

Dragonsinger Study Guide

Dragonsinger by Anne McCaffrey

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Plot Summary

The Dragonsinger is a science fiction novel by Anne McCaffrey. All of Pern has been searching for Petiron's apprentice and have finally found the talented harper, but are shocked to find it is a girl. Menolly has lived alone since running away from Half Circle Sea Hold in the dark days after Petiron's death and is unsure how to handle the concern of the kind people at Harpers Craft Hall who have taken her in with the belief that she will change the face of music on Pern. Menolly is afraid of letting these kind people down, but slowly she begins to realize she has finally found the place where she belongs. Dragonsinger is a delightful novel of hope and self discovery that readers of all ages and tastes will enjoy.

Menolly arrives at Harpers Craft Hall on the back of a dragon. Menolly is nervous, but too tired to worry what everyone thinks of her at the moment. Menolly meets the headwoman of the hall who quickly puts her to bed in a guest room for the night, promising to settle her in the girl's cot the following day. Menolly gathers her fire lizards around her and quickly falls into a deep sleep. The next morning, Menolly rises early and wanders to the kitchen to find something for her fire lizards to eat. Camo, the kitchen drudge, offers to help Menolly feed the creatures, excited at the aspect of being near such beautiful animals. After the fire lizards finish eating, Menolly begins singing along to the choir she can hear singing in a nearby building. The fire lizards join in, making Menolly happy because it proves the creatures are also happy. However, the sound of the fire lizards draws the attention of nearly everyone in the hall, causing Menolly a great deal of embarrassment.

Menolly goes up to visit with the Masterharper, who tries to reassure her about taking on the role of apprentice at a craft in which no woman has ever become a Master. Later, the headwoman, Silvina, takes Menolly to the cot where she will be living with the other girls. As Menolly takes her things to her new room, her fire dragons enter the home. The coholder becomes frightened by the fire dragons and demands that Menolly keep them under control. Afterward, Menolly is directed to go to the instrument makers in order to pick a gitar to use. Menolly chooses carefully, unwittingly impressing Master Jerint when she chooses the Masterharper's gitar. Afterward, Menolly plays the gitar for Master Domick who runs her through a group of chords that would be difficult for a normal apprentice, but Menolly finds easy except for the scar on her hand that limits her movement.

After working with Master Domick, Menolly hears the bell for lunch. Menolly arrives in the hall later and does not know where she is supposed to sit. Menolly picks the first seat she finds beside a small boy she later learns is Piemur. Piemur is excited to meet Menolly and finds himself defending her to the other boys who think Menolly is acting above her station by sitting with them. After lunch, Menolly spends time with Master Morshal who quizzes her on music theory. When she is done there, Piemur takes Menolly to meet Master Shonagar, the singing teacher. Shonagar teaches Menolly so many breathing exercises that she almost forgets how to sing, but manages to get a meager compliment from the grumpy master.



Menolly returns to the hall where she allows Camo to help her feed the fire lizards. Menolly then goes to her own dinner where she meets the other girls who live at Harpers Craft Hall. One girl seems friendly, but the others seem to follow a young woman who is rude and conceited toward Menolly. After dinner, Menolly does not know where she is expected to go. Exhausted from the day's events, Menolly slips back to the cot where she falls into a deep sleep. The next morning, Menolly is awakened by Dunca, the cotholder, screaming at her from the door for sneaking into the cot without letting anyone know she was there. Menolly tries to explain herself, but Dunca wants none of it. Menolly eats a quick breakfast with the rest of the girls before slipping away to feed her fire lizards. Menolly does not know where to go from there, but is directed to the archway room where the other girls are having gitar practice. Menolly outplays all the girls, making them all look like fools.

At lunch, Menolly learns she should have been with Master Domick instead of the girls. A message was left with Dunca for Menolly, but she did not receive it. After lunch, Menolly is supposed to report to Master Jerint with her pipes, but when she goes to the cot to retrieve them, she can hear Dunca and Pona discussing her. As Menolly considers her options, her fire lizards retrieve the pipes from her room for her so that she does not have to enter the cot herself. Menolly is amazed because no one has ever seen fire lizards acting together that way before.

That night, after a long day of working with the masters and helping the Masterharper with the eggs she had given him, Menolly returns to the cot exhausted. Dunca meets her at the door and yells at her for what she sees as Menolly's disrespect. Menolly hears her out and then disappears into her room at the first opportunity she can find. The next morning, Menolly wakes early and decides to take a bath and wash her clothing. Menolly goes to breakfast in her spare set of clothing and is told that the clothes are inappropriate. Menolly is miserable in the cot. Silvina recognizes this later in the day and decides to move Menolly back to the hall. Silvina declares that this is where Menolly belongs anyway since she is the Masterharper's apprentice.

Menolly's first night in the hall she is awakened by her fire lizards. The fire lizards appear to be deeply frightened by something only they are aware of. Menolly senses a tragedy and an overwhelming loss, but does not know where it has come from. The next morning, however, Menolly learns that a dragon and his rider attempted to go to the Red Sun and were badly injured. Menolly writes a song about the event and the Masterharper tells her that it is a very good song. That same morning, the two eggs that Menolly gave the Masterharper hatch and the Masterharper and his journeyman, Sebell, impress them.

On the restday there is a gather. Menolly is given some money by the Masterharper and told to have a good time. Menolly attends with Piemur, first enjoying some hot pies before going in search of a new belt. While Menolly and Piemur are shopping for the belt, one of the girls from the cot approaches with her beau. The girl accuses Menolly of stealing her money. Menolly refuses to back off and a fight ensues. Sensing her anger, the fire lizards join the fight, injuring those who caused the argument. The Masterharper is alerted to the fight by his own fire lizards, arriving in time to break up the fight and



send the offending parties back to their rooms. Later Menolly learns that the offending girl was sent home from the Harpers Craft Hall.

Menolly has come to love the people of Harpers Craft Hall and worries that the young woman who caused her so much trouble could make it so she would have to leave. However, this worry is put to rest when the Masterharper promotes Menolly to journeyman, giving her the rank that will ensure no one will ever be able to hurt her again.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

The Dragonsinger is a science fiction novel by Anne McCaffrey. All of Pern has been searching for Petiron's apprentice and have finally found the talented harper, but are shocked to find it is a girl. Menolly has lived alone since running away from Half Circle Sea Hold in the dark days after Petiron's death and is unsure how to handle the concern of the kind people at Harpers Craft Hall who have taken her in with the belief that she will change the face of music on Pern. Menolly is afraid of letting these kind people down, but slowly she begins to realize she has finally found the place where she belongs. Dragonsinger is a delightful novel of hope and self discovery that readers of all ages and tastes will enjoy.

Menolly arrives at Harpers Craft Hall on a bronze dragon and accompanied by Masterharper Robinton. Menolly is exhausted from her trip and worried about her fire lizards, but is reassured by the presence of the nine creatures on the top of a nearby building. The Masterharper leaves Menolly in the care of the headwoman, Silvina, who settles Menolly in a guest room in the main hall, promising to settle her in a cot the following day. On the way to the room, Silvina learns about Menolly's injured feet, feet she injured while running from Thread. Silvina promises to have the doctor, Master Oldive, look at them the following day. Silvina settles Menolly in her room where Menolly calls the fire lizards to join her. Silvina is fascinated by the creatures, as she is by Menolly. The Harpers Craft Hall has never had a female apprentice before, but Menolly was trained by Petiron, giving Menolly all the respect and attention that honor deserves.

The following morning Menolly wakes early and quickly dresses before going in search of food for her fire lizards. Menolly finds the kitchen and asks Silvina for meat. Silvina sends Camo, the kitchen drudge, outside with the meat to help Menolly. After the creatures have eaten, Menolly begins to sing with the chorus she can hear in a nearby building. The fire lizards begin to sing with Menolly, a fact that pleases Menolly because it means the fire lizards are happy. However, the haunting sound draws the attention of everyone within earshot and annoys the choir leader. Menolly is deeply embarrassed by the reaction. Everyone wants to know about the fire lizards, but they do not ask Menolly directly which further deepens her embarrassment. Silvina sends Menolly up to the Masterharper's room with his breakfast, aware that she needs something to do elsewhere. The Masterharper is aware of Menolly's discomfort and tries to reassure her, once again telling her that she is talented and deserves to be at Harpers Craft Hall despite her gender. Menolly does not agree, especially when she discovers that the Masterharper has made changes to one of the songs she wrote. The changes make Menolly feel inadequate as a composer.

Menolly checks the fire lizard eggs she gave the Masterharper and then she is sent to her room where she is examined by Master Oldive. Master Oldive gives Menolly an ointment for her feet, instructing her to stay off them as much as possible. Master Oldive



also looks at the scar on Menolly's hand she received while gutting fish at the Sea Hold where she grew up and instructs her on some exercises that will help stretch the skin and make the hand more flexible. After the exam, Silvina takes Menolly to the cot where she is to live with the other girls. The cotholder, Dunca, is a miserly woman who is frightened of Menolly's nine fire lizards as well as jealous of Menolly's relationship with Petiron and as a result takes an instant dislike to Menolly. Dunca instructs Menolly to keep the fire lizards out of her cot despite Menolly's protests that the fire lizards are harmless. Menolly attempts to apologize for the disruption she has caused, but Silvina tells her she has nothing to apologize for.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

Menolly is introduced in these first two chapters. Menolly is a quiet, unassuming girl who has been living on her own for some time. Now Menolly has been brought to Harpers Craft Hall, a place not unlike Julliard's School of Music in New York where she will be trained to be a musician, or Master Harper. Menolly is to train under the top musician in all of Pern, the Masterharper. This is a huge honor for any apprentice, but especially so for Menolly because she is a girl and no girl has ever apprenticed to be a Master Harper before. Menolly is overwhelmed by this honor and by the kindness of the people around her, showing the reader her more humble side and her lack of confidence in her own abilities. However, it seems the Masterharper has enough confidence in her for everyone. Menolly was trained under Petiron, a man who was once the Masterharper and who traveled Pern to find a new and talented apprentice to change the face of Pern. Petiron did that with Menolly and has left her to finish her training with his own son, Masterharper Robinton.

Almost immediately Menolly runs into trouble. Menolly sings with her fire lizards and disrupts the morning's choir rehearsals, causing herself to become noticed by everyone at the hold and a deep sense of embarrassment at causing the disruption. Menolly is the kind of girl who has always been in the background so the sudden interest in her causes her a great deal of discomfort. However, the reader gets a sense of Masterharper Robinton's character when he reassures Menolly, telling her that she is very talented and deserves to be there more than some of the other students already in residence. Masterharper Robinton believes in Menolly more than she believes in herself. This reassurance does little to give Menolly confidence, however, when she arrives at the cot where she is to live and finds the cotholder to be a miserly, angry woman who is prejudiced against her from the start. Dunca's reaction to Menolly warns the reader that there will be trouble as the plot progresses, suggesting that Dunca's fear of Menolly's fire lizards and jealousy of her relationship, a theme of the novel, with Petiron will cause Menolly distress.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Menolly goes to Master Jerint's workshop where she has been instructed to pick a gitar for her personal use until she can build one of her own. When Menolly arrives, Master Domick, the composition teacher, is there. Master Jerint and Master Domick admire Beauty, Menolly's fire lizard queen, commenting on the fire lizards' concert that morning. Everyone seems fascinated with the creatures. After a bit of conversation, Master Domick reminds Master Jerint why Menolly has come to his workshop. Menolly turns to the instrument. Master Domick watches as Menolly carefully tests and examines each instrument. Master Domick shows no reaction to the gitar Menolly chooses, but Master Jerint tells her she has made a good choice. Master Domick then takes Menolly to another room where he instructs her to play the instrument for him. Although Menolly's scarred hand limits her mobility, she plays a difficult song for the Master. Master Domick asks Menolly what kind of songs she has experience playing and then has her play several other instruments. At the end of their session, Menolly asks to whom the gitar she chose belonged and he tells her it was Masterharper Robinton's when he was a journeyman.

The bell for lunch sounds. Menolly quickly puts her gitar away and goes back to the hall. Menolly is already late and everyone is already in their place waiting for the signal to sit. Menolly takes the first empty spot she sees beside a small boy who quickly introduces himself as Piemur. Piemur instructs Menolly on the proper etiquette of the dining hall when she nearly makes a mistake. Piemur then compliments Menolly on her singing that morning, reveling in the disruption it caused. When another of the apprentices criticizes Menolly for sitting with the boys, Piemur jumps to her defense. However, it is made clear to Menolly that she should with the girls at the next meal. After lunch, everyone is assigned to a set of choirs. However, Menolly has not been assigned to a group, so she does not have a chore to do. Menolly attempts to help clear the dishes, but is rebuffed by a young man assigned to the chore.

Master Morshal, the musical theory instructor, retrieves Menolly from the hall and takes her to a classroom to quiz her on her knowledge of musical theory. Menolly answers all his questions quickly and respectfully, and then plays the gitar for him. Master Morshal is gruff and disapproving, leaving Menolly with the impression that she is more of a nuisance to him than anything else. After leaving Master Morshal, Menolly runs into Piemur who tells her that Master Shonagar, the singing teacher, has asked to see her. Menolly quickly goes to Master Shonagar's classroom with her fire lizards in tow and is quickly rebuffed for bringing the creatures. Master Shonagar does not want Menolly distracted by the fire lizards. Menolly promises to keep them quiet. Master Shonagar then begins to run Menolly through a group of breathing techniques, teaching her so much at once that she almost forgets how to sing when he finally requests it of her. However, Menolly sings in the fashion Petiron taught her and gets a reluctant



compliment in return. Master Shonagar then dismisses Menolly, apparently falling asleep before she takes her first step.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Menolly begins the rounds of the instructors in this chapter, finally showing both the Masters and the reader her talents as a musician. First Menolly is instructed to pick out a gitar. Menolly carefully listens to each instrument and picks the one with the clearest sound. Menolly is not trying to impress anyone, she is simply attempting to find a proper instrument the way Petiron taught her. However, the reader sees immediately that she has impressed Master Jerint, the instrument maker, but wonders if Master Domick, the composition teacher, notices Menolly's great ear. Master Domick then takes Menolly into a room where he runs her through several compositions and has her play other instruments. The reader is anxious for Menolly, aware of her fear of disappointing and embarrassing the Masterharper. Menolly knows that the Masterharper has gone out on a limb for her and she does not want to let him down. Master Domick does not compliment Menolly or even give her a kind word, but the reader is left with the impression that he is not disappointed since he seems to be the kind of man who is not afraid to voice his disappointments.

Menolly then goes to lunch where she meets Piemur. Piemur is much younger than most of the other apprentices, but is more confident than Menolly herself. Piemur recognizes Menolly's fears and helps her, giving her instruction on the behavior expected from her in the hall. Piemur also defends Menolly to the other apprentices when they criticize her for sitting with them rather than with the other girls. Piemur is kind and open, a young man who would make a complimentary friend to Menolly, touching on the theme of friendship. Later, Menolly meets with two other masters. The first is Master Morshal, the musical theory instructor. Menolly is able to answer all of his questions without trouble, but the reader gets the impression that Master Morshal would not be impressed if Menolly played the gitar while balancing on her head, simply because she is a girl. Menolly then meets with Master Shonagar, the singing teacher, and again meets with a man who is highly critical of her talents and stingy with compliments. However, this time Menolly is complimented, giving the reader the impression that Menolly is as talented as Masterharper Robinton believes her to be despite the cool reaction of each of the Masters and her own lack of self confidence.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Menolly's fire lizards are hungry again, so she goes to the kitchen to find them some meat. Camo is excited to help, causing him to get into trouble with the kitchen helper. Camo ignores the woman, however, over his desire to help Menolly. Piemur comes across Menolly and Camo feeding the fire lizards and asks if he can help the next time. Menolly agrees. Together Menolly and Piemur go inside for dinner. This time Menolly sits with the girls. Menolly is introduced to the girls and discovers that they adhere to the social ranking in force in many holds, but which Menolly thought was discarded in favor of student ranking at Harpers Craft Hall. Menolly is also told that as the daughter of a Sea Holder, she has ranking over all the other girls, including one who appears to be the leader, Pona. Pona appears to dislike Menolly immediately due to this as well as Menolly's status as an apprentice, and the other girls follow Pona except one, Audiva, who stands up for Menolly. All through dinner, the girls discuss the fire lizards, dragons, and the Thread. Thread Fall is due soon. Pona suggests that a dragon go to the Red Star and simply burn it clean of Thread to stop the dangerous spores from falling on Pern. After dinner, Piemur has to go to rehearsals, but Menolly has nowhere to go. Menolly decides to return to the cot and go to bed because her first day has left her exhausted.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Camo is proving to be a good friend of Menolly's, touching on a theme of the novel. Camo is slow witted, more like a small child than the man that he is, giving him an innocent quality that makes it easy for Menolly to enjoy his friendship. It also helps that Camo is so infatuated with Menolly's fire lizards, one of only a few who is not afraid of the creatures. Menolly is then introduced to the girls who live in the cot where she will be staying. Audiva proves to be a kind young woman, defending Menolly and subtly putting another girl in her place when she attempts to pull rank on Menolly. As the daughter of a Sea Holder, Menolly has rank over Pona, the other young lady who had rank before Menolly's arrival. Due to this, despite the fact that Menolly does not care much about rank, Pona dislikes Menolly. The other girls seem to consider Pona their leader, so they too are not friendly toward Menolly. This reaction seems to foreshadow trouble for Menolly, suggesting that Pona's jealousy, another theme of the novel, will get in the way of Menolly's happiness at Harpers Craft Hall.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The next morning, Menolly is awoken by an angry Dunca who demands to know when Menolly snuck into the cot and why she has her fire lizards in the room. The fire lizards are upset by Dunca's anger and begin to fly around the room, causing Dunca to become frightened and more angry. Finally Dunca leaves Menolly to get dressed. At breakfast, Dunca continues to lecture Menolly about proper etiquette in the cot. Menolly eats quickly so she can go feed her fire lizards. After feeding the fire lizards with Camo, Menolly is directed to an archway room where the girls are already practicing their scales. Menolly grabs her gitar and joins the class. Talmor, one of the journeyman, begins to run the girls through a simple song. Menolly finds the song incredibly easy, but the other girls have a great deal of trouble. Menolly's musical abilities embarrass and annoy Pona, but Audiva follows along and tries to pick up some of Menolly's techniques.

Sebell, the Masterharper's journeyman, arrives in the class and pulls Menolly away. Sebell tells Menolly that Master Domick left word with Dunca that she was to work with him that morning. Menolly is horrified, afraid she has upset the Master. Menolly insists she did not get the message, but is afraid this fact will not save her from Master Domick's wrath. Sebell tells her not to worry. Sebell then asks Menolly if she could teach him how to pass as a fisherman, but does not tell her why. When Menolly agrees, Sebell begins to talk about the eggs Menolly gave the Masterharper. Sebell is to impress one of the fire lizards when they hatch. Sebell hopes his will be a bronze, but decides he will be content with whatever hatches just as long as he gets to impress one.

Sebell escorts Menolly to lunch where the girls snub her. After the meal, Menolly hears her name at announcements, informing her to report to Master Oldive. As everyone is leaving the dining hall, Master Domick comes to Menolly and insists on knowing why she did not come to him for lessons that morning. Menolly tries to explain that Dunca did not give her the message. At first Master Domick does not believe Menolly, but when Audiva speaks up on Menolly's side, he wonders aloud what Menolly could have done to earn the wrath of Dunca already. Master Domick then instructs Menolly that she is to take her pipes to Master Jerint and then she has a lesson with Master Shonagar. When Master Domick is gone, Piemur appears from under the table where he was hiding and begs Menolly to allow him to help feed the fire lizards that night. Menolly readily agrees. Menolly then rushes to Master Oldive's who examines both her feet and her hand, happy with the progress he has seen, but again warning her to stay off her feet as much as possible. Master Oldive notices that Beauty's skin has begun to get dry and gives her some oil to rub into the fire lizards' skin.

Menolly makes her way to the cot after Master Oldive dismisses her to retrieve her pipes before seeing Master Jerint, but stops when she overhears Pona complaining about her presence in the cot. Pona does not believe she belongs in the cot with the rest of the girls because she is an apprentice, not a boarding student. Menolly is



embarrassed and does not want to go inside the cot where Pona and Dunca will know she overheard their conversation. Suddenly the fire lizards work as one to retrieve Menolly's pipes, something they have never done before. At Master Jerint's, Menolly is given the task of building a drum. Menolly chooses her materials carefully, constructing a drum that will have a rich sound. Master Jerint approves the construction and sends Menolly to her next class. Menolly rushes to Master Shonagar's where she finds him as miserly as the day before. Shonagar runs Menolly through her breathing techniques again, leaving her exhausted at the end of the session. When the session is over, Piemur arrives and requests that he be allowed to sing with the fire lizards to test the theory that the fire lizards will sing with anyone, not just Menolly. It seems Piemur is correct when the fire lizards happily join him in song.

After lessons, Menolly feeds her fire lizards with Piemur and Camo before going into the dining hall for her own meal. After dinner, the Masterharper pulls Menolly aside and asks her to check the eggs again. The Masterharper is concerned that the eggs will hatch while he is away on business. Menolly reassures the Masterharper that although the eggs have hardened some, they are still a time away from hatching. On the way back to the cot, Menolly reflects on all the kind people she has met at Harpers Craft Hall and how grateful she is to be able to help the Masterharper with his eggs as some small reward for the kindness he has shown her. Menolly is content with her new life until she reaches the cot and Dunca jumps on her. Dunca is unhappy with Menolly's attitude and discourteousness. Menolly quietly hears Dunca out, responding with the necessary platitudes, before escaping to the quiet of her room.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Dunca is proving to be the one unpleasant aspect of Menolly's stay at Harpers Craft Hall. Dunca dislikes Menolly because she was a friend of Petiron's, because she is a female apprentice to the Masterharper, and because she brings fire lizards into the cot. Dunca is jealous of Menolly's achievements and acquaintances, touching on the theme of jealousy, and this causes a great deal of her anger toward Menolly. As a result, Dunca often yells at Menolly for no apparent reason and neglects to tell Menolly that she was to have a session with Master Domick first thing in the morning, a message that was important and caused Menolly to get into trouble with the already skeptical teacher. No one is quite sure how to feel about Menolly being the first female apprentice to the Masterharper and this is causing a great deal of speculation and ill-will. However, Menolly feels as though the majority of people are nice to her, with the exception of Dunca and Pona. The continued friction between Menolly and Dunca suggests that a change of address will be necessary for Menolly eventually, though the reader is unclear at this point how that will come about. However, after Menolly makes Pona's artistic ability look like that of an infant, it appears that the change will come sooner rather than later if Pona has anything to say about it.

Menolly meets Sebell in this chapter. Sebell is a journeyman, which is a step up from apprentice. Sebell is the Masterharper's student and as a result is Menolly's superior. Sebell is not unkind, however, and does not use his position to bully Menolly. Instead,



Sebell attempts to make friends with Menolly, a theme of the novel and something that Menolly could really use. Menolly has been alone for a long time and does not know how to react to the kindness of those around her, but is grateful for it just the same. Menolly also speaks to the Masterharper and finds herself in a position of helping him, which also makes her grateful. The chance to help the Masterharper makes Menolly feel as though she can repay him in a small way for all he has done for her in inviting her to join him as an apprentice at Harpers Craft Hall.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Menolly wakes early the next morning and decides to use the extra time to take a bath and wash her clothing. Menolly only has two sets of clothing, the nice clothes she has worn daily since her arrival, and a many-patched set that she wore while living in the caves. Menolly puts on her old clothes and goes downstairs to breakfast only to have Dunca yell at her for her inappropriate attire. Menolly turns the conversation around, accusing Dunca of not telling her about Master Domick's message the day before intentionally. While Dunca is distracted by this line of discussion, Menolly sneaks away to feed her fire lizards. Afterward, Menolly goes up to the Masterharper's room to check on the eggs before going to Master Domick's for her morning session. There Menolly and Master Domick are joined by Sebell and Talmor. The foursome play several songs, including a difficult composition that Master Domick wrote himself. Menolly impresses all four by the ease with which she tackles the unfamiliar and difficult melody. Menolly enjoys the session immensely, admitting when asked that it is her most favorite thing to do in music.

Alarms begin to sound throughout the hall and Menolly's fire lizards, who had been watching the session quietly, begin to become agitated. Threadfall is eminent and the hold is making preparations. Master Domick insists they continue playing, giving Menolly a harp to play because the gitar has caused her scarred hand to bleed. Menolly could have played all day, but Master Domick insists they break when the lunch bell sounds. Menolly is not excited to go to the dining hall because she knows she will have to sit with the girls. However, when she arrives, Menolly learns that the girls hide out at the hold during Threadfall. Much to Menolly's relief she discovers she may now sit where she wants, which turns out to be right next to Piemur. After lunch the choir decides to put on an impromptu performance. Menolly is asked to allow her fire lizards to join in. Brudegan, the choir leader, even allows Menolly to lead the choir in one song, which makes her feel powerful and energetic, giving her a new joy she has never known.

Alarms sound again, signaling the end of threadfall. Everyone runs outside to see the dragons and their riders return before turning their attention to their chores. Silvina catches sight of Menolly and apologizes for not realizing sooner that the girl would need new clothing. Silvina takes Menolly to a storage closet where she picks out several pairs of pants and blouses as well as underclothing. Silvina then suggests that perhaps the cot was not the best place for Menolly and suggests she move back into the hall, perhaps to the same guest room she occupied on her first night at Harpers Craft Hall. Menolly refuses, insistent that she not have a better room than the other apprentices. Silvina suggests they remove all the furniture and replace the tapestries with old ones, leaving only a double cot with enough room for the fire lizards to share the bed with Menolly. Menolly finally agrees. Silvina arranges to have Menolly's belongings moved while Menolly rushes off to a lesson with Master Shonagar.



Chapter 6 Analysis

Menolly once again manages to incur Dunca's wrath by simply washing her own clothing and wearing the only other set of clothes she owns. It seems Dunca truly dislikes Menolly, leaving the reader wondering how long Menolly will put up with the abuse. It seems not very long. By the end of the chapter, Silvina, who is like the kindly godmother who knows all, has learned of Dunca's displeasure and suggests Menolly move back into the hall with the other apprentices. Menolly objects, deeply afraid of being treated differently than the others and wanting no one to believe she has been granted privileges she does not deserve. This reluctance again allows the reader to see more of Menolly's character, her humbleness and her lack of self confidence in the fact that she does not believe that she deserves to be treated better than Dunca is treating her. Clearly Menolly has suffered some darkness in her life that has caused this lack of self respect, suggesting to the reader that it will be revealed later in the plot what has caused Menolly to be so humble. However, Silvina is able to convince Menolly to make the move, much to the reader's relief.

Menolly spends a good day in her musical pursuits as well. The more the reader is allowed to see Menolly at work at her musical pursuits, the more the reader realizes how talented Menolly is. Menolly is able to keep up with a Master and two journeyman who have been taking lessons much longer than she has. Menolly appears to deserve the confidence the Masterharper has in her abilities, causing the reader to cheer her on, hoping she will continue with her studies and become the Master she so clearly is capable of becoming. At the same time, the reader is getting to know some of the other characters a little better through their interactions with Menolly. Master Domick, who appeared to be skeptical of Menolly's talents at the beginning is clearly impressed with her abilities now. Sebell is growing into a good friend, a theme of the novel, and Piemur is like the little brother Menolly so desperately needs at the moment. It seems Menolly is growing a little family at Harpers Craft Hall, giving the reader hope that she will eventually find her purpose and accept her fate.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Menolly wakes in the middle of the night in her new room in the hall. The fire lizards are upset about something. Menolly goes to the window, suspecting there might be an emergency somewhere, but sees that the guard dragon seems peaceful. However, the fire lizards are frightened and their fear is growing, causing Menolly a great deal of anxiety. Menolly has a mental picture of something grey and painful and hears someone scream to not be left alone. Menolly must have screamed aloud at this image because suddenly Silvina and the Masterharper are in her room. Menolly explains what she saw. The guard dragon has gone between now and Lord Holder Groghe has called for the Masterharper to explain his fire lizard's sudden agitation. Silvina calms Menolly down, giving her medication to help her sleep.

The next morning Menolly wakes late the next morning. Silvina comes and reassures Menolly that Piemur and Camo have taken care of her fire dragons. Silvina then tells Menolly that one of the dragon riders and his dragon attempted to go to the Red Star in order to stop thread from ever falling on Pern again, but were badly burned and fell from the sky. It was this that the fire lizards sensed and what caused their fear. Silvina tells Menolly that the Masterharper has been called away to help at the hold where the injured dragon and rider are. Silvina says that the Masterharper is concerned that his fire lizard will hatch while he is away and wonders aloud if the fire lizards will sense the imminent hatching the way dragons do. Menolly does not know. Menolly leaves the hall for her session with Master Shonagar, then returns to the hall to check on the Masterharper's eggs. Sebell has stayed with the eggs, anxious himself that they will hatch soon. Menolly checks them, then settles down to keep an eye on them. Menolly and Sebell have lunch together in the Masterharper's rooms where they discuss the fire lizards and Menolly gives Sebell a lesson on caring for the creatures. Conversation centers around the fire lizards as well as music and the many tasks Sebell is expected to do as a journeyman.

At one point, Sebell and Menolly begin playing gitar together. They discuss a song Menolly wrote that the Masterharper changed and Menolly expresses her reluctance to attach her name to something she did not fully compose on her own. Sebell assures Menolly that the Masterharper's changes were minor and that she has full right to claim the song as her own. Sebell then leaves the room for a time. Menolly begins playing around, writing a tune in her head about the events of the night before. As Menolly begins to sing the song aloud, Sebell returns and writes the music and lyrics down on the sandtable, covering it with glass so that it cannot be erased. Menolly is embarrassed because she did not mean for anyone to hear the music, but Sebell assures her is a good song, as does the Masterharper when he suddenly reappears from his travels.

While they are discussing the song, the fire lizards begin to hum. Menolly recognizes the sound and tells Sebell and the Masterharper that their eggs are hatching. The two



men snatch up the eggs, each grabbing one, and watch in awe as the tiny creatures make their first appearance. Menolly encourages the Masterharper to feed his fire lizard, a bronze, in order to impress it. When Sebell's is hatched, he is horrified to discover it is a queen, believing he grabbed the wrong egg and that this one should belong to the Masterharper. Menolly tells him it is too late and he should impress the queen immediately, which he does. Word spreads quickly about the hatching. Lord Holder Groghe makes an appearance with his fire lizard. When all the excitement dies down, Lord Holder Groghe pulls Menolly aside and asks her if she would be willing to sit with him to discuss his fire lizard. It seems that Menolly knows more about fire lizards than anyone else in the area. Menolly agrees. As Lord Holder Groghe leaves, he comments that Menolly is not what he expected. When Menolly hears this, she realizes that someone has been telling lies about her and guesses that it most likely was Pona. Silvina tells Menolly not to worry about it, she will take care of it herself.

Chapter 7 Analysis

On Menolly's first night back in the hall she is awakened by a deep fear felt by all her fire lizards. Menolly can sense her fire lizards' emotions and they can clearly feel hers, suggesting to the reader familiar with the author's other books that fire lizards are quite similar to dragons. This ability to feel each other's emotions also foreshadows a point later in the plot when the fire lizards will be encouraged by strong emotion on Menolly's part to protect her from a perceived threat. The fear turns out to be caused by the injury of a dragon rider and his dragon, also showing that the fire lizards are acutely aware of one another and dragons. This episode leads Menolly to write the first song she has composed since arriving at Harpers Craft Hall. Menolly is quickly embarrassed by the composition when she discovers that Sebell has heard it without her knowledge. Menolly is also deeply upset when Sebell and the Masterharper attempt to assure her that the composition is a good one. Normally a person would be flattered by such attention, but Menolly seems almost angry that someone would consider her song a good thing. The reader is curious about this anger and hopes to learn its source as the plot continues to develop.

In this chapter, the eggs that Menolly gave to the Masterharper finally hatch. The eggs contain a bronze and a queen, two highly prized fire lizards. Sebell accidentally impresses the queen, leaving him feeling as though he has taken something he does not have the right to take, showing the reader that Menolly is not the only person who feels a sense of rank at Harpers Craft Hall that the Masterharper does not seem to feel the need to enforce. The Masterharper does not care which fire lizard he got, just pleased in the idea of having one at all. The Masterharper acts like a man whose wife has just given birth, so excited is he about the fire lizard. This shows a softer side of the Masterharper that the reader has always suspected exists and is happy to finally see. At the same time, Menolly meets Lord Holder Groghe, the lord holder of Fort Hold, and learns that someone has been spreading unkind rumors about her. Menolly immediately suspects Pona who spent threadfall at the hold. Pona is jealous of Menolly, a theme of the novel, and the reader suspects she would stop at nothing to get rid of Menolly. However, Silvina insists that Menolly let the slight go, that she will deal with it. Menolly is

offended and the reader wonders if she will be able to let the situation pass without a fight.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The following day is a restday and while Menolly is feeding her fire lizards with Camo and Piemur, the gather flag rises at the hold. Piemur explains that this means vendors from all over will come and display their wares. Piemur is excited to buy hot pies and goods with the little money he has been saving for just such an event. Piemur promises to take Menolly and show her around. After feeding the fire lizards, Menolly goes inside and finds Sebell searching frantically for her to explain why his fire lizard is upset. Menolly tells him to feed the creature, but he cannot because his pants are falling down. Menolly gives Sebell her belt and then some meat to feed the creature with. Menolly then takes the Masterharper his breakfast and meat for his fire lizard. The Masterharper thanks Menolly and then gives her some money to spend at the gather on a new belt.

At breakfast in the dining hall, Menolly overhears a group of people discussing the fact that Sebell got the queen instead of the Masterharper. Menolly explains how it was impossible for the Masterharper to know which fire lizard would come out of the egg and that they both impressed the fire lizard they were given, hoping to put an end to the gossip. Menolly then joins Piemur and listens as he conspires with several other apprentices to find a way to get more money for the gather. Menolly then arranges to meet Piemur after lunch to go to the gather. Menolly retires to her room and watches as the girls leave their cot to go to the hold. Menolly admires their clothes and feminine trappings, but reminds herself that she is the Masterharper's apprentice and that rank gives her so much more than all the fancy clothes and feminine wiles in the world ever could. Menolly worries about the rumors Pona has been spreading about her, but knows she must leave it to Silvina to put those to rest.

Chapter 8 Analysis

There is going to be a gather, kind of like a fair, at the hold above Harpers Craft Hall. Piemur is excited, causing Menolly to grow excited as well. After helping both Sebell and the Masterharper feed their fire lizards, Menolly finds herself in a position to defend the two men for the circumstances that left the Masterharper with a bronze and Sebell with a queen. Menolly does not want anyone to think badly of her two friends, touching on a theme of the novel, and puts herself out on a limb to make sure everyone understands how the event took place. Menolly shows strength of character in her defense of these two men, but she also shows the deep loyalty she already feels to two men who have only been in her life for a short time. Later, when Menolly feels some jealousy of her own, another theme of the novel, while watching the girls go to the hold, she reminds herself that being the Masterharper's apprentice means more than all the fancy clothes and feminine wiles in the world. Menolly is showing some character growth in this realization, proving that she is matured during the short time she has been at Harpers Craft Hall.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Menolly goes down for lunch where she finds the apprentices stuffing themselves because they know there will be little for dinner that night since Silvina believes they will all fill up on treats at the gather. As they head up to the gather, Piemur warns Menolly to leave her fire lizards behind to keep them from being abused by other visitors to the hold. Once at the gather, Piemur sells a pipe for a few of the boys, gaining money for them all to spend. Piemur immediately then takes Menolly to a booth to buy pies fresh from the oven. Piemur successfully barter for eight pies for the same amount of money that might have bought him only six. Piemur shares with Menolly and Camo. Then Piemur takes Menolly to a vendor's stall to look at belts. While they are looking, Pona walks by with an escort and several of the other girls from Dunca's cot. Pona makes a comment about how Menolly has no money to buy anything causing Piemur to reveal the amount of money the Masterharper gave Menolly that morning. Pona then accuses Menolly of stealing the money.

Menolly claims insult against Pona, causing Pona to insist that her escort take Menolly's money to excuse the insult. Menolly refuses to allow it. Menolly attempts to strike Pona, but is stopped by the escort. Pona takes advantage of the situation to attempt to steal Menolly's money, but Piemur jumps in, grabbing Pona by the hair. Before anyone can remember how it began, a fight breaks out. Within seconds, all nine of Menolly's fire lizards arrive, jumping into the fight to protect Menolly. Moments later, called by his own fire lizard, the Masterharper arrives. The Masterharper sends Pona and her escort, as well as their friends, back to the hold. The Masterharper then listens to Menolly's side of the story, as well as Audiva's and the vendor's version, assuring her that the offending parties will be punished. Sebell arrives, also called by his fire lizard. When the Masterharper is gone, Sebell consoles Menolly. Menolly, touched by all the kindness of those around her, confesses to the pain of her childhood and the abuse she suffered at the hands of her parents. Menolly also tells Sebell and Piemur that she has no confidence in her songs because her parents were horrified that she would indulge in such meaningless work and would punish her for it. In fact, when Menolly cut her hand, they purposely allowed it to heal badly so she would not be able to play a musical instrument again.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Menolly goes to the gather with Piemur, enjoying for the first time the excitement of such a recreation and the taste of good junk food. Menolly is being allowed to be a child for once and she seems ill at ease with the situation, but willing to learn how to enjoy herself through her good friend Piemur. However, a dark cloud is about to cross her skies. Menolly is innocently attempting to buy a belt when Pona comes by and accuses her of being a thief. Menolly has had enough of Pona's lies and unfounded jealousy, a



theme of the novel, and decides to stand up for herself. A fight breaks out and ends when Menolly's intense emotion calls her fire lizards to her rescue. The emotion also transmits to the other fire lizards in the area, causing the Masterharper and Sebell to arrive as well. The Masterharper listens to Menolly's side of the story as well as those of several witnesses before assuring Menolly that the offending parties will be taken care of. Menolly does not know what this means and fears for her position at the school, leaving the reader wondering if Menolly will be sent back to Half Circle Sea Hold, a home she hated so much she ran away from it.

The reader learns Menolly's darkest secrets in this chapter as well. Overwhelmed with the kindness of those around her, Menolly confesses to Sebell and Piemur the cruelty with which her talents were met at Half Circle Sea Hold. Menolly was beaten for writing songs and her hand was left to heal wrong to keep her from playing musical instruments. This explains a great deal about Menolly's lack of confidence, especially when it comes to her music. Menolly was taught that being a musician was wrong, but chose to stick with it anyway. Once more the reader sees what a strong personality Menolly has and how determined she must have been in regards to her music to keep at it despite her parents. Menolly is a survivor and now the reader wants to see her succeed more than ever.



Chapters 10-11

Chapters 10-11 Summary

Menolly sits down with the Masterharper, Sebell, and Lord Holder Groghe to discuss all she knows about fire lizards. After a time, musicians begin putting on shows on a stage near where they are sitting. Menolly is encouraged to sing first a sea hold song and then her song about the fire lizards, which she does, shocked by the overwhelmingly positive response she receives. Menolly then finds herself dancing with many of the young men from Harpers Craft Hall, as well as a few of the Masters. The next morning, after feeding her fire lizards, Menolly is asked by Master Domick to make copies of her fire lizard song for him to use in his classes. Master Domick takes Menolly to the archivist to get paper before leaving her to the task. As she works, Menolly can hear a meeting between the Masterharper and the other Masters taking place nearby as they discuss the new assignments for the journeymen. Later Menolly joins Master Domick, Sebell, and Talmor for another session.

At lunch Menolly learns that Pona was sent home for her actions at the gather. This leaves Audiva free to be Menolly's friend, with an apology for her aloofness on previous meetings. Menolly worries, however, that Pona and her family still have the power to make her life difficult, however, by complaining to the lord holder that she should not be allowed to remain at Harpers Craft Hall. Menolly knows that as an apprentice her position remains vulnerable. After lunch, Menolly visits Master Oldive, who declares her feet nearly healed, and then goes to her lesson with Shonagar, who yells at her for singing without his permission at the gather. The next morning, Master Domick asks Menolly to also make copies of the sea hold song she sang at the gather. Menolly spends most of the morning and the afternoon, when not in lessons with Shonagar, working on the request. That night at dinner, the assignments for the journeymen are announced. At the end of the announcements, the Masterharper announces that an apprentice is to be promoted. It is Menolly. Now Menolly no longer needs to fear Pona or anyone else.

Chapters 10-11 Analysis

Menolly spends the end of the gathering telling the other fire lizard owners what she knows about the creatures. In this Menolly is the teacher and she relishes the role. Later, Menolly is encouraged to sing, something she does with relish, and then allowed to dance with the friends and Masters she has made at Harpers Craft Hall. Menolly is surrounded by friends, a theme of the novel, in contrast to the trouble she experienced from Pona and her friends. This shows Menolly as the mature one, the victor, and makes the reader feel good about how far Menolly has come in such a short time. Back at Harpers Craft Hall, Menolly learns that Pona has been sent away. At first this seems like good news, but Menolly knows that Pona's uncle has rank enough to request her removal from the hall as well. Menolly is fearful this will happen until she is surprised by



a raise in rank in only a week of being at the hall. Menolly is promoted to journeyman, making it impossible for Pona to force her removal. Now Menolly has found her place at the hall, touching on another theme of the novel, and can now concentrate on her future without any distractions.



Characters

Menolly

Menolly is the daughter of Yanus Sea Holder of Half Circle Sea Hold. Menolly grew up around fishermen and was expected to help with the chores associated with that craft. When Petiron came to Half Circle Sea Hold, he became Menolly's teacher, helping her hone her natural ability to play and compose music. However, Menolly's parents were not happy about Menolly's pursuit of a craft they saw as useless. Menolly was often beaten for writing songs and berated for pursuing her desire to be a Master Harper, a role no woman has ever filled on Pern. Menolly eventually ran away after Petiron, her only friend died, living on her own in a cave rather than continue to be abused by her hurtful parents.

Unknown to Menolly, the Masterharper of Pern has been searching for her based on compositions of hers that Petiron sent him before his death. Masterharper Robinton believes Menolly to be just the apprentice that Pern needs and is not deterred by the fact that Menolly is a girl. Menolly is taken to Harpers Craft Hall to become an apprentice and to learn a craft no girl before her has learned. Menolly is excited, but exhausted as well. Upon her arrival, Menolly is grateful for the kindness of the headwoman, but feels as though she is in the way. This feeling continues the next morning when Menolly interrupts choir practice by singing along with her fire lizards. When Menolly crosses the cotholder and finds herself on the bad side of the girls in residence at Harpers Craft Hall, it seems she will never find a place where she truly belongs. However, kindness outshines jealousy and Menolly finally realizes Harpers Craft Hall is exactly where she belongs.

Masterharper Robinton

Masterharper Robinton has been searching for Menolly for many months, unaware of her name or her gender. Masterharper Robinton has received many of Menolly's compositions from his father, Petiron, who is Master Harper at Half Circle Sea Hold. Petiron never names his apprentice, but allows Masterharper Robinton to come to his own conclusions based on the songs he has sent. Masterharper Robinton believes that change is coming to Pern and that it should begin with the harpers. Masterharper Robinton therefore is not shocked when Menolly turns out to be a girl and does not shy from his desire to take her on as his own apprentice.

Masterharper Robinton is a busy man and at times too busy to see the struggle Menolly has ahead of her. Masterharper Robinton is also unaware of the abuse Menolly suffered at the hands of her parents due to her talents. Masterharper Robinton does go out of his way, however, to encourage Menolly and to show her that her music has the ability to change Pern and to help him in his endeavors to spread diversity throughout Pern.



Masterharper Robinton believes the best way to do this is to allow girls to be Master Harpers and that Menolly is the best to begin with.

Master Domick

Master Domick is the composition teacher at Harpers Craft Hall. Master Domick is a talented song composer, but his compositions tend to be filled with complicated chords that minor musicians cannot play. Master Domick's compositions are good for those learning the harper's craft at Harpers Craft Hall, but Menolly's songs are better suited to the general public and it is this that makes her an ideal apprentice to the craft. Master Domick does not appear to be impressed with Menolly when they first meet in Master Jerint's workshop. Master Domick watches as Menolly picks a gitar and is surprised by her choice. Later, Master Domick seems impressed with Menolly's ability to play, but again reserves judgment and does not overwhelm her with praise. However, as the novel progresses, it is Master Domick who encourages Menolly to share her songs and to join the more advanced journeymen in their quartet. Master Domick clearly sees in Menolly the same talents Masterharper Robinton sees and is more than willing to encourage its development.

Masters Jerint, Morshal, and Shonagar

Master Jerint is the instrument maker at Harpers Craft Hall. Master Jerint meets Menolly first when she is sent to pick a gitar and later when he instructs her to build a drum. On both occasions Master Jerint does not lavish Menolly with praise, but is clearly not unhappy with her work. Master Morshal is the musical theory teacher. When Menolly has her session with master Morshal, the man is clearly not happy with the idea of teaching a girl. Master Morshal tests Menolly strenuously, refusing to listen to her pleas of mercy when he makes her play an instrument that causes her pain in her scarred hand. Master Morshal is old fashioned and does not believe a girl should be an apprentice at Harpers Craft Hall. However, Master Morshal only teaches young apprentices, so fortunately he will not be Menolly's teacher.

Master Shonagar is the singing teacher. Shonagar takes his craft seriously and spends a great deal of time teaching Menolly how to breathe properly while singing. Menolly is intimidated by Shonagar, but with time begins to realize that he is only attempting to teach her to the best of his ability. When Menolly does well, Shonagar compliments her, begrudgingly, but with welcome praise. Menolly is not overcome with compliments from any of her teachers, but soon learns to take their criticism and learn from it to help her become a better musician.

Silvina

Silvina is the headwoman at Harpers Craft Hall. It is Silvina's job to run the main hall, to make sure all the students are fed and cared for, and to take care of the Masters. Silvina takes an instant liking to Menolly and quickly takes her under her wing. When



Silvina sees that Dunca is not doing all she can for Menolly, she quickly moves her out of Dunca's cot and returns her to the main hall. Silvina finds clothing for Menolly, has the doctor care for Menolly's injuries, and makes sure that Menolly's emotional health is attended to. Silvina is a kind woman who is more of a mother to Menolly than her own mother ever was. Menolly takes an immediate shine to Silvina and does all she can to keep out of Silvina's way so as to not make a nuisance of herself.

Camo

Camo is the kitchen drudge. Camo is like a child in a man's body and he finds Menolly's fire lizards fascinating. When Menolly allows Camo to help feed her fire lizards on her first morning at Harpers Craft Hall, Camo feels as though it is his job to help every time the fire lizards eat. Camo loves the fire lizards, calling them his pretties, and doing all he can to help Menolly care for them. Due to the fact that Menolly has nine fire lizards, she can use all the help she can get and is grateful not only for Camo's help but for his friendship as well. Menolly feels bad when Camo gets yelled at for helping with the fire lizards, but Camo does not seem bothered by it.

Sebell

Sebell is a journeyman who works with the Masterharper. Sebell is Menolly's immediate superior. Sebell befriends Menolly on her second morning at Harpers Craft Hall by asking her to help him learn how to be a fisherman. Menolly does not like the subject, but agrees to help because she likes Sebell. Talk of fish quickly turns to talk of fire lizards because Sebell is to have one of the fire lizards that will hatch from the eggs Menolly gave to the Masterharper. Sebell is excited about the hatching and asks Menolly many questions about the care of the fire lizards. When the fire lizards hatch, Sebell accidentally impresses the queen and is upset about it. However, Menolly assures him that he did nothing wrong and helps him to care for the tiny fire lizard. In return, Sebell encourages Menolly to pursue her composition and listens when she finally feels she must confess her past to someone.

Amania, Audiva, Pona, and Briala

Amania, Audiva, Pona, and Briala are the other girls who live at Harpers Craft Hall. These girls are not apprentices and will not become Master Harpers, but are there to learn the basics of music in order to amuse their families. Pona has been the leader of the group until Menolly arrives. Pona had believed herself to outrank the other girls, but because Menolly's father is a seaholder, Menolly outranks Pona. Pona is outraged by this fact and dislikes Menolly on sight. The fact that Menolly is also an apprentice to the Masterharper makes Pona's jealousy run deeper still. Pona spreads lies about Menolly to the lord holder and starts a fight with Menolly at the gather. Menolly defends herself and Pona is eventually sent home for causing so much trouble. The other girls follow



Pona blindly, except for Audiva who attempts to defend Menolly on several occasions and quickly befriends her once Pona is gone.

Dunca

Dunca is the coholder of the cot where the girls at Harpers Craft Hall live. Dunca dislikes Menolly the moment she meets her for several reasons. First, Dunca does not believe a girl should be an apprentice. Second, Dunca had a crush on Petiron and she is jealous of anyone who has had a relationship with him. Finally, Dunca is afraid of Menolly's fire lizards. Dunca treats Menolly badly and often yells at her rather than attempting to help her adjust to her new home. Dunca has a conversation with Pona about arranging for Menolly to be sent home. Finally, Dunca makes Menolly's life so uncomfortable that Silvina decides to move her out of the cot and back into the hall with the other apprentices.

Piemur

Piemur is the youngest apprentice at Harpers Craft Hall. Piemur has a voice like an angel. When Menolly arrives in the dining hall on her first full day at Harpers Craft Hall, Piemur reaches out to her and quickly befriends her. Menolly finds Piemur to be a reliable friend and respects his attempts to defend her to the other apprentices. When Piemur asks to help feed her fire lizards, Menolly quickly agrees, eager to make new friends. Piemur proves to be a valuable assistant, much like Camo. Piemur remains a loyal friend, defending Menolly at the gather when Pona causes her trouble, giving Menolly someone she can rely on in a way she has never known before.



Objects/Places

Gitar

A gitar is a musical instrument similar to a guitar that Menolly plays while she is an apprentice to the Masterharper.

Sandtable

A sandtable is a table that contains loose sand to allow its owner to write on its surface. Menolly and her teachers use the tables to write out music compositions.

Eggs

Menolly has found two fire lizard eggs that she gave to the Masterharper for him and his journeyman, Sebell. When the eggs hatch, the Masterharper impresses the bronze while Sebell impresses the queen.

Thread

Thread is spores from the Red Star that fall on Pern at regular intervals. Thread will attach itself to any organic object and devour it in a matter of moments.

Meat Scraps

Menolly, Piemur, and Camo feed Menolly's fire lizards meat scraps that Camo collects from the kitchen.

Cot

Cot is a boardinghouse or cottage. Menolly briefly lives in the cot run by Dunca, but is moved when her presence causes disruption among the other girls.

Scarred Hand

Menolly has a severe scar on her hand that is the result of a cut she received while gutting a packtail fish at Half Circle Sea Hold, a cut that later became infected. This scar makes it difficult for Menolly to play her instruments.



Injured Feet

Menolly was caught outside her cave while living on her own during Thread and was forced to outrun it. As a result, Menolly has severely injured feet that cause her a great deal of difficulty walking her first few days at Harpers Craft Hall.

The Fire Lizard Song

The Fire Lizard Song is a song Menolly wrote that brought her to the attention of the new Masterharper of Pern.

Harper Craft Hall

Harper Craft Hall is where the Masterharper resides and where all the musicians of Pern are trained.

Half Circle Sea Hold

Half Circle Sea Hold is where Menolly grew up. Menolly's father is the Sea Holder, which gives her rank over the other girls at Harper Craft Hall.

Pern

Pern is the name of the planet on which Menolly and her friends live.



Themes

Jealousy

The girls at Harpers Craft Hall dislike Menolly because she is an apprentice rather than living there simply because her parents want her to learn the basics of music. One of the girls learns that Menolly also outranks her and finds this unacceptable. These girls enjoy a certain amount of privilege due to their status at their home Weyrs and do not like losing that status, especially to a girl who is acting like a boy by being an apprentice to the Masterharper. Menolly's position as an apprentice and as an accomplished musician causes a great deal of jealousy on the part of the other girls. Menolly gets into a fight with one of the girls due to this jealousy. However, rather than causing Menolly trouble, the fight ends with the troubled girl leaving the Hall.

Others at Harpers Craft Hall are also jealous of Menolly. Not only is Menolly a talented musician and an apprentice to the Masterharper himself, but she also has nine fire lizards. Many of the people at Harpers Craft Hall find this to be something of an oddity and feel that Menolly is not important enough to have so many fire lizards, especially one that is a queen. When two eggs that Menolly found hatch and are impressed by the Masterharper and his student, many believe the Masterharper should have impressed the queen instead of the bronze. This jealousy causes a lot of tension in the craft hall until Menolly sets people straight. Menolly is one of only a few people who know much about the fire lizards, so her word puts down much of the talk, but there are still those who have opinions about the situation and do not appreciate Menolly's interference in the matter.

Anywhere a person goes, there will always be someone who does not like them or who are jealous of their abilities or status in life. Menolly offends on two accounts. One, Menolly is a highly talented musician, able to play instruments and sing in a way that no female has ever been taught before. Second, Menolly has nine fire lizards in her possession, new animals on Pern that many would like to own, or are afraid of. These two things cause a great deal of trouble for Menolly, but with the help of her friends and the Masterharper, Menolly manages to get along without too much trouble.

Friendship

By the time Menolly arrives at Harpers Craft Hall, she has been living alone for many months. Menolly ran away from Half Circle Sea Hold where she grew up with her parents refusing to allow her to pursue her love of music. The only friends Menolly has during this time are the nine fire lizards she accidentally impressed. Menolly was rescued and brought to Harpers Craft Hall in order to be an apprentice under the Masterharper of Pern, Robinton. When Menolly arrives, she does not know what to expect. Kindness is something that Menolly has not known in her short life, so she does not know how to deal with it when it is offered to her at Harpers Craft Hall. Menolly



meets Piemur, a young man who is younger than all the other apprentices but has a voice like an angel. Piemur immediately defends Menolly against the other students at Harpers Craft Hall, especially those who believe Menolly should not be there. Piemur stands up for Menolly when she is teased by the other students, and even gets into an altercation with a group of older students when Menolly refuses to back down from a fight.

Menolly also discovers kindness in the adults around her. Silvina mothers Menolly in a way that even her mother failed to do, while Robinton offers Menolly the kind of encouragement that only her previous teacher gave her. Menolly also discovers the support of her other teachers, each revealing it slowly and in their own unique ways. It is all overwhelming to Menolly. However, Menolly quickly comes to realize the value of friendship. Menolly finds herself accepting the kindness of those around her and repaying it by trying to be the best student and the best friend she can be.

Finding One's Place in the World

Menolly is an outcast at Harpers Craft Hall. No female has ever trained to be a Master Harper before. Menolly comes from a place where she was not praised for her talents. Menolly does not understand why so much fuss is made over her musical accomplishments or her ability to survive on her own. In Menolly's mind, she is simply living her life the only way she knows how. To others, Menolly's ability to survive on her own, outrunning the thread, is miraculous. Not only this, but the few songs that Menolly has written are the most refreshing and inspiring compositions to be written on Pern for many years. Although Menolly does not see it that way, the Masterharper believes that her compositions have the power to bring Pern together in a way no other Master Harper has been able to do.

Menolly feels her way into Harpers Craft Hall, not sure where she belongs. When the Masters test her abilities, Menolly feels that she has not done the best she is capable of doing and that she has let Masterharper Robinton down. However, what Menolly does not know is that she has impressed the Masters in a way they have not been impressed in recent years. Menolly is highly talented despite her gender. Masterharper Robinton wants to make Menolly his apprentice and turn her into a Master Harper despite the fact that a woman has never been a Master Harper before. Menolly is not highly confident in her abilities, but soon comes to accept the confidence others have in her and begins to accept that her destiny is to be the first female Master Harper on Pern.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person omniscient. Menolly, the main character of the novel, is also the narrating character. Everything that takes place within the plot of the novel is seen through the eyes of Menolly. Due to the omniscient aspect of the point of view, the reader is allowed access to Menolly's most private thoughts as well as her emotions, even when those around her are unaware of her feelings. This point of view creates an intimacy between the reader and Menolly that might not be present if the writer had chosen to present her novel with a different point of view.

The point of view of this novel works because it not only allows the reader an intimate relationship with Menolly, but because it keeps the plot focused on Menolly. Menolly is the main character, the focus of the plot, therefore it is important the reader feel intimately attached to Menolly. This point of view allows this intimacy. The point of view also keeps the reader focused on Menolly, instead of moving from character to character the way some points of view work. Menolly is the force that drives the plot, therefore it is important for the reader to remain focused on Menolly. Should the writer have chosen to shift her narrating character, the focus of the novel's plot would have changed, making this a much different book than it is.

Setting

This novel is set on the fictitious world of Pern. Pern is a world not dissimilar to Earth that is populated by a variety of people who live in places called Weyrs. Each Weyr has a set of dragons and their riders who live there in order to protect the Weyrs from Thread, a deadly spore that falls on Pern from the Red Star. The majority of the novel is set at Harpers Craft Hall, a place where the Masterharper lives and where students are trained to be Master Harpers. Harpers Craft Hall is like the Earth equivalent of the Julliard School of Music. Menolly, the main character, arrives at Harpers Craft Hall in the first chapter in order to become an apprentice to the Masterharper. It is not common on Pern for a female to become an apprentice at Harpers Craft Hall, but Menolly is talented enough to become the first.

The setting of this novel is almost a character all its own. Pern is a fictitious planet on which there exist dragons and many other animals that do not exist on Earth. Pern makes this novel a science fiction story even though the overall plot contains themes that are common to many character driven novels. Pern creates a world in which Menolly is an oddity, a talented musician who would not normally be trained as a musician if not for the generosity of the new Masterharper. Due to the traditions and lifestyles of those on Pern, the setting of this novel is important to the plot in ways that other settings might not be.



Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple English. However, there are many words used within the novel that apply directly to the setting of the novel and are therefore unfamiliar to readers who are not familiar with the Pern series of books. Simple words, such as the word for the cities where people on Pern live, are strange and unusual, causing the reader to pause when coming to one of these words in order to find a reference in the prior or subsequent exposition that explains the strange word. However, there are not many of these words that cause the reader a challenge as many of them are somewhat self explanatory. Those words that are not self explanatory, will eventually reveal themselves later in the novel.

The language of this novel works in its attempt to be simple enough for young adults to read and understand. However, the novel also contains words made up specifically for the Pern setting, words that at times can confuse and mislead the reader. These words are important to the setting of the novel, therefore they are important to the overall plot of the novel. The writer is successful in using these words in small doses and then explaining them within the text of the novel whenever possible. However, these words can be confusing, causing some difficulty in the comprehension of the novel.

Structure

The novel is divided into eleven chapters. Each chapter is fairly long, often divided into separate sections as the action within each chapter changes location or moves in time. The book is written in both exposition and dialogue, moving between the two in a satisfying division. The exposition is a lot of description of Menolly's surrounding and her thought and feelings about that setting. The dialogue often takes place between Menolly and her new friends, as well as her teachers, filled with a respect due the people Menolly is talking to.

There is only one plot within the novel. The plot follows Menolly as she arrives at Harpers Craft Hall and adjusts to her new surroundings her first week there. Menolly meets many people that first week, makes the first friends she has had, and enjoys the only encouragement she has ever gotten from adults in her life. Menolly also faces the jealousy of the girls at Harpers Craft Hall as well as some of the other apprentices. However, Menolly manages to survive the jealousy and find her way at the hall, settling in as though she was meant to be a Master Harper.



Quotes

"When Menolly, daughter of Yanus Sea Holder, arrived at the Harper Craft Hall, she came in style, aboard a bronze dragon." Chapter 1, p. 3.

"Strange not to have the smell of sea in her nostrils, Menolly thought, for sea and fish odors had dominated all but the last sevenday of her fifteen Turns. How pleasant to realize that she had done with the sea, and fish, forever." Chapter 1, pp. 12-13.

"Menolly tried to sit small, heartily wishing herself between: she was certainly frozen motionless." Chapter 2, p. 21.

"What I said about change affects the Harper Hall more than any other craft, Menolly, because we are the ones who effect change. Just as we teach with our songs, so we also help people accept new ideas and necessary changes. And for that we need a special kind of harpering." Chapter 2, p. 27.

"She had a brief notion of showing him that he wasn't the only one who could fill the hall with resounding tones, but some fragment of advice from Petiron came to mind, and she concentrated on singing intensely, rather than loudly." Chapter 3, p. 66.

"She longed for the peace of her cave near the Dragon Stones. Even for the little cubicle in her father's Sea Hold. She'd usually been able to slip away to it without accounting to anyone for her disappearance. At least once the day's work was done. And somehow, she'd never thought of the Harper Craft Hall being so...so populated, with so much to be done and doing, and all the masters and Silvina and..." Chapter 4, p. 78

"Though she had eaten, she was still conscious of hunger pangs. The fire lizards were waiting to be fed! She doubted that Dunca would supply her need, but her responsibility to her friends gave her the courage to ask." Chapter 5, p. 83.

"It had been fun, always, for Menolly to play with Petiron, particularly when he let her improvise around his melody. It had been a pleasure yesterday to see new music in Talmor's lesson, but now, the stimulation of playing with three keen and competent musicians gave her such impulsion that she seemed to be an irrelevant medium for fingers that had to play what her eager eyes saw. She was lost completely in the thrall of the music, so that when the rushing finale ended, she suffered a shock as keen as pain." Chapter 6, p. 119.

"In her mind, out of nowhere, Menolly received an indelible impression of turbulence: savage, ruthless, destructive; a pressure inexorable and deadly; churning masses of slick, sickly grey surfaces that heaved and dipped. Heat as massive as a tidal wave. Fear! Terror! An inarticulate longing!" Chapter 7, p. 144.



"Menolly laughed to herself. Just wait till those sissies heard about that! She, apprentice trainer of fire lizards, the only successful one on Pern. The teacher just one step ahead of the student." Chapter 8, p. 193.

"'D'you know...d'you know what used to happen to me when I wrote a song?' She tried to stop the words that were threatening to burst from her, but she couldn't, not with Piemur's face contorted with distress for her. And Sebell quietly encouraging her to speak with the sympathy so plain on his face. 'I used to get beaten by my father for tuning, for twiddles as he called them.'" Chapter 9, pp. 220-221.

"The last vestige of anxiety lifted from Menolly's mind. As journeyman in blue, she had rank and status enough to fear no one and nothing. No further need to run or hide. She'd a place to fill and a craft that was unique to her." Chapter 11, p. 264.

Topics for Discussion

Who is Menolly? Why is she brought to Harpers Craft Hall by the Masterharper? What is Menolly expected to do at Harpers Craft Hall? Who was Petiron? Why do they call Menolly Petiron's lost apprentice? What is special about this title? What is unusual about assigning this name to Menolly?

Who is Masterharper Robinton? Why is he called Masterharper? What does the Masterharper do in Pern? What is the purpose of his job? Why has Masterharper Robinton taken Menolly under his wing? What does Masterharper Robinton hope Menolly can do for Pern?

What are fire lizards? How are they similar to dragons? How are they different? What do dragons do on Pern? What is between? How are dragons able to go here? Are fire lizards capable of traveling between? What else can fire lizards do? How do Menolly's fire lizards help her?

Why do the girls dislike Menolly? How is Menolly different from them? Is this the only reason the girls dislike Menolly? How do the girls show their disapproval of Menolly? Why do the girls start a fight with Menolly? Why does Menolly refuse to back down? Does Menolly make the situation worse by refusing to back off? Should the girls all be punished?

Discuss the Masters. Why do the Masters test Menolly? What do they hope to learn from these tests? What does Menolly think they have learned? Is she correct? Are the Masters impressed or disappointed with Menolly? Why? Does it matter if the Masters are impressed?

Discuss the eggs. Who brought the eggs to Harpers Craft Hall? What do the eggs contain? Why is Menolly called to check the eggs? What does Menolly know about the eggs that no one else knows? What happens when the eggs hatch? Should the Masterharper have gotten the queen? Why or why not? What is meant by impress? Can more than one person impress a fire lizard? Why or why not?

Discuss the themes of the novel. What themes would you name for the novel? How is friendship an important theme of the novel? Does Menolly's ability to make friends affect the overall theme of the novel? Why or why not? How is jealousy important to the overall plot of the novel? Why is jealousy an issue? How does Menolly deal with it?