

A Dance with Dragons: A Song of Ice and Fire: Book Five Study Guide

A Dance with Dragons: A Song of Ice and Fire: Book Five by George R. R. Martin

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Plot Summary

George R. R. Martin's *A Dance with Dragons*, is book five in the fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The book, a work of fiction, is by no means a stand alone book. For those who are not familiar with the characters and various complex scenarios, the book will prove to be nearly impossible to follow. For those who do manage to follow it, there will be numerous trips to the lengthy and complicated appendices to learn about characters, places, and situations.

The story opens with the introduction of Varamyr, a human who is able to "warg" into other life forms, including wolves. Many characters throughout the story can leave their bodies and force their spirits into another for various purposes. This causes some conflict for humans who turn into animals since they are often required to hunt other humans for food.

Varamyr is a powerful creature. Varamyr thinks about the parameters of his being and the things that are and are not permitted. He also thinks about his past battles and the possibility that his life is almost over. He relies on Thistle who seems to be the hunter and gatherer of the group. Varamyr is correct in thinking that he is dying and is on the verge of entering the second life.

Several favorite, main characters take part in the story. These include Tyrion, Daenerys, Jon, and Theon aka Reek.

The basis of the story is this: Stannis continues to try to usurp power and remains at the wall, determined to claim The Iron Throne. While there, he continues his part in the triumvirate of Jon and Melisandre to try to gain more power.

Tyrion spends most of the book trying to get to Meereen where he hopes to persuade Daenerys to serve his own ends. As a new queen, Dany is still settling into power, hates war, and ends up marrying Hizdahr for political reasons. Dany, mother of the dragons, finally takes flight on Drogon, which is a much awaited event. Many things go awry in Dany's absence.

Like Dany, Jon Snow is trying to find out his role as the new Lord Commander. Jon is young and has a great deal to learn, including listening - with healthy skepticism - to what Melisandre has to say about his future and safety.

Aegon Targaryen still intends to recover the Iron Throne. Aegon goes to in Westeros armed with the Golden Company. Aegon has not yet made his big move.

The story ends with Kevan Lannister being called in to see the Grand Maester Pycelle. It is a trap set by Varys. Kevan and Pycelle are both murdered.

The book shows a great deal about the characters' loyalties as well as their ulterior motives. Martin kills off several characters before they complete their goals, which leaves a great deal to be decided in the next book.



Prologue, Chapters 1-7

Prologue, Chapters 1-7 Summary

Prologue:

The prologue begins with a warg tracking down the scent of a man. Wargs, unlike wolves, are not afraid of men. Men are slow and stupid, deaf and blind to the sounds and sights in the forest. Man is easy to catch. One Eye attacks. Varamyr goes along with his pack thinking about hunting in the form of a wolf. Varamyr has never tasted human flesh as a human, only as a wolf. Varamyr thinks about Haggon, one of his victims who talked about the abomination of man eating another man. Haggon also says the same of a man who would mate with a wolf while in wolf form. Varamyr killed Haggon and ate his heart. Varamyr returns to human form, relieved to hear his own human voice. He has ripped open a wound in his side.

Varamyr thinks about the battle at the Wall when thousands fled as they were chased by the servants of the Others. He uses the name Haggon so he can hide his cowardice. Varamyr had named himself at age ten because the name sounded regal - like one fit for a lord. Varamyr thinks about various past experiences with warriors and an encounter with Mother Mole, a woods witch.

Varamyr knows his time is almost up and that he will die. Haggon had told Varamyr that he will enter into a second life. Varamyr had already spent nine lives in animal form.

Varamyr calls to Thistle but she has not returned from the hunt.

Varamyr decides to go hunting for supplies since he is hungry and thirsty. Along the way, his crutch breaks and Varamyr falls into the snow. He is frail and cannot get up. While waiting for help, or perhaps to start his second life, Varamyr dreams about his youth.

Thistle wakes Varamyr from the dream and says that hundreds of wights are almost upon them. Varamyr tries to force his spirit inside Thistle but fails and dies.

Chapter 1: Tyrion I

Tyrion is on his way across the Narrow Sea. The captain will not allow him to go on deck, so he stays below, drinking great quantities of wine. The food is wretched so Tyrion drinks wine only and becomes quite drunk. There is no night or day and the time is marked only by the ugly boy who brings food and will not speak to Tyrion.

Tyrion does not know precisely where the ship is headed, except that it is somewhere in the Free Cities. When the ship docks, Tyrion is taken off the ship hidden in a wine cask. Once at the house of Illyrio Mopatis in Pentos, Tyrion is set free. Illyrio is a good host and gives Tyrion full access to the house.



Tyrion wakes and surveys his surroundings. He recognizes the city. Tyrion asks Illyrio where he can find a whore. Illyrio says Tyrion should not worry and will not have to go far because the servants will not refuse him. Tyrion asks if the servants are slaves. Illyrio says that there are no such things as slaves in Pentos, but the unspoken meaning says otherwise.

Tyrion wakes in his room to find a young servant waiting for him. She announces that dinner will be served in an hour. The woman offers herself to Tyrion, who refuses her. Tyrion discovers that he despises women almost as much as he despises himself and turns her away. When she persists, he pretends as if he is going to strangle her. The woman flees.

Tyrion joins Illyrio at dinner. Illyrio tells Tyrion that Astapor and Meereen have fallen. Tyrion talks about the poisoned mushrooms and how dying from being poisoned in such a way should not cause much pain. Illyrio tries to convince Tyrion to drink wine instead. Illyrio knows about the conversation Tyrion had with the washerwoman. Tyrion speaks of his bleak future and how his options are few. Illyrio tells Tyrion that there may be another way. He speaks of a dragon with three heads and how Westeros is now in need of a new savior.

"Are your Seven Kingdoms so different? There is no peace in Westeros, no justice, no faith...and soon enough, no food. When men are starving and sick of fear, they look for a savior." Chap. 1, p. 30

Illyrio says that Tyrion could be the new savior of Westeros.

Chapter 2: Daenerys

Daenerys Targaryen waits for Ser Barristan Selmy, the lord commander of the Queensguard. Dany sits with a lion pelt clutched to her chest, talking of how someone died for her. Others tell Dany that one must never touch a dead man unless she killed him. Dany thinks about her handmaids and their foolishness. Dany questions Grey Worm about the fact that the man had been alone. Grey Worm brings news of more fighting. Dany is sick of the fighting and wants it to end but sees no resolution.

"I am still at war,' Dany realized, 'only now I am fighting shadows.'" Chap. 2, p. 33

Dany orders the Grey Worm to find the Harpy's Sons for her so that they may learn what it means to wake the dragon.

Chapter 3: Jon

The white wolf is running through the black wood. He is on the hunt. The other members of the pack call out. There is snow on the ground and it crunches beneath the wolf's paws. The moon talks of snow. All the wolf thinks about is snow until a raven lands on his chest.



Mormont's raven has woken Jon. Jon curses at the raven and throws a pillow at him. Dolorous Edd comes in to ask what Jon would like for breakfast. The raven chants for corn. Jon, annoyed, asks for roasted raven and a half pint of ale.

Jon asks Edd if there has been any more trouble. Edd says there has not been any problem since the guards were put into place. Edd talks about the wildlings that are in prison and how some of the guards have been taking advantage of the women. Edd says that the wildlings are beginning to realize that they have nowhere to go.

Jon meets with Stannis. Stannis has sent out forty ravens to the lords but has only received one confirmation. Jon says that Stannis must win over White Harbor. Jon is very cautious of Stannis.

Melisandre speaks with Jon about Stannis. She tells Jon that Stannis is becoming fond of Jon but that Jon needs to be careful.

"It is not the foes who curse you to your face that you must fear, but those who smile when you are looking and sharpen their knives when you turn your back. You would do well to keep your wolf close beside you." Chap. 3, p. 59

Chapter 4: Bran

Bran is tired of traveling but resists asking how much farther they must go. He rides in a basket on Hodor's back and searches for the three-eyed crow. The journey through the Far North continues with Coldhands in the lead and Summer bringing up the rear. Bran slips inside Summer as much as possible because the direwolf does not object to the cold. Bran also thinks about the times he has slipped inside Hodor and how the stable boy does not resist as much as he did the first time.

Coldhands is warned of a threat by a raven. He orders the group to go on without him. Meera worries that they have been traveling in circles. The group does as it is told. However, when they reach the shoreline it is frozen and nearly impossible to follow. After hours of walking the group finally finds shelter.

Food is scarce and Summer worries that Jojen is going to die. Summer smells meat and follows the scent. Summer finds human corpses, takes over a feasting pack and feeds.

Coldhands returns. A ranger, supposedly dead, approaches the group. Meera questions his presence and purpose.

Chapter 5: Tyrion

Tyrion prepares to leave Pentos. Illyrio says it is important that no one see Tyrion leave just as no one saw him enter the city. Tyrion and Illyrio discuss the voyage. Tyrion, suspicious, wonders why Illyrio cares about the next ruler of Westeros. Illyrio says he is tired of this world and that he only wants the rightful heir to regain her throne. Tyrion wants to learn more about Daenerys.



Illyrio treats Tyrion to stories of his past and of the history of various regions.

Tyrion sleeps and has a strange dream about fighting alongside Barristan the Bold. In the dream, Tyrion has two heads and two noses. Dragons fly overhead. Tyrion kills his brother Jamie and weeps.

Chapter 6: The Merchant's Man

Quentyn surveys the boat with disdain. The smell on the ship makes Quentyn want to retch. Quentyn is about to suggest changing ships when the master appears. It has been decided that Gennis will speak for them despite his difficulty with the language.

The Adventure sets sail on a long voyage. Quentyn worries that Dany might be dead by the time they reach her. Gennis says he has a plan.

Chapter 7: Jon

Jon struggles with a letter before him. The letter is from Maester Aemon. Jon refuses to sign the letter; says he cannot sign it. Jon argues with himself: "I have to sign it. They chose me to be their lord commander. The Wall is mine, and the Watch as well. The Night's Watch takes no part." Chap. 7, p. 95

Gilly arrives. Jon speaks to her about the children. Jon tells Gilly that the only way to save Mance's baby is to take the child and leave her own behind. Gilly argues but has no choice.

Jon continues to struggle with his new position and eventually has to execute a man.

Prologue, Chapters 1-7 Analysis

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The prologue features Varamyr, a human who often takes wolf form. Varamyr is a powerful creature. Varamyr thinks about the parameters of his being and the things that are and are not permitted. He also thinks about his past battles and the possibility that his life is almost over. He relies on Thistle who seems to be the hunter and gatherer of the group. Varamyr is correct in thinking that he is dying and is on the verge of entering the second life.

In Chapter 2, Tyrion is introduced. Tyrion travels undercover to Westeros, the home of Illyrio. Tyrion seems to feel that he has no reason to live and acts like a man on the verge of death or insanity. His actions are careless. Illyrio is a game player. He is



interested in watching what happens to the other kingdoms. It remains to be seen what Illyrio will gain by convincing Tyrion that he could be the savior of Pentos.

In Chapter 3, Daenerys Targaryen aka Dany, is introduced. Dany is a smart woman who has been put into a position of power. She is tired of war and of the fools that surround her. It is clear that Dany will be forced to make some very difficult and life changing decisions soon.

In Chapter 4, Jon Snow is introduced during a dream sequence. Throughout the dream Snow is running through the woods, with something calling his name. Meanwhile there is snow on the ground which is an obvious metaphor. When Snow wakes a raven sits on his chest. Snow is aggravated. He is not used to his surroundings since he has recently been thrust into power. Snow is smart but young and green.

The trio of Melisandre, Snow and Stannis is mentioned. It is a powerful triumvirate; however, Stannis is a cunning and ruthless man who will stop at nothing to get what he wants. Melisandre's warning foreshadows dark times for Snow as well as a battle.

"It is not the foes who curse you to your face that you must fear, but those who smile when you are looking and sharpen their knives when you turn your back. You would do well to keep your wolf close beside you." Chap. 3, p. 59

In Chapter 5, a group, including Bran and Summer, travel northward. The route and destination are not entirely clear. The route is dangerous and the expedition is being led by one who no one seems to trust completely. This chapter further explains how a spirit can enter and travel in another body, as Bran does to Summer and others.

In Chapter 6, Quentyn worries about being able to get to Dany before it is too late. There are only two routes that will get him to his future queen and neither is desirable.

In Chapter 7, Jon must step up and prove that he is fit for command. He must execute a prisoner by his own hand. Not wanting to do so, Jon offers the man a way out but the man spits in his face. Jon has no choice. While this task is distasteful and difficult, Jon knows it is necessary if he wants his people to see that he is determined, powerful, and fit for ruling the kingdom.



Chapters 8-20

Chapters 8-20 Summary

Chapter 8: Tyrion

The journey continues. Tyrion wakes when the convoy stops. Outside, Illyrio and Yollo talk to strangers. There is some verbal combat before the convoy moves on. Tyrion's loyalty to the queen is questioned by Griff.

Chapter 9: Davos

Davos Seaworth is marched into a castle bound in heavy chains. His crime is trying to buy his way off the island while being in possession of twelve dragons. After a conversation with Lord Godric, Davos is set free. There are hints about the Sisters and the fact that Davos has friends there, as most people do.

Chapter 10: Jon

Once again, Jon is in an uncomfortable situation. Mance, King-Beyond-The-Wall, has been brought forth in bondage. Stannis intends to kill Mance, who begins to deny that he is a king. Jon tries to convince Stannis that Mance is more valuable alive. The law is clear, however - deserters must die. Melisandre is less than sympathetic. Mance is burned alive.

Jon is sad that he has no one to confide in on a friendship level any more. He does not approve of Stannis' actions but there is little or nothing that can be done.

As Jon retires that night, he says to himself: "'This is my lot,' he realized as he undressed, 'from now until the end of my days.'" Chap. 10, p. 147

Chapter 11: Daenerys

Dany is awakened by Irri. Grey Worm has come to tell the queen that nine people are dead. Two people captured, a wine shop owner and his daughter, claim innocence and beg for mercy. Dany shows no mercy to anyone.

Dany thinks that saving Meereen will be hopeless without the dragons. She is concerned that she has unleashed monsters into the world.

"'I am the blood of the dragons,' she thought. 'If they are monsters, so am I.'" Chap. 11, p. 160

Chapter 12: Reek



Reek is in a prison cell. He captures a rat and bites into it. Reek is starving. He has been beaten and several toes have been cut off. Reek can't even remember his own name. Reek is taken to King Ramsay and told that he will be cleaned up to attend the wedding of Arya Underfoot and Ramsay Bolton.

Chapter 13: Bran

Bran is afraid. The ravens screech and the wolves howl. He tries to tell himself to be brave and often recalls Nan's tales to guide him. The group battles through the icy wind, snow and steep climb while being confronted by scary creatures. However, finally Bran reaches the three eyed crow. Bran has been badly injured. The three eyed crow tells Bran that he will never walk again, however, he will fly.

Chapter 14: Tyrion

Tyrion's voyage, painstakingly slow, continues.

Chapter 15: Davos

The Merry Midwife arrives in the harbor at White Harbor. Davos must steal into the city. Davos thinks about the way things used to be. Davos must find out as much information from the locals as possible and also make his way into the castle.

Chapter 16: Daenerys

The chapter opens with naked dancers which Dany finds comical. There is a long discussion and conflict between Xaro and Dany. Dany realizes that she must shift her political stance. A declaration of war is issued.

Chapter 17: Jon

Edd leads Jon through the wormways in Black Castle to check the stores for the winter gathered by Night Watch. Jon worries that there is not enough food to last throughout the winter given the number of people that must be fed. Lord Steward also warns of illness. In the past food could be brought in from the south but the war has closed off that possibility.

Jon visits Stannis. There is a discussion of finding more men for battle. Jon does not approve of Stannis' plans.

Chapter 18: Tyrion

Tyrion is aboard the Shy Maid. Haldon complains of fog. Ysilla talks about the fact that there is no common fog and that this fog speaks of sorcery. Haldon speaks of Garin's curse. The people are advised not to breathe in the fog nor eat the fish.

Chapter 19: Davos



Davos is taken before Ser Marlon Manderly, Lord Wyman's cousin in White Harbor. Davos says everything possible to get a one on one meeting with the man in charge but fails. It is ordered that Davos' head and hands should be cut off.

Chapter 20: Reek

Reek is given a horse and a banner. Damon tells Reek that he has a choice - come back to the Castle or try to run and see how far he gets. Reek knows he cannot run. Reek does as he has been ordered and manages to talk the men in the towers into surrendering. The promise is broken and Ramsay kills them all.

Chapters 8-20 Analysis

Tyrion plays a background role in this chapter as most of the conversation in the beginning takes place between Illyrio, Duck, Yollo and the others. Later, Tyrion talks about his loyalty to Dany but the reason, and Tyrion's lazy pace, seem to be in question.

Davos is sent before Lord Godric. Others have been freed from the Three Sisters which makes one wonder why Davos is singled out except for information. Davos needs a break at this point and Lord Godric lets him go.

Jon begins to understand the downfall of power. He has power in some places, but none in others. He has lost his friends. Jon knows that Stannis and Melisandre are not good people and do not have the welfare of others at heart. Jon is especially uncomfortable when Stannis gives the wildlings a choice to run or burn their gods.

Dany's hand is forced. Nine people have been killed and no one is taking responsibility yet. She declares war which means that things are going to get much more difficult before they get better. The novice queen has a lot to prove.

Tyrion's voyage is actually getting somewhere. The road to Dany is treacherous but Tyrion does not seem to take it as seriously as the others.

Davos misfortunes continue when he cannot be heard at the New Castle. This is not terribly surprising.

Reek's mission is one that could easily get him killed but he has no choice. He struggles to survive while still being unable to remember his true identity.



Chapters 21-31

Chapters 21-31 Summary

Chapter 21: Jon

Jon sits in his room thinking about Sam and Maester Aemon. Jon misses them and worries about their safe passage. He also worries about Gilly and the baby.

Jon recruits the wildlings to fight. Bowen Marsh questions using women in battle but Jon says that they have knives and know how to use them.

Chapter 22: Tyrion

Tyrion has been spared. He is still in danger but alive. Tyrion and Young Griff talk about Dany. Tyrion and Haldon go into town and are surprised to meet someone who speaks the Common Tongue although they are far from Westeros.

Chapter 23: Daenerys

The Green Grace visits Dany and speaks about her mercy. The Green Grace tries to convince Dany that if she marries Hizdahr, peace is possible. Dany does not agree with the choice.

Chapter 24: The Lost Lord

The Lost Lord is a reference to Griff. Griff waits aboard the Shy Maid for Haldon and worries that he may also be lost. Sad at the loss of Tyrion, Griff decides to take Young Griff to the Golden Company and introduce him as the lost Prince Aegon. A discussion is had about joining Dany.

Griff releases the Shy Maid and its crew.

Chapter 25: The Windblown

Frog is on his way to Dany. He travels with a group known as the Windblown. Frog is actually Quentyn but answers to the name pinned on him. Quentyn has joined an army that will fight against Dany's army. It is supposedly a better way to reach Dany without being attacked by the greyscale or traveling the Demon Road. Quentyn is not so sure.

Chapter 26: The Wayward Bride

Asha Greyjoy hides in the Deepwood. She is in danger of being attacked by Stannis and Bolton's people. She could be safe if she would return to the Iron Islands, yet her father had promised her hand in marriage to a man she does not love and has in her absence usurped her throne. Asha has little choice but to fight.



Chapter 27: Tyrion

Tyrion, trussed up and tied to a saddle, reaches Volantis. Tyrion meets with Jorah. It is believed that Tyrion will indeed serve Dany.

Chapter 28: Jon

Jon decides to send Ser Allison out to get training. Jon also gets training and is tested. Later, Jon receives the news that Arya's is going to marry Lord Ramsay.

Chapter 29: Davos

Despite Wyman's previous order, Davos is not dead. Wyman put together a ruse to convince all that Davos has been executed. In return, Davos is asked to smuggle one of the Starks to safety.

Chapter 30: Daenerys

Dany sits in the morning and counts ships out on the bay. There are not enough ships but she is told that more cannot be built because of lack of materials. Dany begins to realize that she is woefully unprepared for war.

Chapter 31: Melisandre

Melisandre is in her chamber. She has a vision of Stannis but is unsure if the vision is real. The vision foretells of death and danger. Melisandre is not quite as powerful as readers are meant to believe but she controls Rattleshirt.

Melisandre plans to win Jon's favor by saving his sister.

Chapters 21-31 Analysis

This section is mostly about people traveling to take their places. Some are coming into their own, like Jon. Others, like Davos and Reek, are being used as pawns. There is a great deal of foreshadowing in the form of hints and visions. It is clear that there is a great war underway and the end is unclear. Characters doubt themselves and their abilities. While others may be consulted, only the characters themselves can make the decisions that are right and true.

Melisandre reveals more of her character, abilities, and her plans to win Jon over to her side.



Chapters 32-42

Chapters 32-42 Summary

Chapter 32: Reek

Reek is taken away by Lord Roose. Ramsay has broken Reek so that he will not be called by his old name. Reek despairs at his present and future although he seems to be able to do nothing about it. Ramsay is angry with his father for taking away Reek. Ramsay says he will cut off another one of Reek's fingers when he returns from his journey. Reek objects and says that it is not his fault that he is being taken away. Ramsay won't hear it.

Roose tells Reek about Reek I. Like the current Reek, the man smelled so bad that even horses shied away from him. Roose says that the man bathed three times a day and even went as far as to drink perfume to mask his odor but it did not work. Roose believes the man smelled of his own rotting soul.

Chapter 33: Tyrion

Tyrion is out at sea aboard the Selaesori Qhoran, seven days from Volantis. With him are Penny and Jorah. Jorah spends most of the trip being sick, Penny stays in her cabin. Tyrion hopes to become friends with Penny in order to help calm the grieving over her brother. Jorah tells Tyrion that he should have sex with Penny but Tyrion isn't interested.

The ship passes close to city of Valyria, which is in ruins and is rumored to be haunted.

Chapter 34: Bran

Bran is still alive but is wired to a tree. He learns to control ravens as it was predicted when it was said he would learn to fly. Still, Bran uses Hodor's body to travel when his human form cannot.

Bran receives training from Brynden "Bloodraven" Rivers, the raven, regarding his new position as greenseer.

Chapter 35: Jon

This chapter opens with Jon surveying the land. It is the first time in a week that the skies are clear. Jon orders Edd to gather the recruits since they may not have another chance at good weather. Members of the Knight's Watch go out into the weirwood so that the wildlings can take their oaths. They return with a giant and two corpses.

Chapter 36: Daenerys



Dany is at camp. The stench is unbearable but Dany insists that it will not give her the flux. Barristan begs her to return to the city where she will be safe and protected. Upon her return, Dany makes more plans for the wedding and then becomes intimate with Dario.

Chapter 37: The Prince of Winterfell

The wedding between Ramsay and Arya takes place. The scene is grand, yet bloody and filled with death. Reek is still at the beck and call of Ramsay, even on the Lord's wedding night.

Chapter 38: The Watcher

Ser Balon Swann, a member of the Kingsguard, delivers the severed head of Gregor Clegane. Swann, a cunning man, plans to take over as the chaperone for Princess Myrcella.

Chapter 39: Jon

Val stands by the gate and prepares to ride a half-blind horse provided by Mully. Jon begs Val not to undertake such a journey but Val says the risk is hers to take. Val will go to find Tormund Giantsbane.

Jon worries about the wildlings and wants to save them.

Chapter 40: Tyrion

Tyrion's ship is hit by a bad storm. It is saved by a slaver ship.

Chapter 41: The Turncloak

Roose announces that the gods of north have unleashed their wrath on Stannis. Roose declares that Stannis will not be permitted to live.

Chapter 42: The King's Prize

Stannis marches during a blizzard. Many of the southrons fall off one by one.

Chapters 32-42 Analysis

The reader is meant to feel bad for Reek. The man can do nothing right. No matter what he does, he is punished. Roose, while as evil as Ramsay, is perhaps the lesser of two evils yet it remains to be seen. Reek remains between a rock and a hard place. Even denying his former self (Theon) does not save him from trouble.

Tyrion remains restless, only intrigued by the ruins of Valyria. He feels bad about Penny's brother and his death. Tyrion shows character when he attempts to befriend Penny and tries to make her feel better.



Like the others, Bran also has visions of doom that warn the reader of things to come. It has not yet been explained how Brynden "Bloodraven" Rivers became so powerful, nor why he is referred to as the three eyed crow when in fact he is a one eyed raven.

Jon moves ahead with his plans to recruit wildlings which he is being forced to care for anyway. It is still a risky but necessary move to include them in the battle.

Dany acts like Mother Teresa with the people outside the walls, mostly likely to show that she cares about her people, diseased as they are.

The wedding between Ramsay and Arya involves people being hanged which may show the brutality of the time and place but is a strange addition.

Balon Swann uses his talents and strengths to take control of the Princess. Still, he is devoted to serve and protect and to obey simple rules made for simple men.

Edd continues to be comic relief for Jon. As Val prepares to ride out, Edd says to Jon, "This is going to end badly."

"You say that of everything."

"Aye, m'lord. Usually I'm right."

Reek continues to be wary - and rightfully so - of expressing any opinion about Stannis or much of anything else. Reek notes that the men from the House of Frey share his opinions.

Martin continues to show his characters' brutality through the act of cannibalism.



Chapters 43-55

Chapters 43-55 Summary

Chapter 43: Daenerys

Dany is awake and watches while Dario sleeps. Dario jokes that Dany should marry him instead of Hizdahr. Dany cannot do that.

Chapter 44: Jon

Queen Selyse arrives at Castle Black. Jon watches the arrival. He knows that the travelers that attend Selyse may travel with the Queen but in reality they serve Melisandre. Selyse is surprised to find that Jon is now the Lord Commander. Selyse introduces her knights.

Tycho Nestoris, a representative of the Iron Bank visits Stannis. Tycho wants Stannis to collect on his behalf. Jon also approaches the Iron Bank for money.

Alys Karstark arrives at Jon's door with the news that her uncle, Arnolf, intends to betray Stannis. Alys tells Jon that he is her only hope for protection. Jon offers to write to Stannis but Alys says that Stannis will be dead before the message reaches him.

Chapter 45: The Blind Girl

The Blind Girl is Arya. The chapter opens with Arya enjoying the slaughter of various animals. Game has become scarce and people and animals must take food where they can find it. Arya does not suffer as greatly from her affliction as she might because she wargs into different creatures, which permits her to see again. Through this method Arya is able to learn that the kindly man is the who one bea her. Arya is given a bitter and vile drink. In the morning, her sight has returned.

Chapter 46: A Ghost in Winterfell

A dead man is found inside the inner wall. It is not the only dead body that appears at the castle. Roose's men assume that Stannis is dead but there is no proof.

Rowan tries to soothe Theon by promising that there will be no more torture. Theon will be permitted to have a quick death - after he sings for Abel.

Chapter 47: Tyrion is on the auction block at Slaver's Bay. It is not unexpected as the slaver ship had rescued the Stinky Steward. The people bidding on Tyrion make him ill, so he decides to bid on himself. As Tyrion explains: "A clever slave deserves a clever master, and you lot all look like fools." Chap. 47, p. 621



In the end, Tyrion ends up with a freak show. He and Penny are headed for the Great Pit of Daznak in Meereen. Tyrion hopes that he will see Dany.

Chapter 48: Jaime

Jaime Lannister arrives at Raventree Hall. He surveys the land and thinks about how it is overgrown. Jaime has come to mediate the feud between the Brackens and the Blackwoods. Jaime meets with Lord Jonos. They talk about the feud after some niceties. Jaime searches for Brienne, who he desperately wants to see. Brienne looks old and Jaime is shocked. Brienne offers to take Jaime to Arya.

Chapter 49: Jon

Melisandre leads the wedding guests into a prayer. Alys has married Magnar of Thenn. During the ceremony, Alys chats with Jon. After prayers and responses from Melisandre and the guests, the vows are finally exchanged.

Melisandre talks to Jon about Patchface. Melisandre is worried but assures Jon that Stannis is alive:

"He is not dead. Stannis is the Lord's chosen, destined to lead the fight against the dark. I have seen it in the flames, read of it in an ancient prophecy." Chap. 49. Pg. 652

Horns blast signaling Val's return. Tormund Giantsbane has arrived.

Chapter 50: Theon

Theon (Reek) sits in the Great Hall watching the washerwomen eat. Theon finally breaks his fast and drinks dark ale. He thinks about Abel's crazy plan.

Roose arrives with his wife. Ramsay also arrives. Theon whispers to Abel that his plan is mad - they cannot escape from Roose and Ramsay. Abel says they can make it - they only have to get outside the walls. Stannis is not far away and they will be safe. Theon fears more repercussions.

Theon speaks to Arya. Arya shows Rowan and the others what has been done to her. Theon realizes that Ramsay has brainwashed her. Rowan says it is possible to get Arya to her half-brother, Jon Snow. Arya is afraid and says that Ramsay will cut off her feet if she tries to run. Somehow, Arya is convinced. She and Theon flee the castle. Crossbows are fired.

Chapter 51: Daenerys

Dany bathes and gets ready to go down into the pits. Her lady in waiting begs her not to go but Dany knows she must. The fighting pits will be filled with blood and many men will die. Still, Dany and Hizdahr are expected to attend.



Drogon the dragon makes an appearance at last. Dany mounts and rides the dragon to the delight of everyone.

Chapters 43-55 Analysis

Dany begins to think that she may grow to love Hizdahr in time since he is a gentle spirit. Currently, however, Dany must deal with her relationship with Dario which may or may not end after the wedding.

Once again, Jon's age and inexperience cause him to face doubt in the presence of others. Queen Selyse is surprised by the choice of Lord Commander. Selyse covers up her doubts and treats Jon properly.

It seems that Roose has betrayed Stannis and will kill him despite their agreement. Alys puts Jon in a strange position.

It is presumed that Stannis is dead from his long travels in the blizzard. Theon is asked by Abel to view the crypts. This is a trick since Abel is actually Mance.

Jamie tries to patch up the problems between houses with little chance of success. Brienne is lying to Jaime about Arya and the Hound but the reason is unclear.

Weddings mark the marriages of four different houses and it is possible, at least in Dany's case, that the marriage will bring some peace. However, Dany questions her choices. While politically smart, Dany is already unhappy and asks herself why the triumph tastes like defeat.

Only Theon can truly understand what has happened to Arya. Although she has pledged herself wholly to Ramsay - mostly out of fear - she has no real choice but to flee or die. Arya must be convinced of this. One look at Theon will prove that what the dwarf says is true.

Dany works hard not to show fear in the eyes of the dragon. Riding the dragon is vital to Dany's reputation and role as mother of the dragons. Riding the dragon will show the people that Dany has more strength and command than was believed.

Many of the characters are captured, imprisoned, and forced to give up everything to their captors, including their will. Some, like Cersei, go along to escape, while others totally succumb.

Dany's disappearance is a mystery at this point. Some think she may have flown home, others think she is dead by Hizdahr's hand, others think she may be lost. Barristan is fully prepared to take on Hizdahr although Skahaz says there must be proof. This puts Hizdahr's motives into question.

Victarion struggles with his ill fortunes out at sea and wonders what has happened to his lost friend. One good bit of fortune befalls Victarion when the monkeys flee the ship.



Chapters 56-65

Chapters 56-65 Summary

Chapter 56: Tyrion

Tyrion and Penny are tending to their slavemaster, Yezzan. A healer has been called but Yezzan seems to be too far gone with the plague to be helped. Tyrion and Penny must clean up after Yezzan, which is a foul job. Tyrion thinks about trying to escape and wonders how to get rid of the bells around his neck. Penny wonders if Yezzan's slaves will be freed if he dies. Sweets laughs at the comment.

Tyrion orders soldiers to bring fresh water for Yezzan. The soldiers scoff at the little dwarf for issuing orders. However, they finally obey.

Tyrion thinks about Drogon and plans to shoot him down with crossbows. Tyrion knows that it is only possible if they hit his eyes as it is the only part of a dragon that is vulnerable.

Nurse continues to tend to Yezzan. Tyrion realizes that he and Penny were meant to die out in the wilderness.

Chapter 57: Jon

Jon has yet another prophetic dream:

Jon dreams of wildlings howling in the woods, while warhorns blow. Jon calls out to the wildlings but they are all gone and Jon stands alone.

Jon wakes to the raven. The raven calls Jon by his full name which he has never done before.

Over breakfast, Jon speaks to Edd about the restoration of what is now being called Whore's Barrow. Edd is not pleased with the presence of the spearwives and quips:

"Place was overrun with rats when we moved in. The spearwives killed the nasty buggers. Now the place is overrun with spearwives. There's days I want the rats back."
Chap. 57, p. 770

Jon speaks to Tormund about the enemy. Tormund refuses to give information out in the open.

"They're never far, you know. They won't come out by day, not when that old sun's shining, but don't think that means they went away. Shadows never go away. Might be you don't see them, but they're always clinging to your heels." Chap. 57, p. 778



Bowen tells Jon that 3119 wildlings have entered through the castle gates that day. For the first time, the castle does not seem dark and foreboding to Jon:

"The castle Jon returned to was far different from the one he'd left that morning. For as long as he had known it, Castle Black had been a place of silence and shadows, where a meager company of men in black moved among the ruins of a fortress that had once housed ten times their numbers. All that had changed. Now lights shone through windows where Jon Snow had never seen lights shine before." Chap. 57, p. 781

Jon receives disturbing news and knows that the war has begun.

Chapter 58: The Discarded Knight

Hizdahr is introduced by his full title: His Magnificence Hizdahr zo Loraq, Fourteenth of that Noble Name, King of Meereen, Scion of Ghis, Octarch of the Old Empire, Master of the Skahazadhan, Consort to Dragons, and Blood of the Harpy.

Barristan stands by as Hizdahr holds court. Barristan's weapon had not been taken although he did not consider himself to be a protector.

Hizdahr is eager to wield his newly found power. He has the Admiral beheaded although it is unclear why. Barristan tells Quentyn to leave. Quentyn wonders how those in Dorne would view him if he returned without Dany.

Chapter 59: The Spurned Suitor

Drinkwater reports to Quentyn regarding the people in Meereen's cellars. The men drink and watch naked slaves kill each other. Drinkwater bribes Beans. Quentyn thinks about returning home and how he would surely be mocked, laughed at and scorned.

Quentyn decides to attempt to buy a dragon from the Second Sons. Quentyn offers the Tattered Prince twice the rate. The Tattered Prince says he wants Pentos as his payment.

Chapter 60: The Griffin Reborn

Black Balaq calls for 1,000 bowmen. Knights had once scoffed at bowmen, thinking that swords are more powerful but seasoned fighters know better, especially since one can kill at a great distance.

The relationship between Connington and Prince Rhaegar is discussed, particularly Connington's fondness of the prince.

The Golden Company attacks at Griffin's Roost and wins with ease. The Prince talks about taking Storm's End next with the intention of becoming its ruler.

Chapter 61: The Sacrifice



A funeral pyre is being built. Mormont tells Asha that she will not want to watch the gruesomeness. Asha says she can handle it. When Mormont tells Asha to go, she asks where she should go - Winterfell? The people are desperately sick of snow and it seems to Asha that she will never get home.

The pyre is being built for four men who have taken to cannibalism with a sense of joy. The deaths were required to pay penance and homage to the Lord of Light. Godry chants:

"R'hllor," Ser Godry said, "we give you now four evil men. With glad hearts and true, we give them to your cleansing fires, that the darkness may be burned away. Let their vile flesh be seared and blackened, that their spirits may rise free and pure to ascend into the light. Accept their blood, Oh lord, and melt the icy chains that find your servants. Hear their pain, and grant strength to our swords that we might shed the blood of your enemies. Accept this sacrifice, and show us the way to Winterfell, that we might vanquish the unbelievers." Chap. 61, p. 818

Riders have come from Braavos. They present an old man and a girl to Asha. The old man, unceremoniously dumped in the snow looks up into his sister's eyes. The man is Theon. The girl is Arya/Jeyne.

Chapter 62: Victarion

Victarion watches as the Iron Fleet swoops down on its prey. The ship, while not a warship, is still a good capture.

Victarion learns that Dany is not dead as had been feared. More people are sent as sacrifices to R'hllor and the Other. Victarion takes his choice of women from the newly captured ship.

The Horn of Winter is discussed. Whoever sounds the horn ends up blistered from the heat.

Chapter 63: The Ugly Little Girl

Eleven servants of the Many-Faced-God gather together. One of the acolytes is Arya. They are prepared to serve those in attendance. After several hours most people take leave except for the kindly man and a few others. The kindly man tells Arya that she must give up everything if she is going to serve the Many-Faced-Gods. Arya tells the man that she wants to change her face. The man says she must earn it.

Arya receives her first assignment as an assassin. The victim is an insurance salesman. When Arya returns to the kindly man to report the job has been completed, he tells her that she will begin an apprenticeship at Izembaro's. Arya gets her face back.

Chapter 64: Cersei

Cersei thinks about leaving the prison:



"On the last night of her imprisonment, the queen could not sleep. Each time she closed her eyes, her head filled with forebodings and fantasies of the morrow. I will have guards, she told herself. They will keep the crowds away. No one will be allowed to touch me. The High Sparrow had promised her that much." Chap. 64, p. 848

Cersei tries to block out the horror of what she must do. In addition to the humiliation, Cersei is shorn. Cersei tries to keep it together during and after the shearing:

"When the deed was done she was as naked and vulnerable as a woman could be. Not even a hair to hide behind. A little laugh burst from her lips, bleak and bitter. 'Does Your Grace find this amusing?' said Septa Scolera. 'No, Septa,' said Cersei. 'But one day I will have your tongue ripped out with hot pincers, and that will be hilarious.'" Chap. 64, p. 850

Cersei is taken out onto the street to make the walk of shame. People scream out to her and curse her as she walks by.

Cersei makes it to the Red Keep. She meets Robert Strong, who has taken a vow of silence.

Chapter 65: Tyrion

Tyrion joins the Second Sons. Once he signs on there are 514 members. Tyrion will work for Inkpots in accounting and legal.

Tyrion thinks about where he has been and where he is going. Tyrion wants to convince the Second Sons that they are on the wrong side.

Chapters 56-65 Analysis

Tyrion joins the Second Sons. Once he signs on there are 514 members. Tyrion will work for Inkpots in accounting and legal.

Tyrion thinks about where he has been and where he is going. Tyrion wants to convince the Second Sons that they are on the wrong side.

Once again, Jon has a prophetic dream about being alone in the weirwood when the warhorns blow. It is not explained why Jon, like the other Starks, refuses to keep his wolves beside him even after Melisandre warned Jon to do so. This foreshadows Jon's impending death.

Several of the characters are behaving very foolishly, taking on tasks that they are ill-equipped to handle or achieve. Quentyn is one of these characters. Griffin's Roost and Black Castle both are in the midst of revitalization but the disorganization and lack of training will prove to be a big problem for any type of long term plans.



The women in the book prove to have great strength and perseverance when they choose to use it. Ashara feels the need to show that by watching the deaths. Arya is making a comeback after having her face restored.

Hizdahr is much more about appearance than Dany, who prefers simplicity. Hizdahr has installed two gilded thrones which Dany will surely dislike.

Quentyn is foolish when he dismisses Barristan's warning. It can be assumed that something bad is going to happen to Quentyn.



Chapters 66-70; Epilogue

Chapters 66-70; Epilogue Summary

Chapter 66: The Kingbreaker

Barristan plans to go up against Hizdahr and his men. At this point Barristan is not suspect. Barristan and Shavepate meet under cover of night to discuss their plans. Shavepate has his own ideas but Barristan argues. Shavepate wants to attack the Yunkai'i but Barristan says they cannot:

"There is a peace, signed and sealed by Her Grace the queen. We will not be the first to break it. Once we have taken Hizdahr, we will form a council to rule in his place and demand that the Yunkai'i return our hostages and withdraw their armies. Should they refuse, then and only then will we inform them that the peace is broken, and go forth to give them battle." Chap. 66, p. 873.

Shavepate simply tells Barristan that his way is stupid.

Barristan thinks back to his unrequited love Ashara.

Barristan manages to get to Hizdahr and escorts him to a cell.

A boy comes into the king's chambers to announce that the dragons have been let loose.

Chapter 67: The Dragontamer

Quentyn still intends to marry Dany although she is already married to Hizdahr. Quentyn speaks with Drinkwater about Dany. He is convinced that she is simply lost and he will be able to find her. Things look bleak. Still, Quentyn is determined to become a dragonrider and to find Dany.

The scene between Quentyn and the dragons goes very badly:

"The crossbowman was fumbling for another quarrel as the dragon's teeth closed around his neck. The man wore the mask of a Brazen Beast, the fearsome likeness of a tiger. As he dropped his weapon to try and pry apart Viserion's jaws, flame gouted from the tiger's mouth. The man's eyes burst with soft popping sounds, and the brass around them began to run. The dragon tore off a hunk of flesh, most of the sellsword's neck, then gulped it down as the burning corpse collapsed to the floor." Chap. 67, p. 898

Gerris yells out to Quentyn to look behind him but it is too late.

Chapter 68: Jon



Jon worries about the wildlings. Queen Selyse tells Jon to let them die. Jon ignores the Queen's advice. Queen Selyse is troubled by Jon's choice to ride to Hardomme to save the creatures.

Jon receives a letter from Ramsay telling him that his false king is dead. Ramsay wants his bride returned. If Jon wants Mance, then he has to come and get him.

Jon is attacked and stabbed by Wick and Bowen. He calls out for Ghost but it is too late.

Chapter 69: The Queen's Hand

It takes Quentyn three days to die. Barristan watches over him and thinks about how horrible it is to die that way. Barristan waits for word from the Yunkai'i regarding the hostages.

Ever since Hizdahr has been imprisoned, the Sons of Harpy have been fighting non-stop. Barristan calls the council to order to discuss their next move.

The Green Grace returns. The negotiations with the Yunkai'i have not been successful. Barristan proposes that it's time to break the peace. Not everyone agrees.

Chapter 70: Daenerys

It is finally proven that Dany is not dead as so many feared. Dany is on a stony island she refers to as Dragonstone. Dany spends her time walking on the island, surviving off the scraps from Drogon. Again, Dany has prophetic dreams. Eventually, Dany sees a hundred warriors on mounts. Khal Jhaqo has found her.

Epilogue:

The Knight of Griffin's Roost pledges allegiance to Kevan Lanister, who is acting as Regent. Kevan orders the man to be taken to his chambers and kept there.

Tyrell discusses the fact that Connington is rumored to have taken Storm's End. Tyrell simply tells Kevan that even if it is true, they will simply take it back from him. Kevan thinks back to his first meeting with Connington. While Kevan has his own opinions, he keeps his mouth shut, which is wise.

After Kevan has dinner with Tommen and Cersei. Kevan thinks of how Cersei used to be and no matter how hard she scrubs she will never truly be clean again.

Kevan is summoned to Grand Master Pycelle's chambers. Cersei thinks there may be news of Jaime. Kevan takes his leave. Once in Pycelle's chambers, Kevan notices a white Citadel. Winter has come. Kevan receives a crossbow bolt in the ribs. As he calls out to Pycelle, he sees blood on the table.

The story ends:



"Ser Kevan was cold as ice, and every labored breath sent a fresh stab of pain through him. He glimpsed movement, heard the soft scuffling sound of slippered feet on stone. A child emerged from a pool of darkness, a pale boy in a ragged robe, no more than nine or ten. Another rose up behind the Grand Maester's chair. The girl who had opened the door for him was there as well. They were all around him, half a dozen of them, white-faced children with dark eyes, boys and girls together. And in their hands, the daggers." Epilogue, p. 959

Chapters 66-70; Epilogue Analysis

A great deal happens in the Epilogue, which sets things up for the next book of the series. There are seven books in the series with *A Dance with Dragons* being number five. Martin begins to wrap up a few things while leaving the door open for many more.

One of the biggest changes - albeit not surprising - is the death of Jon Snow. Melisandre may have chosen to prevent the death and is it hinted that she may be able to save Jon in the next book by bringing him back from the dead or perhaps overseeing his reincarnation.

Hizdahr is in for a big surprise when he learns that Dany is not dead. Dany will certainly not tolerate Hizdahr's behavior and there is sure to be a battle between the newlyweds.

Barristan may be one of the cleverest of the lot as he plays things close to his chest. Despite what is happening in Meereen, Barristan holds a sense of honor as all knights should. It may be unwise but Barristan knows no other way.

It is also foreshadowed that adopting the wildlings, while humane, may be a mistake. While they bring life back to Black Castle, they will mainly serve as warm bodies that offer little help and eat the food needed for the residents and soldiers.

Stannis and Ramsay continue their villainous ways and the readers can count on even more bloodshed and horror as the war gets underway.

The ending is telling and works well as a cliffhanger:

"Ser Kevan was cold as ice, and every labored breath sent a fresh stab of pain through him. He glimpsed movement, heard the soft scuffling sound of slippered feet on stone. A child emerged from a pool of darkness, a pale boy in a ragged robe, no more than nine or ten. Another rose up behind the Grand Maester's chair. The girl who had opened the door for him was there as well. They were all around him, half a dozen of them, white-faced children with dark eyes, boys and girls together. And in their hands, the daggers." Epilogue, p. 959

Martin is known for a good ending with plenty of room for speculation.



Characters

Jon Snow

Jon Snow, Lord Commander of the 998th Lord Commander of the Night's Watch. He is also the bastard son of Eddward and an unknown woman believed to be a servant. Jon has recently been appointed the Lord Commander of the Night's Watch and is quite uncertain how to handle the power and responsibility thrust upon him. Jon often has prophetic dreams which are usually ended by the cawing of Mormont's raven.

Snow reluctantly partners with Melisandre although he does not trust her and her magic. In this book Jon struggles with loneliness since he he has sent away his two best friends so that they might be protected.

Jon's compassion may get the best of him when he foolishly saves the wildlings from certain doom. Although Black Castle is ill-equipped to fight, the addition of the wildlings only worsens the situation.

Jon, trying to find his way in this new role, does not always appreciate the wisdom of others. Jon does not heed the advice to keep Ghost, his direwolf, at his side at all times for protection. In the end, this is Jon's undoing.

Daenerys Targaryen

Daenerys Targaryen aka Dany is the self proclaimed Queen of Westeros and Queen of Meereen. Dany is the only child of Aerys II Targaryen and Rhaella Targaryen and reported to be the sole heir to the throne.

Dany's appearance is striking. She has violet eyes and silvery blond hair. She is by all means the classic fair maiden. Dany is new to ruling a kingdom and sometimes has problems dealing with people she considers to be fools, listening to the appropriate people like Barristan, and understanding the need for constant and violent bloodshed.

Dany is infatuated with Dario but he is not acceptable marriage material. Dany ends up marrying Hizdahr to create a politically advantageous union. Meanwhile, Quentyn still plans to marry Dany. Others are also on their way to try to win Dany's favor and to accomplish their own quests for power.

Dany, mother of dragons, finally takes flight on Drogon. Dany ends up getting lost but is finally saved. She does not make it back to Westeros in a timely manner, however, and Hizdahr has basically proclaimed that Dany is dead and has taken the throne.



Stannis Baratheon

Stannis Baratheon is referred to as the First of His Name, the Rhoynar, King of the Andals, and the First Men, Lord of Dragonstone, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm. Stannis is a cruel and ruthless man.

Hizdahr

His Magnificence Hizdahr zo Loraq, Fourteenth of that Noble Name, King of Meereen, Scion of Ghis, Octarch of the Old Empire, Master of the Skahazadhan, Consort to Dragons, and Blood of the Harpy is married to Daenerys, Queen of Meereen. The marriage is one of convenience and political advantage.

Tyrion Lannister

Tyrion Lannister is the brother to Jaime Lannister and son of Lord Tywin Lannister and Joanna Lannister. Tyrion is a dwarf with no nose which makes him quite conspicuous. Most of the way through the book Tyrion has all but given up and decides he has no real reason to live until he joins the Second Sons.

Melisandre

Melisandre is a self-proclaimed sorceress. While Melisandre has some powers, some are merely smoke and mirrors. Melisandre is self-serving and can at times be wicked. Melisandre is known for her visions.

Theon Greyjoy

Theon Greyjoy is referred to through most of the story as Reek. Theon is the son of Lord Balon Greyjoy and Alannys Harlaw. Ramsay Bolton has captured Reek, renamed and brainwashed him. He has been tortured into madness.

Varys

Varys is also known as the Spider. Varys serves as the Master of Whisperers for King Robert Baratheon. He is responsible for the deaths of Kevan Lannister and Grand Maester Pycelle.

Jaime Lannister

Jaime Lannister is a member of the Kingsguard also known as Kingslayer. He is the younger twin brother to Cersei, and brother to Tyrion.

Ramsay Bolton

Ramsay Bolton is the bastard son of Roose Bolton. He is a cruel and ruthless man and responsible for the downfall of Theon aka Reek. Ramsay is married to Jeyne Poole.



Objects/Places

Westeros

Westeros is one of the main settings used in A Dance with Dragons. It is a narrow continent that has been divided between seven houses and formed into independent regions known as the Seven Kingdoms. Much of Westeros is uninhabited, uncharted, and unexplored. It is believed that savages and unknown creatures live outside the civilized areas. The wildlings live outside the civilized areas.

Westeros is situated between the northern region of Always Winter and the southern region of Dorne. The Seven Kingdoms, situated in the south, are under the rule of Daenerys and House Targaryen.

While there are many townships located throughout Westeros, there are five major cities which include White Harbor, King's Landing, Oldtown, Gulltown, and Lannisport.

The main religion celebrated in Westeros is the Faith of the Seven.

There is a wide variety of species in Westeros. The humans are divided by ethnic groups and their associated regions. Humans come in the form of ordinary people, giants, children of the forest (which is basically extinct), wildlings, and Others.

Animals in Westeros range from the ordinary to the mythical. They include aurochs, direwolves, lizard-lions, mammoths, krakens, manticores, ravens, shadowcats, zorses, dragons, and unicorns.

Major Houses

Much like Europe in Medieval times, the regions in the story are ruled by the major houses. Each house has a great history and descendants of each rule a specific region or intend to recoup leadership of regions that have been stolen through conquest or magic.

The main houses and major characters included in the story are:

1. House Arryn
2. House Baratheon - Robert Baratheon, Stannis Baratheon
3. House Greyjoy - Asha Greyjoy, Theon Greyjoy, Victarion Greyjoy
4. House Lannister - Cersei Lannister, Jaime Lannister, Kevan Lannister, Tyrion Lannister



5. House Martell - Quentyn Martell
6. House Stark - Robb Stark, Arya Stark, Bran Stark, Jon Snow
7. House Targaryen - Daenerys Targaryen, Rhaegar Targaryen
8. House Tully

Winterfell

Winterfell is located in northern Westeros. It is the fortress-like castle and home House Stark.

King's Landing

King's Landing is the capital city of the Seven Kingdoms. It is located on the eastern coast of Westeros. King's Landing is home to the King as well as the Red Keep and the Iron Throne.

The Red Keep

The Red Keep is the King's home. It is also the location of the much sought after Iron Throne.

Black Castle

Black Castle is the home to Jon Snow and is ruled by House Stark. Until the arrival of the wildlings, Black Castle was dark and dismal.

Pentos

Pentos is one of the Free Cities. It is the location that has recently undergone some trouble. Tyrion may be convinced that he will be the one to save it. Pentos is home to Magister Illyrio.

Beyond the Wall

Beyond the Wall refers to anything that is outside the Wall of Westeros. Much of the land is uncharted and uninhabited by civilized peoples. It is thought to be filled with savages and a wide array of beasts.



Faith of the Seven

Faith of the Seven is the primary religion in most of Westeros. It refers to a deity with seven faces, which includes a father, mother, warrior, maiden, smith, crone, and a stranger. Each face represents a different virtue.

Magic

Magic is commonly used throughout the book from the enchantment of swords and other weapons to prophetic dreams and visions.



Themes

Betrayal

Betrayal abounds in *A Dance with Dragons*. Everyone wants power, whether it is taken by righteousness, fear or conquest. It seems that few can trust anyone although there are some that are loyal to the end, such as Barristan and Jon. The more wicked characters take advantage of the weaker ones, particularly those who are new to power or are still somewhat green.

Melisandre warns Jon:

"It is not the foes who curse you to your face that you must fear, but those who smile when you are looking and sharpen their knives when you turn your back. You would do well to keep your wolf close beside you." Chap. 3, p. 59

The characters seem to take betrayal and death in stride since there is so much of it. The last person to be betrayed is Kevan Lannister, who falls victim to Varys:

"Ser Kevan was cold as ice, and every labored breath sent a fresh stab of pain through him. He glimpsed movement, heard the soft scuffling sound of slippered feet on stone. A child emerged from a pool of darkness, a pale boy in a ragged robe, no more than nine or ten. Another rose up behind the Grand Maester's chair. The girl who had opened the door for him was there as well. They were all around him, half a dozen of them, white-faced children with dark eyes, boys and girls together. And in their hands, the daggers." Epilogue, p. 959

Magic

Magic is one of the main components in *A Dance with Dragons*. As with many fantastical kingdoms, magic is at the root of a great number of happenings, including turns in battle. Magic is used to create, betray, and destroy. It is used to strengthen weapons and to imprison characters either righteous or evil.

The main character in the book that uses - or professes to use magic - is Melisandre. Melisandre is a sorceress of sorts and a Shadowbinder. While it has been proven in visions, prophecies and spells that Melisandre holds some great magical power, it is unclear how much of that power is real and how much is simply smoke and mirrors.

Warging is also a type of magic. Humans take form in spirit and invade the bodies of other life forms, namely wolves and humans although others have been used. Through this technique the characters can operate as the creature they inhabit. This is particularly handy for characters with limitations, such as Bran when he can no longer walk or The Blind Girl who uses another's eyes to see.



Duty

Duty is the hallmark for many of the characters in *A Dance with Dragons*. Many of the characters were born into duty by virtue of their lineage. Some, like Jon Snow, do not have pure lineage but have still come into command and must put duty ahead of personal gain and desires, including friendship and marriage.

Daenerys, for example, is the last scion of House Targaryen and must rule in the name of her family. Dany is one who must sacrifice her own desires of marrying a man she desires in exchange for one who will be politically wise.

Some characters, like Magister Illyrio, have spent so much time devoting themselves to duty that there is not much time left and they choose to amuse themselves at every opportunity.

Lastly, there are people who are forced into duty by means of slavery. One of the best examples of this is Theon Greyjoy, aka Reek, who is forced to serve Ramsay Bolton and then his father, Roose Bolton. Theon has been sacrificed as a human as have others who have been captured and sold into slavery.



Style

Point of View

The point of view used in *A Dance with Dragons* by George R.R. Martin varies between second person and third person omniscient. This point of view works well in the stories as there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. While the first person point of view might have been interesting when coming from the characters in their time of confusion, third person conveys the entire story and not just the subjective opinions of the characters. It also permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

There is some slight confusion about the second person point of view when it comes to the characters. The first person point of view may have been more efficient and somewhat less confusing for the reader who must learn to switch between points of view between chapters and characters, of which there are many.

Setting

Westeros is one of the main settings used in *A Dance with Dragons*. It is a narrow continent that has been divided between seven houses and formed into independent regions known as the Seven Kingdoms. Much of Westeros is uninhabited, uncharted, and unexplored. It is believed that savages and unknown creatures live outside the civilized areas. The wildlings live outside the civilized areas.

Westeros is situated between the northern region of Always Winter and the southern region of Dorne. The Seven Kingdoms, situated in the south, are under the rule of Daenerys and House Targaryen.

While there are many townships located throughout Westeros, there are five major cities which include White Harbor, King's Landing, Oldtown, Gulltown, and Lannisport.

The main religion celebrated in Westeros is the Faith of the Seven.

There is a wide variety of species in Westeros. The humans are divided by ethnic groups and their associated regions. Humans come in the form of ordinary people, giants, children of the forest (which is basically extinct), wildlings, and Others.

Animals in Westeros range from the ordinary to the mythical. They include aurochs, direwolves, lizard-lions, mammoths, krakens, manticores, ravens, shadowcats, zorses, dragons, and unicorns.

Much like Europe in Medieval times, the regions in the story are ruled by the major houses. Each house has a great history and descendants of each rule a specific region



or intend to recoup leadership of regions that have been stolen through conquest or magic.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used in *A Dance with Dragons* by George R.R. Martin reflects the times in which the stories are set. Martin does not give an exact time period for any of the stories but offers clues to the reader that might help to pinpoint a general era. The feel of the book allows the reader to be able to identify the time periods with medieval Europe. A great deal of the language is the same in its formality, such as m'lord and m'lady. Martin also adds words that have been invented for the book, including warg, direwolf, wildling, sellsword, and others.

The time periods dictate the language but not in such a way to make the language difficult for the reader. Most of the invented jargon is either explained or can be deciphered. The most difficulty the reader may have with the language involves the vast number of characters, places, and the overall complexity of the tale. The language used between characters is common for the genre but Martin uses it in such a way that it reflects the behavior of the characters.

Structure

A Dance with Dragons by George R.R. Martin is a work of fiction. It is comprised of 1016 pages, broken into 72 chapters plus an epilogue. It contains lengthy appendices as well as several illustrated maps.

The structure used throughout *A Dance with Dragons* follows the main narrative as well as chapters based on the points of view of various characters. The main characters have several dedicated chapters. The events are at times simultaneous while others give a great deal of background information and history that was previously unknown. The chapters are as follows:

1. Prologue 26. The Windblown 51. Daenerys VIII
2. Tyrion I 27. The Wayward Bride 52. Theon I
3. Daenerys I 28. Tyrion VII 53. Daenerys IX
4. Jon I 29. Jon VI 54. Jon XI
5. Bran I 30. Davos IV 55. Cersei I
6. Tyrion II 31. Daenerys V 56. The Queensguard
7. The Merchant's Man 32. Melisandre I 57. The Iron Suitor



8. Jon II 33. Reek III 58. Tyrion XI
9. Tyrion III 34. Tyrion VIII 59. Jon XII
10. Davos I 35. Bran III 60. The Discarded Knight
11. Jon III 36. Jon VII 61. The Spurned Suitor
12. Daenerys II 37. Daenerys VI 62. The Griffin Reborn
13. Reek I 38. The Prince of Winterfell 63. The Sacrifice
14. Bran II 39. The Watcher 64. Victarion I
15. Tyrion IV 40. Jon VIII 65. The Ugly Little Girl
16. Davos II 41. Tyrion IX 66. Cersei II
17. Daenerys III 42. The Turncloak 67. Tyrion XII
18. Jon IV 43. The King's Prize 68. The Kingbreaker
19. Tyrion V 44. Daenerys VII 69. The Dragontamer
20. Davos III 45. Jon IX 70. Jon XIII
21. Reek II 46. The Blind Girl 71. The Queen's Hand
22. Jon V 47. A Ghost in Winterfell 72. Daenerys X
23. Tyrion VI 48. Tyrion X 73. Epilogue
24. Daenerys IV 49. Jaime I
25. The Lost Lord 50. Jon X



Quotes

"Are your Seven Kingdoms so different? There is no peace in Westeros, no justice, no faith...and soon enough, no food. When men are starving and sick of fear, they look for a savior." Chap. 1, p. 30

"I am still at war,' Dany realized, 'only now I am fighting shadows.'" Chap. 2, p. 33

"It is not the foes who curse you to your face that you must fear, but those who smile when you are looking and sharpen their knives when you turn your back. You would do well to keep your wolf close beside you." Chap. 3, p. 59

"I have to sign it. They chose me to be their lord commander. The Wall is mine, and the Watch as well. The Night's Watch takes no part." Chap. 7, p. 95

"What if we should find the queen and discover talk of dragons was just some sailor's drunken fancy?" Chap. 8, p. 122

"This is my lot,' he realized as he undressed, 'from now until the end of my days.'" Chap. 10, p. 147

"I am the blood of the dragons,' she thought. 'If they are monsters, so am I.'" Chap. 11, p. 160

"Gods and wonders always appear, to attend the birth of kings." Chap. 14, p. 191

"This is going to end badly."

"You say that of everything."

"Aye, m'lord. Usually I'm right."

Edd to Jon, Chap. 39, p. 516

"A clever slave deserves a clever master, and you lot all look like fools." Chap. 47, p. 621

"He is not dead. Stannis is the Lord's chosen, destined to lead the fight against the dark. I have seen it in the flames, read of it in an ancient prophecy." Chap. 49. Pg. 652

"Place was overrun with rats when we moved in. The spearwives killed the nasty buggers. Now the place is overrun with spearwives. There's days I want the rats back." Chap. 57, p. 770

"They're never far, you know. They won't come out by day, not when that old sun's shining, but don't think that means they went away. Shadows never go away. Might be you don't see them, but they're always clinging to your heels." Chap. 57, p. 778



Topics for Discussion

What is the real purpose behind Melisandre's actions? Is she evil? How powerful is Melisandre? Are her visions accurate? Is she devoted to Stannis? Explain.

Examine Dany's role as the new queen of Meereen. Explain why Dany chose to marry Hizdahr instead of Dario. Was it a wise choice? What might happen when Dany returns?

What was Dany's purpose when she mounted Drogon? What was her intended destination? What happened? Where did Dany go? How was she found? What might happen next?

Why do you think Quentyn is so intent on marrying Dany although she is already married to Hizdahr? Does Quentyn love Dany that much or does he want to take advantage of her status as queen?

Examine the relationship between Roose and Ramsay Bolton. Which is the most evil? Do you like either character? Which is the most powerful? Which will prevail?

Why do you think Jon Snow was killed? What might have happened if Snow had kept Ghost at his side? Is Jon Snow truly dead?

Explain the purpose of warging. What types of things might occur as a result of warging? Who uses it the most? Why? How do the hosts react to being invaded?