

The Forest House Study Guide

The Forest House by Marion Zimmer Bradley

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Contents

The Forest House Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue - Chapter Five.....	5
Chapter Six - Chapter Ten.....	8
Chapter Eleven - Chapter Fifteen.....	11
Chapter Sixteen - Chapter Twenty.....	13
Chapter Twenty-One - Chapter Twenty-Five.....	15
Chapter Twenty-Six - Epilogue.....	18
Characters.....	21
Objects/Places.....	24
Themes.....	26
Style.....	28
Quotes.....	30
Topics for Discussion.....	32



Plot Summary

The Forest House is the story of the love affair between Eilan, a native British woman, and Gaius, a half-Roman man raised by his Roman father. As such, it is also the story of how the Romans conquered Britain, and the aftermath of their invasion and occupation.

The story is bookended by a prologue and an epilogue told from the viewpoint of Caillean, a high priestess of a group of women on an island. She sets up the narrative as a story of how she came to found the House on the island. Caillean begins by telling of how Eilan and Gaius met; Eilan was in the woods with her friend and niece (though they are the same age), Dieda, when they find Gaius trapped in a pit set up to trap boars. He stays with their family for some time as he recovers from his injuries, not revealing that he is Roman, and eventually falling in love with Eilan. At the Beltane festival, he reveals who he is and says that he will return home but send a proposal for her hand in marriage to her father, who is a Druid.

However, though Gaius does this, Eilan's father refuses to let her marry a Roman, and she goes into the Forest House, where priestesses serve the Goddess, with Dieda. Caillean, one of the priestesses who is very close to Lhiannon, the current high priestess, takes Eilan under her wing, offering her a place at the house, training her, and confiding in her. Eilan enjoys her time there (unlike Dieda, who is in love with their foster-brother Cynric, who has gone off to fight the Romans), but still thinks of Gaius. Lost at another Beltane festival, she runs into him, and the two of them go off in the woods together and consummate their love.

Back at the Forest House, Eilan discovers that she is pregnant; however, she is also chosen as the next High Priestess when Lhiannon dies. Together with Caillean and her grandfather, the Arch-Druid, they construct a plan. She will officiate at the next rites, to be accepted by the people, and then be replaced by Dieda, who resembles her completely, until she has given birth. At that time, she will return and Dieda can go learn music from the bards, as she has always wanted to do. Dieda agrees, but it makes her bitter and her relationship with Eilan is never the same.

Eilan gives birth to a son, who she calls Gawen, after Gaius's Briton name. He comes to visit them, and again proposes to her; however, as High Priestess, she cannot abandon her post. Gaius, by this time, has been engaged to a Roman girl named Julia. They have several children together, all daughters; he dreams of bringing his son back to live with them. As his dreams of uniting with Eilan grow more and more distant, he falls in love with a young girl, Senara, who is being fostered at the Forest House, though she is a Christian. His wife, who has also converted to Christianity, has taken a vow of chastity and he decides to divorce her and marry Senara. At the same time, Caillean goes off to start her own House in Summer Country, after the Goddess speaks and says she must.

However, when Eilan hears of this, she tells Senara the true origins of Gawen, and Senara vows never to marry Gaius. Eilan feels that she will soon die, and starts preparing; she tells Senara to take Gawen away and eventually go to marry Gaius,



though Senara does not want to. Meanwhile, Gaius hears of several soldiers who plan to rape the priestesses and goes to stop them; however, the Druids find that he has entered the Forest House and attack him. Eilan's father holds him up as an example, asking him (under torture) if he has intentions towards any of the priestesses. So that he does not reveal that he loves Senara, ruining Eilan's plans for them, Eilan says that it was she. After he is killed, she says that she slept with him only as he was chosen as the King of Summer (the one circumstance under which priestesses are allowed to sleep with men). Her father asks the Goddess for proof, and Eilan falls down dead. Caillean takes Gawen with her back to the new community she has founded in Summer Country, also known as Afallon.



Prologue - Chapter Five

Prologue - Chapter Five Summary

The prologue begins with an image of Romans attacking a group of women and druids, a bloody battle scene. The high priestess, Caillean, wakes up, realizing that she'd dreamed of these events, which happened before she was born. She prepares herself for the day, thinking that she will tell her fellow priestesses the story of how they came to the island where they currently live.

In chapter one, two young Briton girls, Eilan and Dieda, are out in the woods. They go there to bring an offering to the Goddess, which the women of their house do after each moon-cycle. Eilan, looking into the pool where they make their offering, sees The Lady, or the Goddess, though Dieda is unable to; the girls discuss the priestesses who worship her, in the Forest House. Eilan would love to be one of them, but Dieda finds the idea horrifying.

While in the woods, they find a young boy, Gaius, a little older than them, who has fallen into a pit they keep to trap boars, and who is bleeding there. They call for the men of their house for a stretcher. A boy about Gaius's age, who seems unfriendly to strangers, comes to help bring him home. Gaius, a half-British Roman (though raised by his Roman father), is glad to be wearing British clothes, and is taken back to their house. There, he realizes that the house belongs to a Druid, Ardanos, who has sworn to be polite to strangers, and tries to show respect himself. He meets Eilan, the young girl from the woods, and notices how attractive she is. The members of the house give him mead to drink and survey his injuries. His arm is injured badly and he stays awake while they try to repair it. They note how brave he is, and then he faints.

Gaius awakes at the beginning of chapter two to see the lady of the house. He hides the fact that he is Roman, calling himself "Gawen," which is a British name and what his deceased mother used to call him. Cynric, the boy who saved him, asks him something about ravens, in what seems to be code, but Gaius doesn't know how to respond. He finds out that Cynric is an orphan, fostered by the Druid and his family.

At the common meal, later on, Gaius has to hide as much as possible about his past as the family discuss Romans. On the second day, he participates in their day-to-day life, going on a picnic with them. It becomes clear that Dieda and Cynric are in love with each other; Eilan does not know what she will do, but imagines that she might go into the Forest House as a priestess.

In chapter three, Ardanos goes to see Lhiannon, the High Priestess of the Forest House, revealing that he knows who Gaius is: the Roman son of the Prefect. He wonders what will happen when Rome withdraws its legions, speculating that it will lead to chaos and a younger generation wanting revenge. He and Lhiannon also discuss who will be her successor. Lhiannon has thought of Caillean, but her pick will not



necessarily be appointed, as the Druids have the final say. Caillean, who has served Lhiannon for a long time, knows her troubles, rituals, and all about her power.

At the end of the chapter, Eilan is sleeping with her sisters and wakes, discussing marriage with Dieda.

The Beltane festival is the center of chapter four. The family all goes there, including Gaius, who makes some errors by not recognizing certain British things, but tries to keep his British cover. The priestesses of the Forest House appear, choosing Dieda (who is almost identical to Eilan) to enter as a priestess. She and Cynric are distraught, trying to think of plans to get her out of it - sleeping together, switching Dieda with Eilan - but the trial period in the house is only three years, during which Cynric will have to be off at a possible war, anyways.

Ardanos goes to see Lhiannon while she is preparing for a trance, which she does to become the Oracle at Beltane festivals. They know that the villagers will complain about the Romans and the kind of uneasy peace they live in. She tells him that more trouble is coming; Rhodri, the husband of Eilan's oldest sister Mairi, has been captured.

In chapter five, Gaius reveals his growing love to Eilan, who reciprocates his feelings. He tells her who he truly is - a Roman - and though she is shocked, she still loves him. She has had visions of him, but also of herself as a priestess, and so she does not know her future. He feels that to ask for her would be a betrayal of his host, and so he proposes going back to Deva, to his father, where he will send a letter asking for her hand.

During the ritual of the High Priestess, the villagers are mad. The Goddess predicts war for the Romans, but says they will not fall at the Briton's hands.

Prologue - Chapter Five Analysis

Several important factors come into play immediately in *The Forest House*. Eilan, though not immediately revealed as one of the most important characters, is referenced in the prologue as falling in love with a Roman (none of whom Caillean has ever had any respect for). She and Gaius eventually end up being the two driving forces of the novel. Eilan's connection to the Goddess is also extremely important, and readers should pay particular attention to the visions she has: for example, she sees herself both with Gaius and as a priestess. Both of these visions eventually come to pass, as does every vision she has throughout the novel.

Larger themes also emerge in these early chapters. One of the most immediate is the rupture between the Britons and the Romans. Gaius himself symbolizes the combination of these two traditions, as his mother was a Briton and his father a Roman. However, his reticence to reveal himself as a Roman shows that the two peoples have animosity towards one another: the Romans view the Britons as savages and the Britons view the Romans as conquering barbarians.



Readers may have a hard time keeping track of the many characters at this point in the story. The reference guide provided by the author comes in handy, but it is also important to question why the author has chosen to include so many characters. This cast emphasizes the communal nature of life at this time, and the extended family that formed many people's communities.

The relationship between the High Priestess and the Druids also foreshadows ruptures that occur later in the book, as other characters question the Druids' influence over the word of the Goddess and the Forest House.



Chapter Six - Chapter Ten

Chapter Six - Chapter Ten Summary

Chapter six begins with descriptions of Gaius's father, Marcellius's, daily duties. He sells wheat and whey, arranges for army escorts, and other administrative tasks. When Gaius returns, Marcellius is happy to see his son, but notes that he overstayed his leave by several days. They talk about Briton and how his father finds it very Roman. Marcellius would like him to marry, proposing first the daughter of Clotinus, then another, of an old friend, but Gaius is fixated on Eilan - the idea of whom Marcellius does not like. However, Gaius begs his father to send a proposal, and he finally agrees, knowing that her father, the Druid, will most likely refuse.

In chapter seven, Eilan believes that Gaius has abandoned her until her father reveals that he sent a proposal that he refused. She cries that he could have dealt with her less honorably (that is, slept with her) and they'd be allowed to marry then, but her father slaps her at her insolence. She swears that if she can't marry him, she won't marry.

Eilan soon goes to her sister Mairi, who is giving birth. One of the priestesses from the Forest House, Cailleán, comes to help. She reveals to Eilan that Mairi's husband is dead, but warns her not to tell until after the birth. The baby starts to come, in the middle of a storm, with a hard labor, and Eilan helps her. Holding the baby, Cailleán has a premonition of a woman with a crescent on her forehead (as the priestesses have) with a baby.

Gaius, sent to spy on local people, sees Cynric at a market in Chapter Eight. After he received the refusal from Eilan's father, he's tried to forget about girls but has a hard time getting Eilan out of his mind.

Meanwhile, back at Mairi's, Eilan and Cailleán hear something, finding raiders in the house. Cailleán bravely throws burning coals at them, without burning herself, and drives them away. The raiders (probably from the North Country) leave and the two women talk. Cailleán talks about her childhood, how she left Ireland when she was young and even forgets her original name (though Eilan somehow knows it: Isarma). She came from a large family, and a man on the seashore raped her and swore her to secrecy, which she kept. She worries that if the priestesses had known, she never would have been named as one, but there were no evil omens before she was initiated.

The women also discuss the tower of Mona, when priestesses were raped by invading Romans, some of whom became pregnant; Eilan realizes that Cynric must be the child of this event. The male children who were born have formed a coalition, of the Ravens, who will eventually try to avenge their mothers' pain. The two women talk about Gaius, and Cailleán asks her if she would like to come back to the Forest House, which she does; Cailleán will try to arrange it.



At the same time, Gaius is nearing Eilan's family home, excited at the prospect of seeing her, only to find smoke and charred land, realizing that the house was burned to the ground. He wonders if his father knows and is distraught by the idea that he's lost Eilan. Reminded of his mother's death, he cries.

In chapter nine, Cailleán tells Mairi that her husband has died; though Mairi is distraught, the priestess tells her that she has to live for her children. Eilan's father comes, bringing worse news (which Cailleán already knows) that raiders have burned their village, and that her mother and little sister Senara have disappeared. Senara's body was not found, but he hopes that she is dead and not suffering atrocities at the hands of the invaders. Cailleán offers to shelter Eilan in the forest house, as her father wishes to avenge his family's deaths. Cailleán will also attempt, with Lhiannon's help, to recall Cynric. Bendeigid goes to discuss the events with the Arch-Druid, his father, and then returns to escort the women to the Forest House compound.

There, Eilan stays with the Forest House maidens, finding that her kinswoman Dieda is serving Lhiannon, who wishes to speak to Eilan. Bendeigid and Ardanos are also there, and the Arch-Druid is confused between Eilan and Dieda. In addition, he says that the Roman Marcellius is a good man. At the same time, Dieda must summon Cynric to come to their aid, which she does unwillingly with water. The men leave, with Eilan's father blessing her if she wishes to stay in the Forest House.

Cailleán asks for three promises if she wishes to stay there: that she came of her own free will, that she will treat the other priestesses as kin, and that she will obey the orders of the priestesses and lie with no other man than the Summer King. Eilan accepts.

At the beginning of chapter ten, Eilan has lessons with the other young women, about herbs and other things. She dreams of Gaius, and spends much time with other women: Eilidh and Miellyn especially. At the same time, she is becoming closer to Cailleán. Cailleán reveals that she does not wish to be a high priestess, as they are under the control of the priests, and shows Eilan how to control the fire by trusting it and becoming the fire herself.

Meanwhile, Cynric is with Bendeigid, fighting; Eilan sees them in a vision and looks for Gaius there.

Eilan and Miellyn become close, and the young girl warns Eilan about Cailleán, saying that she plays the harp wonderfully but is difficult. Miellyn suggests that Eilan might be the Priestess of the Oracle one day.

The next month, Lhiannon must perform a public ceremony, letting herself go at the midsummer festival. There, the king of the festival can sleep with whomever he chooses, which is Miellyn; she soon becomes pregnant. Eilan has decided that she no longer wishes to be the Oracle, but can't say no if she is chosen. Before the ceremony, she witnessed the priests talking to the High Priestess, and knows that the genuine oracles are few, realizing that Cailleán and Dieda must already know but that the



priests/Druids must have Lhiannon's consent to act this way. By the Beltane festival, it is three years since Eilan entered the Forest House.

Chapter Six - Chapter Ten Analysis

Many factors in this section establish events that will change the destinies of the characters. The most important of these are Eilan's father's refusal to give her hand in marriage to Gaius. Interestingly, it is not his family who won't allow it, but hers. However, it is important to note that his father only sends the proposal knowing that the Druid will never allow his daughter to marry into a Roman family. Gaius's father married a Briton himself, but wants a better social rank for his son; still, his family pride makes him send the proposal, as he knows that his son has proposed and also knows that Eilan's family will never accept the proposal.

In terms of theme, communities of women appear over and over again in The Forest House, beginning in this section. The reader sees several gatherings, both formal and informal, of women: Eilan, Cailleán and Mairi at Mairi's house, for example, as well as the women of the Forest House. These communities are nurturing places, and not necessarily undefended. Their power is shown by Cailleán, who can ward off the raiders by throwing fire at them. She has learned how to use fire, a symbol of masculinity (among other things) throughout the book, for her own purposes.

Events occur in this section that appear to be chance but end up as fated—as, indeed, the meeting of Eilan and Gaius was. It is extremely unlikely that Gaius would see Cynric, for example, especially at a crowded market. However, this happens. Similarly, Eilan no longer wishes to become the Oracle herself, though this is exactly who she will end up being.

Finally, the animosity between the two cultures (of Britons and Romans) is again highlighted in this section. Cynric is an excellent example of the growing feelings, as he is half-Roman and half-Briton, but growing increasingly restless and bloodthirsty.



Chapter Eleven - Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Eleven - Chapter Fifteen Summary

In chapter eleven, Gaius returns to the south with some of his father's men. There, he witnesses the Beltane festival, which is interrupted when a group of cows stampede, goring some villagers. The High Priestess's bodyguard is unnerved by this and faints, and Gaius himself catches the High Priestess. As he does, he sees Eilan again and realizes what she must have become.

Back at the Forest House, Lhiannon decides to adopt a young British/Roman girl that the Fellowship of the Raven (the organization of sons born from the priestesses raped by Romans, including Cynric) ask her to take in. This girl is the niece of Gaius's father's secretary, Valerius, and is called Valeria, though Eilan, who looks after her, renames her Senara.

At the beginning of chapter twelve, Valerius asks Gaius to find out what happened to his niece, who has no living family. Gaius goes to the market and meets up with Cynric, who arranges a meeting with Eilan, though he has not seen Dieda since she entered the Forest House. Eilan agrees to a meeting, though she has Cailleán to go with her for her own protection. Eilan and Gaius speak formally, arranging just for the girl to stay; Gaius has come in his Roman uniform, and Cailleán insists that she return just as soon as they have completed their business. However, when Lhiannon finds out that they met, she punishes Cailleán by sending her to a hut in the woods to be alone. The chapter ends with Dieda telling stories, especially one about three hags, to a group of women in the Forest House.

Gaius meets with Cynric again at the beginning of chapter thirteen, who tells him that he can never see Eilan again or he will have trouble with the Ravens. Back at the Forest House, Dieda reveals that she won't see Cynric as long as the Ravens are his first priority. Cailleán comes out of solitude and tells Lhiannon of her rape; the High Priestess forgives her, and Cailleán thus forgives Eilan her love for Gaius. She asks the young woman if she is ready to take her vows, and Eilan says that she is.

The initiation takes place in the forest at night. Lost and looking into a pond, Eilan sees three visions: a lady on the coast with red hair and Cailleán's eyes with a man by her side; a ship with a dragon sail on the water; and the Merlin, the spirit of whom the Arch Druids are supposed to represent, who touches her. When she emerges, the other priestesses join her and they have a ceremony, which culminates in their receiving the crescent moon tattoos on their foreheads.

Pining for Eilan in chapter fourteen, Gaius goes to stay with Clotinus, the lord he was staying with when he fell into the boar pit. He is nostalgic and still unmarried.



The day of the Beltane festival, Eilan goes off on her own and gets lost, becoming terrified in the crowds of people. However, she bumps into Gaius and they are delighted to see each other. He takes her into the woods and she, knowing it will determine her future, sleeps with him. She rationalizes that Caillean has revealed that the priestesses have been sworn to chastity only since the Roman's arrival.

Later, he is worried that she will encounter danger on her return, but she says that he is in greater danger and she will go alone.

At the beginning of chapter fifteen, Eilan is still thinking about Gaius. She learns from Caillean that chastity was a rule set in place by the Druids, not the Goddess. However, she soon discovers that she is pregnant, as Caillean begins her own menopause. Caillean discovers this as well, and they tell Lhiannon, who insists on summoning Ardanos. At first, he wants to put his granddaughter to death, but the group then decides to conceal the pregnancy. Eilan, three or four months along, still does her priestess duties well; at the end of the chapter, however, Lhiannon takes to her bed and does not get up again.

Chapter Eleven - Chapter Fifteen Analysis

The question of God's rules versus man's rules, which plays an enormous role throughout the book, comes into play in this third section. Here, Eilan has to grapple with the consequences of the time she spends with Gaius, slowly learning that the rules about priestesses' celibacy were put in place not by the Goddess but by the Druids to protect the reputation of the Forest House. Although these rules may have a purpose, that of protecting the women against invaders, they also curtail the women's spirit and show another example of the Druids' control over the women. This last fact is also underscored in this section by Lhiannon's refusal to deal with Eilan's pregnancy within the house itself, but by calling upon her grandfather.

The future also becomes of direct importance in this section, as the characters in the story question what will happen to themselves and the Forest House. When the "new" Senara comes along, readers should realize that this renaming casts the character in an important role: she is the double of Eilan's lost sister, as well as another character who is half-Briton and half-Roman. Eilan's visions take on another layer of complexity during this period as well, particularly during her initiation rites. Though it is not clear to readers exactly what she is seeing (the book serves as a prequel to others by the same author), it is clear that she sees a woman like Caillean on an island. The future her visions show her is not yet quite clear. Similarly, when Lhiannon becomes ill, the future of the Forest House comes into question.



Chapter Sixteen - Chapter Twenty

Chapter Sixteen - Chapter Twenty Summary

Ardanos visits Marcellius, telling him about the pregnancy and claiming that his granddaughter was raped. Marcellius swears that Gaius was in Londinuum, and immediately sends him there, where he stays with his father's friend Licinius. There, Gaius meets his daughter Julia, who is young but vibrant, and whom everyone would like him to marry. Licinius explains the whole situation to Julia; the two young people take a liking, though not a strong one, to each other, and decide that they could be married after he spends some time with the family to make it proper.

Before they marry, however, Julia wishes Gaius to go back to see Eilan and make sure that he is no longer in love with her. He is sent north on army business and is to see Eilan on his way back down south.

In chapter seventeen, Lhiannon is dying, and everyone but Cailleán realizes this. Later, Lhiannon tells Cailleán that she has seen her as a high priestess herself but summons Eilan, choosing her as the successor to high priestess. Ardanos is against this, but then they come up with a plan: Eilan will perform the next ritual, proving her worthiness (or not; some priestesses are killed in the rituals) and will then be replaced with Dieda. Dieda agrees to this plan, but is angry, and only complies because Cailleán promises that after she has served, she will send her to study with the bards in Ireland.

The ritual of the Oracle kills some of those who undertake it, and Eilan is affected powerfully by the potions. Under their spell, Ardanos tells her some things to say, and then later seems to mistranslate some of her answers to the people out of the old language the Goddess replies in. At the end of the ceremony, drained but alive, the elders decide that it is her time to be sent away.

Chapter eighteen depicts a battle, with Gaius and Cynric on opposing sides. Gaius fights under the general Agricola, and Cynric under the leader Calgacus. Both are inspiring and powerful. Gaius goes to the General and helps the cavalry, charging with the Romans. He finds himself fighting hand-to-hand against Cynric, who he offers to take as a hostage rather than killing. Cynric at first refuses but then agrees, spitefully, saying that he will later get his revenge. He is taken with the other hostages, and Gaius feels entirely like a Roman for the first time in his life.

Nearing the end of her pregnancy, Eilan is taken to a hut in the woods. Gossip spreads among the Forest House, with everyone thinking that Dieda has gone away. Cailleán comes to visit her, and then Dieda, who is darker and angry, but civil.

Gaius comes back, searching for Eilan, watching the priestesses perform a ritual and grabbing Cailleán's attention. Because she thinks it might be good for Eilan, Cailleán takes him to her. There, he sees the new baby, who Eilan has named Gawen. The two



talk of Julia, and she tells him that they cannot marry even if he marries Julia and divorces, as she is the high priestess. Gaius swears that he will gain all the power he can in the Roman hierarchy to help Eilan and their baby.

In chapter twenty, Gaius returns to Julia and tells her that they can be married. Happy, she shows him her wedding veil. Meanwhile, Eilan fantasizes about escaping with her baby, but knows that this cannot happen. When the Arch Druid comes to take the baby away, though, she is desolated. Caillean comes up with a plan (as yet unrevealed) to keep the baby with her.

The rest of the chapter is devoted to Gaius's wedding feast. It is full of food and strong wine and Roman customs, such as walnuts and coins being thrown to beggars. The chapter ends with Gaius and Julia approaching their wedding bed.

Chapter Sixteen - Chapter Twenty Analysis

Two important doublings occur in the fourth section of *The Forest House*: Gaius is "doubled" by his son, who bears his Briton name, and Eilan is mirrored by Julia, a young girl who is as innocent as she once was. The first of these pairs, Gaius/Gawen, shows Eilan's belief or hope that her son will take after his father - it is notable that she chooses to name him after the illusion that Gaius created, and not after Gaius himself. Similarly, although Gaius is not in love with Julia, he does find her freshness and youth appealing, as they remind him of what he saw in Eilan. However, Julia is much tamer; both characters only resemble their "doubles" to a limited extent. Readers should also note that the men in love with Dieda and Eilan—that is to say, Cynric and Gaius—never confuse them for one another, though even their own grandfather sometimes does.

Great life changes also occur in this section. Eilan is not only named High Priestess, but also gives birth to their son, at the same time as Gaius realizes that he has to marry Julia. The hero and heroine of the novel (Eilan and Gaius) go from having hope for a future together to realizing their fates. Eilan does this more easily than Gaius, as she starts to fantasize about having a life with her son elsewhere but knows that it is not possible. Gaius, on the other hand, still wants to marry Eilan; it is only when she reveals that she has accepted the role of high priestess that he realizes that they cannot be married.



Chapter Twenty-One - Chapter Twenty-Five

Chapter Twenty-One - Chapter Twenty-Five Summary

The beginning of chapter twenty-one describes Caillean's plan, which has been accepted, to keep Gawen in the Forest House. The women know him as Mairi's illegitimate child, and he is kept by a nurse called Lia. Gossip circulates that he may be Dieda's, as Dieda has disappeared, but nobody guesses the truth.

Meanwhile, Cynric has escaped from Roman custody, though no one knows where he is.

At the next rites of the Oracle, Eilan changes the herbs so that she will still be in contact with the Goddess, but not in the trance-like control of the Druids. The Arch-Druid, thinking she is in this trance, councils her to advise peace, and the Goddess chooses to speak these same words. Later, her father comes to see her, asking her to council revenge on the Romans; she says that she will ask the Goddess.

At Gaius's home, Julia is pregnant. During her pregnancy, she and Gaius take lessons in Greek and formal Latin to prepare for a possible trip to Rome. She goes to see her own Oracle, who promises a boy if she donates lots of money. However, she goes into premature labor and gives birth to a girl. She later becomes pregnant again, but Gaius is sent away to deal with other Roman territories.

In chapter twenty-two, Dieda returns, having spent time learning poetry and music in Caillean's land. She thinks that it's stupid and shameful to have Gawen in the Forest House, but agrees to stay and educate the women in music, as she likes Eilan's plans for the community.

Gaius has been serving in Germania, but is called back by the Governor in Briton to help with a possible uprising; the Roman soldiers are withdrawing from many places.

Eilan decides to take the trance herbs for her next rites, and Cynric appears; the Goddess speaks through her, talking of no justice, death, and a bloody eagle, advising him to flee. One moment later, the Romans charge, led by Gaius; the Goddess, speaking through Eilan, had momentarily paused his troops. He sees her taken by the Goddess and is shocked.

Gaius returns to Julia and his two daughters in chapter twenty-three, but soon leaves to visit his own father, who has retired. Gaius is sent to Rome, where he sees many new things: on the way, he has an escort and sleeps with several slave girls along the way. Once in Rome, he notes the vibrancy and multi-ethnic nature of the markets there, and thinks about how Julia and Eilan would have fared in the high Roman society. He witnesses gladiators fighting at the Coliseum, which moves him and which he greatly



appreciates. Later, at a dinner party, there is great debate over religion (some of the men there think that all gods, no matter from which religion, are the same) and the Emperor, who Gaius feels many would like to fall. At the Senate, where he gives a report on Britannia, he briefly meets the Emperor, and is later named as Procurator for Britannia.

Chapter twenty-four begins with the priestesses performing rites in the woods and singing. Caillean is officiating, as Eilan has cramps. Afterward, Caillean goes to the High Priestess, who says that she has thought of the Isle of Apples and sees Caillean as a high priestess. Caillean says that a hermit, who says he is a Christian, has asked if he may stay in the hut on the Forest House property, and Eilan agrees.

Meanwhile, Gaius moves with his family to the country. In addition to his two daughters, Julia has given him twin girls. However, their second daughter runs off and drowns in a river, and Julia is so distraught that she miscarries the child she is currently carrying, who is a boy. Gaius decides that he wants to adopt his son with Eilan and goes to the cottage on the Forest House property. There, he talks to Father Petros, the Christian, who he thinks might help Julia, and meets Senara for the first time. Back at home, he describes the man to Julia, who asks if she might see him. At the end of the chapter, Gaius kills her pet monkey by accident, and decides to say he was killed by a dog.

At the beginning of chapter twenty-five, Gaius sees a woman who proclaims herself a queen; her husband has died, splitting his estate between her and Rome. This has happened before, leading to war between the Romans and the native peoples, so the Romans decide to send this queen to Londinium. However, she has two daughters, and the question remains: what to do with them?

Eilan dreams that she becomes a swan; when she wakes, Cynric appears and presents the two daughters of the queen to her, asking if she can keep them there. Though Dieda is present and also urges her to accept them, Eilan is unsure and says that she must ask Ardanos. He comes in and tells her to accept them. Later, Marcellius comes on behalf of Rome and tells her to return them; she asks to keep them for one year, while they adjust. He agrees. On his return to Gaius, he describes what happened to his son; both Gaius and Eilan wonder if he knows who she really is.

Chapter Twenty-One - Chapter Twenty-Five Analysis

These chapters of *The Forest House* are marked by the amount of role changing, metamorphosis, and evolutions that take place throughout. In the first place, the question of who Gawen's mother really is becomes a way of placing different women within the role: Mairi, Dieda, and Eilan, who is, of course, his true mother. There is also the woman who claims she is a queen, though the Romans only see her as just another barbarian. Julia, meanwhile, keeps believing that she is pregnant with a boy, only to have girl after girl, showing the changing role of the babies she carries. In addition, Eilan changes in Gaius's mind after he sees her performing the rites, with the Goddess speaking through her; he finds her terrifying. Finally, Eilan herself dreams that she



becomes a swan. These changes are not only indicative of the changes within each character that occur throughout the novel, but also of the society as a whole: Briton/Britannia is moving away from its old traditions and blending with the Roman traditions.

These dual cultures form two of the clashing forces of the novel. In this section, they are building steam as old tensions between the native people and the Romans prepare to come to a head in the final section. However, the children of the next generation are already appearing (Gawen, Julia and Gaius's children), many of whom come from a background that combines both cultures. Therefore, there is some hope present in this section, as well, that the characters and the cultures will be able to resolve their differences and live together in harmony.



Chapter Twenty-Six - Epilogue

Chapter Twenty-Six - Epilogue Summary

Chapter twenty-six begins with Cailleán dreaming she has to cross a shore; Eilan sees how disturbed she is and commands her to tell of her dream. However, Eilan interprets it differently and wonders if she will depart soon, perhaps to the Summer Country, and will ask the goddess. Eilan has seen Cailleán there as a high priestess herself, with a group of priestesses. She goes into a trance during the rites, telling the people that Rome will peak and fall in its own time; Cailleán asks where she must go, and the Goddess says that she is to start her own house in the Summer Country.

Gaius talks to his father about the unrest he feels in the country. Julia, meanwhile, has become a Christian and believes that the end of the world is coming and therefore they should have no more children. She refuses to have sex with him anymore, which he accepts.

At the beginning of chapter twenty-seven, Eilan sends Senara to take the two half-Roman girls to Marcellius. On the way there, Senara meets Gaius, who escorts them, but she refuses his help on the way back.

Julia has become obsessed with Christianity and takes the whole family and household to church with her. However, Gaius is bored and insists on leaving; Senara accompanies him and Julia to help them with the children. Later, he escorts her back and she tells him, though she does not think it wise, where he can meet her: at the Father's cottage.

At the Forest House, Cailleán sets off for the Summer Country with a group of young priestesses. Once there, she meets a group of Christians, and speaks to a man who says that they all serve God. She decides to run her House differently, refusing to serve the Druids, and deciding to expand it enormously within the year.

At Beltane, the Goddess predicts disasters. Immediately afterward, the Arch Druid dies, without naming an heir.

Gaius goes to see his father and learns that in Rome, there has been a faction that has risen against the emperor. He goes to tell Eilan and to get Gawen. However, she is cold to him and, even though he proposes marriage to her, she will not marry him. Later, Cynric comes to the Forest House and accuses her of being in allegiance to Rome; in an argument, he slaps Eilan and her bodyguard immediately kills him. Eilan tells Diedo, who witnesses the whole thing, that she is free to leave, but Diedo wishes to stay to see Eilan's downfall.

Gaius, rebuffed by Eilan, sees Senara and tells her that he will marry her and they can live in Londinium or Rome and that he will convert to Christianity for her.



At the beginning of chapter twenty-nine, Senara tells Eilan that the Emperor is dead; Eilan sends her to tell the druids and immediately faints. She feels a weakness in her brain and wonder if she will die.

Caillean, on the Isle, goes to see Eilan but is attacked by a group of bandits. She controls the weather to a certain extent and a bolt of lightning comes; she falls unconscious.

Back at the Forest House, Senara confesses her love to Eilan, and Gaius comes in. Eilan, shocked, reveals that they have a son together, and Senara is so upset that she wants nothing more to do with Gaius. The bodyguard comes in, and Eilan sends Gaius away, telling Senara that she can go with him, but she refuses. Gaius, on his own, drinks at a pub, but runs into Valerius, who asks about Senara (his niece) and tells Gaius that some soldiers have a bet to see who can rape a priestess of the Forest House. Gaius decides that he will go save them.

At the Forest House, Eilan, who has been sleeping, sees Caillean in a vision. She thinks that she herself is dying. She goes to see her son, summoning Senara and asking her to take him to the hut for safety with Father Petros.

Chapter thirty begins with Caillean awakening to find two of her escorting priests dead, but the bandits as well. A farmer helps her on her way.

Gaius approaches the Forest House, considering going into Father Petros's hut but thinking better of it. He finds two soldiers and sends them on their way, but their friend is still inside; he goes to find the friend and sends him away, too. However, Druid priests attack Gaius, who kills some of them. Bendeigid, who wants war, has Gaius brought into the high priestess's area, and Dieda reveals who he actually is and his history with Eilan. Bendeigid sees this as an opportunity to make a sacrificial offering that will leave the country with no choice but war.

The people gather on a hilltop to watch Gaius be sacrificed, but, rather than let him confess his love for Senara (risking the future of her son), Eilan says that he had come for her. Her father, furious, decides to make an example of them both. Her bodyguard tries to stop him, but the Druids kill him. Gaius is hanged, then burned while still alive. Eilan says that she broke no law because he was the Summer King, and that in Gaius was both Rome and Britannia, now united in the sacred fire. In her last trance, she says that not until the ninth generation will Rome depart. Her father asks for a sign that what she says is true, and she dies immediately, realizing that the Goddess has struck her down in mercy. She watches them burn her body, thinking that the power she is going to is "brighter than the fire" and "lovelier than the moon."

In the Epilogue, narrated by Caillean, she reveals that many of the priestesses, including Dieda, who committed suicide, died. Caillean arrived and gave orders to the people, who obeyed. Marcellius came to ask about his grandson, and she told him he had disappeared; later, Senara brought him back. She asked if Caillean could take him to his grandfather, as she was going to take the orders of Christianity. However, Caillean



decides to take him to Summerland - which is revealed, for the first time, to have a second name: Afallon, foreshadowing the time when it will be called Avalon.

Chapter Twenty-Six - Epilogue Analysis

In the final section, the goddess that the Forest House priestesses worship is revealed to be true. It is important to note that, throughout the book, the author never claims that this religion is the only true religion, or that other religions are wrong; in fact, she has many characters argue that gods are all the same, just called by different names. However, the fact that Eilan's Goddess strikes her down out of mercy, and not out of hate, shows the kind nature of this deity and the truth that has been emerging throughout the book: that she/he loves his subjects and does not wish to see them suffer.

Truth is revealed in many forms throughout the concluding chapters of The Forest House. The carefully-constructed lies that conceal Gawen's real identity, for example, crumble as Dieda tells everyone the story that will finally clear her name (but condemn her kinswoman). In addition, though the Druids have been communicating to the High Priestess for years, subtly directing the activities and speaking of the Forest House, Cailleán calls all of this to an end when she decides to run her own House without interference from the Druids and to set down her foot from the beginning about how things should be run. This removal of outside interference from sacred activities also represents a step towards the truth, though a positive one (whereas the revelation that Eilan gave birth to Gawen has mostly negative outcomes).

Gaius's burning is, as Eilan notes, representative of the Britons and the Romans coming together in the earth for the future. Therefore, the two tribes of people are no longer going to be separate; their destinies are bound from that point forward. This foreshadows a possible resolution to the many cultural conflicts present throughout the book. Similarly, Eilan's death represents a resolution of male/female conflict: she thinks of how the power she is going to is brighter than fire and more powerful than the moon. The fire and the moon represent, throughout the book, the male/female powers (respectively) and Eilan's final observation shows that eventually, she has surpassed these false divisions.



Characters

Eilan

Eilan, the heroine of *The Forest House*, is a passionate and intuitive young girl (and later woman). She is skilled at healing, understanding people, and communicating with the Goddess. Before she meets Gaius, she thinks that she might like to become a part of the Forest House; after she cannot marry him, it seems like the best option. However, she cannot control her love for him and when they meet again, at Beltane, she sleeps with him, becoming pregnant with their son, Gawen. She is a loving mother and becomes distraught when her grandfather tries to take her son away. Eventually, Caillean contrives a plan to keep the boy at the Forest House so Eilan can be near him. When she is named High Priestess, Eilan performs her duties thoroughly. The previous High Priestess had foreseen her in this role; however, she resembles her cousin Dieda so much that Dieda was chosen at first by mistake. Eilan tries to educate her priestesses as much as possible, letting them learn music and not banishing them to solitude anymore for punishment. Though she has to construct many facades throughout her life to hide her love for Gaius and the fact that she gave birth to a son, she eventually comes clean and tells the truth, trying to save the life that she has set up for her son. Throughout the book, every vision that Eilan has comes true, and her dreams are often important indicators of events that will occur later on.

Gaius

Half Briton and half Roman, Gaius feels torn between the two cultures. Though he has been raised by his Roman father, who is of high rank in the army, he has also spent his life in Britannia and speaks the native language well enough to pass as a Briton. He is by nature honest and open, and it is difficult to hide his Roman origins from his hosts when they take him in; however, he knows that it would probably mean death for him to reveal them, and so he keeps quiet to everyone. Later on, his love for Eilan becomes the driving force in his life. He often tries to visit her, even after she is at the Forest House and becomes High Priestess. Though he has to marry a Roman girl, he chooses one whose freshness and youth remind him of Eilan. Later, when he contemplates divorcing his wife, it is for Senara, who was raised by Eilan, bears the name of her sister, and also lives at the Forest House. He feels abandoned by the women in his life: his mother died giving birth to his little sister, Eilan (through her father) had to reject his proposal of marriage, his wife Julia eventually figuratively abandons him to Christianity, and Senara refuses to marry him once she finds out his history with Eilan. However, as he is about to die, he realizes that this last love was really his love for Eilan in disguise, and that he has never loved anybody except for her.



Caillean

Caillean, one of the priestesses of the Forest House and later the High Priestess at Afallon, is older than Eilan but becomes a close confidant of hers. Originally from Ireland, Caillean is blunt and outspoken and hates the way the Druids control the High Priestess. For this reason, both she and Lhiannon know that she can never be chosen as the High Priestess of the Forest House. However, Caillean looks after Lhiannon tenderly when she falls ill, and provides excellent counsel to Eilan later on. It is Caillean who comes up with several important plans, including how to bring Eilan into the Forest House, how to hide her pregnancy from the other priestesses, and what to do with Dieda. Both Lhiannon and Eilan have visions of Caillean as High Priestess, though only Eilan realizes what this means; Eilan eventually asks the Goddess to direct Caillean to start her own House in the Summer Country, on what also called Afallon (later Avalon). At the end, when everything falls into chaos, Caillean returns to get everything back in order and to direct people. She is the one who tells Gawen's Roman grandfather that she does not know what happened to him. Later, when he appears, she takes him back with her to Afallon to raise him.

Gaius Macellius Severus, senior (Macellius)

Gaius's father, a Roman officer (Prefectus Castrorum of the II Adiutrix Legion at Deva, Equestrian rank)

Valeria/Senara

The half-Briton, half-Roman niece of Macellius's secretary, who is raised by Eilan at the Forest House.

Julia Licinia

The Roman wife of Gaius.

Father Petros

A Christian hermit who lives in a cottage on Forest House property.

Bendeigid

A Druid; he is Ardanos's son and Eilan's father. He plays an important role in the eventual downfall and death of Gaius.



Mairi

Bendeigid's oldest daughter and Eilan's sister. She has two children of her own, though her husband dies.

Senara

Eilan and Mairi's sister, who disappears after the raiders come.

Gawen

Eilan and Gawen's son.

Cynric

The foster son of Bendeigid and the man who is in love with Dieda. He eventually plays an important role as a Raven, fighting against the Romans.

Dieda

The daughter of Ardanos; close in age to Eilan, the two are often mistaken for each other.

Lhiannon

The High Priestess/Priestess of the Oracle.

Huw

The bodyguard of the high Priestess

Eilidh

A friend and colleague of Eilan's at the Forest House.

Miellyn

A friend and colleague of Eilan's at the Forest House.



Objects/Places

Brittania

The Roman name for England; the natives here are known as Britons.

The Forest House

The residence of the priestesses, also known as Vernemeton, "Most Holy Grove"

Deva

The Roman fort where Macellius works, and where Gaius was raised.

Londinium

A large town, present-day London.

Rome

The capital of the Roman Empire; Gaius goes here to report to the Senate and the Emperor.

Germania

Modern-day Germany; Gaius is stationed here briefly.

The Summer Country

Present-day Somerset, where Cailleán goes with a group of women to start a new House.

Crescent Tattoos

The women of the Forest House all have crescent tattoos in blue on their foreheads once they have become priestesses.



Pools of Water

Pools of water are often used for "seeing" into the future or the Otherworld in The Forest House.

Afallon

Another name for the island where Caillean takes her priestesses; eventually known as Avalon.

Themes

Natives versus Conquerors

Taking place after the Roman invasion of Briton (or Britannia, as they called it), *The Forest House* treats the theme of natives versus conquerors in a complex and sensitive manner. The natives, given voices throughout the story in the form of the Druids, feel that their territory has been encroached upon by these barbarians. On the other hand, the Romans, trained to want to extend their empire, believe the Britons are uncivilized savages who need their cultured influence. The clashes between the two run extremely deep.

However, by the time the story of *The Forest House* starts, some crossover has already begun to happen between the cultures. For example, though Gaius identifies as a Roman, he has spent almost his entire life in Britannia, and gives birth to a son who is raised as a Briton. Conversely, characters like the Ravens (Cynric represents this group in the story) were born from British priestesses when they were raped by Romans and were raised to seek revenge on their Roman kinsmen. Other characters, such as the second Senara, are also indicative of the increasing mixed blood that has occurred as the result of the Roman invasion.

The tensions between the two groups come to a head for the characters in *The Forest House* in the last chapter, as Eilan and Gaius are held accountable for their love affair. However, as Gaius's body burns, Eilan notes that his Roman and Briton blood are merging together with the soil and becoming an inextricable part of the place. For better or for worse, the two cultures mixed together in Gaius (and, notably, in his son Gawen as well) and would determine the future destiny of the country.

Religion

As it focuses on the dwelling of the priestesses, *The Forest House* is necessarily concerned with the theme of religion, as well. However, for a book that focuses so much on religion, it is surprisingly open-minded and does not profess that there is one true religion. In fact, religions depicted in the book include those of the Britons, the Romans, and early Christianity.

The Britons' religion is exemplified by the priestesses of *The Forest House*. It is a religion that values women's role (although their presence can still be undercut by the influence of the Druids here), that worships the Goddess, and which respects and celebrates nature. Many ceremonies and rites involve natural elements, and almost all take place out of doors. Before performing the rites of the Oracle, the High Priestess drinks a concoction of herbs, mushrooms, and other natural elements that help her to get in touch with the goddess.



Although the Roman's religion is not depicted in a positive light (when Julia goes to the temple of Juno, they ask her for money to get her the son that she wants), the Romans themselves are depicted as open-minded about religion. This is particularly apparent during Gaius's trip to Rome, where the guests at the dinner party discuss the possibility that gods of all religions are the true gods, just going by different names - an extremely open-minded view, and unexpected at this time.

Finally, early Christianity - a religion that most readers would assume to be extremely evangelical - is depicted as peaceful and serene, even boring (to Gaius, for example). The only fanatical Christian is Julia, who converts after her miscarriage; however, even she has her reasons for acting so that go beyond religion itself.

Gender

Gender roles also serve as an important theme in *The Forest House*. Modern readers may be surprised that the most valued members of the Briton's religion are the priestesses, who are valued and honored. In fact, no one is allowed to touch the High Priestess; when Cynric does so, Eilan's bodyguard kills him instantly. However, the Britons live in a highly patriarchal society. For example, when Gaius wishes to marry Eilan, he has his father send a marriage proposal to her father. Eilan also worries at certain points that her father is going to arrange a marriage for her. Thus, the Forest House represents, for most women, an escape from this patriarchal society. In some cases, this escape is voluntary; Dieda, for example, wants nothing more than to marry Cynric. Similarly, Roman society is patriarchal as well, if not more so. Julia swears that she will bear Gaius sons, as her mother failed to do, and is desolate when she cannot. In many instances, masculinity is symbolized by fire; for example, Cailleán rids Mairi's house of the male raiders by throwing fire back at them. She has learned how to capture a certain amount of freedom (normally a masculine trait) for herself and use it to scare off unwanted male advances. On the other hand, femininity is represented by the moon; many of the Forest House rituals take place under the moon, menstrual cycles are described by the moon, and so on. However, Eilan eventually sees that these are false barriers when she dies, going on to a place that is more powerful than fire or the moon.

Style

Point of View

The Forest House is told from a third-person limited point of view. The reader follows the narrative from the perspective of one character at a time. However, this character shifts as the story unfolds. In the prologue and epilogue, the story is told through Caillean at her new House on Afallon. Still, throughout the body of the novel, the point of view shifts from Eilan to Gaius. From time to time, the reader is privy to the thoughts of other characters - Julia, for example, and her desire to have a male son. For the most part, though, Eilan and Gaius provide the framework through which the story is told, and the reader sees the events from their points of view. Eilan's point of view includes her many visions, dreams, and even the experience of her death, as she watches her body being burned and floats above the human scene. The novel could have been told from the first-person point of view, changing with each scene depending on the character, allowing for a similar feeling of proximity to the characters. However, such a mystical story benefits from the relative objectivity of the third person point of view, as this presents the events—even the most mystical, like Eilan's visions—as fact, and not simply the imaginings of one deluded person.

Setting

The setting of The Forest House varies dramatically, taking the reader all around present-day England and parts of Europe, including Rome and Germany (although Gaius's stay in Germany is very brief). Locations that the reader might be familiar with include Deva/Chester, Glevum/Gloucester, Viroconium Cornoviarum/Wroxeter, Venta Silurum/Caerwent, Isca Silurum/Caerleon, Aquae Sulis/Bath, The Tor/Glastonbury, The Summer Country/Somerset, Isca Dumnoniorum/Exeter, Lindum/Lincoln, Londinium/London, Rburacum/York, Lugavallium/Carlisle, and Hibernia/Ireland. These locations are all defined in the glossary given by the author at the beginning of the book, with their Roman or Briton names and their present-day locations.

The book takes place after the Roman invasion of England, in the first century CE.

Language and Meaning

The language of the book varies greatly depending on setting and speaker. All characters speak in a language that modern readers are likely to understand, with less formality and dialect than one might expect from a narrative set at this time. Bradley's storytelling is heavily action-based, and she does not often go off into long periods of description, which keeps the story moving forward quite quickly. There are many words with which readers may not be familiar, particularly in the Roman scenes; however, most of these words become clear enough from the context.

Structure

The Forest House is divided into thirty chapters, with a prologue and an epilogue narrated through the third-person limited view of Caillean. Within these chapters, the scenes often shift at least twice, leaving the reader with a view of what is happening in the lives of numerous characters at the same time. Most often, these characters are Eilan and Gaius; a chapter might begin with Eilan's story, go to Gaius's, and then return to Eilan's. Other characters' stories also appear, from time to time, notably that of Caillean. For the most part, however, the two main characters also provide the main structural elements of the novel. There are certain chapters that focus more on one than on the other, depending on the intensity of the events described. Nevertheless, most are divided relatively evenly.



Quotes

"Perhaps the Priestess of the Oracle will claim me for the Goddess at the Beltane festival. Closing her eyes, Eilan tried to imagine the blue robes of a priestess trailing behind her, and the veil shadowing her features with mystery."

Chap. 1, p. 4

"She remembered how the priestesses moved through the festival, so serene in their dark blue gowns. They were honored like queens. Wouldn't that be a better life than being at some man's beck and call?"

Chap. 3, p. 45

"I love Eilan; she is the only woman I will ever marry. And if her father will not give her to me, Rome is not the whole world, you know."

Chap. 6, p. 78

"I have never been tempted to marry; I have been pledged to the Goddess for so long."

Chap. 8, p. 101

"But he wept for her now, as he wept for these women who had for a little while, made him feel part of a family."

Chap. 8, p. 105

"She had not thought what might confront her there. Now she wondered what she would find, and whether she had made a decision she would regret all her life."

Chap. 9, p. 113

"Doubt is the enemy of magic."

Chap. 10, p. 125

"The Light of Truth is One, but we see it as light reflects through crystals or prisms, in many colors. Each of the ways in which men and women see their gods—or their goddesses—has a part of that truth. We who live in the Forest House are privileged to see the Goddess in many ways, and to call Her by many names, but we know this first and greatest of all secrets, that the gods, whatever they are called, are all one."

Chap. 13, p. 166

"I will not soon forgive you for putting me in a position where we cannot even make honorable amends, but, as things are now around here, I cannot even order you to marry her."

Chap. 16, p. 201

"To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles they call Empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace."

Chap. 18, p. 244



"A lot of lives would have been saved, Gaius thought grimly, if they had had the sense to see that three years earlier!"

Chap. 21, p. 284

"In the end it seemed safer to say nothing."

Chap. 25, p. 343

"[T]here must be some good in it, to have attracted a girl like Senara."

Chap. 28, p. 387



Topics for Discussion

Both Roman society and Briton society are arranged in extremely hierarchical ways. Compare and contrast the social organizations of the two cultures, as they are presented in *The Forest House*.

Half-Briton, Half-Roman characters appear frequently throughout the novel. What is their narrative and symbolic purpose, and how does this purpose change throughout the book?

Dieda and Eilan are often mistaken for each other at the beginning of the book. How are they similar and how are they different? How do they change in relationship to one another, throughout the book?

Mothers are discussed in many different ways in *The Forest House*. How is the role of the mother portrayed in Briton society? Roman? What about in religion?

How are Ardanos and Macellius similar? Discuss the similarities and differences in their societal and familial roles.

Senara is the name of two characters in *The Forest House*. Discuss the significance of the re-naming of the second Senara, and the roles each character plays in Eilan's life.

Children are an important aspect of life in *The Forest House*. What role do they play? Discuss their role in the Briton/Roman relations in particular, with details and examples.