

Dragonflight Trilogy Study Guide

Dragonflight Trilogy by Anne McCaffrey

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Plot Summary

In a world where dragons and men coexist, Weyrleader F'lar and his Weyrwoman, Lessa, push past personal differences and work together to save Pern from deadly spores known as Threads that fall to the ground with the Red Star's orbital passing. In the past, six Weyrs filled with weyrfolk, dragons and their riders fought this alien invasion using dragon flames to sear the Threads before they reached the ground. Yet, as the threat draws near, five of six Weyrs sit empty, leaving F'lar, Lessa, and a handful of dragons and dragonmen of Benden Weyr to save all of Pern. The two turn to the ancient Ballads, Traditions and Records for help. When Lessa accidentally visits the past while learning to fly her dragon queen, they believe the answer to the Question Song is to fly dragons between times to the past in order to seed the dragon population and give them time to grow before the next battle.

As the story opens, Lessa hides behind the disguise of a filthy kitchen drudge within Ruath Hold where she awakens with a sense of danger. Her special ability touches the watch-wher's mind, but it does not sense the danger. The threat is unfamiliar. Danger emanates from the east and the west. Her eyes drift to the Red Star dominating the sky at dawn—a recent occurrence. The worst of the danger will come from the east.

F'lar senses Lessa's power and sees through her disguise while she is unconscious. After talking to her, he carries her to Benden Weyr in hopes she is one to Impress with the queen. When the queen dragon hatches, Lessa is chosen by the hatchling. This thrusts the girl into the position of Weyrwoman overnight. She uses her secret abilities discreetly, but her hidden skill of communicating with all dragons creates a bond between her and the beasts. This bond of trust paves the way for the future when dragons and riders are forced to fly between times in an effort to repopulate the diminished dragon population.

With the discovery of Threads falling over Nerat, flying between times becomes a reality for the dragons of Benden Weyr and their riders as they go back two hours to fight Threads at dawn. The battle is successful but takes its toll. The few dragons and trained riders will not be enough to fight the Threads day after day for years. This reality gives birth to a plan to send a queen and a handful of others ten years into the past to grow the dragon population and bring their riders to maturity. This venture is not enough to keep up with the steady stress of fighting the Threads. However, it gives birth to Lessa's idea as she reads the Question Song. Along with references found on a long lost tapestry, she decides to risk traveling back four hundred years to a time before the Weyrfolk of the other five Weyrs disappeared. If she arrives safely, she plans to ask their help to fly forward in time to fight the Threads along with F'lar and the handful of others.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 1

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 1 Summary

In a world where dragons and men coexist, Weyrleader F'lar and his Weyrwoman, Lessa, push aside personal differences and work together to save Pern from deadly spores known as Threads that fall to the ground with the Red Star's orbital passing. In the past, six Weyrs filled with weyrfolk, dragons and their riders fought this alien invasion using dragon flames to sear the Threads before they reached the ground. Yet, as the threat draws near, five of six Weyrs sit empty leaving F'lar, Lessa and a handful of dragons and dragonmen of Benden Weyr to save all of Pern. The two turn to the ancient Ballads, Traditions and Records for help. When Lessa accidentally visits the past while learning to fly her dragon queen, they believe the answer to the Question Song is to fly dragons between times to the past in order to seed the dragon population and give them time to grow before the next battle.

Lessa awakens to a cold deeper than the ordinary cold of the stonewalls. It is the cold of danger. Her special abilities warn of danger stronger than that which chased her to hide in the watch-wher's lair ten Turns ago. She lies upon a bed of straw within the cheeseroom along with other kitchen drudges. An awareness of the restless watch-wher chained outside touches her mind in the pre-dawn hours. What subtle menace would rouse her and not the suspicions of the watch-wher of Ruath Hold? She stretches her abilities. The danger is not within the Hold, nor even approaching the parameter, nor is it detected within the craftsmen's holdings. The danger is not in Ruatha, at least not yet. It is not a familiar threat—so it is not Fax the overlord of Ruath Hold. Lessa considers Fax a self-styled Lord of the High Reaches. During the three years since he last showed himself at Ruath Hold, she has used her powers to make Ruatha an undesirable conquest in hopes that he will forget why he ever subjugated the Hold.

Lessa picks her way among the sleeping drudges, through the kitchen and outside. The watch-wher slithers across the yard happy to see her. She scratches it affectionately before making her way to the tower. From there, she stares toward the east. Danger emanates from the west as well. Her eyes drift to the Red Star dominating the sky at dawn. The worst of the danger will come from the east. Other than that, she finds no answer as the physic awareness wanes. She must wait, something she is used to. Perversity, endurance and guile are her other weapons—that and her vengeful dedication.

Sunlight dawns on the twisted orchards of Ruatha. Grass grows where it should not and dies where it should grow. Lessa smiles. Fax sees no profit from this conquest and has no idea that she has any part as the source of his undoing. The cock crows and she resumes her disguise. On the way back into the hold, she hugs the watch-wher. It alone cares about her and knows who she is. She reminds it to be as vicious to her as to anyone if someone comes near them. As sunlight peeks over the outer wall, the watch-wher rushes into its dark nest, and Lessa makes her way back to the cheeseroom.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter introduces Lessa's power to sense danger, play with men's thinking and communicate with the large, lizard-like watch-wher. Playing the part of a kitchen drudge, no one knows of her hidden ability or that she comes from the Blood of Ruatha. Using flashbacks, we learn Lessa's family was murdered by Fax, and that she is the last remaining family heir. She bides her time, gradually using her power to bring Ruatha into shabby condition in an effort to keep Fax's visits to a minimum. Lessa's ability is unique to her and hints at things to come as the author details the use of her powers in common, everyday circumstances to set the stage for the future. Gradual insight into Lessa's abilities lays the groundwork to tie together the beginning, middle and end of the plot with elements of tension, conflict and consistency. For example, in this chapter Lessa's powers alert the reader to the undefined danger of the Red Star in the sky at dawn.

Lessa's character is presented wearing a disguise—both physical and mental. Revenge feeds her determination. Her powers manipulate people's perceptions as she works toward her goal to see Overlord Fax dead so she can claim her rightful place. Lessa's disguise marks her own lack of self-awareness. Her lust for revenge has consumed who she is for so long that she has lost herself. Little does she understand how the Red Star will catapult her on a dangerous journey that leads to her own self-awareness and healing. A recurring theme introduced in this first chapter and repeated throughout the book is "danger at dawn." As an obvious pointer to new beginnings, within this plot dawn ties the start of each new day with clues to a nebulous danger.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 2

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 2 Summary

Each chapter starts with a verse from ancient texts foretelling things to come or things that have occurred that influence the present. This chapter's verse introduces dragons: bronze, brown, blue and green, and mentions dragonmen of Pern arising unseen. Dragonmen are classified by the color of dragon they ride. F'lar rides a bronze dragon named Mnementh. Together they fly above Fax's chief Hold where he observes the disrepair Fax has allowed to overtake his Holds. F'lar determines that after this search is over and the impression made, there will have to be a disciplinary Council held.

Mnementh rumbles his approval as he lands along the grassy flagstones of Fax's Hold. A claxon sounds from the Hold's tower. F'lar's half-brother, F'nor, joins him. A group of men marches out to meet them, led by a heavy-set man, Fax. Fax offers a rude greeting using a third person pronoun welcoming the bronze rider to the Hold. F'lar recognizes the veiled threat. The man is living up to his reputation. Flashy rings on Fax's hand hover near the hilt of his sword. The man needs to be treated with caution.

F'lar announces that they are on a search after the death of the queen. Fax responds through gritted teeth that the High Reaches are honored with their search. The interaction between the two men is clearly confrontational. F'lar singles out Ruatha, for many Weyrwomen have come from that Hold. A strange look comes over Fax's face. Instead of continuing the conversation, he invites F'lar and his men to follow him into the Hold where the dragons perch along the walls, stirring apprehension in Fax's men.

Fax doesn't like the idea of F'lar looking over his women to find the next Weyrwoman. Yet if he refuses, the insult can be countered with mortal combat. Fax offers to take the dragonmen to see their quarters, but F'lar brushes aside the distraction. He reminds the Overlord that it is duty first. Fax leads the way with F'lar and F'nor into the Great Hall, and F'lar and F'nor test the Overlord to see how closely he follows the ancient customs. They come to see that Fax's following of the old traditions are more out of prudence than respect for the old ways. His treatment of dragomen raises enough concern in F'lar's mind that he determines the Overlord needs to be watched.

Fax takes the men to the women's quarters where he introduces Gemma, the mother of his heirs. The pregnant woman looks tired. None of the women is worthy enough to become a Weyrwomen. F'lar then follows Fax to his assigned quarters where he asks permission to wander the Hold freely—a traditional privilege of a dragoman. Fax stomps off and F'lar eyes the drudges setting up tables to see if any may be the one. They are not.

F'lar sends his men out to search and they return by sunset with the names of prospects. F'lar and F'nor walk through the crafthold, with F'lar's mind pondering changes of the last 200 Turns. He's one of the few Weyrfolk who credit Records and



Ballads. They decide to first visit the Clothman's Hall where a former dragonman lives in exile after the death of his dragon. The man's name is Lytol. He takes in news about the Weyr, the death of the queen, and they discuss the women of the High Reaches. Many families sent their daughters away when Fax took power. Any women of Weyr Blood are dead or gone now.

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 2 Analysis

Ancient ballads define dragon colors and ranks. These ballads provide back-story but also foreshadow things to come. "Dragonmen will arise unseen." This raises questions of how this unlikely scenario will play out at a time when one surviving Weyr makes such a statement unlikely. Until Lessa and F'lar learn to interpret the Ballads and understand the answers to the Question Song, these are hints of future things. The author uses F'lar's thoughts to provide back-story on the history of Pern and paint a clear division between those who believe the Records and honor of the old ways and those who don't.

The ranking of dragons is a pivotal plot thread, because only bronze dragons are allowed to mate with the queen. This presents a shifting of power as the rider of the bronze who mates the queen becomes Weyrleader. Leadership is not determined by men but by the dragons they ride. The author introduces conflict within the Weyr with back-story that bronze rider F'lar was groomed to be Weyrleader. The untimely death of his father leaves him under the leadership of R'gul, who placates the Overlords rather than confronting disobedience. He teaches the letter of the law, but does not believe what it teaches. This hypocrisy divides the dragonmen and the death of the queen sends dragonmen out on a search for Weyrwoman candidates. This is another type of danger at dawn—the dawn of new leadership.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 3 & 4

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 3 & 4 Summary

Four days later, F'lar still endures Fax's company. It's only through F'lar's practiced self-control that the situation hasn't turned explosive. He glides on Mnementh into Ruatha. The decline of the Weyr and its influence isn't only due to the Holding Lords; the decay is also from within. It's the result of an incompetent queen and inferior Weyrwomen. Along with the encroachment of grass came the withholding of tithes. Little by little, the Weyr's influence lessened so that even ancient holds didn't take proper precautions to keep Pern free of Threads.

As they cut through the pass from Crom to Ruatha, a clear distinction is noted. Ruatha lies in near ruin. The sight stuns F'lar. He had thought for sure the answer to the search would be found here to the south. Fax has met resistance here, but they owe him tribute as the rightful Overlord. F'lar looks at the bleak landscape and wonders at the man's greed. If he exacts tribute, the people will starve. Fax's emotions are charged. F'lar tries to figure out why it bothers Fax to be in Ruatha. While discussing it, Fax's hand hovers above the hilt of his sword. F'lar admits to himself that he will kill the man. Dragonmen are bred not to seek blood, but dealing with Fax in Ruatha makes him want to fight. The dragons flap their wings drawing attention to the subtle power sensed in the valley.

Wearing her drudge disguise, Lessa shovels ashes from the hearth when an agitated messenger rushes into the Great Hall. He tells the Warder that Fax is coming along with dragonmen. Lessa is excited and slips from the Hall carrying her bucket of ashes while planning to seize the opportunity. She seeks to get Fax so infuriated or humiliated that he will renounce his claim on the Hold. If this happens, she can reclaim her birthright. Even though she's excited, she is also wary. Dragomen are intelligent, and greed and fear do not cloud their judgment. Was this the danger she had sensed earlier?

As she makes her way to the stables, she wonders if the dragomen will hold the Lords accountable for the disgraceful greenery encroaching on the Holds. Here in Ruatha, much of the blame rests on Lessa, but she admits to herself that she'd rather Ruatha fell to the Threads than to live under the rule of Fax. Above her, Lessa sees the shadow of a great dragon as it circles to land. Terrified drudges scream as they run from the kitchen as the claxon rings its warning from the tower. Lessa ducks into the kitchen where the head cook quickly assigns her the job of scrubbing the grease-encrusted cooking utensils. She takes on the task while knowing that she has set things in motion to see her plan succeed.

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 3 & 4 Analysis

When F'lar realizes that the decline of the Weyr isn't just a result of the Holding Lords, but that the decay is also from within, the author introduces a secondary plot line:



Conflict within and conflict without. She also lays the groundwork for explaining the important role of the queen and her Weyrwoman. The severe decay of Ruath Hold also foreshadows Lessa's abilities to influence from within and the power she will wield as Weyrwoman.

Back-story is introduced through F'lar's thoughts. Encroachment of grass is linked to the dangerous Threads that haven't appeared for 400 years. The withholding of tithes is further evidence of decline in respect for the old traditions.

Unseen powers are sensed as F'lar and Fax fly above Ruatha. Fax's emotions are charged, and F'lar tries to figure out why it bothers him to be in Ruatha. Discussing it almost leads to a fight between F'lar and Fax. This subtle clue is linked to Lessa's powers as she works to instigate a fight between these two to bring about Fax's death. The dragons sense the power in the valley, foreshadowing the link not only to Lessa's powers but also to her ability to communicate with the dragons.

Lessa's character and powers become more defined in Chapter 4. Her ability to hide behind her drudge disguise and her plan to see Fax renounce his claim on the Hold within the presence of the dragonmen moves the plot forward as she plants to reclaim her birthright. This plan highlights Lessa's beliefs in the old traditions. However, when she wonders if the dragonmen could be the danger she felt earlier, we see Lessa's powers have their flaws, making her less predictable and more interesting. She may sense things, but she doesn't always know what they mean. When Lessa pauses to look up at the dragon, it opens the door for the dragon to sense her power. Later we see that this dragon may be her own Ramoth visiting from the future with Lessa on her back.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 5

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 5 Summary

F'lar senses the watch-wher is hiding something. F'nor's dragon senses it as well, but F'lar trusts his dragon, Mnementh, to sort it out. The two dragonmen stand within hastily cleaned guest quarters warming themselves before the fire. They and their dragons have sensed the power in Ruatha. F'lar finds it hard to believe that the ancient Hold has fallen into such disrepair. F'nor tries to come up with reasons that they may have misread the power, but F'lar stops him. "That watch-wher is hiding something, and only someone of the Blood of its Hold can arrange that, brown rider," Flar said emphatically." (p. 34) Even though Ruatha has been overcome, the Hold still resists in subtle ways. He claims it is the power at work.

Fax assigns one of his women to show F'lar around, and the dragonman quickly becomes bored with his escort. F'lar ignores her except for when the Search journey obliges him to acknowledge her. She takes him from room to room, the woman speaking incessantly while he notes various and numerous points of disrepair. In the distance, Lady Gemma descends the stairs with awkward movements. Fax has insisted she journey to Ruath Hold. His escort blabbers on about how it is not Lady Gemma's time but it seems the baby may have ideas of its own. The news stirs F'lar's hatred for Fax. He rushes over to help Gemma down the stairs.

F'lar learns Lady Gemma was a friend to Ruatha in her youth. He dares to ask if she thinks anyone in Ruatha could have escaped the sword. She shakes her head almost imperceptibly and takes her seat at the table. F'lar sits beside his escort at the same table where Fax will join them. As Fax stomps into the room, Lady Gemma winces and shudders in pain. Fax slams his chair into Lady Gemma as he takes his seat. The Warder will serve the best of what is left. This irritates Fax. In his greedy view, nothing should be left. The Warder verbally backpedals. There's nothing good enough to be sent on to Fax. Fax replies, "The day one of my Holds cannot support itself or the visit of its rightful overlord, I shall renounce it." (p. 37) Lady Gemma gasps, and the dragons roar. F'lar feels a surge of power. He glances at F'nor at a separate table. He has felt it, too.

F'lar carries on conversation while scanning for the source of the power surge. It's not one of Fax's women, but the only other women are five drudges serving the food. Matted hair hides the face of the drudge serving Lady Gemma. Labor pains seize Lady Gemma, but Fax doesn't notice. He's busy chastising the Warder. Lady Gemma lets F'lar know that she cannot leave as Fax is always dangerous at Ruatha. Suddenly, Fax is on his feet striking the Warder for the poor quality of food. F'lar reminds Fax of his earlier statement which was witnessed by all in the room. He should renounce Ruatha as he said, for it cannot support itself. Even as he says it, F'lar is shocked at the words coming from his mouth. It is the result of covert use of the power. Someone wants him to fight Fax.



Lady Gemma groans. Fax raises his fist to strike her for interrupting. Instead of hitting her, Fax laughs. "Aye, renounce it, in favor of her issue, if it is male . . . and lives!" (p. 41) He goes over to the meat table where he hacks and stuffs pieces into his mouth. F'lar helps Lady Gemma to her feet. She whispers that her husband plans to kill him. Things she says leave him wondering if she believes in the Old Laws. Two of the Warder's men carry Lady Gemma up to the Hold while he sends one of the drudges after the birthing woman. F'lar joins Fax at the roast and waits to be invited to join in the slicing.

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 5 Analysis

Even though F'lar and F'nor don't possess powers as defined as Lessa's, the dragonmen are able to sense power senses in Ruatha. Dialog provides insight into F'lar's expectations. He is surprised at the state of disrepair of the ancient Hold. F'nor respects his brother's leadership, adapting to situations as needed. This time he comes up with reasons that they may have misread the power. F'lar stops him. The facts show that someone of the Blood is within the Hold. This is a subtle foreshadowing of the role these two brothers will play in future events. They both can sense things, but F'lar is the one with the ability to sort things out to see the direction that must be taken. He tends to base decisions on facts rather than feelings.

Lady Gemma's presence and poor physical condition is the vehicle used to show F'lar's caring nature and respect for women. It is also the tool the author uses to stir his hatred for Fax. F'lar recognizes integrity in Lady Gemma and takes action to help her. This reveals a glimpse of his strong sense of right and wrong as this scene builds on the theme of good versus evil. Good being equal to basing your actions on the Traditions, Records and Ballads, and evil following one's own ways whether motivated by greed, fear, or some self absorption.

Good versus evil is also defined by the way men act and react. F'lar's men admire and support him. Fax's Warder fears him. This fear is used to provoke Fax's statement to renounce a hold that cannot support itself or a visit from its Overlord. This theme moves the plot forward as Lessa's plan comes closer to fulfillment. With the use of Lessa's power, F'lar is alerted that she is near. All these details are cleverly crafted to work together to introduce elements strategically important to further the plot.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 6

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 6 Summary

Lessa runs from the Hall after being sent for the birthing woman. She's angry. After using her powers on Fax and the bronze dragonman, they should have fought. The whole situation makes her wonder if all honor in Pern is dead—smothered by the grass. Part of her even blames Lady Gemma for going into labor. If she hadn't groaned at that moment, they would have fought. In the distance, the bronze dragon lets out a weird croon, but she silences him with her power the same way she controls the watch-wher.

She knocks on the door of the birthing woman's home announcing she's needed. Lessa warns the woman to hurry, that the child to be born will be male and Ruatha's Lord. Lessa hurries the woman into the Great Hall. F'lar points urgently. Lessa tugs the birthing woman along, and F'lar joins them. He tells the birthing woman to hurry. As they reach the stairs, he gestures for Lessa to accompany the woman. At that moment, he stares at Lessa's hand on the birthing woman's arm. Her disguise has slipped for a moment. Her fingers are fine-boned and graceful. She quickly blurs them.

Lady Gemma's in full labor. The birthing woman pleads Lessa to stay. If the child lives and is a boy, it will be the heir and Lord of Ruatha. Nevertheless, Gemma bleeds too much, and the baby is too early. Lessa believes they both will die. Anger boils within her. All this thwarts her plan. Gemma grasps Lessa's hand and asks what she's done to her. Lessa leans close and whispers so no one else hears. She has to have Ruatha back. Lady Gemma responds with unexpected words about how there are so few bronze riders. Between gasps, she talks of old tales, and the Star but her words trail off. Lessa asks what she means but agony steals her last breath.

Lessa lays the dead woman onto the bed noticing a smile on her face. She contemplates all that's happened and forms a plan. To force a fight between Fax and the dragonman, she'll say the child lives. As she hurries to the Hall, she realizes that she's let her guard down. She slows while taking on her stooped drudge persona. When she reaches the Hall, the harbinger of death is at Fax's feet but Lessa announces that the child lives and that it is a male. Fax kicks the woman at his feet. She announces Ruatha has a new Lord. The dragons roar. Fax slams his fist into Lessa before she can move away. She crumples to the floor unconscious. F'lar reminds him that his oath was heard and witnessed.

Fax yells that the Weyr power is over. He leaps toward the dragonman with his weapon drawn. The two fight. F'lar is wounded, and Fax killed. F'lar stumbles to Lessa's side. Her heart beats steady and strong. He carries her to his bed where he sees beyond her disguise. He counts it as luck that he has found the one. She regains consciousness and pulls her disguise into place. He asks her name and rank. She stands straight no longer blurring her appearance. She asks about Fax. When she learns he's dead, she states that she is Ruathan Blood and that she claims Ruatha.



F'lar is impressed with her proud bearing, but reminds her of the oath all the dragomen witnessed. Fax's heir would be Lord. Lessa admits her lie. Gemma and her unborn child died together. Anger flares within F'lar. He grabs her by the wrist upset that she provoked him to fight while on a Search. She admits she doesn't care about his Search for she now has Ruatha. She runs from the room, F'lar gives chase, but she disappears. He hurries to the Great Hall, asks F'nor if he has seen her, and lets him know she is the source of the power and of Ruathan Blood. F'nor asks if she will depose the baby and goes on to tell F'lar that the birthing woman took the baby, and he lives.

Mnementh roars and warbles in the distance. He has caught Lessa. F'lar hurries outdoors where he sees his bronze dragon circling to land with Lessa in his grip. As he lands, Mnementh lets his rider know that he caught her climbing from one of the high windows. The dragon sets Lessa on the ground and forms a cage around her with his claw. F'lar takes note that she is not afraid of the dragon. It pleases him. He lets her know that the baby did actually live and that it is a male. Her shoulders slump. He challenges her to think beyond Ruatha—to be a Weyrwoman. Nemorth has laid a golden egg and is near death. They are in Search of a strong Weyrwoman.

Fear comes over her, and she mentions the Red Star as more of a question. He hopes she will come with him voluntarily. As Weyrwoman, she will have command of all the Holds, not just Ruath Hold. Her name is Lessa, the daughter of the Lord of Ruath. She says she fears nothing. Mnementh stretches his long neck and lets out a throaty peal. Lessa has accepted the challenge. They agree to set up the ex-dragonman Lytol as Warder and Lord Surrogate of Ruath Hold.

The bronze dragon lowers his head for Lessa to climb aboard. The watch-wher lies panting in the dust. Lessa feels bad for the animal that saved her as a child. F'lar offers her his hand. In a flash of movement, he is knocked off his feet by the watch-wher. The watch-wher leaps toward him. Lessa cries out not to kill. The watch-wher flips to stop its charge, snapping its neck. Lessa cradles the ugly beast's head as her only friend dies.

Lessa climbs aboard Mnementh holding tightly to F'lar's forearms as they take to the air. F'lar tells the bronze dragon to transfer, and they flow into the profound cold of the between. Lessa shows no fear. Before she knows it, they are flying over the great stony troughs of the Weyr. The other dragons go to their own tier in the caves while Mnementh circles lazily and lands. F'lar points to a corridor leading to their quarters. They reach the sleeping room, and F'lar shows Lessa where to bathe. He gives her a change of clothes and leaves to feed Mnementh. As their dragons feed, F'nor and F'lar talk of the High Reaches and the rejoicing over Fax's death. They also discuss the women brought to the Weyr because of the Search. There are 12 in all.

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 6 Analysis

As Lessa runs after the birthing woman, the bronze dragon lets out a weird croon. She silences him with her power the same way she controls the watch-wher. This is another



foreshadowing of her ability to not only communicate with but also even control the dragons.

The birth of Gemma's child is a birth of a leader. Just like birth pangs, small clues reveal the birth of the Weyrwoman as they grow in intensity. Lessa's role in the birth of Gemma's child shows that she is willing to do what needs to be done even when it is not the easy thing. When Lady Gemma clasps Lessa's hands and asks her what she's done, it opens the door to possibilities. Did Lessa's powers inadvertently have something to do with the baby's early arrival? On the other hand, could it have been purposeful? In addition, does Lady Gemma have Weyr Blood within her making her son a legal heir to Ruath Hold? Even in agony, the woman confirms knowledge of things not often spoken of, old tales. Moreover, when she speaks of the star, her words trail off. This is an excellent use of what readers already know to create deeper mystery. As what she says is true, her knowledge of the star would also be true. It's another alert to danger. The travails of childbirth and death cut off the source of information, leaving the reader wanting more.

Lessa's ability to think on her feet is evident when she announces the baby lives, just to make Fax angry. It works, but he knocks Lessa unconscious before challenging F'lar. The two fight, and Fax is killed. Lessa is carried to F'lar's bed, and he sees beyond her disguise. He is sure she is the one. This interaction shows flaws in Lessa's plans and powers. Although willing to take action, she is not in control of the outcome. This fact plays an important role in the future of Pern and the fighting of Threads.

After Fax's death, Lessa announces that she is Ruathan Blood and claims her place as heir. F'lar is impressed with her proud bearing, but reminds her of the oath witnessed by the dragomen. Fax's heir will be Lord. Lessa admits that she lied. The baby died. This is a precursor to the relationship that develops between these two characters. She lies for what is just and now has desired result. His anger flares that she provoked him to fight while on a Search. The plot takes twists and turns as each character achieves their goals only to find they are thwarted in some way by another obstacle. For Lessa, the baby lives.

F'lar's dragon, Mnementh, catches Lessa, and it pleases F'lar to see she is not afraid of the dragon. This same courage later drives him mad when she takes risks endangering her life. Within this same scene, F'lar demonstrates traits that characterize their relationship and his leadership. He tells her the baby lives; it deflates her. He challenges her to look beyond the disappointment, to consider becoming a Weyrwoman as if it is already determined. He even tells her that she is the object of his search when in truth, who becomes Weyrwoman is determined by the queen hatchling. His faith inspires her, and she agrees to come along. This chapter also introduces the concept of between. It is the equivalent of being nowhere and yet on the way to somewhere. There is foreshadowing of possible outcomes to plans that require traveling between.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 7

Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 7 Summary

Left alone to get cleaned up, Lessa wonders what it means to be Weyrwoman. Does F'lar mean his Weyrwoman? It wasn't the impression she had gotten from the bronze dragon. They must intend for her to be the Weyrwoman of the unhatched queen egg. She wracks her memory for what that entails. The Search brings a variety of women to the Weyr. Therefore, she is one of the women. Lessa gets cleaned up without fear of intrusion while F'lar feeds his dragon. Her skin and hair take several scrubbings before she dresses her slender frame in clothes too big for her. She catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror-like finish of polished bronze. To her surprise, she's pretty. Sounds of boot against stone draw her attention from the mirror. She finds F'lar with his sleeping dragon and senses the love between the man and his beast. He needs her help to clean his wound after they eat. He orders food by way of a subterranean shaft. While they wait for their food, he explains that the dead queen, Nemorth, is nearly rigid, and the Hatching will begin soon. Lessa's stomach churns at the very mention of it. She has heard macabre and chilling stories about the Hatching.

Lessa tends to F'lar's wound, and he compliments her gentleness. When she's done, he thanks her. They sit on furs and eat their meal. She is to show no fear at the Hatching ground no matter what happens. Also, one of her main functions is to keep the hatchling from overeating. With a bit of confusion, she wonders how a new hatchling would be able to overeat.

An unearthly keening fills the cave. F'lar rushes Lessa to change into the white tunic to be worn for the Hatching. The bronze dragon is ready to carry them to the hatching grounds. Lessa feels the dragon's inner excitement and realizes the dragonman and dragon are conferring about her. The dragon approves of her. F'lar yanks her onto the dragon's back. They follow along the corridor until they break out into a large cavern filled with dragons of every color perched on various ridges. Mnementh flies beyond the other bronzes and takes Lessa to the clutch of mottled dragon eggs spasmodically moving on the floor. F'lar lowers her to the floor. Just beyond the one golden egg is the dead hulk of the queen. Lessa doesn't want to be left, but accepts the challenge. Twelve girls stand on the cavern floor for the Hatching. The others cling to each other weeping. Lessa stands apart. She reminds herself of her heritage and that she need not fear.

Several eggs hatch. Fledglings waddle toward young boys. One young dragon mauls a boy, his blood soaking into the sandy soil. One by one, hatchlings pair off with the boys. Lessa turns back to see the Golden Egg hatch. The other girls scream or fall to the floor in fear. Lessa wonders how long it will take the dragon to mature. The hatchling flaps its wet wings and heads toward the screaming girls. Two girls are mortally injured. The rest of the girls scatter. Lessa takes the small, wedge-shaped head of the clumsy baby dragon and scratches the eye ridges. The dragon croons. She is hungry. Ramoth is the dragon's name. Lessa of Pern Weyrwoman of the Golden wonders how she knows this.



Book 1 Weyr Search - Chapter 7 Analysis

This is a transitional chapter, as Lessa of Ruatha becomes Lessa of Pern Weyrwoman of the Golden. The interaction between Lessa and F'lar offers insights into background and personal knowledge as Lessa is carried to Benden Weyr as a candidate to become Weyrwoman. Her thoughts reveal vestiges from her upbringing within this feudal society from the days before the takeover of Ruatha and the slaughter of her family. She reveres what she knows of the Traditions and Ballads. This foundation of knowledge gives Lessa an understanding not every character possesses. Along with her hidden powers, this makes her an ideal candidate for Weyrwoman. Yet, her stomach churns based on her former knowledge. This momentary flaw makes her human and shows that she is willing to push past her own fear to accomplish what needs to be done. It is a combination of her heritage and F'lar's guidance that help her to remain calm when deposited beside the clutch of throbbing dragon eggs. When the new queen hatches, they instantly communicate. This concrete foreshadowing of the connection between the two provides momentum that draws the reader into the story and the next chapter.



Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 1

Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 1 Summary

Much to Lessa's chagrin, she sits beneath the tutelage of R'gul and S'lel. Her role as Weyrwoman isn't living up to what F'lar led her to expect. She dares to ask why the Queen has wings if she isn't meant to fly. R'gul doesn't really address her question, but only repeats that Queens don't fly. R'gul's colleague, S'lel, adds that they do fly to mate. The two men argue. Bickering over minute details is the norm. Lessa often wakes Ramoth with her powers to end her sessions. Other times she wakes R'gul's dragon, Hath. At this point, no one knows she can communicate with all the dragons.

Part of Lessa's schooling requires her to write out every Teaching Ballad, Disaster Saga and the Laws. Each has to be letter perfect. However, as she writes them, she wonders at their meaning. When she comes to the line, "Dragons prove," R'gul doesn't suggest an official meaning. She lets her thoughts play with the possibilities of how it is tied with the Red Star's passing. When she comes to the line, "Guard all Passes," she wonders if this is so that no dragonrider can leave the Weyr undetected. She considers the difference between the misdirected disciplines of R'gul compared to F'lar's sincere belief in the Laws and Traditions he follows. He has even made sense out of some of these puzzling ballad lines, but only the Weyrleader was to instruct a Weyrwoman. With regret, she can't help but wonder why F'lar's bronze Mnementh hadn't flown the Queen. His wingspan and girth is greater than Hath's. There would have been more eggs in that last clutch if Mnementh had sired. Lessa thinks back to F'lar's words. He brought her to the Weyr to save Pern. What is he waiting for? She thinks he should depose R'gul.

She comes to the verse about the Star Stone watch. From her position, she sees the Star Stone. It's another mystery. When she comes to the line that speaks of readying the Weyrs, she takes special note that it is the plural Weyrs and not Weyr. Five Weyrs sit empty. Yet she is required to learn their names and the order in which they were established—all this with no explanation of why they had been abandoned. Other than her time with Ramoth, her days are tedious and uninspired. If it weren't for Ramoth, she would never have stayed. Her thoughts wander to the one time she flew on Mnementh's back through the between. It leaves her with a hunger to do it again. She recalls The Battle of Moreta's Ride and believes it supports the fact that she be allowed to ride. When she is allowed to take her role as Keeper of the Records, she plans to find a copy of that ballad to make her point. In the meantime, she wonders what F'lar is waiting for.

Manora, the headwoman of the Lower Caverns, walks in with tally sheets. The Holds are experiencing shortages due to the Holds withholding tithes. The year before, only three Holds paid their dues. The Weyr has used up its reserves. Through their conversation, Lessa learns that the Weyr travels to Igen Plain for the spring and fall nuts and berries. She asks how they get there. Manora tells her that the Old Ones fly them. It angers her that she has never known this. When she brings up the possibility of flying to Ruatha, for instance, Manora promptly reminds her that as Weyrwoman she has other



obligations. The conversation turns back to the fact that they don't have enough rations to make it through winter. Lessa mentions allowing the dragonmen to hunt, but Manora tells her that R'gul will never allow that. They will have to barter for what should rightfully be theirs. At this moment, Lessa determines to end R'gul's domination over her, for it is partially his restrictions that are causing the shortage. As she carries on her conversation, Fax's words ring in her mind. "The day one of my Holds cannot support itself or the visit of its rightful overlord..."(p. 96) She wonders if this foreshadows disaster and if so for whom. The thought stirs an inner terror.

As Weyrwoman, it is her role to bring this shortage to the attention of the Weyrleader. However, she knows R'gul acts on nothing. Manora asks Lessa if she has noticed how K'net and his riders chafe at R'gul's restrictions. She points out others who feel the same way, including F'lar's half-brother F'nor. When Manora leaves, Lessa makes her own plan for boosting the Weyr's stores without R'gul's knowledge. Her thoughts drift to F'lar. She decides that he is waiting for Ramoth to mature so that Mnementh can fly her. He will then become Weyrleader. She watches out for F'lar as she starts "arranging things" to suit herself. Her advantage is that she can communicate with all the dragons. As she laughs, Ramoth awakens. The dragon has had a recurring dream about the cold place. As Lessa is linked, she understands the dismay generated by the dreams. She soothes the dragon's itchy skin with oil. The beast is growing so fast!

When she and F'lar take their dragons to feed, other dragonriders return announcing tithes brought from Ruath Hold. They've experienced a good year. F'lar mentions that the loyal ones will be protected when the Red Star passes. As they speak, the Red Star shines like a spark in the sky even with the sun up. The roads are clear, but something funny is happening with the weather patterns. Cold and then warm—changes brought about by winds. The coasts have been hit hard. When the messenger leaves, F'nor comes into the room. The message doesn't really tell them anything they didn't expect.

R'gul and his companions barge in. He wants to know if what he's heard is true. Only one Hold paying their tithes? Lessa hopes F'lar will speak up. Discussion follows, but R'gul puts a stop to it. He warns that if the Weyr moves against any Hold that all the Lord's will come together against the Weyr with clear roads for an advancing army. As Lessa listens to the exchange, she becomes furious knowing that if R'gul wins the argument, it will be the end. A dragon trumpets from outside. Lessa staggers. F'lar whispers, asking if she dares to control. He knew what she was doing! R'gul says nothing can be done; there are young dragons to train. Lessa plans to get together with K'net when the time is right.

Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 1 Analysis

Lessa's ability to communicate with the dragons continues to allow her to manipulate circumstances around her even to get away from R'gul and S'lel's bickering. Although the focus in this chapter draws lines between Lessa and R'gul, an underlying theme of unity begins to take shape as Lessa's relationship with the dragons grows. The fact that this ability is still a secret also provides an evocative hint of things to come.



Lessa wonders at the meanings of every Teaching Ballad, Disaster Saga and the Laws. Her mind plays with how these teachings tie to the Red Star's passing. Why does it tell of readying the plural Weyrs when all but one has been abandoned? In contrast, R'gul's heart has grown cold to the intent of the original writers' meanings. Lines are drawn between these two characters creating an anti-establishment feel where each looks at the other side as stubborn and irrational.

The differences between R'gul and F'lar, hint that F'lar and Lessa are on the same side even though they don't always get along. When Lessa wonders why Mnementh wasn't the one to fly the Queen, it offers the first foreshadowing of romantic interest to come between Lessa and F'lar. The author blends it nicely with Lessa's impatience toward F'lar for his unwillingness to depose R'gul. She believes he should act now to save Pern. This is another hint of things to come. F'lar tends to try to do things "right" following facts and plans. Lessa has learned that if you want to get things done, it's best not to stand back and wait. Action is what she desires. Instead, her life is boring. The Ballad known as Battle of Moreta's Ride leaves her restless and yearning to fly.

Other areas of leadership leave Lessa making plans to act. The shortages are due to R'gul's leadership. If she doesn't do something, the Weyr will starve this winter. Instead of taking it up with R'gul, she makes her own plan. As she considers the future, Ramoth awakens disturbed by a dream "about the cold place". Considering this dragon has never flown between, this concrete foreshadowing creates a question. Combined with the shifting weather patterns, it's obvious that the dream holds meaning. Both are elements of the answer to the future threat of Threads.



Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 2

Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 2 Summary

Lessa challenges F'nor. "What's the matter? Noble F'lar going against tradition?" (Page 113). F'nor comes up with a polite excuse for his half-brother's absence, but Lessa knows the truth. F'nor lets her goading get to him. He bluntly admits that F'lar is tracking K'net who is off raiding the Holds taking what should be rightfully given. An angry Lessa tells F'nor that F'lar would do better to imitate K'net than tracking to stop him. F'nor sets her straight. K'net is young. He follows her instructions too literally. Telgar and Fort have conferred with Keroon. They all know that the Weyr is behind their losses. The two exchange heated words. Lessa thinks it's too late to do anything to save the Weyr. F'nor tells her they have to wait. "'R'gul is Weyrleader only by default. He'd be well enough, I suppose, if there hadn't been such a long Interval. The Records warn of the dangers . . .'" (Page 116)

This information only stirs more questions from Lessa. An Interval happens "when the Red Star does not pass close enough to excite the Threads." During the 400 years since the last Threads fell, most have forgotten or don't believe the danger is real. He admits that R'gul knows the Laws and Traditions but doesn't feel them in his bones the way F'lar and Lessa do. He goes on to tell her how F'lar had been groomed to be Weyrleader from the moment he Impressed Mnementh. Yet, his father's untimely death in a brawl short-circuited those plans. F'lar was too young. R'gul became Weyrleader, by default, when his dragon, Hath, flew the queen.

Now it is time for Ramoth's first mating. When she flies, all the bronze dragons will fly to catch her. Only the strongest will succeed. Their conversation is interrupted when an angry R'gul marches into the room. From outside, Lessa hears R'gul's bronze dragon out on the ledge generating a ruckus along with all the other dragons except for the sleeping queen. Others follow him into the quarters forming a half-circle around Lessa.

F'nor asks if Hath has bloodied his kill. Several of the other dragons have shown this precursory mating behavior. The time has come for Ramoth to fly. Her mating will result in the next Weyrleader coming to power. However, K'net and F'lar are absent. F'nor tells R'gul to call them in, but R'gul only laughs. No one knows where they have gone. F'lar's absence will eliminate him from the competition. Lessa uses her power to send out an urgent telepathic plea to K'net's and F'lar's dragons to return. Within minutes, F'lar stands in the doorway with K'net at his side. Lessa senses a change in F'lar. He is done waiting.

Ramoth takes to the air. Lessa stands at the feeding grounds earthbound, but feels as one with Ramoth. She feels the great bronze dragons pursuing her, the chase, the sudden maneuvering of Mnementh; his wings enfolding her, his neck intertwining, the drop—his wings spread, her wings spread. The mating. Lessa explodes back into her body almost fainting. F'lar tells her to stay with her dragon and to bring her back before



she goes into the between. Lessa spirals within the mating passion and feels F'lar's arms around her, his mouth pressing hard against her lips. Another wave of passion envelops her. F'lar tells her that now they can bring them home.

Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 2 Analysis

The author uses dialog to introduce back-story as F'nor and Lessa argue about the raiding missions. F'nor backs up his opinion with history. It's been 400 years since the last Threads fell. R'gul does not believe in the Traditions as Lessa and F'lar, because he doesn't really believe the Threads will fall again. Background information about the history of the Threads, Intervals and the Red Star occur naturally within the dialog rather than like an information dump. Readers learn along with Lessa that F'lar had been groomed to be Weyrleader since the moment he Impressed Mnementh. However, when F'lar's Weyrleader father tragically died in a brawl, F'lar was too young. R'gul became Weyrleader by default. This underlying conflict adds additional tension within the plot as R'gul announces that his dragon has bloodied his kill, and F'lar is not there. Lessa's powers to call F'lar home highlight the influence this woman has to see this accomplished according to her plan. This builds on the foreshadowing of earlier scenes as Lessa's relationship with the dragons proves valuable. The mating carries Lessa and F'lar's relationship to a new level as the mating of their dragons link her as mate to the new Weyrleader.



Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 3

Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 3 Summary

The authority structure of the Weyr changes overnight. F'lar realizes he almost missed his opportunity to become Weyrleader. He wonders who called them home. Mnementh offers nothing more than the fact that they were called home. Why the mystery? Even on this, his first day as Weyrleader, F'lar worries that the sighting of the Red Star at dawn puts it at the top of the Eye Rock. It grows closer just like the old Records predict. "And the dawn when the Star gleamed scarlet at the watcher through the Eye Rock heralded a dangerous passing and . . . the Threads." (p. 125) One day soon, he'd look through the Eye Rock to see this prophetic fulfillment.

Sounds of splashing water interrupt his thoughts. It is Lessa bathing after their night together. However, his leisurely recollection is cut short when Mnementh alerts to an alarm. An army approaches the Weyr. F'lar is fully dressed as Lessa draws the curtain to come into the room. F'lar sees no remaining hint of the dragon-roused passion they had shared. He has no time to discuss it as Mnementh gives rise to another alarming report. For now, he has to go. Through her, she knows the Lords of the Holds are marching on the Weyr.

As F'lar emerges, R'gul is already at the ledge expressing his authority. As the new Weyrleader, F'lar makes haste to set him straight and invites Lessa to join him. R'gul joins them in the queen's lair where he announces news of the advancing army and K'net's confession of raiding the holds. He plans to placate the angry Lords. F'lar tells R'gul he is out of order. "'You've forgotten a very important fact,' F'lar went on ruthlessly. 'Policy changes when the leader of the Weyr is replaced. I, F'lar, Mnementh's rider, am Weyrleader now.'" (p. 128) Others in the room support him making it clear that the power had truly passed to F'lar.

They take places at the Council table. Brown riders stream into the room. A new air of anticipation has replaced their defeated attitudes. F'lar asks who is at the gate. They list the Lords from Telgar, Nabol, Fort and Keroon. The army stands at more than 1,000. F'lar reminds them that as dragonmen they are sworn to protect. He makes a plan to "reeducate" the Lords to respect the dragonmen and their service to the Holds.

He sends a handful of dragonmen through the between to the unprotected Holds in order to carry the Lords' ladies to the Weyr into captivity as a bargaining tool. The army reaches the only way into the Weyr by land, and the dragons and their riders take to the air. Mnementh asks F'lar if they should pick up Lessa, but the bronze rider says she has no part in this. Instead, she is sent to welcome the hostages. With everything in place, F'lar gives Mnementh the signal to go between.



Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 3 Analysis

When Mnementh offers no detailed information about who called them home in time for the mating of Ramoth, this symbolizes a trust between the dragon and Lessa. The secret form of communication is held sacred between Lessa and the dragons foreshadowing a future when this ability will come into play.

The mention of the Red Star at dawn again indicates a day closer to the approaching danger as it orbits toward the Eye Rock. Dawn in this chapter carries the new danger of an army marching against the Weyr. The author raises the tension between F'lar and Lessa, as they have slept together in a night of dragon-aroused passion. However, F'lar sees no hint of the passion in the morning, and with an invading army, there is no time to discuss it. Division exists within the Weyr as R'gul and F'lar hold different views on how to handle the current crisis. In addition, division exists between the Holds and the Weyr. F'lar wields his new authority, and the dragonmen set out to follow him. Not only does the author use conflict on a personal level to propel the story forward, but also adds the tension of a world divided at a time when they should be united against the Threads.

Resolution to the conflict is not complete. Yet it's enough to establish a closer bond between F'lar and Lessa as F'lar includes her in the planning meeting where his authority is established among the dragonmen. A new wave of tension is introduced at the end of the chapter as Mnementh asks F'lar if they should pick up Lessa. F'lar says that she is not part of this. This foreshadows the dragon's ability to see that Lessa is part of this, as well as unresolved conflict over her participation in things to come.



Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 4

Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 4 Summary

Larad, Lord of Telgar, eyes the gigantic cliffs surrounding the Weyr. At the back of his mind, he knows he's committing blasphemy, but he stifles the thought. He and the others believe that the Weyr has outlived its usefulness. They no longer want to tithe, and are fed up with the Search nonsense that allows dragonmen to take away their most attractive women. Above all, the steady raids and pilfering has pushed them into action. They stand on the outskirts of the Weyr with only one way in. Larad and Lord Meron of Nabol discuss their strategy. Meron has implemented a secondary group to find another way in by the southern peak. This news bothers Larad as he had been chosen to lead.

A sudden rustling of wings and blast of cold ushers dragons and riders to meet the invading Lords. Fear grips not only the Lords' beasts but also many of the men within the army. The determined Lords dismount and approach F'lar and the others. As spokesman, Larad tells F'lar that the Lords agree that the Weyr has outlived its function. F'lar stays calm. He informs the Lords that they are to return to their Holds, go into their barns and fields and send the tithe due to the Weyr. Meron of Nabol laughs and mocks the Weyrleader. F'lar positions two more wings of dragonmen over the Nabolese and announces that the ladies of the Holds will be held until tithes are received. At the signal, dragon riders appear with a ladies of captivity. Larad realizes F'lar has the advantage, but Meron wants to press on until F'lar's men fly in carrying Meron's men from the peak. F'lar points out that nothing escapes their notice.

F'lar's orders go beyond the tithing. The Lords are to clear their habitations of green, clear the fire pits and stockpile fire stone. Larad agrees about tithing but questions the rest. F'lar's points toward the Red Star. He reminds the army of how they had forgotten the reality of dragon abilities and in the same way have forgotten the Ballads and Sagas. "Can you dismiss these portents that always presage the coming of Threads?" (p. 139) He announces that the queen has mated in her second year. All heads glance skyward. The queen wheels into view. Lessa, dressed in a white flowing gown, rides on her back. F'lar is surprised, but does not show it. Instead, he announces that Lessa of Pern is from Ruath Hold. Meron mumbles, but Larad asks if the Threads are coming. F'lar nods before vaulting onto Mnementh's back and taking to the sky. He keeps the queen in sight. Mnementh reminds F'lar that it might be better not to chase them lest they head into the between. F'lar takes the advice and lands near the Star Stone on Benden Peak. Mnementh tells F'lar that he had better teach the queen and her rider to fly between. "She's quick enough to figure it out for herself, and then where are we?" (p. 142) When Lessa brings the dragon to the ground to eat, she turns and watches F'lar dismount. She's taken aback as F'lar's anger at her sojourn is replaced by admiration.



Book 2 Dragonflight - Chapter 4 Analysis

The author continues to define conflict and tension within the ranks, but this time it's within the army of the Lords attempting to invade the Weyr. Although Larad is chosen as leader, Meron sends out a secondary party to find another way into the Weyr. The author uses this exchange to show that Larad's real protest is the pilfering, while Meron does not respect the Weyr, its people or traditions in any way. Nor does he recognize the authority vested in Larad to lead. Conflict increases when F'lar and his men appear. This scene defines who are allies and who cannot be trusted. This foreshadows the fact that help will be needed beyond what the dragons and their riders can offer when fighting the Threads.

Not only is Lessa's unscheduled appearance supported by Mnementh, he also suggests that F'lar teach Lessa to fly between. This builds the alliance between dragon and Weyrwoman to a new level as the influential Mnementh starts to put into place the strategic skills needed for the future.



Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 1

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 1 Summary

F'lar speaks with his men, and R'gul challenges his authority. F'lar's character's leadership comes into focus as F'lar puts him in his place diplomatically by questioning what he holds true. K'net breaks into the conversation and corners R'gul on his belief about the Eye Rock. Why didn't he admit that it was placed on the Star Stone to bracket the Red Star when it is about to make a Pass? R'gul is infuriated by the upstart's insolence. F'lar puts the young man in his place, too. F'lar leads with integrity. He doesn't tell R'gul what to do but asks questions that place R'gul in a position to accept F'lar's leadership and still save face. He agrees to accept F'lar's policies as Weyrleader.

There have been long Intervals in the past when the Red Star has not passed close enough to drop Threads. F'lar points to the ingenuity of their ancestors who positioned the Eye Rock and the Finger Rock at each Weyr. Weather-watch reports say tithing trains are coming and that weather remains cold across Telgar and Keroon. F'lar sends out patrols to look for older boys for when the time comes for Ramoth's eggs to hatch. It's part of his plan to build the dragon fleet. He sends K'net to inspect firestone dumps and quantities available. He gives R'gul charge of the Weyrlings. It is important that they learn the recognition points. He sends his brother F'nor and T'sum and a double wing to clear the Hatching Cavern at Ista Weyr. Records are gathered at the abandoned Weyrs.

Ramoth's color deepens signaling her pregnancy. The tip of her tail twitches, and F'lar wonders why all the dragons are on edge. When he asks Mnementh, he gives no reason. With business finished, F'lar looks for Lessa with plans to teach her to fly between. When they almost bump into each other in the corridor, Lessa is upset that she didn't have the opportunity to see the Red Star through the Eye Rock at dawn. "'Too many to accommodate as it was on the Peak,' he muttered, determined not to let her irate him today. 'And you already believe.'" (p. 151) Her anger flares. He catches her arm and feels her tense. He regrets that he didn't know she was a virgin before that first night of dragon-passion induced sex. It had been violent. Since that first night, he wishes to be able to gently coax her in lovemaking but, unless Ramoth and Mnementh are involved, it is more like rape. He hopes that will change over time.

He announces that he plans to take her riding to teach her to go between. She lights up with excitement. They eat a quick breakfast where she tells him that Manora called her to witness the birth of Kylara's fine son, T'kil. F'lar and Lessa discuss the advantages of Kylara becoming Weyrwoman for another Weyr as they work to repopulate the abandoned Weyrs. This is fine with Lessa, for she has her suspicions that Kylara's son is sired by F'lar. Lessa changes the subject to the replenishment of Benden Weyr's stores, and then to her distrust of R'gul. She then asks if the sun had touched the Finger Rock before the Red Star was bracketed by the Eye Rock. F'lar admits he doesn't know, because he didn't see it but that the two are supposed to be simultaneous. It makes her



angry again wondering who was allowed to witness the passing. F'lar reminds her that he is Weyrleader. She backs off and respects his position.

The slumbering Ramoth's forked tail twitches. F'lar leans across the table studying the queen's fork-tipped tail jerking from side to side. "Mnementh, too. And always at dawn and early morning. As if somehow they associate that time of day with trouble..." (p. 160) Lessa points out that all the Red Star warnings come at dawn. She tells him of her own experiences awaking at dawn with a sense of approaching danger.

While Ramoth feeds, F'lar explains to Lessa the importance of visualizing where you are going when entering between, and how poor reference points have led some riders and their dragons staying between. To fly between, Lessa needs to have a clear reference point and a plan to visually arrive above that reference point. F'lar, Lessa and their dragons take to the air. They fix the alignment of the Star Stone firmly in their minds. Before she can blink, they experience the cold blackness of the between and materialize above the Star Stone. Lessa cries out in triumph. Mnementh tells her to picture where she is to go and return by the same way she arrived—but instead of returning to the Weyr, she pictures Ruatha as she remembers it and travels between. To her surprise, she returns to Ruatha as it was before Fax overtook it. She witnesses herself as a child running from the invading army. The watch-wher had not sounded the alarm, because it sensed her presence and thought things were safe.

Lessa visualizes the present Ruatha, blinks between and arrives at the deteriorated Ruatha she left three years before. This time she sees herself dressed in the raggedy drudge clothes as she walks out to the watch-wher before climbing to the tower. This is still Ruatha of the past. She travels back through between and arrives at the Star Stone to an angry F'lar. They fly to the Weyr where F'lar angrily shakes her asking where she had gone. She tells him Ruatha—twice. He calls her a liar, because he went there looking for her. She explains she visited Ruatha of the past. "'Between times,' F'lar murmured. 'I wonder . . .'" (p. 169) This discovery could tip the scales of survival in their favor.

F'lar takes Mnementh for a ride to test his theory. He returns to the summer's day when R'gul's Hath flew the queen Nemorth. He experiences the cold of between and comes to rest above the Star Stone, but the sun hangs in another quarter of the sky. Below, he witnesses his younger self and his young bronze emerging from the weyring barracks. F'lar returns to his own time sobered by what he has seen.

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 1 Analysis

The twitch of Ramoth's tail is another sign of danger at dawn. All the dragons are sensitive to it. When F'lar asks Mnementh what it means, he gives no reason. This exchange hints at a deeper level of understanding and knowledge on the dragon's part. Lessa reminds F'lar that all the Red Star warnings come at dawn. She shares her experiences of waking at dawn with a sense of approaching danger. The author's use of doubling signs of danger, create an imminent threat and theme of danger at dawn.



After experiencing her first successful pass through the between, Lessa's independent nature takes her to Ruatha of the past. She witnesses herself as a child running from the invading army. The watch-wher does not sound the alarm as it senses her presence. This and subsequent trips to the past are key time travel passages. This visit to the past and others like it are the foundation to the author's plot and the plan F'lar institutes to save Pern. The between times concept finally tips the scale of survival back in Pern's favor.



Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 2 & 3

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 2 & 3 Summary

F'lar and Lessa pour over the ancient records of Ista Weyr while Lessa complains about them being nothing more than information-like recipes. They discuss Lessa's idea that their strong beliefs may be based on their own visits to the past. As when F'lar visited that day from his past, he impressed upon his younger self the belief he would become Weyrleader. F'lar agrees it could be an influence, but the facts of the Records support that Pern is in danger. He challenges her to believe in him until spring. She nods.

Although they don't know the exact time, there is a timetable for when the Threads will spin down. Cold weather makes the Threads brittle, and they blow away harmlessly like dust. However, when the air is warm, they are viable and deadly. F'lar digs through the pile of Records and a shiny metallic sheet etched with strange symbols falls to the floor. Lessa picks it up. F'nor found it at Fort Weyr. Another just like it was attached to the diagrammed wall of the Hatching Ground. It depicts the Red Star, but no one knows what it is. They determine that the words inscribed on it are a death vision written by a grandchild who could not spell well. Within the message, it says that "Flamthrowing fire lizards to wipe out the spores. Q.E.D." (p. 179) Lessa tries to wipe off the words. Though it is primitive, they had a more permanent way to record. F'lar pulls out charts encompassing all six Weyrs. If they were all occupied, there would be close to 3,000 dragons. Nevertheless, today only Benden Weyr is populated. By the time the Red Star is passing at its closest, he plans on more than one Weyr to be operational. With the queens that Ramoth lays in combination with the older boys brought from the outside, they can build their army. Their conversation is cut short with a high-pitched whine. It is time for Ramoth to lay her clutch. F'lar runs to the ledge and crosses to the Hatching Grounds leaving an angered Lessa to follow on foot. By the time she reaches Ramoth, her beloved dragon has already laid a golden Queen egg amid the mottled eggs as F'lar predicted.

In the months following, F'lar disregards tradition. Lessa backs him completely while more conservative Weyrfolk grumble. As soon as the eggs' shells harden, F'lar has prospective riders brought into the Hatching Grounds instead of waiting for the day of Impression. Of the sixty-something candidates in their late teens, few are Weyr born. In the same way, Kylara is brought in to be near the golden egg. Lessa accepts this choice as a way to remove Kylara from the Weyr along with her affections toward F'lar. Shortly before the hatchings, F'lar brings in families of the candidates to witness the Impression.

Lessa and F'lar discuss a message from Ruath Hold from Lytol. He mentions Gemma's son who is now Lord of her ancestral Hold. She finally comes to terms that it is fitting that Gemma's Jaxom is Lord of Ruatha. The message also carries a warning that Meron is causing trouble again. He questions that the Threads have not appeared. F'lar knows they will appear and is thankful that the weather continues to be unseasonably cold. When the weather warms—then he will worry.



The hatching goes on without one injury to the candidates. The newly hatched queen stands with Kylara. She is destined to be Weyrwoman of Pridith. The watching dragons hum their approval.

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 2 & 3 Analysis

F'lar and Lessa relationship continues to grow through ups and downs. As they study the ancient records, they discuss Lessa's hypothesis that their strong beliefs may be based on their own visits to the past. F'lar's faith in the Records is not always shared by Lessa. He asks her to give him until spring. She agrees to support him until then. They discuss timetables and the effect of cold weather on the Threads making them turn to dust. The author uses this scene to establish doubt in that F'lar's plan can work or is needed.

The shiny item found on page 179 is a loose plot thread left dangling perhaps as a tie in to the next book. The item has a duplicate on the wall of Fort Weyr that bears a depiction of the Red Star. Whatever it is, although primitive, the manner of recording is more permanent. Perhaps it is not primitive. F'lar pulls out charts encompassing all six Weyrs and figures there would be close to 3,000 dragons if the Weyrs were occupied. This is another foreshadowing of what might be if they can successfully populate all the Weyrs in a short time by traveling between times.

The chapter's end is punctuated with a high-pitched whine marking the time for Ramoth to lay her clutch. The author once again raises the tension as F'lar leaves Lessa to follow on foot. This chapter shows growth in F'lar and Lessa's relationship, but the author keeps it short lived and real stirring the reader to be emotionally involved. It also brings to the forefront Lessa's lack of rights as a woman.

F'lar's ideas leave conservative thinking as he implements his plan to re-populate the Weyrs. His use of non-weyrborn youths is a precursor to sending these weyrlings back in time to mature along with the queen. F'lar respects tradition but finds ways to follow it while stepping away from it. He allows candidates to become familiar with the eggs before hatching and extends invitations to the families to come as spectators. All his plans reflect a theme of unity. Unity between the Weyrs and the Holds, between R'gul and himself, between one Hold and another, and even between the hatching dragonets and the young candidates. However, unity is threatened as Meron still causes trouble by casting doubt when the Threads don't appear as predicted.



Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 4

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 4 Summary

Lessa awakens from a nightmare that diminishes upon waking. She calls out for F'lar while fighting vague fears. When F'lar steps into the room, he asks what's gotten into Ramoth. The dragon is echoing the nightmare Lessa can't recall. Conversation moves to the fast-growing hatchlings and the measures being taken to be sure that bored riders do not pop in and out between times by accident. Lessa says, "You know F'lar, if I discovered it, someone else must have, and someone else may. If they haven't already." (P. 191). F'lar determines that it has to be inherent dragon ability or they wouldn't be able to do it. Lessa feels this ability plays a crucial part in things to come.

F'nor returns from his weather patrol over Tillek. He enters the room choking, coughing and complaining of the dust storm. He brushes fine black dust from his clothing. F'lar asks how long since the storms started and why he hadn't reported them. F'nor reminds his brother that he was never told to report dust storms. His task was to look for warm air masses. F'nor first noticed the dust storms six days previous in upper Tillek. F'lar studies his charts and scribbles notations as F'nor speaks. F'lar announces to F'nor and Lessa that the Threads have been falling into the cold, becoming brittle enough to turn to dust. Lessa brings up Moreta's Ballad about black dust. F'lar snaps at her. He doesn't need to hear about Moreta—she could talk to every dragon in the Weyr. "But I can do that," (p. 193) Lessa protests. F'lar can't believe her words. He asks how long she's had this ability. To his dismay, she's always had the ability. It started back with the Watch-wher. The two bicker. She confesses that she never thought it of any use. F'lar explodes. The one thing he hadn't been able to figure out was how to direct the wings and stay in communication with the Weyr. He accuses her of hiding her ability. As they argue, he shakes her and tells her that they can't waste time. The words inspire a plan. They will go between times, back to dawn when the Threads started falling at Neret.

F'lar sends his brother to Keroon and Ista to prepare for the falling Threads. According to his charts, they lie within the affected zones. They are ordered to get their fire pits burning. He also sends weyrlings to warn Igen and Ista. R'gul is upset that his dragon is the one who tells him to report. F'lar tells R'gul and T'sum to mount their dragons armed with firestones and to assemble above the Star Stone. They'll be going to Nerat at dawn. R'gul reminds F'lar that he is watch officer and not on patrol. F'lar announces that it's no patrol. A flustered T'sum tries to remind them that Nerat's dawn was two hours ago. F'lar explains they will be going between times. He ignores R'gul's stammering demand for explanations. Lessa tells him the Threads have arrived. Without a word, the ex-Weyrleader turns and follows T'sum down the corridor to his dragon.

F'lar tells Lessa to warn all the Holds and crafts. As the Star is just beginning its Pass, another attack is a few days off. It gives them time to prepare. The dragons will get laced with the Threads and it hurts. Even worse, if anything should happen to



Mnementh, they'll have to wait until a Bronze is at least a year old to fly Ramoth. Lessa defies such a thought. He kisses her as if drawing strength from her before heading out.

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 4 Analysis

Again, the theme of danger at dawn ushers in hints of a new threat in the dream that Lessa cannot remember. This danger is emphasized by the fact that the queen is also troubled. The author adds tension to this inner conflict as F'lar and Lessa discuss the ability to fly between times. Lessa's own feelings that this ability plays a crucial part in things to come kicks the tension a notch higher. In addition, her statement: "You know F'lar, if I discovered it, someone else must have, and someone else may. If they haven't already." (P. 191) creates a question in the reader's mind asking how this plays into things to come. Is she right, and if so who, why and when did they fly between times?

When F'nor enters the scene choking and coughing on black dust, anxiety rises again as F'lar announces the Threads have been falling for six days. When Lessa quotes from Moreta's Ballad, her secret is finally revealed. She can speak to all the dragons. This offers a touch of resolution to the mounting conflict, only to give way to another wave of inner conflict as F'lar expresses his displeasure that she has never been open enough to tell him of this ability. Heated words lead to a plan as F'lar reminds her they cannot waste time. With the ability to fly between times, they plan to return to the time when the Threads started falling over Nerat.

The author adds another touch of resolution between F'lar and R'gul as the Threads falling shows that R'gul has been wrong all along. This adds support for F'lar as Weyrleader. Plus, the tension between Lessa and F'lar is also lessened for a moment as F'lar turns to her for help, telling her to warn the Holds and the crafts, because the Red Star is just beginning its pass. The use of conflict and resolution in this chapter sends the tension climbing in waves offering a little relief only to heighten it with the threat that if Mnementh is laced by a Thread that it could be a year until another bronze is ready to fly Ramoth. The kiss at the end of this chapter once again supports a theme of unity even amid conflict.



Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 5 & 6

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 5 & 6 Summary

F'lar races to his dragon on the ledge carrying full sacks of fire stone. He sees Nerat's rainforest in his mind as he vaults onto his bronze dragon's back. Dragons armed with fire stones swarm from every opening with riders on their backs. Cold wind carries a hint of moisture as R'gul, T'sum, T'bor and D'nol stretch out to F'lar's left and right. He visualizes Nerat just before dawn. They come out on the other side of the between to the fruity smells of the rainforest and a warmth that concerns him. Just to the north, the Red Star shines. The other riders are surprised to find they've gone back in time. F'lar draws them near and tells them the plan. Across the sea, Threads are falling. The silvery Threads are designed to search out organic nutrients and burrow into fertile soil transforming it into a wasteland of black dust.

In unison, the dragons wield their heads to accept fire stone from their riders. They ready themselves to belch ignited gas to sear the Threads from the sky. As the Threads reach Nerat's shores, the dragons' instinct kicks in. They blink in and out of the between to avoid patches of Threads too close or to squelch the burning when they are hit. The cold of the between freezes the Thread. It crumples, and they return to the fight. F'lar realizes it's the dragons that are really fighting this battle. He encourages his beast as the Threads fall and burn. Hot fire drips across F'lar's cheek and shoulder; Mnementh takes him to the between to break off the Thread. F'lar checks his dragon for score marks but he is uninjured. After hours, the battle is over. The dragons and their riders sweep the area looking for stray Threads that may have fallen to the ground. When the job is finished, F'lar orders them all back to the Weyr.

Lessa watches the sky over the Weyr as dragons and their riders disappear between times. To quiet her fears, she hurries to the floor of Benden Weyr where Manora orders women about as they prepare salve pots and clean rags. F'nor's dragon Canth communicates with her from Keroon. Threads are falling. They need help. Most of the dragons and men are fighting Threads between times in Nerat. She sends K'net and his men to Keroon. They no sooner disappear when the others return. It confuses Lessa, for it seems they just left, but in the dragonriders' reality between times, they've been gone for nearly two hours.

Numbing ointment is spread upon wounds created by searing Thread burns. The exhausted men tend to their beasts first. Lessa helps T'sum with his dragon's pierced wing. When she's done, she finds Kylara tending F'lar's wounds. As she approaches, Canth sends an urgent message that they need more help, those who are able take to the air and disappear. Lessa wonders how long they'll be able to keep this up with so few men and dragons. Lessa's own dragon feels left out, but Lessa reminds her that chewing fire stone would "reduce her to a silly green."



As she walks among the wounded, Lessa notices that more riders than dragons have been wounded. Out of the 172 dragons, 15 were already out of action after just the first battle. Now they were fighting again in Keroon. Just then, Canth lets her know they need more fire stone. There's no one left to bring it—except old C'gan. He agrees to fly his old blue to Keroon to carry the fire stone. A shriek pierces the air and Lessa's dragon Ramoth shoots into the sky before she even understands what it is. C'gan's blue dragon drops from the sky like a stone. Ramoth supports the dragon on its fall and brings it to the ground where an injured C'gan is laid on the ground. He and his dragon are the first casualties. The experience helps Lessa to finally accept her role as Weyrwoman and F'lar's mate.

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 5 & 6 Analysis

The theme of danger at dawn reaches a climax along with the theme of time travel. The Threads have fallen, and F'lar leads his dragonmen between times to two hours past to arrive at dawn over Nerat. During the battle, F'lar comes to the realization that it is really the dragons that fight these battles. This ties back to the fact that Lessa can communicate with all the dragons and foreshadows a change in a woman's role and how the battles will be fought.

Lessa ability to communicate with dragons finally comes into play to fight the Threads when F'nor's dragon Canth communicates with her from Keroon. Threads are falling, and they need help. She is able to send off the last of the dragons and men to help and informs F'lar upon his return from between times that they are needed at Keroon. Lessa's dragon, Ramoth, feels left out. Based on what the author presents about the dragons innate ability, this foreshadows a change in how fighting the Threads will be done in the future. When Canth lets her know they need fire stone, there's no one left to send but old C'gan. This emphasizes the need for more dragons and riders. This increases the conflict and tension within the plot as C'gan and his dragon are killed. Through the experience, Lessa finally accepts her role as Weyrwoman and as F'lar's mate along with her role in securing Pern against the Threads.



Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 7

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 7 Summary

The Thread attack ends by high noon, just as F'lar predicted. When they return, Lessa checks to see that F'lar was not injured further. She organizes care of the wounded and comforts those who are worried. At final count, 28 men or dragons will be unavailable to fight for the next battle plus 4 more dragons and 7 men are out for a month. She heads to the sleeping chamber to give F'lar the news, but he's not there. She finds him in the Records room studying the musty skins when he should be sleeping. He can't sleep. "I need the answer to the very pressing question of how one under-strength Weyr can do the fighting of six." (p. 210) Lessa fights her own panic. She tells him that his charts and time schedules will help.

There have always been six fully equipped Weyrs. F'lar says they need to be honest. Now that he has battled the Threads and seen the injuries, he has doubts. They must still return to Nerat and search out Threads that have had the chance to burrow. This raises the question of how to burn them out. Dragons do it in the air. The records show that there was one a way, but it was so well known that details are not listed in the Records. Lessa recommends that the Holders be the ones to conduct the on-foot search through the rainforests. Lessa encourages F'lar that it's been his own ideas that have made the difference. F'lar says, "So let us forget these misguiding and antiquated precepts and think up our own guides. First, we need more dragons. Second, we need them now. Third, we need something as effective as a flaming dragon to destroy Threads which have burrowed."(p. 212).

Between the two of them, they come up with an idea to check out the Southern Continent that no one has visited in a thousand years. Perhaps if they go between times to 10 turns ago they can establish a Weyr and dragon population with Kylara's queen and the dragonets. As they discuss it, a suntanned F'nor calls in a hoarse anxious voice from the corridor. This F'lar from the past tells them that it is not working out because you can't be alive in two times at once. The dragons are not affected by living between times but their riders are shadows, half-alive like dragonless men. In addition, all Kylara wants to do is go back and watch herself. Her enigma will destroy them. F'nor can't stay, because he is here already. He only came to warn them. Lessa turns to F'lar and says, "He hasn't even gone yet!" (p. 216)

Book 3 Dust Fall - Chapter 7 Analysis

Tension is brought into focus as F'lar asks how one under-strengthened Weyr can do the fighting of six. This is the crux of the problem these characters face. They know how and when to fight, but they don't have the manpower. Lessa encourages F'lar that his ideas have worked. This development in their relationship shows growth in her as a character now willing to look beyond herself and to the greater good. When F'lar lists



what is needed, he provides an outline for the rest of the story. Dialog generates ideas and carries the plot 10 years into the past to the abandoned Southern Continent. Just as the author provides a touch of resolution, she turns up the stress as a suntanned F'nor returns from the past to warn them that you can't live in two times. It doesn't bother the dragons but it affects men. This warning once again hints at a special level of involvement on the dragons' part.



Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 1 & 2

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 1 & 2 Summary

Lessa and F'lar discuss the appearance of F'nor. What could have gone wrong to prompt the untimely forewarning? F'nor's tanned skin and healed Thread wound are evidence that this F'nor has been gone for some time, even before he actually departs. F'lar is concerned. F'nor's visit is proof that the venture is not without problems. To exasperate the situation, during F'nor's brief visit he didn't mention what he's been able to accomplish. How long had he been gone before he returned? Based on the fact that F'nor's scar had healed, F'lar hopes enough Turns have passed that Pridith has had time to lay one good size clutch to provide dragons for the battle in three days. They move on with the plan for Lessa and F'nor to visit the Southern Continent in hopes of establishing another Weyr and more dragons to fight the Threads.

F'nor listens to the plan to travel between times ten Turns back in an effort to build up the number of mature dragons and dragonmen. He tells F'lar he's willing to go as long as he sends T'bor along to be a mate for Kylara. "Well, they're as near a pair as can be. I don't object to being . . . importuned, but there are limits to what a man is willing to do out of loyalty to dragonkind." (P. 219)

F'lar understands F'nor's request, having experienced Kylara's wiles first hand. F'lar and Lessa tease him F'nor, but soon Lessa and F'nor depart for the Southern Continent of 10 Turns ago while F'lar readies himself to meet with the Lords and Craftmasters in the Council Room. As he prepares his charts, he decides to let the charts convince the council rather than explain flying between times.

The visitors assemble in the Council Room. They include the antagonistic Meron of Nabal, Lytol Warder of Ruatha, Larad of Telgar, Lord Vincent of Nerat, Masterharper Robinton, Raid of Benton, Fandarel the Mastersmith and Zurg the Masterweaver. Of these, Lytol and Larad are F'lar's allies. When Meron walks into the room, he's visibly furious at being summoned. F'lar's seating arrangement staggers dragonmen among the Holders and Craftsmen, and the room is crowded enough that no one has enough room to draw their blade. F'lar welcomes his guests and gets right to the point. Threads are falling, the first attack from the skies over Nerat. People are making a low sweeps to be sure none of the Threads have burrowed. They need help to patrol the ground. Patrols are also on their way to Keroon and Igen. There will be no attacks for three days and four hours. Meron wants to know how he knows this so exactly. F'lar explains the charts and what he has learned about the predictable pattern.

Meron doubts him while Larad reminds the room that the Teaching Ballads back up F'lar's findings. Meron doesn't let it go. He brings up the fact that F'lar predicted the Threads would start falling right after Solstice. F'lar meets the challenge and explains



that the black dust in the Northern Holds was the Threads falling and turning to dust in the unusually cold temperatures. Larad expresses interest in the charts and wants to know more. F'lar lets all the Lords know they will receive copies of the charts. He leaves copying in Masterharper Robinton's capable hands.

When asked why these additional measures are needed, F'lar reminds the Council that there used to be six Weyrs. Now there is only one. No one knows when or why the other Weyrs were abandoned. There's no mention of plans to leave in any of the records. F'lar tells them of Ramoth's clutch of 41, but does not reveal his venture to the Southern Continent. He reminds the Holders of their responsibilities to remove vegetation as the Thread threat will be considerable. When complaints arise, Robinton reminds them that they have brought this on themselves by not supporting the Weyr.

F'lar also brings up the fact that there used to be methods used to flame the burrows, and Fandarel concurs. However, the design for these contraptions has been lost over the long interval when the Threads did not fall. The Mastersmith agrees to work on a couple of ideas that may kill the burrowing Threads. Tension rises as everyone realizes the seriousness of the situation. Then the Masterweaver stands and tells of a tapestry that used to hang in Ruath Hold. On it, men carried flamethrowers. F'lar orders that the tapestry be found and brought to him so Fandarel can see the flaming contraptions. Then he catches sight of F'nor, surprised that they have already returned. The meeting is adjourned, and F'lar hurries to meet with F'nor and Lessa to hear their account. F'nor reports success. Thirty-two eggs have been laid by Pridith but among them, there is no queen egg. However, 14 bronze dragons have been added to their number.

The success does not come without its problems. Kylara stirs up trouble constantly. T'bor has become so touchy that everyone keeps their distance. However, food supplies abound. F'nor plans to leave and not return until Pridith lays her second clutch. As they end their conversation, Robinton clears his throat while standing at the door. The Masterharper brings up a Teaching Ballad that he had set aside. "I wonder if you know the answers to the questions it asks. For I've turned the puzzle over in my mind many times of late." (P. 233). He sings the song that tells starts out, "Gone away, gone ahead . . ." The song is from 400 Turns ago. They discuss what it could mean, but no explanation has been recorded. They also talk about why the Weyrs would have been abandoned and where all the people and dragons could have gone. F'lar tells the Masterharper of flying between times and his concern about the drain on the dragons and their riders. Robinton suggests flying ahead in time to see if their tactics are sufficient. However, F'lar reminds him that the riders must have references to reach their destination. He can't risk losing a dragon or a rider.

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 1 & 2 Analysis

The paradox of flying between times comes to light after F'nor's visit from the past where he has been sent to establish a dragon population mature enough to battle the Threads in three days. Between times, travel has its problems. Exactly what those problems are is unclear, but from what F'nor says it is related to going between in two



times at once. This sets the scene for further danger as Lessa and F'nor of the present plant to visit the Southern Continent 10 years in the past to determine if it is fit for inhabitation of men and dragons.

F'nor, who hasn't gone back between times yet in this time, now returns from 10 Turns in the past to report to his brother even before he has left. F'lar's plan to increase the dragon population by taking Pridith, the dragonets and weyrlings along to mature and increase in number has resulted in a first clutch. This secondary plot line offers hope for resolution in the primary plot where a single Weyr must fight the falling Threads.

When F'lar meets with the Lords and Craftmasters in the Council Room prepared to show them what's happening, he chooses not to tell about his attempt at sending his brother and others between times to increase their strength. After the meeting, Robinton overhears F'lar and the F'nor reporting from his trip to the past. This hints that Robinton will play an important part in finding a solution to battling the Threads. His first suggestion that F'lar jump ahead in time to see if his plan works highlights the fact that, without a reference, you cannot fly forward or backward between times.

Also, the Masterweaver's contribution of information about the tapestry that depicts the use of these flamethrowers is a key object. An ancient article comes from Lessa's Ruath Hold and an item she remembers seeing as a child. This link foreshadows the importance of the tapestry and that it must include more information than the flamethrowers.



Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 3

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 3 Summary

Even though the F'nor from the past has already visited the present, it is only now that Lessa and the present day F'nor go back in time to investigate the Southern Continent. A new anxiety bothers Lessa. The once barren continent is lush and green but they find no suitable place to establish a Weyr. They land on a plateau near a small lake. While the dragonriders eat, the dragons refresh themselves in the water. Lessa and F'nor are restless and have little appetite. F'nor blames the restlessness on the lack of cliffs, but Ramoth tells Lessa that dragons didn't always live in caves. F'nor's dragon admits that he would enjoy living there. Lessa can't wait to leave, but when the time comes, F'nor is a bit reluctant. However, they head back to Benden Weyr where F'lar already has bundles prepared for the trip based on the good report he knows he'll receive.

F'lar is happy to hear their good report. "And we must have many more mature dragons ready to fight at Telgar in three days' time. So, though ten Turns will have passed for you, three days only will elapse here." (P. 243) They will take Pridith the queen, 40 young dragons hatched by Ramoth, and 32 candidates to impress with Pridith's offspring.

Lessa grows dizzy and collapses into F'lar's arms. He lays her on the bed and checks with F'nor who only feels tired. It makes F'lar worry about what the F'nor from the past had said about Kylara. F'nor admits that jumping between times makes a person feel less than whole. F'nor prepares to leave. He has 10 Turns while F'lar has three days.

Manora is called to attend Lessa, but finds nothing wrong other than fatigue. While she sleeps, F'lar tends to the southern ventures to check for burrows. As he waits above the Star Stone, a young weyrling blinks into existence from between. There are burrows too numerous to burn. Lord Vincent wants to see F'lar immediately. He goes back to check on Lessa before he returns to the Records to search for the answer to this impasse.

He finally arrives at the site of a burrow with Fandarel the Mastersmith and his contraption they hope will kill the Threads. The gadget works. Threads turn black and die. Nevertheless, how can they get to all the burrows? More machines needed to be made. Fandarel reminds F'lar that he is still waiting to see the tapestry to be able to create a flamethrower.

Robinton meets F'lar at the Weyr. He has found that 400 Turns ago, the Masterharper was called to Fort Weyr. No comment other than that is recorded. F'lar asks if Robinton thinks it is connected to the disappearance of the Weyrs. "'I do, but I could not say why. I only feel that the events, the visit, the disappearances, the Question Song are connected." (p. 251) The Question Song doesn't answer questions, it raises them. Lessa walks from the sleeping chamber feeling much better and figures out an answer to the first question of the Question Song. The other Weyrs have gone ahead in time.



She determines they have come to this time to fight this battle. Someone from the present must go back to give them references. F'lar calls Lessa mad. "You know what happened to you today. How can you consider going back to a when you can't imagine? To a when four hundred Turns ago?" (p. 253) Lessa and F'lar argue. Lytol interrupt carrying in the lost tapestry. F'lar sends for Mastersmith Fandarel because the model for the flamethrower has arrived. Lessa recognizes the tapestry from her childhood. They take in the details, the Autumn sky, the flamethrowers, the Red Star and dragons fighting Threads. One detail strikes Lessa as odd. The door to the Hold is Ruatha, but different.

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 3 Analysis

The time travel theme gets more complex as a feeling of uneasiness and fatigue is associated with flying between times. Resolution offered by the contraption Fandarel creates is short lived. It works, but they only have one. This foreshadows the fact that if they are to win this battle they have to find another way. The Question Song and Lessa's understanding of the answer to the first question push the plot toward climax. F'lar forbids her to think of going 400 Turns into the past. Finding the tapestry offers information from the past.



Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 4 , 5 & 6

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 4 , 5 & 6 Summary

Lessa nags F'lar about the tapestry. It should be on the wall in Ruatha where it belongs. Fandarel sends word that he would like to come and show his flamethrower. F'lar agrees that Lessa can return the tapestry to Ruatha. She flies with it strapped to Ramoth's back. F'lar watches her depart over the Star Stone as R'gul reports a train carrying Firestone entering the tunnel. Business keeps F'lar busy throughout the day. Fandarel demonstrates his flamethrower. It doesn't actually "throw" the flame very well. R'gul reports that F'nor has been looking for him twice. By the evening meal, F'lar gets concerned for Lessa. He sends to Ruatha and learns she did bring the tapestry and studied it for hours. When she disappeared in the sky over Ruatha, everyone thought she had returned to Benden Weyr. F'lar is furious. Mnementh cannot hear Lessa or Ramoth. F'lar knows within his soul what Lessa has tried to do.

Lessa looks down at Ruatha's great tower from Ramoth's back angling to line up with the image on the tapestry. Only then, there was no tower or carved lintels. She thinks of the Ballad and now how the tapestry provided the reference points she needed to go between times to 400 Turns ago. They slip into the intense cold of between. It penetrates beyond the physical as she experiences the absence of everything—light, sound, touch. "I am here," she heard Ramoth say in her mind. "We are together." (p. 260)

The Masterharper finds F'lar staring at the empty Weyr. F'lar tells him Lessa has gone back 400 Turns. Robinton reminds F'lar that Lessa is not a foolish woman. She would never attempt such a jump without a reference point. Then Robinton remembers how she studied the tapestry the night before and her interest in the Hold's door. F'lar shoots to his feet and says they must go to Ruatha.

Lytol greets them at Ruatha, and F'lar and Robinton study the tapestry. Lytol explains that Lessa examined the tapestry all afternoon. Lessa must have thought the door was an image of 400 Turns ago and used it as a reference. Robinton sits relieved thinking she would have arrived safely in the past. However, F'lar is concerned for the length of time she would have to be between to travel back 400 Turns.

Lessa awakens to voices, aching ears and a nauseating whirling sensation upon a bed. She tries to verbalize the message she came to deliver. On the outskirts of her senses, Ramoth tries to communicate. She finally awakens, and a voice calls her by name. The woman speaking introduces herself as Mardra of Fort Weyr. Lessa's memory rushes back and says that F'lar will be so angry with her. She drifts in and out of consciousness. When she awakens, she meets T'ton the Weyrleader. She has made it



back 400 Turns. She explains the complicated maneuvering between times and makes her plea for help.

Mardra is Ruathan. At mention of the tapestry, she grows excited and asks Lessa to describe it. Her father has just commissioned such a tapestry because the last battle of the Threads took place over Ruatha. It confirms that Lessa speaks the truth. Lessa admits that she doesn't know if she would do it again. "'Yes, this shock makes a forward jump between times quite a problem if your F'lar must have an effective fighting force,' T'ton remarked." (p. 266) He says there is a high probability they will join her in the future. He considers the fact that the Weyrs were abandoned in her time with no mention of where the people had gone or why. They all come to the same realization.

T'ton calls a meeting of the Weyrleaders. They are willing to try the jump if they can figure a way around the time shock. From Benden, only the Weyrleader knows of the meetings because his Weyr is the only one that will not go. Lessa insists they call the Masterharper as Records from her time said he had been called. She tells him of the Question Song. He says, "A difficult assignment to know one must write a song that four hundred Turns later gives a valuable clue." (p. 267) She stresses that it must be a teaching song that poses questions that she will have to answer in the future.

T'ton pulls together a plan. They decide that jumping 25 Turns at a time will keep time-shock at a minimum. The majority agree that it will be better to die trying than to live out their lives in their own time doing nothing now that the threat of Threads had passed. They determine to go 400 Turns ahead, and the Masterharper announces that he has their reference points. They'll use the Red Star dwindling in the sky as they can chart its orbit in the future. When all is ready, Lessa is the one that gives the command to jump.

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 4 , 5 & 6 Analysis

In her fast forward style, the author brings plot threads together to usher in the climax of the story. Time travel, the tapestry and communication with dragons all play a part.

As the plot nears the apex, character growth is evident in F'lar. He is not angry at Lessa's disobedience, but instead is concerned for her safety. He's not even thinking about the Threads falling or how this will look to others. The importance of the tapestry comes to the forefront and creates a question. Is the image from 400 Turns past?

When Lessa arrives 400 Turns in the past, the people are much more open to her way of thinking. The author brings together answers to questions formulated through the plot. The people from the 5 abandoned Weyrs have gone to the future, just as Lessa surmised. The author also makes use of irony when the Red Star becomes not a menace but a reference point to make time travel to 400 Turns into the future possible.



Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 7, 8 & 9

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 7, 8 & 9 Summary

The five Weyrs make eleven stops as they jump forward in time, taking time to rest and talk to Lessa between jumps. They take time to rest and have a meal before the final 12-turn jump. They count on Lessa to offer the final reference point. Lessa wants to arrive at Ruatha before F'lar knows that she has gone. She looks at the Red Star in the sky and starts shaking. She has been in this time twice—there are too many of her in this time. They must hurry and move on. In great haste, she sends the reference points to the Weyrleader's dragons. "Ruatha in the evening light, the Great Tower, the Inner Court, the land at springtime." (p. 271)

F'lar must keep going even without Lessa. Robinton and Lytol make sure he eats, but his mind continues to call for Lessa. Robinton tells him he needs sleep and no more wine. F'lar struggles with impotent anger, and the Masterharper expresses his sympathy that there is nothing he can do. He reminds him that the dragonmen still need their leader. F'lar turns on his heel and heads toward that fateful door of Ruatha Hold.

Lessa, along with the population of the five Weyrs, appears in the sky above Ruatha's Great Tower. The claxon rings out muted by thousands of wings. Below, the Hold door opens. Ramoth takes Lessa to the flagstones outside the door. She meets Lytol. He tells her that she has misjudged the time by two days. "Take the same hour, the Great Court, everything, but visualize F'lar, Robinton, and myself here on the flagstones. Place Mnementh on the Great Tower and a blue dragon on the verge. Now go." (p. 274) He urges her to go, for she cannot linger and be in the same time more than once.

T'ton takes charge. His dragon passes on the reference Lytol provided. The cold between restores Lessa to her senses. When they arrive over Ruath Hold, Lessa sees silhouettes of Robinton, Lytol and F'lar. Mnementh calls out a welcome. Ramoth lands in haste eager to greet Mnementh. Lessa stands on the flagstones with Mardra and T'ton beside her. F'lar rushes to her and hugs her while chanting her name. Then he shakes and scolds her for taking such a risk. She points out the others. She has brought them all except for Benden Weyr. He stares at the dragons settling across the valley. He expresses his thanks. T'ton and F'lar shake hands and T'ton tells him that he has brought 1,800 dragons and 17 queens. F'lar is astonished that they were willing to do this, but T'ton reminds him that they are dragonmen and that they were told there were Threads to fight.



Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 7, 8 & 9 Analysis

As the story ebbs from the climax of returning 400 Turns in the past, the author continues the use of conflict and tension when Lessa experiences the effect of time shock. In her hurry to move on, it leaves the reader wondering if they will land at the right time in history.

The author's fast forward style now skips from one time to another creating tension leading to the final resolution. F'lar must go on without Lessa. Two realities culminate in the present providing the answer to the Thread problem. As the story heads toward ultimate resolution, the author introduces dragonmen and women of a different mindset. This foreshadows change to come in Weyr life as F'lar knows it.



Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 10 & 11

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 10 & 11 Summary

F'nor returns from 10 Turns past along with the southern Weyrfolk. They steel away to quarters they only left a few days ago in this time. R'gul, who is unaware of Lessa's trip back in time, meets up with F'lar and Lessa with news of F'nor's return. He brings 72 new dragons but F'nor doesn't think the men will be fit to fight. R'gul prattles on that he doesn't understand why the men are exhausted. F'lar looks at Lessa and says that he thinks the southern Weyr should be maintained and that R'gul should consider it.

R'gul grumbles that the men better be well enough as soon Threads will fall. F'lar tells him that it is no problem. The man is mystified and asks if the Mastersmith has completed the Flamethrower. He has. R'gul doesn't know the 5 Weyrs brought their flamethrowers along and that Fandarel is working to make more. Lessa tells R'gal that they have found something that will help even more than the flamethrower. She dashes into the sleeping quarters laughing. R'gul is irritated at her insolence. He tells F'lar that he should never let the girl leave the Weyr at all. F'lar brings up a conversation he had with R'gul in the past when the man stated that the five Weyrs were empty, because there were no more Threads. He explains that there was merit in his theory but that the reason they were empty is because they came here and now occupy the Weyrs in this time. R'gul turns without a word. He walks off to take leadership of the Southern Weyr and prepares to fight the Threads.

The following morning, Lessa is off to feed Ramoth. F'lar is off to meet with the Council along with the Craftmasters Robinton and Fandarel. He talks of resigning as Weyrleader. T'ton praises his skills in the battles over Nerat and Keroon. F'lar retains his position thinking soon it will be time for Ramoth to mate again—and Lessa, she's being deceptively docile. He wonders what she is up to. F'lar asks F'nor if he will be ready to ride the following day. His half brother won't miss it for anything.

F'lar announces that he'll need Lessa at Telgar the following day, because she can speak to any dragon. T'ton says that he understands and that Mardra doesn't mind. At F'lar's blank look, T'ton tells him that as senior Weyrwoman she leads the queens' wing. F'lar repeats the term as a question. T'ton says, "'You don't keep your queens from fighting, do you?'" (p. 282) F'lar reminds T'ton that they only had one queen at a time for generations. T'ton says they make excellent fighters, flying low enough to use the flamethrowers. F'lar asks for clarification that T'ton allows his queens to fly against Threads. T'ton picks up on the word "allow" and grins. He asks F'lar if he knows his Ballads. He brings up the very ballad Lessa had pointed out so many times before—Moreta's Ride. F'nor laughs at the look on his brother's face. F'lar smiles. The discussion has given him an idea.



F'lar finds Lessa climbing from the bathing pool wrapped in a drying cloth. They chit chat about the meeting, and he reminds her that he will need her at Telgar. She smiles and adds that she is the only Weyrwoman who can speak to all the dragons. He breaks the news that Fandarel has a flamethrower for her to carry as she rides Ramoth to battle as part of the queens' wing. The cloth falls from her body, and they kiss as if dragon-roused.

Three hours before dawn, above the peak of Benden Weyr, 216 dragons hold formation. F'lar inspects ranks. Lessa and Ramoth have already gone on to Fort Weyr where the queens' wing assembles. Everyman is well loaded with fire stone. He gives the order to go between, and they appear above Telgar Hold. Dragons fill the sky in V formations. F'lar asks Mnementh where Lessa is. She is on the way. Another formation blinks into the sky. Sunlight highlights the dragons' golden color. F'lar is proud. To the east, the Threads approach and the battle cry goes out among the dragons. Mnementh demands more fire stone. The leading Weyr enters the fight. The great queens' skim along the cliffs blasting missed Threads. Mnementh surges upward to join the battle. F'lar shakes his fist at the passing Star. "'One day,' he shouted, 'we will not sit tamely here, awaiting your fall. We will fall on you, where you spin, and sear you on your own ground.'" (p. 286) If they can travel 400 turns, why not travel from world to world? He decides he better not mention it to Lessa.

Book 4 The Cold Between - Chapter 10 & 11 Analysis

More plot threads are concluded and the introduction of the queens' wing brings resolution to the question of how to fight the burrowing threads. It also provides a conclusion to the women's rights theme by providing equality within the society in different functions. The author provides an open-ended conclusion satisfying all the questions and providing final resolution to the problems faced by the characters. The open end is found in F'lar's statement that foreshadows fighting the Threads on their homeworld.



Characters

Lessa

Lessa's hair flows to her waist. She has prominent cheekbones and a dainty form. She has a special ability that allows her to communicate with all the dragons within the Weyr—a talent only held by one other before her. She hides this ability for years, but when it comes time to fight the Threads, she is able to coordinate the battle through communicating with the dragons who then communicate with their riders.

This powerful young woman is generally quiet and self-reflective. She tends to try to figure things out for herself, rather than ask for help. She relies heavily on instinct to make decisions. F'lar considers her a free spirit too independent for her own good. However, her fresh input offers the balance he needs, as she becomes a much-needed source of inspiration to the Weyrleader. Lessa is a take-charge character. When she thinks she understands the meaning behind the Ballads and Sagas but meets resistance to her ideas, she often steps forward to act even without permission. Lessa notices details often overlooked by others. In addition, once she makes up her mind, she has no problem taking care of business her way.

This powerful young woman born the daughter of the Lord of Ruatha is forced into hiding at as a child when Overlord Fax conquers not only Ruatha but becomes the Overlord of seven Holds. She hides within the lair of the watch-wher who becomes her only trusted friend for 10 years. Lessa is autonomous, imaginative, and logical in the use of her powers as she protects the Hold. Lessa is discovered by the bronze rider, F'lar, while on a Search. When queen hatches, the golden dragon Impresses Lessa and she becomes Weyrwoman within Benden Weyr.

F'lar

F'lar's thick black hair waves back from his high forehead and brushes his shirt collar. He has thin lips, well shaped and in repose almost gentle. His amber eyes almost seem golden. His mouth often pulls to the side in a sardonic smile and heavy black brows often knit together in a scowl or arch in a haughty expression. He has a compelling air about him that is magnetic. He is sure of himself and slightly contemptuous of what others do or think. He's a take-charge person and well-organized using his charts to study details and plan in advance. A conservative man in beliefs, he doesn't generally like to take risks. However, he learns from experience and works best with facts and tangible proofs while seeking sensible and realistic solutions.

F'lar rides the bronze dragon Mnementh and is thus known as a bronze rider. His father F'lon had been Weyrleader until his untimely death in a brawl. He had been rearing F'lar to be the next Weyrleader, however when F'lon died, F'lar was too young to take over.



F'nor

F'nor is Flar's half-brother and rider of the brown dragon, Canth. He has heavy black hair like Flar's and is his loyal supporter. He serves as one of Flar's wingleaders and is the first to come back to report that the Threads are falling. He fills the roll as motivator within the storyline, and does what needs to be done with flexibility. Whether sent off to fight the Threads over Keroon, or traveling between times to oversee the effort to increase the dragon population in time for the next battle, he respects his brother's leadership and adapts to situations as needed. Although he is a good follower, his flexibility makes him a good team member as one of Flar's wingmen.

R'gul

A handsome but stubborn man, R'gul is so tradition bound that he has become an ineffective Weyrleader. He recites what is written but does not allow himself or others to question what it means beyond what is already determined to be the answer. R'gul is a big, husky man, physically vigorous and domineering, his heavy face suggests a stern disciplined personality. However, his disciplines lie in areas not effective in leading and it is reflected in his actions as Weyrleader. His leadership proves to be one of a placating nature as he spends more time enforcing the memorization of laws and traditions without enforcing them.

Mnementh

Mnementh is the great bronze dragon ridden by F'lar. As all dragons, he does not understand why people fear him. When he sleeps, if the tip of his tale stands erect it's a sign that he can be ready to fly in an instant. He has a great bronze body and a sinuous, soft-skinned neck, wedge-shaped head and many-faceted eyes. Mnementh becomes Ramoth's mate and elevates F'lar to Weyrleader. He's a wise dragon, loyal to his rider and affectionate toward Lessa.

Ramoth

Ramoth is the golden dragon and Queen of Benden Weyr. Her nature is independent like that of her rider, Weyrwoman Lessa of Ruath Hold. As a golden, she is largest of the dragons, and queen of the Weyr. It is up to her to increase the dragon population. Her first clutch of eggs is impressive at 41 eggs. Her predecessor did well to lay a dozen.

Watch-wher

Watch-wher, the long-bodied, winged beast saves Lessa's life as a child when she escapes the slaughter of her family at Ruath Hold. It is able to understand Lessa's thoughts before she is Weyrwoman and in turn Lessa is able to communicate with the



beast which is kept chained against its will. Its purpose is to warn of danger at night. The beast's sharply tipped ears top an awesome scaly head, and its scale-rimmed eyes cannot tolerate sunlight so it lives in the dark by day. It's loyal to Lessa but it is a secret only shared between the two of them.

Fax

Fax is the heavy set, womanizer who has overtaken seven Holds within the High Reaches. He's greedy, cruel and wears several flashy rings. He keeps numerous women as mates and is rather unkempt wearing a stained tunic that's none too fresh.

Manora

Manora is a stately woman in her middle years and the headwoman of the Lower Caverns within Benden Weyr. She exudes an aura of quiet strength and purpose.

Kylara

Kylara is amorous, quick and ambitious. F'lar uses Manora and Lessa to plant the idea of becoming Weyrwoman of another Weyr within the woman's mind. This is fine with Lessa, for she has her suspicions that Kylara's son, T'kil, belongs to F'lar and Lessa doesn't like the woman's devious mind.



Objects/Places

Between

Between is the equivalent of being nowhere, and yet on the way to somewhere. If a traveler is not careful, they can be caught in the Between never to be seen again. It serves as a dark, cold conduit to fly between one place another.

Red Star

The Red Star is a step-sister planet with an erratic orbit. Deadly spores, known as Threads, fall to the ground with the Red Star's orbital passing. Intervals of time pass when the trajectory does not bring the star close enough to present a danger, but as the Red Star dominates the morning sky, the threat looms closer.

Interval

Interval is the length of time between the Red Star's passing. It is usually 200 years.

Threads

Threads are spores that spin from the Red Star when its orbit takes it close enough. These Threads devastate anything organic leaving behind a desert-like wasteland. Dragons fly to sear the Threads from the sky at risk of their lives. If Threads reach the ground, they burrow and consume everything organic.

Hold

A Hold is much like a castle or manor house complete with servants and lands. It's a place for the common people to live, and they are expected to pay tithes to the Weyr in return for protection from the Threads.

Weyr

Weyr is a network of caves and caverns where dragons live along with Weyrfolk who are supposed to be supported by tithes from the Holds in return for protection from the Threads.



Between Times

Between Times is a conduit to other times and places. It's dark, cold and disorienting. Only dragons and their riders fly between times, and they run the risk of time-shock when visiting a time in which they already exist. The trick to flying between times is to have a reference point that's accurate.

Star Stone

The Star Stone is used as a reference by the dragonmen when flying between. It is also used as a guide to know when to expect the threat of falling Threads. The Eye Rock is placed upon the Star Stone to bracket the Red Star when it is about to make a Pass to determine the threat. When the sun touches the Finger Rock and the Red Star is bracketed by the Eye Rock, the threat is imminent. An Eye Rock and a Finger Rock are positioned at each Weyr.

Pass

Pass is a time when the Red Star's orbit brings it close enough to drop Threads.

Watch-wher

A Watch-wher is a nocturnal reptilian animal used to guard at night.

Ruath Hold

Ruath Hold is Lessa's home. This hold has a reputation for providing the Weyrs with dragonriders and Weyrwomen which causes F'lar to visit the Hold while on his Search. Ruatha is one of the Holds conquered by Fax.

Benden Weyr

Benden Weyr is the only surviving Weyr at the time of this story. It is the home of the remaining dragon population along with their riders and other Weyrfolk. Benden Weyr is supported by tithes from the Holds.

Social Sensitivity

In a society reeling with "future shock," and in which the comforts of small towns, "best friends," and the extended family common a century ago have given way to an increasingly mobile and fragmented way of life, Americans find themselves engaged in a search for closeness and lasting intimacy. A side-effect of this is that America has become a nation of petowners; the population of pets is greater than the human population.

In her Pern books, McCaffrey creates the ideal friend in her firelizards and, particularly, in her dragons. The dragons are enormous and beautiful creatures of intelligence and great common sense that share a complete, symbiotic bond of empathy with their rider, and with that rider only. Smaller and less intelligent, firelizards share the same empathic bonding to one person. They are a complete, instant antidote to isolation and loneliness.

McCaffrey is also one of the current women science fiction authors who presents women as her protagonists.

Unlike female science fiction writers of twenty years ago, she does not feel obliged to use a male nom-de-plume.

Unlike many women who wrote science fiction and fantasy during the 1970s, hers is not a hostile nor aggressive use of female character. McCaffrey merely presents the reader with a character with problems to overcome, a character who happens to be female, but could as easily be male. In doing so, she deals subtly with the issue of woman's competence and also presents a model for her female readers. Although Pern is by no means a nonsexist society — women cook and heal; men fight and build — McCaffrey's women constantly break free of these roles and are quite capable of caring for themselves independently if necessary.



Techniques

One of McCaffrey's best attributes is her ability to keep a story moving. In *Dragonflight*, for example, the actual span of time is several planetary years.

The queen dragon Ramoth hatches from an egg and matures to bear her first clutch. Yet the reader is never aware of the amount of time passing, so quickly does McCaffrey keep the action moving.

One technique that contributes to this fast pace is her use of short sentences, paragraphs, and even chapters during scenes of intense action or emotion. She also sustains the pace with a series of small climaxes which culminate in the final triumphant scene of the Weyrs' arrival four hundred years into their future. F'lar's fight with Fax, Lessa's accidental projection into her own past where she becomes her own premonition, the first battle with Thread, are just a few of the incidents McCaffrey uses, not only to keep the reader reading, but to advance the plot at the same time.



Themes

Courage and Wisdom

Wisdom and courage is a theme that shines through and through Dragonflight. For the main characters, wisdom and courage represent an ideal they grow into. How they reach that ideal is not always agreed upon. Both Lessa and F'lar honor the old traditions and laws, but Lessa sees nothing wrong with using her powers to manipulate people to gain the results she desires, while F'lar likes to deal with facts, right and wrong and expects people to deal with integrity. However, the author does not allow her characters to be stereotyped. When Lessa finally gains victory with Fax's death, she walks away from what should rightfully be her position of leadership over the Hold to accompany F'lar to Benden Weyr. This mental fortitude is combined with bravery evident in taking risks.

Even at the start of the story, Lessa shows no fear of Mnementh as he forms a cage around her with his claw. F'lar admires her courage and yet this same courage challenges F'lar throughout the story because Lessa is willing to take risks that may cost her life. The plot grows each of these characters through circumstances in which they learn from each other and how to work together. The story is filled with challenges and conflict forcing Lessa, F'lar and others forward with acts of courage both physical and emotional. Through their experiences, they gain wisdom as trials become more challenging. They seek to save their world while fighting traditions that would thwart their new ideas. As Weyrleader, F'lar shows a boldness to address disobedience not only when the Holds withhold their tithes, but within the Weyr when R'gul tries to usurp his authority. This courage is tempered with wisdom as he learns not to alienate but instead, presents options so everyone involved can save face but still do what they are expected to do to obey the customs and laws.

Lessa, F'lar and F'nor all show the courage to believe the Ballads, Sagas, and other Records and what they teach about the Red Star, how to read the Eye Rock and to stand firm on those beliefs with action. Traveling between times shows courage on the part of all three of these characters. If they didn't possess this courage and the wisdom gained from it, the plot could not work. For example, if F'lar hadn't been watching for the Threads, the thread-induced dust storms would never have been recognized as a threat. In addition, if he hadn't been willing to return two hours in the past as dawn, the story would have been over. But his courage to stand for what he believed and the wisdom to understand that the cold weather turned the Threads to dust, propels the story forward as F'nor not only visits but has the courage to fight time-shock by staying 10 Turns in the past to help grow the dragon population, while Lessa shows the ultimate courage by when she acts on her believe in the answer to the Question Song and returns 400 Turns in past. Through her courage and wisdom, the answer to defeat the Threads is provided.



Good Versus Evil

Dragonflight presents a clear, epic "good versus evil" theme that builds throughout the plot. When Lessa is introduced, readers learn that her family was murdered and that Fax is a greedy, selfish Overlord. The theme of the evil Fax is expanded through the character as of one of his many women, Lady Gemma, whose presence and poor physical condition is used as a vehicle to show the contrast of good against evil. It highlights Fax's evil and cruel treatment of the woman versus F'lar's caring nature and respect for women. This good versus evil theme introduced early in the story stirs hatred for the evil Fax and admiration for F'lar and Lessa. From there, the plot moves beyond the parameters of Ruath Hold as Fax is dead and F'lar carries Lessa to Benden Weyr. Here several elements of good versus evil work together to move the plot along. One plot thread shows F'lar and Lessa's strong convictions regarding the ancient texts and their belief that the Red Star poses a threat while most of the rest of the world are lulled into thinking the threat no longer exists. This in itself is a battle of truth against falsehood. This strong sense of right and wrong builds on the theme of good versus evil as F'lar, Lessa and their followers come into conflict with the Overlords of the Holds as well as from dragonmen within the Weyr when the former Weyrleader challenges F'lar authority. In this case, good equals basing actions and decisions on the Traditions, Records and Ballads, and evil is following one's own ways whether motivated by greed, fear, or self-absorption.

Good versus evil is also defined by the actions and reactions of secondary characters in the story. F'lar's men admire and support him, while Fax's Warder and the women who serve as his harem fear him. In contrast, the admiration and respect F'lar's brother F'nor shows throughout the story is important to the overall plot. He willingly does what's needed as he follows his brother's leadership while, R'gul's men fall away from following him in time as F'lar's authority is proven in his actions. Moreover, of course, the ultimate good versus evil is in the battle between the Red Star and Pern. This battle is unambiguous from the start. The sense of danger sensed by Lessa in the opening scene sets the stage that draws the line between good and evil. The Red Star poses the threat of destruction to all of Pern. It's one world versus the other for the ultimate fulfillment of the ancient texts. Based on their beliefs and proven integrity, all of the characters come together in unity to fight the evil Red Star and the Threads threatening to wipe out their world. Good dragons, dragonriders, Craftmasters, and every able-bodied person from the past and present gather in the ultimate showdown in the battle against the Threads and the defeat of evil.

Danger at Dawn

The plot starts out with action as Lessa senses danger from the east where the Red Star shines in the early dawn sky. Danger at dawn is a recurring theme and is tied to the Red Star introduced in this first chapter and repeated throughout the book with increasing tension. Dawn is an obvious pointer to new beginnings as history unfolds across the land each day, but within the plot dawn ties the start of each new day with



clues to a nebulous danger. The danger at dawn theme reaches one of its first climaxes along with the theme of time travel when the Threads have fallen unnoticed and turning to dust in the cold air. The knowledge spurs F'lar to lead his dragonmen between times to two hours past to arrive at dawn over Nerat where the dragons and their riders meet their first active Threads and experience the reality of the danger to both man, beast and everything organic.

Dragons have an innate ability to sense this danger. The twitch of Ramoth's tail is another sign warning of danger at dawn. This twitching also symbolizes that the dragons are ready for action in a split second in reaction to the danger. When F'lar asks Mnementh what it means, he gives no reason. This exchange hints at a deeper level of understanding and knowledge on the dragon's part while raising the tension that danger exists. Lessa reminds F'lar that all the Red Star warnings come at dawn. She shares her experiences of waking at dawn with a sense of approaching danger. The author's use of doubling signs of danger, create an imminent threat and theme of danger at dawn. This is also accomplished when Lessa first visits the past to arrive at that first dawn when she sensed the danger from the east related to the Red Star's trajectory. Each repetition creates more tension as the danger comes into clearer focus.

While the danger is tied to dawn and the Red Star, the full extent of what the danger is becomes clearer over the course of the story. The theme of danger at dawn ushers in hints of a new threat in the dream that Lessa cannot remember. This danger is emphasized by the fact that the queen is also troubled. Danger at dawn reaches one climax along with the theme of time travel. It occurs when the Threads have fallen, and F'lar leads his dragonmen between times to two hours past to arrive at dawn over Nerat. During the battle, F'lar comes to the realization that it is really the dragons that fight these battles. This ties back to the fact that Lessa can communicate with all the dragons and foreshadows a change in a woman's role and how the battles will be fought. This lays the groundwork for a better understanding not only how to fight the Threads, but that the dragonforce is lacking. The charts foretell that the next Pass of the Red Star will take place in three days when danger at dawn presents more danger than the current dragon population can handle. This fact spurs the characters into action, taking risks that otherwise might seem too high, because they know that the danger arriving at dawn in three days is more than they can battle and win.

Time Travel

The paradoxes of time travel present plot twists as characters first learn accidentally to travel back in time. This supplies the way for them to build their dragon population enough to battle the Threads for the years to come until they experience time-shock that is brought about by existing in the same time twice or more. Age-old questions arise about changing the outcome and this is evidenced when Lessa returns to the morning when Fax slaughtered her family. The watch-wher gave no warning of the invasion because it sensed Lessa's presence and thinks everything is safe. Time shock is compounded if the traveler visits the same place multiple times. However, these risks must be endured to support the plot because it is the hope of salvation of the world.



McCaffrey expertly weaves a pre-industrial world run with a feudal-like system with Holds rather than Manors, and special cave networks known as Weyrs where dragons and their riders live to protect the lands of Pern from the spore-like Threads that fall from the Red Star when its orbit takes it close enough to make a Pass. The Holds are to pay tithes to support the Weyrs and in turn, the Weyrfolk protect the Holds and their lands from the Threads. With the element of time travel, this land provides plenty of settings within settings. At Ruath Hold, readers are introduced to a hard life under the harsh hand of a greedy Overlord named Fax. However, with the aid of time travel, readers also visits a thriving Hold from the past that has skills that surpass their descendants which are key to defeating the Threads in the future when they travel ahead 400 Turns.

The searing cold of traveling between offers a concept that makes time travel possible without a lot of technical language, and objects like the Star Stone, Eye Rock and Finger Rock are put into place as a warning system and guide to understanding the trajectory of the Red Star. Lessa's first trips to the past and subsequent trips by her and other characters key passages as time travel is the glue that gives this plot cohesion as the between times concept tips the scale of survival in Pern's favor.

The time travel theme gets more complex as a feeling of uneasiness and fatigue are associated with flying between times. Resolution offered by the contraption Fandarel creates is short lived. It works, but they only have one. This foreshadows the fact that if they are to win this battle they have to find another way. The Question Song and Lessa's understanding of the answer to the first question push the plot toward the final climax. F'lar forbids her to think of going 400 Turns into the past. Finding the tapestry offers information from the past and the reference needed to make time travel possible.

Time travel, the tapestry and communication with dragons all play a part in the ultimate solution to fighting the Threads. When Lessa arrives 400 Turns in the past, the people are much more open to her way of thinking. The author brings together answers to questions formulated throughout the plot. Where did the people from the 5 abandoned Weyrs go? To the future as they fly between times.

Women's Rights

When the story opens, Lessa hides behind the disguise of a kitchen drudge, when her real heritage as daughter of the Lord of Ruatha should have her in a place of authority. From among the Ballads and other ancient texts, Moreta's Ballad foreshadows the fact that women were once equal in a land now run in a feudal-like system where Overlords rule and do not honor the ancient ways. Even within the Weyr, Weyrwomen are not allowed to fly between or take part in battles. The women's rights theme is a journey in equality as a step at a time F'lar realizes that Lessa is not only able but sometimes the best at doing what needs to be done. When the travelers from 400 years past join their society, it is revealed that Weyrwomen not only fly between but join the battle in fighting the Threads. Although equal, their function is different as they fly low to the cliffs searing the burrowing Threads with flamethrower.



When Lessa reads the ancient texts and lives the reality of the threat from the Red Star's passing, she takes special note that it is the plural Weyrs and not Weyr that piques her curiosity. Five Weyrs sit empty. She is required to learn their names and the order in which they were established—all this with no explanation of why they had been abandoned. Other than her time with Ramoth, her days are tedious and uninspired. Her thoughts wander to the one time she flew on Mnemeth's back through the between. It leaves her with a hunger to do it again. She recalls The Battle of Moreta's Ride and believes it supports the fact that she be allowed to ride. This one ballad is key to the role women are supposed to play versus the reality that Lessa lives. When she is allowed to take her role as Keeper of the Records, she plans to find a copy of that ballad to make her point.

Although Lessa and F'lar are on the same side, they don't always get along. The author blends Lessa's impatience toward F'lar for his unwillingness to depose R'gul to highlight her insight and impulsiveness. F'lar tends to try to do things "right" following facts and plans while Lessa has learned that if you want to get things done, it's best not to stand back and wait. Action is what she desires. Instead, her life is boring. Battle of Moreta's Ride leaves her restless and yearning to fly. When F'lar reports to F'nor and Lessa that the Threads have been falling into the cold and becoming brittle enough to turn to dust. Lessa is the one who brings up Moreta's Ballad about black dust. F'lar snaps at her. He doesn't need to hear about Moreta because she could talk to every dragon in the Weyr. "But I can do that," (p. 193) Lessa protests. This opens the door for her to step into a position of real authority that can make a difference. The one thing F'lar hadn't been able to figure out was how to direct the wings and stay in communication with the Weyr. As they argue, he shakes her and tells her that they can't waste time. The words inspire a plan. They will go between times back to dawn when the Threads started falling at Neret.

Lessa is moved to a strategic position because she can communicate with all the dragons. Therefore, as dragons are battling Threads, she becomes the hub of communication and even thrust into making decisions in moving troops and supplying what they need. It isn't until the dragonmen arrive from 400 years in the past that the full understanding of Moreta's Ride. Women are allowed to ride into battle as part of the queens' wing. They make excellent fighters and they fly low enough to use flamethrowers to burn out burrowing Threads.

Overcoming Hardship through Unity

The story takes place in the agrarian culture of Pern where the feudal system both despises and embraces progress and social change. It supports a strong theme of learning to look beyond divisions and learning to live and work together. An underlying theme of unity takes shape as Lessa's relationship with the dragons grows, and F'lar's willingness to leave conservative thinking leads to unity between the Weyrs and the Holds, between R'gul and himself, between one Hold and another, and even between the hatching dragonets and the young candidates.



When the story opens, Lessa is at odds with Fax who has not only conquered her Hold but also murdered her family. F'lar lives within the Weyr at odds with R'gul the current Weyrleader. The plot brings Lessa and F'lar together first in their dislike of Fax, and then in their belief in the ancient texts and traditions, and then physically when F'lar carries Lessa to Benden Weyr in hopes that she will become the next Weyrwoman. However, they see things differently and their approach is totally dissimilar. The two very different personalities gradually grow in unity through trials and circumstances with solutions that do not agree, and as they learn to work together and support each other, the theme spreads out to include other places and relationships.

For example, when the Overlords of the Holds decide to march together as an army on the Weyr in protest, F'lar helps them to see reason by reminding them of what the ancient texts teach, what they have forgotten and how it applies within the current situation. When Lessa flies into view, much to F'lar's surprise, it works to unite the people to honor the old ways.

Within the Weyr, the former Weyrleader, R'gul, harbors resentment toward F'lar and Lessa as he thinks that the threat of Threads is a thing of the past. Therefore, even though he teaches the letter of the law, he doesn't believe it in his heart. The fact that his position as Weyrleader was usurped by F'lar when his dragon mates with the queen it makes it difficult to accept the younger man's authority. Gradually, fact upon fact, F'lar ties the prophecies to current happenings making his point. However, it isn't until the Threads actually begin to fall that R'gul steps up to his responsibilities and honors F'lar's leadership.

Finally, when the ultimate resolution comes about, F'lar is concerned for Lessa's safety and forbids her to return 400 years in the past to find the help they need. They are divided on what should be done. When Lessa goes between times without his permission and returns with dragons and riders enough to fight, F'lar's anger turns to admiration. Those once divided by beliefs, authority issues or time now stand united with dragons and riders from the past, the dragons and riders from Benden Weyr, and the support of the common folk of the Holds.

Significant Topics

Over and over again, particularly in the Pern books, McCaffrey stresses the virtues of open-minded change over blind following of tradition. Again and again, tradition, a thing done because it has always been done and in just this way, is decried. Pern is saved and lives are changed for the better when traditions are broken. Weyr must learn to accept those not weyr-bred (and vice versa), old riders must leave behind their arrogance; the runt egg from which Ruth is hatched must not be destroyed and Jaxom's Impression must be respected; even though she is "just a girl," Menolly must be allowed her music. Old songs, old sayings, old traditions, McCaffrey insists, must be looked at with new eyes, in new ways; to accept without question because it has always been so can be fatal. When traditions are broken upon Pern, individual lives change for the better and the entire planet is saved.



McCaffrey also speaks about the value of cooperation. When characters work as individuals within the Pern books, their results are often destructive or, at best, inconclusive. It is not until they accept the need for cooperative action that they are able to achieve positive results. Weyr must work with weyr, with holding, and with crafthall in order to save the planet and its inhabitants from the destructive fall of Thread. Alone, weyr, holding, and crafthall are undermanned, underprotected, and vulnerable; only together can they protect themselves.

This holds true on the individual level as well. When a character such as the self-centered Kylara acts solely in her own interest, her actions result in disaster and destruction. Even Lessa when acting on her own brings about only the degeneration of her beloved Ruatha Hold. She must learn cooperation before Ruatha can be restored.



Style

Point of View

Written in third person omniscient point of view; the author acts as an all-knowing narrator offering insight into the main characters' thoughts and feelings as they interact. This author juggles these elements with clarity, and instead of a feeling creating a feeling of confusion with so many characters, she instills a link between the reader and character. As F'lar and Lessa debate issues, readers not only know what they are saying and how they are acting, but also how they feel and what they perceive. Third person omniscient allows for a broad scope of understanding the whole picture from every character's viewpoint. One advantage to using this viewpoint is that anything can be described, because there are no limitations as to what is known. This allows for a collection of key dragon knowledge throughout the book. Knowing that dragons have not always lived in Weyrs, that traveling between times does not bother them and that they support Lessa's flying between all provide clues strategic to the plot but not blatantly added to give it away. In some cases, this viewpoint can create distance between the character and reader, but not so with this book. Instead, it works to involve the reader in Lessa and F'lar's relationship and helps provide a special connection with the dragons.

Setting

McCaffrey expertly weaves a pre-industrial world run with a feudal-like system with Holds rather than Manors, and special cave networks known as Weyrs where dragons and their riders live to protect the lands of Pern from the spore-like Threads that fall from the Red Star when its orbit takes it close enough. The Holds are to pay tithes to support the Weyrs and in turn, the Weyrfolk protect the Holds and their lands from the Threads. With the element of time travel, this land provides plenty of settings within settings. At Ruath Hold, readers are introduced to a hard life under the harsh hand of a greedy Overlord named Fax. However, with the aid of time travel, also visits a thriving Hold from the past that has skills that surpass their descendants.

The sights and sounds include a world where dragons and humans have a special connection for life. The searing cold of traveling between offers a concept that makes time travel possible without a lot of technical language, and sights like the Star Stone, Eye Rock and Finger Rock are put into place as a warning system and guide to understanding the trajectory of the Red Star. The colors and textures of the morning sky as Threads invade Pern are captivating as she brings setting and plot together in climax. While she leaves some detail up to the reader's imagination, there's plenty of description to make the world real and easy to navigate.



Language and Meaning

Anne McCaffrey's easy storytelling style weaves unique language and its meaning into the context effortlessly. Between becomes a transitional place that works like a conduit carrying dragons and their riders to other places and times. A Hold is much like a castle or manor house, and a Weyr is a network of caves and caverns where the dragons live along with Weyrfolk who are supposed to be supported by tithes from the Holds in return for protection from the Threads. Threads are spores that spin from the Red Star and devastate anything organic leaving behind a desert-like wasteland. Dragons fly to sear the Threads at risk of their lives. These terms come together in this science fiction tale with ease and simplicity. The ancient Star Stone, Eye Rock and Finger Rock mark times, warn of dangers, and provide reference points when flying between.

At the start of the book, names can be confused easily as readers meet, F'lar, F'nor, and Fax and learn about F'lar's father F'lon. Dragon names like Mnementh take a little getting used to, but the story is strong enough that soon you think nothing of the name other than what you know about the character. It's the mark of good writing. Science fiction and fantasy are known for unusual names and in that regard, *Dragonflight* does not disappoint. The key is that the alien language becomes one the reader speaks, as they get involved in the plot and characters' lives.

Structure

The plot starts out with action as Lessa senses danger from the Red Star in the early dawn sky. Background is introduced through the lizard-like watch-wher, when we learn that Lessa's family had been slaughtered when Fax overtook Ruath Hold. She has power to communicate with the animal as well as power to manipulate the thinking of others. On the other side of the plot, the reader meets F'lar and his bronze dragon Mnementh as he comes to Ruath Hold on a Search for the next Weyrwoman. Lessa's powers affect both F'lar and the Overlord Fax bringing the two close to blows. Her intent is to see Fax killed so she can reclaim her place over Ruatha. The action introduces the background, characters, and then conflict. The conflict continues to develop within each chapter, providing respites of resolution only to send another wave of conflict carrying the plot along as relationships develop, lines of authority drawn, and the hopelessness of the situation is clear. Lessa and F'lar find the answer to fighting the Threads, but the real problem is lack of dragons and manpower that leads to solving the mystery of what happened to the 5 abandoned Weyrs. Why did the people and dragons leave and where did they go? It is through the accidental discovery of flying between times that the plot develops to the solution and the end.



Quotes

Quote 1: "Indecisively she swung to her left, for the sense of danger issued from that direction as well. She glanced upward, her eyes drawn to the red star that had recently begun to dominate the dawn sky." (p. 5)

Quote 2: "Can you dismiss these portents that always presage the coming of Threads?" (p. 139)

Quote 3: F'lar leaned across the table, his brows drawn together thoughtfully as he watched the golden-forked tip of the queen's tail jerk spasmodically from side to side.

Quote 4: "Mnementh, too. And always at dawn and early morning. As if somehow they associate that time of day with trouble..." p. 157

Quote 5: "'Between times,' F'lar murmured. 'I wonder . . .'" (p. 169)

Quote 6: "In order to fly a dragon between, he has to know where to go. And so do you." He grinned at the astonished and infuriated look of comprehension on her face. "Ah, but there are certain consequences to an ill-considered jump. Badly visualized reference points often result in staying between." P. 160

Quote 7: "For one thing, while the weather holds so unusually cold for this time of year, the Threads simply turn brittle and blow away like dust. They're harmless. However, when the air is warm, they are viable and . . . deadly." p 178

Quote 8: "Well, isn't it possible that our conviction about the imminence of the Threads could stem from one of us coming back when the Threads are actually falling?" p. 191

Quote 9: "I can't dismiss the thought that the between times ability is of crucial value," she said emphatically." P. 192

Quote 10: "'Crack dust, blackdust,'" Lessa quoted. In 'The Ballad of Moreta's Ride,' the chorus is all about black dust." P. 193

Quote 11: "Silvery gray were those space-traversing spores, spinning from hard frozen ovals into coarse filaments as they penetrated the warm atmospheric envelope of Pern. Less than mindless, they had been ejected from their barren planet toward Pern, a hideous rain that sought organic matter to nourish it into growth. One Thread, sinking into fertile soil, would burrow deep, propagating thousands in the warm earth, rendering it into a black-dusted wasteland." P 199

Quote 12: "F'lar had told her [Lessa] long ago that she must learn to look beyond the narrow confines of Hold Ruatha and mere revenge. He was, as usual right. As Weyrwoman under his tutelage, she had further learned that living was more than raising dragons and Spring Games. Living was struggling to do something impossible—to succeed, or die, knowing you had tired." P. 208



Quote 13: "I need the answer to the very pressing question of how one under-strength Weyr can do the fighting of six." (p. 210)

Quote 14: "Well said, Lessa. So let us forget these misguiding and antiquated precepts and think up our own guides. First, we need more dragons. Second, we need them now. Third, we need something as effective as a flaming dragon to destroy Threads which have burrowed." P. 212

Quote 15: "And we must have many more mature dragons ready to fight at Telgar in three days' time. So, though ten Turns will have passed for you, three days only will elapse here." (P. 243)

Quote 16: "A difficult assignment to know one must write a song that four hundred Turns later gives a valuable clue." (p. 267)

Quote 17: "'One day,' he shouted, 'we will not sit tamely here, awaiting your fall. We will fall on you, where you spin, and sear you on your own ground.'" (p. 286)

Adaptations

In 1978, Caedmon Publishers released a recording of *The White Dragon*, read by McCaffrey herself. This was followed in 1983 by Performing Arts Press release of "Menolly's Sea Songs."

Also in 1983, Mayfair Publications released a board game based on the *Dragonriders of Pern* series, "Dragonriders of Pern." The pictures of the characters were based on Robin Wood's paintings, which are seen in her book, *The People of Pern*.

As audio-books have become increasingly popular, many of McCaf *Dragonriders of Pern* novels have been recorded, including: *Dragonflight*, 6 cassettes/11 hrs. Published by Brilliance.

Dragonsinger, 7 cassettes/10 hrs.

Read by Sally Darling. Slow-paced performance, with a high-pitched, sweet tone.

Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern, 11 cassettes/8 hrs. Read by Sheila Hart. Has an effective narrator, with good production quality.

All the Weyrs of Pern, 2 cassettes/1½ hrs. Abridged. Read by Anne McCaffrey. Steadfast, serious and dramatic reading.

Key Questions

McCaffrey's original trilogy: *Dragonflight*, *Dragonquest* and *The White Dragon* were published between 1968 and 1978.

These three novels are still very popular reading and establish her as a grand dame of science fiction, to say nothing of her continued production.

When these novels first appeared, there was some question as to McCaffrey's classification: was this science fiction or fantasy — what is dragon, real or imaginary? McCaffrey places herself firmly in the science fiction realm: dragons are genetically engineered, though their origins are not clear in this trilogy. Yet there is an aspect to dragonrider life that is often wish fulfillment for her readers: the ever-present, ever-supportive friend/lover, the power to escape one's reality by flying with the power of dragon's wings, the romantic thrill of battle and victory. While McCaffrey has scoffed at the "blood and thunder" of hi-tech SF (calling "thud and blunder"), she seems to have mastered the nuances of the so-called "soft sciences" in her novels: the sociology, psychology, history, and politics of weyr, craft and hold life. Consider, then, these aspects of McCaffrey's first — and some would say best — excursion to Pern.

1. Are dragons ideal friends? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the remarkable ties between dragon and human?
2. How is McCaffrey breaking the gender barriers with her female protagonists? Is Lessa an effective character?
3. One of the conflicts that McCaffrey depicts is between dragonriders and the holders who supply them with food and other necessities. What other details does the author include that gives Pern a viable culture and economy?
4. What are the values of this culture? What personal characteristics are valued above others? How does this compare with your values and experiences?
5. McCaffrey has been compared with J. R. R. Tolkien, Isaac Asimov, and Frank Herbert, in that she has created a comprehensive world, complete with maps, native flora and fauna, and other unique features. How does Pern compare with other science fiction worlds? Is it as detailed as you'd expect?
6. Compare the *Dragonflight* trilogy with the *Harper Hall* trilogy. What differences and similarities in intended audience, themes and character development are evident between these foundational trilogies?
7. How do characters such as Fax, Meron, Kylara and others rate as villains of the novels? How do they represent the social and political opposition to F'lar and Lessa?



8. McCaffrey insists that her work is science fiction — everything is explainable by scientific means. Why, then, are her Pern novels often considered fantasy; what elements are "fantastic" to her readers?

9. Each book of the Dragonflight trilogy has a different character's point of view. How effective is this technique?

10. The White Dragon hints at some archeological discoveries. Speculate on what the Pernese might discover regarding their technologically-advanced ancestors. (This question assumes that you have not read the more recent novels!)



Topics for Discussion

Along with the encroachment of grass came the withholding of tithes. Little by little, the Weyr's influence lessened so that even ancient holds didn't take proper precautions to keep Pern free of Threads. How does this behavior affect the Weyr and why?

List at least three items revealed as a result of the fight between F'lar and Fax and Fax's death?

With an interval of 400 years since the Threads last threatened Pern, how do the people of Benden Weyr determine the signs to know if the Red Star's passing is dangerous? And if it is, what can they expect?

What is the significance of Lessa's experience when she flies solo through the Between to Ruatha to find herself in the past?

What circumstances led to Lessa finally accepting her role as Weyrwoman and F'lar's made and why?

What importance does the lost tapestry play in the solution to defeating the Threads?

The dragons have knowledge that their riders are unaware of until the story unfolds. List three specific bits of dragon knowledge, and how it influences the plot of Dragonflight.

Literary Precedents

Like most modern fantasy writers, McCaffrey owes a debt to J. R. R. Tolkien. Like Tolkien, McCaffrey creates a world of her own, complete with map, culture, flora, and fauna. There is a medieval feel to the Pern culture, with holds dependent upon weyrs for protection from Thread, as fiefdoms depended upon their lords, and in return for this protection hold supports weyr.

Craftsmen are organized into guilds, with apprentices, journeymen, and masters; they are part of but independent from the holds and weyrs. And last, like Middle Earth, Pern is a semiliterate society with much ancient knowledge forgotten, some preserved by trained copyists, and much else passed on by rote, samples of which McCaffrey provides throughout.

However, McCaffrey's Pern books are science fiction, not fantasy. There is no magic in Pern. It is a carefully thought-out world based more on the rational than the wish. In this, her writing resembles that of Andre Norton, whose early works of science fiction included the elements of human beings on a strange non-Earth planet, esper ties with various breeds of animals and aliens, and a concentration on character and plot rather than on technical hardware. Norton and McCaffrey both use the conventions of science fiction to place their characters in interesting and perilous situations.



Related Titles

Dragonflight is the first of a trilogy that includes *Dragonquest* (1971) and culminates in *The White Dragon* (1978).

The setting remains the same, but in *Dragonquest* the focus shifts from F'lar and Lessa to F'nor and the shy queenrider Brekke. In *Dragonquest*, the tension between the dragonriders brought forward in time and the modern inhabitants of Pern increases; additionally, the battle against the planet-threatening Thread becomes more intense as weyrs, crafts, and holders join in searching for ways to combat it effectively. The question of Pern's remote past is first raised here, but *Dragonquest* culminates in F'nor's attempt to take his dragon to the planet where Thread originates. The theme of cooperation is much stressed in *Dragonquest*, as time and again the selfish interests of individuals threaten to undo the fragile alliance of Pern's differing ways of life. In *The White Dragon*, focus moves yet farther from the original pair as it follows Jaxom of Ruatha's coming to manhood. The theme emphasized is again that of questioning of blind tradition. Much of the distant past hinted at in *Dragonquest* is revealed in *The White Dragon*.

McCaffrey has also written a related trilogy, *Dragonsong* (1976), *Dragonsinger* (1977), and *Drumdrums* (1979). Pern remains the setting, but the emphasis shifts from the "aristocracy" of the weyr to the humble, tradition-bound holders and intellectually-curious crafthalls, specifically the Harper Hall. Side issues from the original trilogy, such as the discovery of firelizards and the exploration of the Southern Continent, are dealt with, but essentially the books are tightly-written stories concerning the trials and triumphs of a single character — Menolly in *Dragonsong* and *Dragonsinger*, and Piemur in *Drumdrums*. Again McCaffrey presents vivid interesting characters and explores the theme of the constraints and prejudices of tradition. Menolly and Piemur both explode out of their tradition-bound lives, at last giving full rein to their special talents and so finding both themselves and a measure of happiness.

One of the earliest short stories of the Dragonriders, "The Smallest Dragonboy" (Get Off the Unicorn), was based on McCaffrey's brother, Kevin. Like Kevin, Keeven of Benden Weyr was smaller than the other Hatching candidates and a frequent object of their taunting and harassment. His escape from the infirmary after being savagely beaten up and his subsequent impression of a bronze dragonet constitute another "unusual-impression" story, like that of Jaxom and Ruth. Keevan, or K'van as he is subsequently known, will appear in later novels.

McCaffrey's Dragonriders of Pern novels currently number thirteen; certainly more are to follow. The author suggests that newcomers to her oeuvre read the novels in the order written, as this provides a gradual introduction to the complexities of Weyr, Hall and Hold society. However, the Dragonriders of Pern series can be divided into distinct phases of social evolution.



The story of Pern began in the middle, with the First Generation; that is, the first generation of Pernese that readers became acquainted with, as outlined in the above two trilogies. The next and ongoing phase of the Pern novels detailed those whom the First Generation sometimes refer to as "the Ancients," the original colonists of the planet who experienced the First Fall, as depicted in *Dragonsdawn* and other stories. A recent and expanding phase of the series inaugurates a Transition Phase. These are the children of the First Generation, who will lead Pern through the many cultural and social transitions it currently confronts.

Only two novels in the *Dragonriders of Pern* series are set outside the chronology of the two pairs of trilogies; they are not of the First Generation nor are they of the Ancient's time frame.

Moreta is introduced in *Dragonflight* as a legendary character who saves all of Pern from a pandemic at the cost of her own life; in *Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern* (1983), her legend is told at length.

Nerilka of *Nerilka's Story* (1986), a contemporary of Moreta, also plays a significant role in battling the disease and disseminating the cure.



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