

Dragondrums Study Guide

Dragondrums by Anne McCaffrey

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Plot Summary

Dragondrums by Anne McCaffrey is the story of the young harper apprentice, Piemur. Piemur is first introduced as the finest singer in the Harper Hall hold. His perfectly-pitched soprano voice allows him to take the lead in most musicals, even taking on female leads. But the fourteen-year old is suddenly stripped of his singing assignments. At rehearsal for the upcoming musical, Piemur opens his mouth to sing but only low creaky tones emerge; cruelly, his voice has changed and his singing career has ended. He is very upset as he was more than happy with his singing assignment.

Piemur is sent to discuss his future with the Masterharper Robinton who is the leader of the Planet Pern. Master Robinton recognizes Piemur's intelligence and abilities and taps him for two roles. The first is to be a drummer apprentice. The drummers are the communication link between the various Pern locales. They learn to beat out messages on the drums and interpret the messages received from other outlying holds on Pern. His second role is as apprentice to Master Robinton himself. The latter role is one that is to be kept under wraps. Master Robinton cautions the brazen Piemur not to talk about the assignments he receives from him. He is to use discretion and not boast to others. Menolly is a friend of Piemur's and is a little older than he and is a journeyman and close ally of Master Robinton. She had recommended Piemur for his assignment with Master Robinton. Menolly has charge of nine flying fire lizards. The fire lizards are pampered pets that are fed and cared for by their masters. In turn, the lizards are able to find out important things and relate them via mental imaging to their masters. Piemur looks forward to the day he can have a lizard.

Piemur proves his abilities and resilience in several assignments. He is sent to the Mining Hold to pick up some large, brilliant sapphires for Master Robinton. While there, several crusty Oldtimers from the Southern Continent arrive on their dragons looking for sapphires. Piemur is able to disguise his identity and hide the jewels from the Oldtimers. He learns they may be involved with some illegal trade with another Hold in Pern. Piemur takes this important information back to Master Robinton who is very pleased with Piemur's actions. Along the way, he has his first experiences in riding the large flying dragons of Pern. Although terrified at first when he slips into the cold "between" state, he is able to endure the ride. Piemur travels with Menolly and Sebell and witnesses an Impress where baby dragons are hatched and stumble around the masses until they select their owners.

Piemur quickly becomes the best drummer among the apprentices. The other apprentices resent his abilities and his frequent absences. Unbeknown to the others, his absences are due to the assignments he receives from Master Robinton. But maintaining his vow not to boast, he tells no one about these activities. The apprentices play pranks on him, one of which causes Piemur severe injury. Robinton orders that Piemur be permanently removed from his drummer apprenticeship.

After he recovers, Piemur is sent with Sebell, a harper journeyman, to Nabol Hold. He is to infiltrate among the Nabolese to find out about their illegal trade dealings with the



Southern Continent. He poses as a drudge and gains access to the evil Master Meron's quarters where he finds a large number of incubating fire lizard eggs. He steals the queen lizard's egg and through a series of incidents winds up alone with the egg in the remote Southern Continent. The egg hatches and he names his fire lizard Farli. He feeds the new lizard and protects him from the dreaded Threadfall—a deadly alien fall of razorlike rain that occurs without warning.

Robinton is concerned about Piemur and deduces that he must be in the south. He dispatches Menolly and Sebell to sail south and find Piemur. They are ordered to not return without him. However, when they find Piemur, he is so happy in the South that he gets permission from Master Robinton to stay there. The Master names him the South's first drummer-journeyman.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Piemur, the young apprentice at Harper Hall on the planet of Pern awakes to hear the beat of drums. Piemur has not yet grown used to the drums but hopes he soon will. He falls back to sleep thinking of being able to leave the Hall and find fire lizard eggs and perhaps be allowed to keep one. He startles awake again as he hears the hungry screech of Rocky, one of the fire lizards he is responsible for feeding. Piemur and Menolly meet in the kitchen. Piemur takes Rocky and Mimic on his shoulders as he feeds them scraps of meat. Likewise Beauty encircles Menolly's shoulders as she feeds her fire lizard.

After they feed the lizards, Menolly and Piemur join the chorus class that is rehearsing for the spring feast. The musical is about Lessa and her golden queen dragon, Ramoth. Piemur is not embarrassed that he is taking the part of a girl. His high soprano range is perfect for the role. However, when he is queued for his part, he opens his mouth and nothing comes out. He tries again, and his voice is creaky and all over the scale. The Composition Master is annoyed and sends Piemur off to see Master Shonagar, the voice master, and has Piemur's understudy take over the part for rehearsal. Master Shonagar confirms that Piemur's maturity has led to a permanent voice change. Master Shonagar tells Piemur he can no longer be his apprentice and must now see the Masterharper of Pern, Master Robinton to learn his fate.

Menolly accompanies Piemur to see Master Robinton. Master Robinton has noticed Piemur's quick mind and craftiness. Piemur is thrilled with Master Robinton's announcement that he will become Robinton's apprentice. Piemur must improve his scribing skills and must learn to send and receive drum messages accurately and rapidly. Piemur is quick to gather that he will have the chance to ride the dragons, a prospect that totally delights him. After he leaves, Menolly and Master Robinton discuss Piemur, both in agreement that Piemur is a good selection as Robinton's apprentice.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Piemur is a fourteen-year old apprentice at Harper Hall on the planet of Pern. Piemur is known for his beautiful soprano voice allowing him to take on female singing parts. However, upon reaching puberty, his voice changes overnight which causes him to lose his apprenticeship with the Voice Master. At first upset, Piemur is more than pleased to learn that he will become the Masterharper's apprentice. He will also be Master Olodkey's apprentice and have to learn to send and receive drum messages, but best of all he will be able to ride the dragons. Menolly is a little older than Piemur and is a journeyman at the Hall and who among other duties cares for nine fire dragons. She thinks highly of Piemur and recommended him to Master Robinton for the apprenticeship.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

On the orders of master Robinton, Piemur stops by the kitchen to see Silvina who will fit him with a vest for his new assignment. Silvina has just finished baking some bubbly pies and gives Piemur two of the hot treats. Silvina has not heard of Piemur's new assignment and is somewhat surprised. She fits Piemur with new clothes and boots and extras of everything. Though he is happy with his new position, he still looks forward to having a singing roll again. Piemur moves on toward the dining hall.

The other apprentices do not know about his new position. Piemur's friends, Timiny and Brolly sense that Piemur is gloomy from losing his voice and offer him their bubbly pies. At the end of dinner, some announcements are made. Piemur is angered to learn that Sherris has been selected to replace him as Master Shonagar's apprentice. His friends restrain him and they almost miss hearing about Piemur's new assignment. He will be Master Olodkey's new apprentice. Piemur looks up to see the scowling face of Master Olodkey's senior journeyman, Dirzan, glaring at him. Dirzan is not pleased with the new apprentice and warns him to watch his step. Piemur is known for his brazenness and sometimes thoughtless comments.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Piemur keeps his new assignment as Master Robinton's apprentice to himself. In his talk with Master Robinton he learned that the Master was very concerned with harpers keeping secrets and not blabbing things to everyone. Silvina has not heard about his new assignment but provides him with new attire. Eating with his friends in the dining hall, he stays quiet about his apprenticeship with the Master harper. When announcements are made including his new assignment, he is confronted by Dirzan, Master Olodkey's journeyman, who seems very displeased to have Piemur as the new apprentice.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Piemur settles in the Drummers' Quarters. He learns that as the newest apprentice, he will be responsible for keeping the drums gleaming. As Piemur goes through the rigors of learning new drum columns and identifying beats of drum messages, Menolly suddenly appears and tells Dirzan she needs to borrow Piemur for messenger duties. Menolly leads Piemur to the runner enclosure where they both saddle up runners and ride for two hours to the sea hold. A ship arrives bringing journeyman Sebell ashore, with Menolly's fire lizards flying about and providing a welcoming display.

Sebell is tanned indicating to Piemur that he must have been in the Southern Continent. He indicates he has returned with spices. Sebell is glad to hear that Piemur has advanced from the Voice Master's apprenticeship. Piemur suspects that Sebell is happier to see Menolly and that there may be a budding romance. The three depart, Sebell having left his runner at the sea hold. Piemur is strapped down with the majority of Sebell's sacks and is weary and sore after the eight hour trip back to Harper Hall. Sebell notices that Piemur is stiff and sore from the ride and insists he take a warm bath to ease the pain. Piemur sleeps so well that he misses several drum messages and lizard feedings.

To Drizan's surprise, Piemur does so well that he is doing better than the other apprentices and asks for more messages to learn. After six days, Piemur again is sent on an errand. He rides the same runner to a minehold several hours away. The head miner gives him a satchel of large blue sapphires that he is to return to Harper Hall. Several dragons are flying above and heading for the minehold. One of the dragons lands and its rider, one of the Oldtimers, dismounts and talks angrily to the miner. Piemur senses that he should not be identified as a Harper Hall apprentice. He secretes the sack of gems and tends to the runners, posing as the miner's apprentice. The Oldtimer forces the miners to dig for sapphires but is unhappy with the few pieces they find. The Oldtimer flies off on his dragon warning the miner that they'll be back. Safe for now there is always the threat of the Thread. The miner tells the others that they will be closing up the mine. The head miner is pleased with Piemur's wit in hiding the sapphires and pretending to be his apprentice. The Miner tells Piemur to let Master Robinton know everything that just took place.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Just as Piemur excelled at singing before he lost his soprano voice, he is excelling at drumming. Obviously Master Robinton wants him to be used for far more than drumming. He was selected by Menolly to meet Sobell's ship and he is used to pick up sapphires from a mine several hours away. Piemur shows his intelligence and sensibility in hiding the gems from the demanding Oldtimer who storms the minehold looking for

sapphires. The somewhat ominous introduction of the Oldtimer possibly foreshadows more encounters with him, his cohorts and their dragons. The reference to the Thread refers to the threat of a dangerous alien invasion from another planet.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

There are other chores at the minehold for Piemur to complete. Suddenly, one of Menolly's fire lizards swoops down, squawking at Piemur. Piemur calms Rocky down, telling him he is safe. Piemur convinces the head miner to give him a piece of hide on which to write a message. Piemur writes a cryptic message, "Errand completed. Emergency. Old Dragons." Piemur launches Rocky off with the message yelling at the lizard to go to Menolly and let her know that he found Piemur. The miners knowing that Piemur is a harper, asks him to sing. He tells them he lost his voice but finds a pan to beat on and talks through one of the new songs.

When Piemur returns to Harper Hall, Master Robinton asks if the message meant that he had run into some of the Oldtimers. Piemur confirms and describes his encounter with the Oldtimers, T'ron and Fidranth whom he recognized from seeing them turns (years) ago. Master Robinton is very pleased with Piemur's behavior but the young apprentice soon disappoints the Master. Piemur blurts out that he could have done better in dealing with the Oldtimers if he had his own fire lizard. The master was not pleased with Piemur's presumptive attitude and disrespect for the Oldtimers. Piemur is demoralized and is ever grateful that Master Robinton does not beat him or toss him out. He swears he will work on his thoughtless comments.

Upon his return to drum quarters, Dirzan accuses Piemur of gossiping about drum messages received. If only he could tell Dirzan that Master Robinton will vouch for him, but he cannot since their relationship is not to be discussed. He swears to Dirzan that it is not him and he will prove it. Piemur knows that he is doing better at the messages than the others. Piemur plans to write all the messages down in full. When there is gossip about a partial message, Piemur will prove he is not the babblers since he will have the complete message. Some time later, Menolly comes to the drums quarters and again asks to borrow Piemur. Dirzan offers another apprentice, Clell, instead but Menolly advises Dirzan that Piemur had been requested by no less than Master Robinton. Once they were alone, Menolly confirms with Piemur that he had not been antagonizing the other drummers.

Menolly tells Piemur that they are to attend a Gather at Igen Hold. Master Robinton wants Piemur there to wander around and listen. Menolly leads Piemur to Sebell who is waiting with the dragon, Lioth. Piemur is seated upon the large, bronze dragon behind Sebell who is driving and Menolly who is holding on to Piemur behind him. Piemur is frightened as they lift off and he looks down at the disappearing ground. Piemur feels he is flying by himself in the extreme coldness of the "between" state. The dragon speeds downward back toward the ground making Piemur wonder if they will collide with the ground. They arrive in Igen Hold, which is hot and arid. Lioth lets her riders off and joins the other dragons who are sunning themselves on the ridge.



Piemur walks around in the tented community. There are not many people walking about which Piemur attributes to the oppressive heat. He listens to as many conversations as possible but hears nothing astonishing. The heat makes him sleepy and he drifts off for a spell. He wakes to a cool breeze and rushes off to the Hall for dinner. As Menolly sings to entertain those gathered, Piemur wanders about. He pays close attention when he hears a discussion about the Oldtimers. Piemur is able to ascertain that the raid on the miners was not an isolated incident. Piemur easily drifts off to sleep that night. He is awoken by Rocky who pecks him on the ear and leads him to Menolly and Sebell who are waiting at the large brown dragon, Canth. He learns they are on the way to Benden Weyr for a Hatching. Piemur is stunned and wonders how he will explain this to Dirzan and the other drummer apprentices.

Menolly's fire lizards greet them as they arrive in Benden Weyr. The lizards are hungry as is Piemur and the others. Menolly leads them to the kitchen where they meet Mirrim. Mirrim provides food for the lizards and klah for Piemur, Menolly and Sebell. Mirrim seems demanding to Piemur. She constantly complains about being overworked; Menolly tells Piemur to be patient, that Mirrim is actually very nice. Piemur does concede that Mirrim is doing a lot of work in preparing for the Hatching. She seems to soften when she smiles at Sebell's offer to help. As Piemur and the others take their seats, the distinct sound of a low hum is heard. As Ramoth, the dragon queen is guarding the eggs, the young dragonrider candidates approach in an effort to win the Impress. As the dragons hatch, one by one, they each seek out their dragonrider. The hatchlings stumble and tumble wandering around the large group but stop in front of the rider of their choosing. One last small green dragon baby keeps wandering around and is not lured by the many trying to gain her attention. Finally, she finds her dragonrider, stopping at the feet of Mirrim. Mirrim cannot believe she was chosen, but dragons are never wrong.

There is quite a celebration after the hatchling Impress. There was some dissension to Mirrim winning a dragon. One man from southern Pern expressed his dissatisfaction that a girl impresses a fighting dragon while their lads stand on the ground. Once he returns to Harper Hall, Piemur is met with hostility from his fellow drummer apprentices, especially Clell. Clell demands to know where Piemur has been and gets into an exchange of words with Menolly. Since Menolly is a journeyman and outranks Clell she cites him for insolence and assigns a punishment of water rations. When Piemur retires for the evening, a stench that smells like the "necessary" room hits him. He finds that his bedding has been soiled by his enemies. Silvina helps him wash the dirty bedding and loans him new ones until his dry. Piemur was slightly bothered that he had not been recruited by Menolly and Sebell for several weeks. However, Menolly tells him that Sebell was away but soon would return. They would definitely be needing Piemur soon.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Piemur's brush with the Oldtimers comes to the rapt attention of Masterharper Robinton who senses trouble. Master Robinton is extremely pleased with Piemur's abilities in his dealings with the miners and the Oldtimers. He has provided invaluable information.



However, Master Robinton is not happy with the brazenness that Piemur displays at times and cautions him to curtail that characteristic. Piemur vows to work on his attitude and is grateful that Master Robinton did not throw him out or beat him. Piemur is falsely accused of gossiping by Dirzan, who does not like him anyway. He vows to prove to Dirzan that he is not a gossip and devises a method to carry out his plan.

Piemur is thrilled to accompany Menolly and Sebell to the Gather and ultimately to the hatching of new dragons. At this important ceremony, called the Impress, the newly hatched dragons tumble out of their eggs and search for their dragonrider. The person they select will care for them and the dragon in turn will allow her/him to be its rider. It is quite a compliment to be chosen by a baby dragon and the dragons are never wrong and never make a mistake in whom they select. Piemur faces more hostility when he returns to Harper Hall. He is accused of shirking his duties by his main nemesis, Clell. But Clell's problem is envy—he resents that Piemur is chosen for the special trips by Menolly. Even though Clell receives punishment for his attitude, Piemur's problems with Clell will probably continue.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The drummers receive an urgent message from Lord Meron of Nabol. The message is for the healer, Master Oldive, to come to Nabol immediately. Piemur is selected to take the message to Master Oldive. Journeyman Rokayas notices that Piemur is always chosen for message running. Piemur dashes down the steps three at a time and delivers the message to Master Oldive within minutes. Piemur rushes back with Master Oldive's message of agreement and orders to get a dragon ready for the trip. Piemur begins to dash up the stone staircase but slips unable to catch himself. He falls and hits his head so hard that he passes out. His ribs are cracked and he is bruised and sore. He wakes up with Dirzan hovering over him yelling at him to get up and asking why he did not deliver Master Oldive's message immediately.

Rokayas comes to Piemur's rescue. He realizes that Piemur is severely injured and forces Dirzan to help carry him to Silvina. Piemur moans and whispers that the handrail and step were greased. Although they are clean now, Rokayas suspects they had been greased but were wiped clean. Silvina spots grease on the bottom of Piemur's shoe confirming that his fall was not an accident. When Piemur is moved, he vomits and spasms uncontrollably. Silvina determines that Piemur has a concussion, but that there are no cracks to his skull.

When Masterharper arrives to learn of Piemur's condition, Silvina talks with him, Dirzan, and Rokayas alone. She shows the Masterharper the grease on Piemur's boot and asserts that Piemur's fall was no accident. She is furious and insists that he rest for several days in the infirmary. Menolly has Rocky watch over Piemur, telling the fire lizard to let her know if Piemur needs help. Master Robinton orders Rokayas to gather Piemur's belongings but disallows Dirzan to help. It is obvious that the Master will deal sternly with the guilty apprentices who caused Piemur's injuries. Silvina learns from Master Robinton that beyond being concerned about Piemur's health, he needs to send him to Nabol for a Gather to learn what Meron and his followers are plotting.

Chapter 5 Analysis

In their attempt to gain revenge against Piemur, his fellow apprentices' prank leads to serious injury. The whole episode has angered Masterharper Robinton. He orders that Piemur's belongings be moved out of the drummers quarters. It is obvious that he is upset with Dirzan and that he will deal sternly with the guilty ones. Although Piemur is in pain and misery, the prank has backfired on the other apprentices. Not only will they be punished, the accident has elevated Piemur out of the lowly drummer apprenticeship to a much higher status. Silvina assures Master Robinton that Piemur will recover with rest. Master Robinton plans to use Piemur to infiltrate a Gather that is planned in Nabol in the near future.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Silvina, Rocky, other fire lizards, and Menolly help care for Piemur during his recovery. One day he is visited by an old man in tattered clothing. The man turns out to be Sebell in disguise, a ruse he will use when he infiltrates into the Nabol Gather. Sebell tells Piemur that Lord Meron is suspected of trading for fire lizards with the Oldtimers. Since Lord Meron is dying, another important consideration will be who will be named his heir. Piemur learns that he will travel to the Nabol valley early in the morning. He is to blend in and go unnoticed. His bruises may help shield his identity as they will convince others that he is a lowly herder apprentice and not a harper. Menolly and her fire lizards lead Piemur to the waiting dragon, Lioth. N'ton helps Piemur get atop the dragon while he positions himself as the driver. Again the ride is swift, frightening and during the "between" time very cold.

They land in Nabol and N'ton wishes Piemur luck as he takes off with the dragon. Piemur hides behind some bushes and rocks but is spotted by some nosy fire lizards. Piemur uses all his powers of concentration to go into the "between" and virtually disappear. Finally, the fire lizards fly off and leave Piemur undetected. Piemur is anxiously looking for Sebell who will be disguised as a herder of runner beasts. Piemur is worrying about how he will be returned to Harper Hall. He is happy however that he will miss the festivities where Tilgin his understudy will be singing the song written for him. Piemur grows impatient and beats out a message that says "harper - where" using two rocks. A short time later, Sebell responds with a message that says "journeyman comes and stay."

Finally, Sebell emerges with his heard of runners. Piemur takes his place as a herder apprentice behind the herd. Once Sebell and Piemur arrive at Nabol, they haggle with the steward over their fee and finally herd the runners in to their place on the block. After the beasts are sold, Piemur sneaks in the Hold and disguises himself as a drudge. He is used for hard labor, unloading carts, peeling tubers and cleaning up. Piemur is then sent to clean up Lord Meron's quarters with two other drudges. As they walk along, the others are discussing a rumor that Meron is already dead and that there is quite a competition to be his heir. The stench is horrible in the Lord's quarters, and Piemur is forced to enter first and open all the windows. He somehow manages not to vomit from the horrible odor.

Piemur enters the private quarters of Meron and finds six fire lizard egg pots on the fireplace hearth. He quickly takes an egg and replaces it with a like-sized cinder from the fireplace. Piemur hides the egg under his shirt then hides it in a warm pile of cinders outside. Piemur is looking forward to seeing Sebell as he has much to tell him. He learned that Nabol has far more fire lizards than the small hold should have and that Nabol has far more supplies than they could ever use.



Piemur hides the egg in his shirt and tries to leave. He is stopped by the guard then finds a place to hide until he can sneak out later. Soon he hears a ruckus and loud voices. He soon determines that the theft of the egg has been discovered and that they are looking for him. He sees a window that leads to the storeroom in the kitchen. Piemur crawls and scratches his way to the top and manages to plop himself over the window sill. Even though the door is locked from the hall, someone may inspect the room when he is not found elsewhere. He crawls on top of a stack of bundles and secrets himself inside one. He falls asleep only to wake hot and sweaty. He has been transported along with the other bundles to an unknown place. The egg is still whole, although he senses a slight thumping within. He manages to crawl out of the sack and escape through a forest just as voices near the bundles.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Piemur recovers with the help of the fire lizards and Silvina and Menolly. Sebell comes to him disguised as a beast herder and tells Piemur that they will travel to Nabol to learn what that Hold is doing. They suspect that they are engaged in illegal trading with the Oldtimers and that they are amassing an inordinate number of fire lizard eggs. Piemur is flown off to Nabol the next day on Lioth. He meets up with Sebell and his heard of beasts then poses as the herder's apprentice.

Piemur sneaks into the Hold making his way all the way to Lord Meron's quarters. He confirms that they are amassing fire lizard eggs. Piemur steals one of the eggs to take back to Master Robinton and the others as evidence of Lord Meron's behavior. The theft of the egg is discovered and the others surmise that the unknown drudge, Piemur, is the guilty party. He is finally able to escape with egg intact—although he detects a slight movement from within it. Perhaps the egg will hatch and the fire lizard will be his.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Sebell at first thinks that Piemur must have drifted off to sleep somewhere. The lad did have a very early morning and was still recovering. However, when word gets around that a drudge is being sought for stealing the queen egg, Sebell comes to the conclusion that the "drudge" in question must be Piemur. Even though he has no idea how Piemur pulled it off, it brings a smile of pride to Sebell's lips. Sebell looks all over for Piemur. He "borrows" a beast and races back to the spot they first met. He dispatches his fire lizard Kimi to look for Piemur and to warn N'ton to leave on Lioth without them. Kimi returns with N'ton's fire lizard, Tris, who will be ready to alert N'Ton to return for them. Kimi conveys a message about Piemur and dragons he had never seen but then the message goes black.

Sebell witnesses several large dragons land in the courtyard. He assumes they were carrying supplies in payment for the green fire lizard eggs. After drifting off to sleep he is awakened by a loud drum message that announces the Lord Meron is very ill and that the situation requires the presence of Master Robinton. Sebell sends Kimi off to let Menolly know what is happening. Soon a large dragon appears carrying Master Robinton and Menolly. Sebell runs down the road to meet them. He tells them that the queen's egg was stolen and that Piemur possibly took it. Sebell tells Master Robinton that there are more fire lizards in Nabol than there should be. He also has learned that Meron's heir is his grand-nephew Deckter. Robinton and the others meet with Lord Meron's people who lead the visitors to the Hold. The healer reveals to Robinton's relief that the thief who stole the lizard's egg has not been caught. Lord Meron's collapse was due to the dragon queen's egg theft.

As soon as Robinton sees Meron, he instructs Sebell to send a drum message urgently summoning several other lords. Sebell takes the opportunity to beat out a quick message to Piemur to report in. The summoned lords arrive soon and are led into the odorous chambers of Lord Meron. Meron refuses to name a successor. Robinton insists that he do so and does not allow him to have any painkiller until he names an heir. Meron screams for medicine and writhes in pain but Robinton remains steadfast. He must name an heir or he receives no painkiller. He finally blurts out the name of Deckter as his heir. Master Oldive immediately reappears and administers the medication. Sebell figures out that Piemur must have hidden in the supplies that were shipped to the Southern Continent where the Oldtimers reside. Menolly and Sebell dispatch their fire lizards to find Piemur.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Sebell searches high and low for Piemur but cannot find him. He dispatches his fire lizard Kimi. Kimi returns with news that she found Piemur but due to the darkness could



not determine where he was. Sebell witnesses large dragons taking off with supplies no doubt in payment for the green lizard eggs. There is much commotion as word gets around that a drudge stole the lizard queen's egg. Sebell deduces that the thief was Piemur. The incident causes Lord Meron's health to further deteriorate.

Lord Robinton is summoned for this urgent situation. When he arrives, he is told about the missing egg, the inordinate amount of green fire lizards on Nabol and the apparent trade that takes place between Nabol and the Oldtimers. Robinton summons the other hold lords who all demand that the dying Meron name a successor. He refuses but acquiesces when Robinton withholds his painkiller until he does so. Lord Meron names Deckter as his heir, which pleases the Nabolese. Sebell deduces that Piemur was whisked away with the supplies to the South. This all sets the stage for several situations. Perhaps peace can be achieved with Nabol as the newly-named heir Deckter seems to be well thought of. The trade arrangement between Nabol and the south is revealed providing the former with an excessive amount of green fire lizards. And most importantly, perhaps Piemur will soon be found by his friends.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Piemur is stranded in the Southern Continent. He is protecting the egg and buries it in the warm sand near the sea water so it can incubate. Piemur is scrounging for food. He finds orange and red fruits in the forest but hungers for more substantial food. He uses a jungle vine and a plant thorn to rig a fishing line. After much effort, he is able to land a yellow tail. Piemur manages to roast the fish and enjoys his delicious catch. He continues fishing, collecting fruit and tubers from the forest. He is able to sustain himself but begins to wonder why he is seeing no dragons or fire lizards fly over. Suddenly it occurs to him that perhaps there is a danger that Thread could drop down. His fear turns into reality as the vicious gray rain of the Thread comes hissing down. Piemur dives in the water trying to allude the Thread but the fish are in a frenzy as well and keep nipping at him. He is running out of breath and cannot keep hiding in the water. He manages to find shelter under a rock shelf until the danger passes.

Piemur resumes his fishing and hunting for food ever mindful of his prize fire lizard egg. The egg is showing signs that it will soon hatch. Piemur has just caught a fish when he notices something moving on the beach. It is the hatchling fire lizard and it is hungry. He rushes to it and gives it pieces of fish as he wants to Impress it. Piemur is gaining the confidence of the baby lizard as he holds and strokes it. Suddenly wherries are flying above threatening to attack the newborn. He whisks the lizard off to the forest where they are able to elude several attacks from the wherries. The wherries disappear as Piemur sees a flock of fire lizards and dragons flying low, perhaps looking for the newly-hatched queen fire lizard. Piemur is able to stay hidden with his new lizard.

Menolly is worried about Piemur but Master Robinton and Sebell try to comfort her reminding her how cunning and resilient he is. Lord Meron has died and Robinton is making plans to meet with the new Lord for a successful transition.

Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter shows the strength and wiliness of Piemur. Although abandoned in the South Continent, Piemur is able to rely on his own devices. He finds enough food to nourish him and is able to survive an attack of the dreaded Thread. Piemur carefully buries the queen's fire lizard egg in the warm sand to help its incubation. One day while he is fishing, he sees movement on the beach. The fire lizard has hatched. He rushes to the hungry newborn and feeds it pieces of fish. The baby is threatened by wild wherries who try to capture it for food. Piemur is able to elude the attackers and get himself and the lizard to safety. Dragons and a group of fire lizards fly by looking for the hatchling, but Piemur is able to keep the lizard hidden. He finally has his own lizard.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Piemur drudges through the jungle with his fire lizard queen, Farli, on his neck. They eat fruit and find the carcass of a runner beast on the jungle floor. The lizard eats meat from the bone and Piemur takes a supply of the meat with him. He is searching again for the sea when he comes across a grassland that leads to the sea. Herdbeasts are grazing on the lush grass despite the Threadfall from the day before. He saw no dragonriders blazing the grass to destroy the deadly stuff dropped by the Thread. Piemur pulls up a clump of earth and sees the grub worms eating the soil. He determines that they are eating the poison dropped from the thread. The grubs are doing the work for the dragonriders.

Piemur knows he must get back to Harper Hall but the demands of his growing fire lizard keep him occupied. The Thread falls again, but he is prepared this time and is able to protect Farli and himself against its threat. Farli becomes very frightened a few times and goes between, disappearing for some time. Piemur found a large reed in the lake that he could use to breath while diving beneath the reach of the stinging Threadfall. When he finally emerges from the water many creatures are nearby with bloody faces from the onset of the Thread. Farli flies up to Piemur and is very glad to see him. A female beast laid across her calf to protect it from the Fall but it did take her life. Piemur pulls the calf and treats its injured leg. He names the calf Stupid and plans to keep it with him until it is healed.

Back in Harper Hall, Master Robinton has just flown back from Nabol. Menolly greets him and leads him to Sebell who helps him out of his riding gear. Master Robinton tells them that he has resolved the trading agreement between Nabol and the Southern Continent in which Nabol was getting far more fire lizards than they should have. He advised the heir, Lord Deckter, to apply his knowledge of business affairs in running the Nabol Hold. Lastly, Master Robinton informs Menolly and Sebell that they must take the skiff south to find Piemur. They are not to return without him.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Piemur cares for his fire lizard, Farli, and protects her and himself from another Threadfall. Piemur continues to find food for them and defends them from harm. They find a dead herdbeast who fell across her calf to protect it from the Threadfall. Piemur's kindness is apparent when he takes the calf and treats his wound. Reference is made to Farli going "between." When she is in this state, she disappears. This reference ties into the times when Piemur rides the dragons and goes "between" and when he is spotted by unfriendly fire lizards and also goes into that state. Finally, Master Robinton is sending Menolly and Sebell to find Piemur who they is in the South.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Farli suddenly squawks and seems afraid. Piemur sees three red-sailed ships approaching the shore. Based on the color of their sails, he presumes they are southern. He stays hidden but observes that they are collecting numbweed. This is not a pleasant discovery since it will take them days to collect the plant and boil it down for transportation. Piemur moves through the jungle to put some distance between them and the visitors who just sailed in.

Suddenly he is surprised by a tall girl stepping into his path and asking him why he is sneaking around. The girl, Sharra, has two fire lizards with her the sight of which scares Farli. Piemur tells Sharra his real name but not the real reason he is there. He claims he and his companions crashed in the lagoon. Sharra explains that she is a Southern and is gathering numbweed and other medicinal plants. Piemur offers to help. Piemur and Sharra spend days going through the forests collecting the medicinal plant leaves. Sharra is quite a good cook, which Piemur and Farli enjoy. One evening she cooks a strange looking beast that Piemur had never seen before. He was a little dubious but Sharra promised him a good meal.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Piemur, Farli and Stupid are still in hiding in the jungle. Their plans are disrupted when some southerners land on the beach. Piemur does not want to be detected so they travel a good distance away. They run into a young girl who is gathering medicinal plants. Piemur keeps his identity from the girl making up a reason for his being there. Piemur helps the girl gather the medicinal leaves. Piemur seems to like roughing it and also seems to admire this girl quite a bit. He does not seem concerned with getting back to Harper Hall.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Sebell and Menolly are on their way in the skiff that will take them to the Southern Continent. Their red sail is flying high when suddenly the wind dies off. Their fire lizards are behaving strangely. Menolly sends Beauty off to let Hold Master Toric know of their impending arrival. Kimi is diving for fish and brings her catch on board. Rocky and Diver seem sedate, staying back from Kimi's catch and letting her eat it all. Suddenly it dawns on Sebell that Kimi is ready to mate and Rocky and Diver are waiting for the opportunity to compete for her. In the end, Diver wins over Kimi, and Rocky takes off on his own for the night.

Sebell and Menolly embrace realizing their strong feelings for each other. They finally arrive in the South and are greeted by Toric. Toric is told that the trade between Nabol and the South will cease. Toric tells Sebell that they noticed that one sack was only half full in the last shipment. Sebell thinks that Piemur may have hidden in the sack to escape Nabol. Toric confirms that a fire lizard's hatched egg was recently found on the beach. Menolly asks Toric to take them to where the hatched egg was found. Toric is skeptical that Piemur could have survived the Threadfalls but Menolly and Sebell are sure he did.

Sebell asks to be taken to Toric's drum heights to send a message to Piemur but is told that the south has no drums. Toric offers to make a drum by taking a large tree felled recently in a storm and stretching hide over it. They find the gigantic tree, haul it back and plan to make the drum the next day. But that is not necessary. Several ships with red sails are coming ashore. Sharra is walking toward them as they hear a drum message asking for harpers. Menolly and Sebell rush to the ship and shout out Piemur's name. The three friends embrace and are ecstatic at their reunion. Piemur suggests that he really belongs in the South. Sebell suggests that they could use a drummer and he could stay to help build the drum. Menolly sends Beauty with a message to Master Robinton for permission for Piemur to stay. Beauty brings the message back for Piemur to stay safe and enjoy his new assignment as drummer-journeyman. Piemur is ecstatic and wishes he had a drum big enough to tell the whole world.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Sebell and Menolly make their way down in their skiff. Sebell and Menolly admit their feelings for each other. When they arrive in the South, they are greeted by the Master Toric. He doubts that if Piemur was there that he could have survived the onslaught of the Threadfalls. Menolly and Sebell never doubt his abilities and sense that he is there and alive. They decide to make a drum to communicate with him. Before they are able to do that, Piemur shows up in one of the boats returning from the gathering. Piemur

gets Lord Robinton's permission to stay as the drummer-journeyman in the South. He has found the place where he belongs.



Characters

Piemur

The main character of this fantasy is the young harper apprentice, Piemur. Piemur is first introduced as the finest singer in the Harper Hall hold. His perfectly-pitched soprano voice allows him to take the lead in most musicals, even taking on female leads. But the fourteen-year old is suddenly stripped of his singing assignments. At rehearsal for the upcoming musical, Piemur opens his mouth to sing but only low, creaky tones emerge. Cruelly, his voice has changed and his singing career has ended. He is very upset as he was very satisfied with his singing assignment.

Piemur is sent to discuss his future with the Masterharper Robinton, who is the leader of the Planet Pern. Master Robinton recognizes Piemur's intelligence and abilities and taps him for two roles. The first is as a drummer apprentice. The drummers are the communication link between the various Pern locales. Drummers beat out messages on the drums and interpret the messages received from other outlying holds on Pern. His second role is as apprentice to Master Robinton himself. The latter role is one that is to be kept under wraps. Master Robinton cautions the brazen Piemur not to talk about the assignments he receives from him. He is to use discretion and not boast to others.

Piemur proves his abilities and resilience in several assignments. Piemur quickly becomes the best drummer among the apprentices. The other apprentices resent these abilities and his frequent absences. Unbeknown to the others, his absences are due to the assignments he receives from Master Robinton, but maintaining his vow not to boast, he tells no one about these activities. The apprentices play pranks on him, one of which causes Piemur severe injury. Robinton orders that Piemur be permanently removed from his drummer apprenticeship.

After he recovers, Piemur is sent with Sebell, a harper journeyman, to Nabol Hold. He is to infiltrate the Nabolese to find out about their illegal trade dealings with the Southern Continent. He poses as a drudge and gains access to the evil Master Meron's quarters where he finds a large number of incubating fire lizard eggs. He steals the queen lizard's egg and through a series of incidents winds up alone with the egg in the remote Southern Continent. The egg hatches and he names his fire lizard Farli. He feeds the new lizard and protects him from Threadfall—a deadly alien fall of stinging rain that occurs without warning.

Finally, Master Robinton sends Menolly and Sebell to the south to search for Piemur. They are told not to come back without him. However, when they find him, Piemur is so entranced with the South that with Master Robinton's permission, he becomes their drummer-journeyman.



Masterharper Robinton

Master Robinton is the Masterharper of Pern who takes on Piemur as his apprentice after Piemur loses his soprano voice. The Masterharper of Pern is a stern but kindly silvery haired older man. He has a pet fire lizard named Zair of whom he is quite fond. When Piemur visits Master Robinton, the old master seems preoccupied, but he nonetheless assesses Piemur with a very critical eye. Piemur is thrilled when Master Robinton's makes his decision announcing that Piemur will become the head Master's apprentice. In addition to that, Robinton decides that Piemur will serve an apprenticeship as a drummer as well.

Master Robinton tells Piemur he must improve his scribing skills and learn to send and receive drum messages accurately and rapidly. Most important of all Master Robinton tells his young apprentice that he must learn to be discreet. Master Robinton is aware of Piemur's reputation as brazen and outspoken. But Master Robinton is aware of Piemur's intelligence and abilities, which potentially at least far outweigh his sometimes babbling tongue.

Masterharper Robinton puts Piemur to the test by sending him on a solo mission to the Mining Hold to retrieve some sapphires that the Master needs to use as citizen awards for good deeds. Master Robinton receives a cryptic message from Piemur sent by him via the fire lizard, Rocky. He manages to decipher it correctly—Piemur is safe and has had an encounter with some Oldtimers. Robinton is very pleased with Piemur's handling of the situation at the mine but reminds the youngster to resist his tendency to be brazen.

Masterharper Robinton is summoned by drum message to travel to Nabol to attend to the dying Lord Meron. Lord Meron is the cruel leader of the Nabol Hold. Due to his declining health, Master Robinton orders Meron to name a successor. Meron is bitter and uncooperative and, on his death bed, refuses to comply with Robinton's orders. As a result, Robinton instructs the doctor not to give Meron any painkiller until he names an heir. Although Meron is screaming and writhing in pain, Master Robinton remains steadfast. Finally, he wins the tug of war and Meron complies naming a successor. Robinton then allows Meron to have his medication.

Master Robinton's apprentice, Piemur, has been missing for weeks. He sends two of his journeymen, Menolly and Sebell, off to the South to find Piemur telling them not to return without him. Menolly and Sebell reunite with Piemur, but he is so happy in the south that he seeks Robinton's permission to remain there. The kindly Robinton is happy that Piemur is safe. He allows him to stay in the south and promotes him to drummer-journeyman of the Southern Continent.



Master Meron

Master Meron is the cruel leader of the Nabol Hold. He is very sick and does not have long to live. He only names a successor when Master Robinton denies him his painkiller until he does so.

Master Domick

Master Domick is the Composition Master and is Harper Hall's musical director.

Menolly

Menolly is a young female journeyman. She is a songmaker and cares for Beauty's nine baby lizards. She is a good friend of Piemur.

Beauty, The Fire Lizard

Beauty is Menolly's fire lizard who has nine babies that are cared for by Menolly.

T'ron and Fidranth

T'ron and Fidranth are two of the Oldtimers who fly their old dragons to the Mining Hold in search of sapphires.

Sebell

Sebell is a journeyman at Harper Hall. Piemur joins Sebell on several special missions ordered by Master Robinton.

Clell

Clell is a drummer apprentice with Piemur. He is envious of Piemur and is the mischievous ring-leader who plays pranks on Piemur—one of which causes great injury to Piemur.

Farli, The Queen Fire Lizard

Farli is the green queen fire lizard that hatches from the egg that Piemur stole from Master Meron's quarters. Piemur cares for the flying lizard which happily becomes his own.



Objects/Places

Harper Craft Hall

Harper Craft Hall is where Piemur, Menolly and Sebell live. Also residing there is the Masterharper Robinton, who is the leader of the planet Pern.

Planet Pern

Pern is the planet where Harper Hall is located which is the headquarters of the planet Pern.

Southern Continent

The Southern Continent is where the exiled Oldtimers live. It is a temperate locale with a beach and ocean front. This is the location Piemur escapes to after he steals the queen fire lizard's egg.

Nabol Hold

Nabol Hold is led by the dying Lord Meron. Nabol is involved in illegal trade with the Oldtimers in the south.

The Mining Hold

Piemur is sent to the Mining Hold to retrieve sapphire gemstones. While there, he runs into some demanding Oldtimers who are also looking for sapphires.

The Fire Lizards

Flying fire lizards are characterized as loyal, pampered pets. They are of varying colors with colorful whirling eyes. Their masters tend to them—feeding and protecting them. In turn, the lizards are able to locate people and learn key information and relay these messages through mental imaging back to their masters.

The Flying Dragons of Pern

The large, docile flying dragons are the means of transport for the people of Pern traveling between the various locales of their planet. The powerful dragons are bronze, brown, green or white.



Igen Hold

Igen Hold is the region where Masterharper Robinton sends Sebell, Piemur and Menolly to attend the Gather, which is being held in an attempt to learn important information.

Benden Weyr

Benden Weyr is another region that Piemur visits with Menolly and Sebell. They travel there to attend a Hatching of new dragons.

Fort Sea Hold

Fort Sea Hold is the region where Menolly and Piemur travel to meet Sebell who is returning by sea from a secret mission in the south.



Themes

Discretion

The main character is Piemur begins the story as a singer but loses that position when his voice suddenly changes. When he discusses his situation with the Masterharper Robinton, he is cautioned about his tendency to talk too much. The Master tells him to watch his words and to think before he speaks. Piemur is assigned to the drummer heights where he will learn to communicate using drum signals. His first encounter with the drummer journeyman Dirzan, it is not a pleasant meeting. Piemur has a reputation of being brazen and too outspoken and his reputation has proceeded him. However, he is also known as being wily, intelligent and capable.

Piemur is selected to travel to the Mining Hold to collect some large sapphires for Master Robinton. Since he is the newest of the lowly drummer apprentices, the other apprentices wonder why he is able to be absent from his responsibilities. Although he has good reason for his absence—the Masterharper Robinton sent him—he keeps this to himself and dares not boast about his secret assignments. Piemur also keeps to himself the fact that he is being abused by his fellow apprentices. Maintaining his vow to the Masterharper not to brag or boast and to be discrete, he never tells his fellow apprentices that he is being taken from his drummer duties by none less than Master Robinton. The other apprentices resent his absences not knowing their nature. They play pranks on him, one of which results in Piemur's severe injury. Not matter what happens, Piemur never waivers from the vow of discretion that he made to Master Robinton.

Self-Reliance

Piemur finds himself in one harrowing situation after another. Although only fourteen-years old, Piemur uses his instincts and intelligence to survive one close call after the other. When Piemur is sent to the Mining Hold to retrieve some sapphire gemstones, he encounters several crusty Oldtimers from the Southern Continent. He quickly senses that the Oldtimers will not be happy to see a harper in their midst. Piemur understands quickly that the Oldtimers are looking for sapphires and the lead miner is nervously telling them that he has none. Piemur quickly hides his sack of large, brilliant sapphires, positions himself behind one of the runner beasts and pretends to be the miner's apprentice. When the Oldtimers enter the building, his role as apprentice is not questioned.

Piemur gains access to the evil Lord Meron's quarters where he finds several fire lizard eggs incubating on the fireplace hearth. Piemur recognizes one of the eggs as that of a queen fire lizard. Piemur exchanges the egg for a lump of coal and sneaks away with the egg. Through a series of incidents, Piemur finds himself alone in the Southern Continent, a place where he has never been before. The egg hatches and Piemur takes



on the responsibility of caring for the baby fire lizard. He must keep the lizard as well as himself fed and protected from the elements and from the deadly alien Threadfall that occurs without warning. Piemur survives successfully in the harsh conditions of the Southern Continent due to his intelligence and craftiness. He does so well in the South that he convinces the Masterharper to let him remain there.

Adventure/Fantasy

Dragondrums is the story of a young apprentice and his adventures on the planet Pern. Piemur finds himself in one exciting adventure after another. Dragondrums is laced with fantasy and action throughout the tale. The Masterharper Robinton, leader of Pern, recognizes Piemur's abilities and intelligence and selects him for assignments that require cunning and quick thinking. Piemur's first mission takes him on a long, exhausting journey by runner beast to meet a returning journeyman who has been on a secret mission.

Piemur is sent on a solo mission to the Mining Hold where he is instructed by the Masterharper to pick up a pouch of valuable sapphires. Everything is going well until several Oldtimers barge in demanding sapphires from the head miner. Through quick thinking, Piemur is able to elude these crusty visitors just in the nick of time. Another mission requires Piemur to travel with others on one of Pern's gigantic, flying dragons. Although at first terrified, Piemur is able to go to a "between" state which helps him cope with the wild and speedy ride.

Piemur is dispatched to the Nabol Hold where he is instructed to infiltrate with the citizens to learn about Nabol's illegal trade dealings. Through his cunning, Piemur is able to gain access to the evil Lord Meron's quarters where he steals a prize flying fire lizard egg. Piemur escapes to the south with his prized egg. The egg hatches and Piemur is blessed with his own flying fire lizard, which has always been his dream. In the south, however, Piemur faces many dangers and risks including having to face the deadly Threadfall three times.

The flying fire lizards are pampered and cared for by their masters. In turn, the lizards are able to fly about and learn things and find people. The lizards are able to relay the information to their masters using mental imaging.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in the 3rd person, omniscient that allows the reader to know and understand the actions and thoughts of the main characters, especially Piemur, the young apprentice-hero of the story. The tale is told from Piemur's point of view; that is, his hopes, dreams, adversities and adventures are central to the tale. The other main characters are his two journeyman friends, Menolly and Sebell, who share some of the adventures with him. But again, the emphasis of their story lines lies with Piemur. The story details how Piemur interacts with the other main characters, contends with adversity and uses his intelligence and grit to succeed. Masterharper, another important character, is the leader of the planet Pern and is a major force in the development of Piemur's character.

As the story of Piemur unfolds from his point of view, the reader gains sympathy and understanding as the young boy faces many obstacles that at first stand in his way. Although he seems brazen and cocky, the reader easily understands that his seeming arrogance is just bluster displayed to cover his lack of confidence. It is gratifying to the reader to see the development that the young man undergoes during his adventures and journeys. Piemur has the support of his good friends, Menolly and Sebell, and of the Masterharper Robinton who show the young man their unyielding support throughout the story.

Setting

The main setting is at Harper Hall on the planet Pern. Harper Hall houses the leader of the planet Pern, Masterharper Robinton. The apprentices and journeyman as well as the Masters all gather in a large dining hall for their meals. The talents and skills of the Harpers, the inhabitants of this region, include singing, dancing and communicating. This locale is the main communications center of Pern. The main character, the young apprentice Piemur, is assigned to learn drum messages—those that are sent as well as received from all over Pern.

Pern is separated into Holds which can be likened to states. The main Hold is Harper Hold where the leader of the planet Pern, the Masterharper Robinton, resides. Nabol Hold is a less-than-successful Hold to the north that is run by an evil and unpopular leader, Lord Meron. Meron is very ill and does not have long to live. Piemur is sent to infiltrate Nabol Hold in an effort to learn some needed information for Masterharper Robinton.

Piemur's last adventure takes place in the Southern Continent. This coastal region has a warm, balmy climate and thick lush jungles. In this final adventure, Piemur, through a series of unexpected incidents, accidentally lands in the Southern Continent. Although



he faces adversities including dangerous Threadfalls, Piemur survives and comes to love the southern land and receives Robinton's permission to stay there.

Language and Meaning

This fantasy is a story that is rife with strange beings and faraway places. Those who have read other books about Pern will have the benefit of familiarity with some of the locations, objects, and language. Otherwise, one needs to adjust to the new words and the familiar words that are used in new ways. As an example of the latter, is that there are quite a few references to the "between." Piemur is told that during his first ride on a flying dragon, he will feel intense cold when he reaches the "between." Just as promised, when he reaches a point of terror he is suddenly thrust into a cold that numbs his consciousness. Dragons go between in order to travel long distances almost instantaneously. They also use that ability to go between to fight threadfall. One of the early dragonriders learned how to move through time by going between.

The most dire threat in the story is call the Thread. The word "thread" of course brings to mind a sewing aid. The reader notices the capitalized "Thread" or "Threadfall" interspersed throughout the book. There is at first no clear definition of what the "Thread" is but there is the indication that it is involves danger or threat. Late in the book, the reader learns a little more about the "Thread" although there is still a vagueness attached to it, probably by design. The "Thread" is a deadly alien rain of spores that falls to the ground without warning.

The various regions of the planet Pern are called Holds. The Holds are each run by Lords or Masters. The Masterharper is the leader of Pern. There are flying fire lizards of many colors and whirling eyes. The story also contains flying dragons and herd runners and various other strange beasts that the main character encounters.

Structure

Dragondrums, a novel by Anne McCaffrey, is one of a series of books that take place on Pern. This particular volume is targeted for the young adult. The book is separated into numbered chapters and proceeds in a chronological fashion with no flashback episodes. This structure presents the story in a clear and easy to follow manner. The story is built upon the main character, Piemur, who is a young apprentice in Pern. As the tale unfolds, it describes the progress and maturity of the young boy who grows and develops in both character and ability.

At first, Piemur is presented as privately unsure of himself but overtly presenting a somewhat cocky, brazen attitude. As the story develops, the young Piemur matures, gaining more ability and confidence in himself with each adventure he faces. There are many obstacles that confront him but his abilities to cope with adversity strengthens with each situation in which he finds himself. The finale of the tale takes place in the Southern Region and succinctly ties up the story of young Piemur. He has gone from lowly apprentice with little potential to brave journeyman/adventurer. The ending of the

story describes a happy, confident young man who has found himself and fulfilled his dreams.



Quotes

"He'd imagined, as he always did during Threadfall, the graceful passages of the great dragons as their fiery breath charred Thread before it could fall to the ground and devour anything living, before it could burrow into the ground and multiply." Page 5.

"A chance spoken word, even by an apprentice, can sift through a man's thoughts till he forgets the source and remembers the intent. And repeats it inadvisedly." Page 19.

"You watch your step with our Master. Quickest man in the world with a drumstick and he doesn't always use it on the drums!" Page 33.

"I do not disapprove of ambition nor the ability to think independently, but presumption is unforgivable." Page 56.

"If it's you she wants, Mirrim, get down there before she hurts herself! . . .The dragon's never wrong! Come! Be quick about it, girl. She's scraping her chin raw to get to you!" Page 87.

"Piemur tried to form an excuse, but only a groan issued from his lips as he groggily tried to right himself. He was dimly conscious of aches and pains all over his left side and sore stiffness across his cheek and under his chin. 'Greased.' Piemur mumbled waving with one hand at the steps." Page 104.

"Go away, you silly creatures. I'm not even here!" to provide this, he closed his eyes and concentrated on the awful nothingness of between." Page 125.

"Reposing on the hearth were nine pots of exactly the size in which fire lizard eggs were placed to keep warm and harden. One pot was set slightly apart from the others and lifting the lid, Piemur scaped enough sand away to see the mottled shell. The egg was smaller and of a different hue. He'd wager every mark he owned that the separate pot contained a fire lizard queen egg." Page 140.

"He had long known that Master Robinton would use unexpected methods to maintain order throughout Pern and to uphold the leadership of Benden Weyr, but he had never expected such ruthlessness in the otherwise gentle and compassionate Robinton." Page 171.



"He was fishing that dawn, lying prone on the grass pad when he experienced a sudden sense of alarm so intense that he glanced over his right shoulder and saw in horror the gray rain hissing into the sea not a dragon's length away." Page 181.

"As Piemur continued to watch the disembarkation, he became aware of a growing sense of indignation that anyone would dare invade his privacy, would have the audacity to make a camp and set up cooking fires with great kettles balanced on spits across the flames, just as if they belonged here." Page 203.

"Smiling, Menolly put her hands in his and let herself be drawn into his arms where he had so yearned to have her." page 219.

"I wish I had a drum big enough to tell the whole world how happy I am!" Page 240.



Topics for Discussion

Describe what a fire lizard is and what it looks like. What values and services do the fire lizards provide to their owners? What method do the lizards use to communicate with their people?

What great talent does Piemur possess when the story first opens? What happens to that talent and why is this point crucial to the rest of the story as it plays out?

When Piemur first rides a large flying dragon, he is warned that it will seem very cold when they are in the between. Describe what the between is. What other ways and in what circumstances is "between" used by Piemur?

What is an "Impress" ceremony and under what circumstances does Piemur witness one? During this Impress, what is the involvement of the girl Mirrim?

While still a drummer apprentice, Piemur sustains a terrible injury. Describe the injury and the circumstances leading up to it. What happens to Piemur's career as a result of this injury?

When Piemur infiltrates Nabol posing as a drudge, to whose quarters does he gain access? What happens once Piemur is in these premises?

What is the Thread? Where does Piemur encounter it and how does he deal with it?