that choice is merely an illusion, and that Taran was always destined to choose as he did, and to go to the marsh to retrieve the cauldron. Adaon knew that he would die, and so refused to make the choice for Taran in case he decided to save his own life. It certainly seems like Taran was destined to go to Morva all along, as he is the only one who could have succeeded. He knows Dallben, which allowed him to gain the enchantress's trust, and he has the brooch, which is the one thing that could be exchanged for the cauldron. Even the witches themselves speak of a destiny laid on everything and everyone in the world. Everything has its place, and they say that they



are concerned with how things are and how things should be. They are not good or evil, but merely see that things happen as they should. As such, they seem to be keepers of fate, and bear a resemblance to other mythological figures connected to fate, such as the three Fates or the Norns of Greek and Norse mythology respectively.

If everything in the world has a destiny, then perhaps free will really is just an illusion. However, the three enchantresses also place a great deal of importance on choice. Taran has to make a choice, and Arawn had to be allowed to make a choice years ago too. The witches seem to be saying that fate cannot be denied, but free will also cannot be interfered with. This ambiguous line between free will and destiny is a theme that runs throughout the story, and it is ultimately up to the reader and the characters themselves where to draw the line. This combination of destiny, and real heroic choices made by the characters, is a typical feature of heroes in many mythologies, including the Welsh mythology from which the author has drawn inspiration.



Style

Point of View

The story is told in third person, but it is very much from Taran's point of view. Taran's thoughts and emotions are followed closely, whereas other characters' feelings must be guessed from their speech and behavior. Taran is the main character, and the events are seen from his perspective. The reader therefore does not know what is happening elsewhere or with any other character when Taran is not present. Although there is a wider conflict and adventure taking place, it is Taran's story that is being focused on. One of the main themes in the book is growing up, learning responsibility, and dealing with pride. These ideas could not be communicated as effectively if the story did not focus on Taran. His emotional journey, and the lessons he learns, are just as important as what is actually happening in the story. By showing events from Taran's point of view, the author also allows the reader to sympathize with him much more easily, and to understand why he acts in the way he does. Since the reader has seen his ambitions and desires and knows how much it means to him to be a hero, they also greatly appreciate his sacrifices.

Setting

The story is set in the magical land of Prydain. Prydain is split into areas called cantrevs that are ruled over by kings who owe their allegiance to the High King. Caer Cadarn is the main town in the cantrev ruled over by King Smoit, and is used in this story as a place to hold a reserve army in case it is urgently needed later. Caer Dathyl is the main city of Prydain and where the High King rules from. This is also where the main bard's college is located and where the Chief Bard resides. These are distant places not seen in the novel, which remain mysterious and far away. They are places from stories, places of excitement and adventure to Taran, who has lived a very sheltered life on his farm. Taran longs to make a name for himself and to discover more about life, but he soon finds that real life is not as magical and exciting as he once thought it was. The places in Prydain at first appear to be wonderful things in a magical land, like those in fantasy stories, but are soon revealed to be as brutal and scary as real life. Despite this, just like in real life, there is beauty everywhere.

Caer Dallben is the name of the farm on which Taran lives and works, owned by Coll and named after Dallben, the powerful sorcerer who lives there. Dallben possesses great knowledge, wisdom and power, but he does not long for glory or for great cities. He is content living on a simple farm, enjoying a good, peaceful existence. Although Taran finds this way of life very dull at the beginning of the story, by the end he has learned to appreciate it. He can now understand why Dallben would choose this, and why other characters such as Coll and Adaon insist that there is honor in a simple life. This is an important message in the story, and so this particular setting is very important. Caer Dallben represents a kind of ideal; it is a quiet, peaceful and honest



existence, and a simple life free from grief and pain. When Taran enters the world he finds battle and excitement, but also loss and disillusionment. Caer Dallben is a place that he can return to and feel happy and safe.

Annuvin is the realm of the evil Death Lord Arawn. It is called the Land of the Dead, but it is not the underworld or afterlife. Arawn is named after the death god of Welsh mythology, but he is not supposed to be the same person. In this story, Arawn is an evil sorcerer who wants to rule over Prydain as well as Annuvin. He is therefore constantly attacking Prydain, and Prydain's rulers fight against him. Annuvin appears to be a dark place full of pain and suffering. It is entered by Dark Gate, a treacherous and dangerous place. The landscape reflects the nature of its ruler, becoming frightening and sinister. This is quite a simplistic idea and very typical of fantasy. However, other areas do not necessarily reflect the truth of what is found in them and appearances can certainly be deceiving. Gwystyl's waypost appears to be drab and gloomy, and certainly nothing impressive. The characters misjudge Gwystyl, thinking him a weak coward, but he is actually a very important and valiant person amongst the Fair Folk. Later, the Marshes of Morva appear lifeless and dismal, and yet they contain a cottage where three strange enchantresses live. The cottage appears to be abandoned and run down, but it is home to Orgoch, Orwen, and Orddu and is still very much lived in. The enchantresses themselves seem to be evil old hags, but appear as beautiful women at night when they think that no one is watching them. They are like their home as the marsh is full of hidden dangers and unexpected things.

The setting of the story is loosely based on Welsh mythology, as many of the ideas and names are taken from it. This is why there are magical beings, strange spells and powerful objects, and why the idea of destiny is so important to the characters. The landscape is based on Wales, which is located in the United Kingdom. Wales is a very beautiful place with many hills and valleys, lush grass and trees, mountains, lakes and rivers, and a great deal of rain. However, although Prydain reflects Wales, it is not actually supposed to be Wales. It is a separate magical world. Although aspects of Prydain reflect Welsh mythology, the story is not meant to be a retelling of Welsh legends.

Language and Meaning

Much of the language in which the story is told seems a little old-fashioned with archaic words and oddly phrased sentences. This reflects the fact that the story is set in another world in times long past. The world is vaguely set in medieval times or earlier, but it is a fantasy land and so does not conform to any particular time period. The language used in the narration of the story mostly resembles that found in high medieval romantic tales, which is what the story reads like. The quirky language of several of the characters helps to give a sense of magic and mystery, and helps the reader to understand that this world is not our own.

Many of the characters have very distinctive ways of speaking. Eilonwy is very emotional and will often launch into outbursts of anger or shock, only to retract the



heated things she said moments later. She uses similes and metaphors a lot when she is talking to others, such as comparing Gwystyl's rudeness to a person closing their eyes and covering their face in the hope they will not be seen. Gurgi speaks in a very quirky manner, using rhymes at the end of his sentences and referring to himself in third person. He will often praise himself or attempt to elevate himself in his own speech, yet at the same time is very groveling and subservient. It is clear from the way he speaks that he is desperate for the approval and friendship of others, but that he is very loyal to those he does call his friends. Fflewddur Fflam is another character who tends to refer to himself in the third person. In particular, he often calls himself 'a Fflam.' Unlike Gurgi, this does not seem to be a lack of intelligence but an attempt to add drama to his speech. He is a bard, and so likes to be flamboyant in everything he does. He often speaks as if he is telling a story, and sometimes uses some very elaborate phrases. Whatever he says, whether it is making an observation, professing his loyalty or lamenting the fact that he thinks he will die, he is always enthusiastic. Fflewddur's tendency to refer to himself as 'a Fflam' probably also reflects the fact that he was once a king, and so his family's name and honor is something he was always taught to boast of. In contrast to these quirky and exuberant characters, Doli is gruff and often grumpy, always grumbling or complaining about something. Adaon is quiet and reflective and only speaks if he has something important to say. These differences in speech and language help to establish the very different characters and their traits, as well as adding interest and humor to the story.

Structure

The story is told with a very simple structure in chronological order with no flashbacks. There are however some flash-forwards or foreshadowing as both Adaon and Taran dream of the future at different points in the story. This is always in a cryptic manner, heightening suspense and only making full sense when the events actually come to pass.

The story is told at a very fast pace, moving quickly from one event to another. The mission is urgent. Taran and his companions do not really have the time to stand around and talk. In this way, the story is almost all action, but it does not lose anything in character development or depth of themes because of this. Characters are shown to be learning, growing and changing through their actions and their choices, and through their interaction with others. This allows the story to be both fun and exciting, while also being deep and thoughtful.



Quotes

""Though manhood," he added softly, with a trace of sadness, "may not be all that you believe"" (Chapter 1, p. 9).

""I have marched in many a battle host," Adaon answered quietly, "but I have also planted seeds and reaped the harvest with my own hands. And I have learned there is greater honor in a field well plowed than in a field steeped in blood"" (Chapter 3, p. 27).

""Do you love danger so much?" asked Gwydion. "Before you are a man," he added gently, "you will learn to hate it. Yes, and fear it, too, even as I do"" (Chapter 3, p. 35).

"Is there not glory enough in living the days given to us? You should know there is adventure in simply being among those we love and the things we love, and beauty, too" (Chapter 8, p. 75).

"As he held the brooch, Taran recalled with bitter clarity the joys of sight and scent, of dewdrops on a spiderweb, his rescue of the companions from the rock fall, of Gurgi praising his wisdom, the admiring eyes of Eilonwy, and Adaon who had entrusted the brooch to him. Once more there came to him the pride of strength and knowledge" (Chapter 15, p. 127).

"...you didn't give up a thing to the enchantresses, not really. You did exchange the clasp and everything that went along with it. But, don't you see, all those things came from the clasp itself; they weren't inside you" (Chapter 15, p. 132).

"If there is a destiny laid on me, I shall face it. I hope only that I may face it as well as Adaon did his" (Chapter 15, p. 133).

"All my life I have been forced into the second rank. I have been put aside, slighted. Honor? It has been denied me at every turn. But this time I shall not let the prize slip from my fingers" (Chapter 17, p. 147).

""I care nothing for your black beast!" shouted Ellidyr. "I care for my honor"" (Chapter 17, p. 148).

""Pig-boy!" Eilonwy cried indignantly. "Don't ever speak of yourself that way, Taran of Caer Dallben. No matter what has happened, you're not a pig-boy; you're an Assistant Pig-Keeper! That's honor in itself!" (Chapter 18, p. 155).

""It is easy to judge evil unmixed," replied Gwydion. "But, alas, in most of us good and bad are closely woven as the threads on a loom; greater wisdom than mine is needed for the judging"" (Chapter 20, p. 174).

"I had longed to enter the world of men. Now I see it filled with sorrow, with cruelty and treachery, with those who would destroy all around them" (Chapter 20, p. 177).

""That is why your sacrifice was all the more difficult," Gwydion said. "You chose to be a hero not through enchantment but through your own manhood"" (Chapter 20, p. 177).



Topics for Discussion

What does Taran learn about pride in his adventure? Is pride dangerous and why? Can it ever be a good thing? What kinds of things should a person be proud of, and when is pride inappropriate?

Why is friendship important and how is this shown throughout the story?

Discuss Taran's sacrifices in the story. What things is he asked to give up? Which is the hardest for him and why? What do Taran's sacrifices show about his character?

Adaon claims that there is a 'black beast' tormenting Ellidyr. What does he mean by this? What is the symbolism of the 'black beast'? How are Adaon's words proved true?

Discuss the theme of honour in this story. What is honour and how does a person earn it? Which characters are mistaken about honour and why? What has Taran learned about honour by the end of the story?

Discuss the idea of destiny in this story. What clues suggest that fate is guiding everything and everyone in Prydain? Do the characters have free will? How are the three enchantresses in the Marshes of Morva connected to the idea of destiny?

Is Ellidyr a hero? Has he redeemed himself by the end of the story or are his crimes too severe? Can any of his feelings and actions be excused? Do you feel sorry for him as Taran does? Give reasons and examples from the story to back up your answer.

Taran begins the story by claiming that he wants to become a man. In what ways does Taran grow up through his adventures? What does Taran learn about what it means to be a man? Has he grown into a good person?

Who do you consider to be the main villain of this story? Is it the absent driving force for the whole plot, Arawn? Or is it Ellidyr, whose pride causes him to steal the cauldron and try to kill Taran? Or is it Morgant, who turns against Gwydion and wants the cauldron for himself? Perhaps there is no real villain, but only shades of grey? Give reasons for your answer and examples from the story.

Is Taran a hero? If so, why? What actions and choices make him heroic? Why not? What mistakes does Taran make and what failings does he exhibit?