

Here Be Dragons Study Guide

Here Be Dragons by Sharon Kay Penman

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Plot Summary

Here Be Dragons is the first in a trilogy of historical novels about thirteenth century England and Wales by Sharon Kay Penman. This novel follows the unique love story of Llewelyn ab Iwerth, Prince of Gwynedd, and the illegitimate daughter of King John of England. The marriage is arranged by King John in the hopes of taking Llewelyn as an ally. However, the marriage is less than a year old when old tensions begin to explode between Llewelyn's Wales and John's England. Joanna finds herself stuck in the middle of two men she loves, struggling to decide where her loyalties should lie. Here Be Dragons is history brought to life, filled with romance, mystery, and intrigue that will keep even the history phobic glued to the page.

Llewelyn is the son of a prince and fiercely patriotic to his country. However, Llewelyn is taken out of his native Wales to live in England when his mother marries an English nobleman. This time away from Wales only increases Llewelyn's love for his homeland, increasing his resolve to regain his father's lands and the title that should have been his. At the age of fourteen, Llewelyn raises an army with the help of an uncle. Before Llewelyn is thirty he regains control of all of Gwynedd, the northern region of Wales. At the same time, Prince John is scheming to steal the English crown from his brother. John nearly loses everything after one of his schemes, but makes up with his brother and wins his favor by showing his loyalty. With patience, John wins his heart's desire, being named Richard's heir on Richard's death bed.

While these two men are fighting to gain the power they desire, a little girl is growing up in the shadow of her mother's despair. Joanna is the illegitimate daughter of a noblewoman who lives in shame in an isolated village. Joanna's mother dies after news of her father's death drives her over the edge of despair. Joanna is then given to her father, Prince John of England. John raises Joanna as though she were his child in wedlock, proud to embrace his only daughter where other men might have been ashamed to acknowledge her very existence.

When Joanna is fourteen, King John arranges for her to marry Llewelyn, Prince of Gwynedd, in the hopes of achieving a truce with Wales. Joanna is frightened by the idea of marrying a man she has never met and moving to a foreign country. Although Llewelyn appears to be kind, Joanna is miserable her first few months of marriage because she does not understand the language of her new country, Llewelyn's people see her as an outsider, and Llewelyn's children refuse to accept her. On top of this, Joanna finds herself falling in love with her husband, but is unsure how to tell him. Joanna follows advice of her stepmother only to walk into Llewelyn's bedchamber and discover him in bed with his mistress. Joanna is devastated, afraid of her husband's wrath. However, this fear does not stop her from retaliating by ordering Llewelyn's men to burn his bed.

What should have resulted in an irreparable rift between Llewelyn and Joanna actually brings them closer together. Within two years, Joanna delivers two children, a daughter, Elen, and son, Davydd. A blissful time in Joanna's life is marred by Llewelyn's son,



Gruffydd's refusal to accept Joanna and the growing tensions between Llewelyn and John. All these tensions come to a head when John invades Wales, forcing Llewelyn to surrender. Joanna goes to John and arranges the surrender for Llewelyn. As a condition of his surrender, however, John insists that Llewelyn hand pick thirty hostages for John to hold, including Gruffydd.

Gruffydd's captivity is pleasant at first. Gruffydd is allowed a moderate amount of freedom, carousing with his friends and fellow hostages. However, when Llewelyn takes advantage of a strategic move that could help him take control of a larger portion of Wales, Llewelyn acts on it despite his truce with John. John becomes enraged and orders the hanging of all his Welsh hostages. Gruffydd is to be last. Before it is Gruffydd's turn, John receives a letter from Joanna informing him of a plot among several of his noblemen to assassinate John the moment he crosses the border into Wales. John spares Gruffydd's life to reward Joanna for her loyalty. However, John continues to hold Gruffydd for many more years.

Upon learning the news of the deaths of the Welsh hostages, Llewelyn tells Joanna some truths about John from which he had been shielding her. One of these was that John had Maude de Braose imprisoned and starved to death. Joanna also learns that John ordered the hanging of a son of a Welsh Prince, even though the child was not yet seven. These truths haunt Joanna, causing her to doubt her blind faith in the father she has always loved. Joanna runs away, hiding in England while she attempts to find a way to face Llewelyn. Llewelyn comes to Joanna and tells her that he loves her enough to continue in their marriage, but insists that she end her loyalty to her father. Joanna agrees, refusing to see her father again.

John struggles for the next few years, finding himself embroiled in a war with his own barons. The war ends with John signing a historic charter, the Runnymede Charter, that outlines the rights of the citizens of England. This charter also frees Gruffydd. Finally, the charter creates a committee of citizens who are given the task of governing the king. John dislikes the charter and applies to the Pope to overrule it. The Pope does as John requests, returning to John the bulk of his power. Not long afterward, John contracts an illness that kills him, leaving his nine-year-old son, Henry, king.

As relations between Wales and England improve under Henry's reign, Joanna and Llewelyn's private life begins to fall apart. Gruffydd is outraged when his father announces that he intends to make Davydd his sole heir despite the more liberal inheritance laws of Wales. Joanna becomes concerned that Gruffydd will kill Davydd in his attempt to recapture what should rightfully be his. Joanna concocts a scheme to force Llewelyn to exile Gruffydd, a scheme that works so well Llewelyn finds himself forced to imprison his eldest son. Llewelyn disapproves of Joanna's methods, causing tension in their relationship. Before they can make up, Llewelyn goes off to battle.

Llewelyn takes William de Braose, the grandson of Maude de Braose, hostage during his battles and sends him to stay at his court where Joanna is. Joanna is uncomfortable among any de Braose, but especially William because of an advance he made toward her at her daughter's wedding. William seeks Joanna out until she finds herself forced



into a conversation with him about her father. Joanna is heartbroken by William's grief and allows him to seduce her. William and Joanna have a week long affair that Joanna ends out of ear of discovery by Llewelyn. However, William continues to pursue Joanna until the night he is discovered in Joanna's bedchamber. William is hung and Joanna is imprisoned in one of Llewelyn's seaside castles.

Llewelyn could have had Joanna killed or divorced her, but instead does nothing. Llewelyn cannot stop thinking about Joanna and their more than twenty years of marriage. Eventually Llewelyn goes to Joanna and asks to be told the truth about her relationship with William. When Llewelyn learns that Joanna ended the affair and that she indulged in the affair because of her sense of betrayal in regards to her father, Llewelyn forgives her. Llewelyn takes Joanna back into his life despite the shock and disapproval of his people and family members. Llewelyn loves Joanna and their love has survived every obstacle life has put in their way.



Prologue and Book One, Chapters 1-2

Prologue and Book One, Chapters 1-2 Summary

Here Be Dragons is the first in a trilogy of historical novels about thirteenth century England and Wales by Sharon Kay Penman. This novel follows the unique love story of Llewelyn ab Iwerth, Prince of Gwynedd, and Joanna, the illegitimate daughter of the King John of England. The marriage is arranged by King John in the hopes of taking Llewelyn as an ally. However, the marriage is less than a year old when old tensions begin to explode between Llewelyn's Wales and John's England. Joanna finds herself stuck in the middle of two men she loves, struggling to decide where her loyalties should lie. Here Be Dragons is history brought to life, filled with romance, mystery, and intrigue that will keep even the history phobic glued to the page.

While Wales has a rich history of fighting, going as far as to divide the country into three kingdoms, England, too, has entered a time of discord. Henry Plantagenet, King of England, has four sons. Three of King Henry's sons have turned against him, leaving only John, the youngest, on his side. In 1183, ten-year-old Llewelyn ab Iwerth is living in Shropshire England with his mother and new stepfather, Lord Hugh Corbet. Llewelyn is not happy with this living arrangement because he is Welsh and fiercely loyal to his homeland. However, his ten year old curiosity finds him making a trip to Shrewsbury because he has never seen an English town. Llewelyn does not approach the town, however, because it has grown late. On the way back to Caus Castle, his new home, Llewelyn meets a young boy about his age. Llewelyn and the boy talk for hours about England and Wales and all the myths both have heard about each other's homeland. After a time, the boy's brother comes looking for him. Walter de Hodnet is older than the two boys and cruel. Walter sees Llewelyn's horse and decides to steal it. When Llewelyn attempts to stop the theft, Walter beats Llewelyn and forces him to say that all Welshmen are thieves to keep Walter from breaking his arm. Llewelyn is so ashamed by this that he refuses to tell his mother and her new husband what happened to him. However, Llewelyn confides in his priest, Morgan, who assures Llewelyn that saying such a thing does not make him any less of a proud Welshman.

Four years later, Llewelyn has grown into a strong teenager. Hugh Corbet is concerned about Llewelyn's future, as well as his own, especially now that the government is in such turmoil as King Henry has refused to name his eldest son, Richard, as his heir. Hugh's concern seems unnecessary, however, since his brother has arranged for Llewelyn to apprentice with the Earl of Chester, a position that is much better than any Hugh could have hoped for the boy. Unfortunately, before the apprenticeship can be arranged, Hugh's wife informs him that her brother has been murdered. Llewelyn goes with his mother and stepfather to Powys for the funeral. While there, Llewelyn plots with his surviving uncle to raise an army and reclaim Gwynedd, the kingdom of Northern Wales that is his birthright and was stolen by his father's brothers. Hugh attempts to stop Llewelyn's plan, but discovers that by Welsh law, Llewelyn is a legal adult and can do as he pleases.



Prologue and Book One, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The political environment of the novel is introduced in the prologue through the authorial voice. Wales is a small country on the western border of England. This country is filled with men who are fiercely proud of their country, but the laws of inheritance in Wales are such that the lands are often divided within single families, leaving the country divided. In fact, at the time the novel begins, Wales is divided into three kingdoms, Gwynedd, Powys, and Deheubarth. In the opening chapters of the novel, the reader is introduced to a little boy who is the proper heir of Gwynedd. However, this boy is young and therefore restricted by the authority of his mother and stepfather. As such, this fiercely patriotic boy finds himself stuck in a country that is not his, living as the child of an Englishman, one of the greatest enemies to his country. Due to this situation, Llewelyn is an unhappy little boy.

At ten, Llewelyn is beaten by the brother of a new friend and forced to make disparaging remarks against himself and his fellow countrymen. Llewelyn is devastated by this event and feels as though he has been disloyal to his country. Llewelyn's reaction to this situation clearly reveals to the reader his deep patriotism to his country as a whole. Llewelyn is so young that his patriotism seems to be just the outpouring of homesickness. However, Llewelyn's continued loyalty to his country is revealed once again when he returns to Wales for his uncle's funeral and announces his intention of staying in Wales and raising an army to reclaim the throne that was stolen from him upon his father's death. Now the reader can see just how important Wales is to Llewelyn and begins to understand the level of ambition that motivates this young man.



Book One, Chapters 3-7

Book One, Chapters 3-7 Summary

King Henry is ill. His son, John, visits him and listens to the same promises his father has made on so many other occasions. Henry promises to give his son some land and a title, something he did for all his other sons, but not John. However, John is beginning to find it difficult to believe these promises any longer. In the middle of the night, John gathers his men and rides out to where his brother Richard has his army camped. Richard and King Philip of France have been waging battle together against King Henry in order to secure the crown for Richard. John has decided to give his loyalties to Richard rather than Henry. Not long after, Henry dies. One of John's illegitimate brother's accuses John of killing their father with his defection. Several years later, after Richard has become King of England and is in the Holy Land on crusade, John begins to plot with King Philip against Richard. John's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, comes to see him. Eleanor spent sixteen years in prison for disobeying her husband, from the time John was six, therefore they do not have a close relationship. Eleanor even admits that Richard is her favorite child. However, Eleanor promises to encourage Richard to name John his heir, over Richard's nephew Arthur, if John will only promise to stop scheming with Philip behind Richard's back. John agrees.

A year later, and six years after Llewelyn's return to Wales, a group of hired soldiers follow Walter de Hodnet into Wales. The hired men are aware of the power struggle that has been taking place in Gwynedd and are concerned about their safety. However, de Hodnet insists on following the Welsh guide, unaware that this guide is purposely leading them into Llewelyn's hands. When the men are caught, Llewelyn allows the hired soldiers to go free, but forces Walter de Hodnet to disrobe first, causing him to be humiliated in front of his men and to lose the respect of the man to whom he is an apprentice. The following spring, Richard is in Normandy after having been kidnapped and ransomed by the Austrian ruler. Richard is aware that John attempted to pay the Austrian to hold Richard longer, even after his ransom was paid by Eleanor of Aquitaine. Richard has stripped John of his lands and titles as a result of his betrayal. However, John comes to Normandy and apologizes to his brother and receives his forgiveness. Eventually all of John's titles are restored to him.

On her fifth birthday, Joanna awakens excited by the hope that her mother will finally allow her to have a puppy. However, Joanna's mother continues to refuse Joanna's request, instead giving the child only a few trinkets and spending the majority of the day lamenting her circumstances. Clemence, Joanna's mother, is an unhappy woman who is living in a home that is little more than a peasant's hovel, even though she is clearly a woman of noble blood. Joanna is too young to understand, but it is her birth that has caused her mother to fall so far in social standing. Upon receiving the news that her father has died, Clemence locks herself in the room she shares with Joanna, refusing to come out for several days. Finally Clemence's servant forces the door and finds Clemence dead. Joanna is taken to the home of the noble who lives in the town's castle.



The noble contacts Clemence's family and learns that Clemence had been living in her small house on the generosity of her father, but that her father refused to forgive her the indiscretion that resulted in Joanna's birth. The brother also refuses to acknowledge Joanna, suggesting that the noble give her to a family who need a servant girl. However, the noblewoman decides to send Joanna to her biological father. It turns out that Joanna's father is John, brother of King Richard. After a long journey, Joanna is welcomed by John as though she were his child in wedlock.

Book One, Chapters 3-7 Analysis

The struggle in England between King Henry and his son, Richard, is explored in detail here after its initial introduction in the prologue. Henry has refused to name an heir even though his second eldest son, Richard should be heir after the death of Henry's eldest. Richard has joined forces with the French King to battle his father and steal the crown. The strain of this fight causes Henry's health to begin to fail. John, Henry's youngest child, finds himself stuck in the middle of the power play. John has always been faithful to his father but has become discouraged by his father's empty promises. John is ambitious and this shines through when he decides to switch allegiances and join Richard's fight. However, John's allegiance to Richard only lasts as long as it takes for Richard to become king. John then begins to scheme behind Richard's back to make himself king. This backfires, however, when John's schemes fail, leaving him once again without land or title. John finally sees the error of his ways and decides to be loyal to his brother.

Along with John's ambition to become King of England, other aspects of his character are illustrated in these chapters. John has a difficult relationship with his mother. John's mother was imprisoned when he was only six; therefore, they do not have a strong relationship. In fact, John grew up without his mother and has no relationship with her. John would like to believe his mother loves him, touching on the theme of overcoming childhood trauma, but Eleanor of Aquitaine is a strong willed woman who tends to be blunt about her feelings. Eleanor admits that Richard is her favorite child. However, Eleanor believes the throne should belong to direct members of the family, not grandchildren or nephews. Therefore, Eleanor agrees to fight for John to be named Richard's heir. Another aspect of John's character that is touched on in these chapters is his habit of seducing young women, resulting in a large number of illegitimate children. One of these children, Joanna, is a small child who has grown up in poverty because of her maternal grandfather's refusal to forgive his daughter her indiscretion. However, Joanna's life turns around when she comes to live with John. To Joanna, John is like a white knight, setting up a lifelong loyalty to her father that will cause her a great deal of pain in the future.

Finally, this set of chapters contains an episode in which Llewelyn, who is now in possession of most of Gwynedd, is able to exact revenge on Walter de Hodnet. This act not only shows Llewelyn's sense of justice, in that he allows Walter to live but humiliates him, but it also touches on the idea of holding a grudge. Llewelyn never forgave Walter for the humiliation he caused Llewelyn to suffer; therefore, he took pleasure in exacting

revenge. Grudges and revenge will play a significant role in Llewelyn's life and the developing plot of the novel.



Book One, Chapters 8-11

Book One, Chapters 8-11 Summary

Eleanor accuses John of again scheming behind Richard's back after some rumors reach the royal court, but John successfully convinces her that he has been loyal to Richard since the fiasco during Richard's kidnapping in Austria. John goes to Brittany to visit his nephew, Arthur, where he receives news from his friend William de Braose that Richard has died of a battle wound. John has been named Richard's heir. John sneaks away before Arthur can hear the news. Eleanor warns John that Arthur plans to fight his ascension to the crown. That spring, Thomas Corbet, Llewelyn's cousin by marriage, is traveling in Powys with an acquaintance. Before the two men can reach their destination, they learn it is under siege by Llewelyn. Llewelyn has succeeded in capturing all of Gwynedd and is now attempting to seize control of the northern regions of Powys. The noblemen who live at Mold, the castle Llewelyn is attempting to take, are hiding inside the garrison. When Llewelyn's men take Corbet and his friend captive, they also take possession of a letter meant to inform the men at Mold that Richard has died, and Arthur is actively fighting to take the crown from John.

Eleanor has retired to Fontevrault Abbey to recover from her grief over losing Richard and from a minor illness. John visits his mother and tells her about a treaty he has entered into with King Philip. John also tells his mother that the Count of Angouleme plans to wed the count's daughter to Hugh de Lusignan, an enemy of John's. John does not want this marriage to take place because it would give de Lusignan too much power; therefore John suggests to the count that John marry his daughter instead and make her the Queen of England. The count quickly agrees. John meets the daughter and discovers a beautiful, poised young girl that makes him forget she is only twelve. John falls heads over heels in love and decides to hold the wedding as quickly as possible. After the wedding, John brings Isabelle, his new bride, to Westminster Palace where Joanna and his son Richard are waiting. Joanna is nervous about meeting her stepmother, but discovers that Isabelle is quite charming and easy to like.

Two years later, in Gwynedd, Llewelyn's childhood friend, Stephen de Hodnet, and his brother travel to Dolwyddelan Castle to ask Llewelyn's protection in a conflict between themselves and King John. Stephen's brother has doubts due to a recent truce Llewelyn entered into with John, but Llewelyn welcomes them with open arms. Stephen and his brother are introduced to Llewelyn's son, Gruffydd, one of three children he has with his mistress, Tangwystl, and one on the way. During dinner, Llewelyn gets word that Tangwystl suffered a fall that led to premature labor. Tangwystl delivered a third daughter, but dies shortly afterward. Llewelyn is devastated by the news, leaving the castle to deal with his pain alone until his son intrudes and offers his awkward overtures of consolation.



Book One, Chapters 8-11 Analysis

John has been loyal to his brother for several years, despite rumors designed to discredit him in Richard's eyes. John's actions again show his ambition but also his intelligence. John clearly is aware that the best way to convince his brother that he should be named heir, which is the surest way to make him king, is by remaining loyal to him. This appears to be working when Eleanor once again assures John that she will make sure Richard names him heir. When Richard dies a short time later, Eleanor tells the world that Richard named John his heir on his death bed. Unfortunately, Arthur does not believe this and decides to raise an army against John, just like Richard did against his own father when Henry refused to name Richard heir. It seems the English royalty are moving in circles. However, John is quick to make a treaty with King Philip to slow Arthur rather than fight him on the battlefield as Richard would have done, pinpointing the differences between these two men.

John is beginning to show himself to be an intelligent ruler, using schemes and political maneuvering rather than fighting wars as his brother did before him. To this point, John finds himself promising to make a twelve-year-old girl his queen in order to stop one of his enemies from gaining possession of a strategic title and piece of land. This marriage proves to be more than John expected. Isabelle, John's new wife, is young, but she is extremely beautiful and poised. John falls under her spell immediately, as does his daughter Joanna when she finally meets her new stepmother. Joanna was frightened she would lose some of her father's affection in his new marriage, but finds Isabelle a welcome addition to the family, suggesting a budding friendship that will have significant impact on Joanna as the plot continues to develop.

Llewelyn has been recognized as the Prince Gwynedd not only in Wales, but by King John thanks to a well timed truce. However, this does not stop Llewelyn from welcoming into his court temporary enemies of John's, his childhood friend Stephen and another of his brothers. This situation shows the reader that Llewelyn's priorities are not based in what is good for England, but in what is good for Wales, showing that he is willing to go back on a truce in order to do what he thinks he needs to do to benefit Wales. This is important because as the plot continues to develop, Llewelyn will find himself in many situations where he will have to choose between obedience to John and the good of Wales. Finally, the reader is introduced to Llewelyn's son Gruffydd, who is only a child at this point, one of four that Llewelyn has with his mistress, Tangswytl. The fact that Gruffydd is Llewelyn's first born son and is with Llewelyn while his other children are at another residence with their mother suggests a close relationship between father and son. At the same time, Tangswytl dies and Llewelyn is devastated in his grief, showing the reader the depth of his affections for this woman and his ability to love deeply, not just with the shallow need for companionship as might be common among the men of Llewelyn's time.



Book One, Chapters 12-15

Book One, Chapters 12-15 Summary

Joanna learns from Isabelle how Eleanor of Aquitaine was once married to the French King, Louis, but that she convinced him to divorce her after she met King Henry of England. Eleanor then married Henry and gave him eight children. When Henry took a mistress and flaunted her in his court, Eleanor returned to her own lands and rebelled against Henry. Unable to control her, Henry had Eleanor imprisoned where she would remain until she was freed by Richard after Henry's death. Shortly afterward, Joanna goes to stay with Eleanor at Fontevrault Abbey where she gets to know her grandmother, as well as more about her Uncle Richard of whom her father rarely likes to talk. Joanna also learns the story of Ingeborg, the wife of King Philip who has also been imprisoned for a long time because of the Pope's refusal to allow Philip to dissolve the marriage. After a few weeks, Eleanor gets word that Arthur's army is moving and that Fontevrault Abbey is in his path. It seems that Arthur intends to take Eleanor captive to use against John. Eleanor decides to leave immediately, but Arthur's army is moving faster than anticipated. Eleanor, Joanna, and Eleanor's guard are forced to make a stand at a walled town called Mirebeau.

Mirebeau is not the kind of town that is well equipped for a prolonged siege. The town falls immediately, but Eleanor's guard is able to fortify the castle for a time. However, the situation is dire and it seems inevitable that Arthur will be successful. Just as Eleanor and Joanna are preparing to be taken hostage, John and his army arrive. Arthur is taken hostage along with his sister, Eleanor, giving John custody of both his rivals to the crown. Eleanor attempts to express her affection for John, but he refuses to listen. Two years later, Eleanor passes away at Fontevrault Abbey. John does not express any emotion at the news even though Joanna is devastated by it. At the same time, no one seems to know where Arthur is since there has been no news of him since the previous Easter. Several months later, Joanna travels to Winchester at the request of her father. While awaiting his arrival, Joanna overhears Maude de Braose, wife of John's friend William de Braose, speaking disrespectfully of John. Joanna attempts to put Maude de Braose in her place only to be chastised by the unkind woman.

When John arrives, he tells Joanna that he has arranged for her to marry Llewelyn ab Iorwerth after her fourteenth birthday. John sees this marriage as a good match for his daughter because it will make her a princess, something of which most illegitimate children can only dream. However, Joanna sees it as a punishment, being sent away from all her friends and family and living in a foreign land. Isabelle attempts to console Joanna, pointing out how politically important this marriage is to John. Eighteen months later, Joanna meets Llewelyn for the first time. Llewelyn is kind, but Joanna is concerned that he is unhappy with her lack of pale beauty. In fact, Llewelyn finds her quite beautiful but is concerned by her youth. Joanna and Llewelyn are married the following day in a quiet ceremony. John does not attend. At the reception, Joanna has words with Maude de Braose and Llewelyn backs her up, causing Joanna to be



overwhelmed with gratitude. Later, Llewelyn schemes to avoid the traditional bedding ritual, sneaking Joanna up to the bedroom they are to share. Then Llewelyn tells Joanna that he does not want to push her into consummating the marriage before she is ready; therefore, they go to bed without making love. Joanna wakes in the middle of the night and remembers that the bridal party will look for proof of her virginity, so Llewelyn cuts his arm and leaves behind some blood to protect his wife's reputation.

Book One, Chapters 12-15 Analysis

Joanna learns the story behind Eleanor's imprisonment as well as that of the French Queen. These stories have an impact on Joanna, leaving her with a great deal of concern for these women who suffered for the actions of the men in their lives. Joanna finds herself sympathizing with these women, unable to imagine what it would be like to live incarcerated without knowing if they will ever be freed. This compassion will prove to be an important aspect of Joanna's personality. It also sets a precedent, showing the reader that people are often held prisoner for reasons that are beyond their control. Joanna also becomes friendly with Eleanor, learning more about her Uncle Richard that conflicts with the few things that her father has told her. John only tells Joanna what he wants her to know and from his own point of view, leaving Joanna with only a fraction of the true picture.

Joanna is with her grandmother when Arthur attempts to capture Eleanor in order to use her to force John to relinquish the throne. However, Arthur does not anticipate that John will be able to come to his mother's rescue before Arthur is able to capture the castle where Eleanor has taken refuge. As a result, John takes Arthur and Arthur's sister, Eleanor, hostage, ending their claims to the English crown. Some time later, Arthur's whereabouts become something of a mystery, leading the reader to wonder if he is still alive. It seems it would be in John's best interest if he were not, but murder is still murder, no matter what the motive.

Joanna is given to Llewelyn in marriage in order to strike a truce between England and Wales. John sees the marriage as a strong political maneuver as well as a leap in social status for Joanna. Therefore, John is not happy when Joanna is less than thrilled by the prospect of marrying a stranger and moving to a strange country. Joanna loves her father, however, and agrees to the marriage to make him happy. Llewelyn proves to be a kind man, backing Joanna up when she has words with Maude de Braose at the wedding reception. Joanna dislikes Maude de Braose, a relationship that will have an impact later in Joanna's life. Llewelyn also allows Joanna to escape the unpleasantness of the traditional bedding rituals and does not force her to consummate the marriage on their first night together. These things combine to make Joanna feel more at ease about the man she has married and shows the reader that Llewelyn is not a cruel man, but an insightful man who understands the fears and insecurities of his child bride.



Book One, Chapters 16-20

Book One, Chapters 16-20 Summary

Llewelyn takes Joanna to Aber where she is given her own bedchamber. Joanna had hoped to befriend Llewelyn's children, the four he had with Tangswyt and the twins with his mistress Cristin, but Gruffydd is openly hostile and the other children follow his lead. Not only this, but only a few people in Llewelyn's court speak French and Joanna does not speak Welsh. Everything is foreign to Joanna, but she is slowly learning the power of being a Princess. Joanna slowly becomes comfortable issuing orders and taking command of the household after years of being an outsider. Llewelyn continues to be kind, taking a whole day away from his duties to show Joanna his country. Joanna is falling in love with her husband and this emotion causes her a great deal of frustration and humiliation when reminded that she has yet consummated the union months after their wedding. Eventually Joanna seems to be making progress with Llewelyn's daughters, but Gruffydd continues to be cold and distant. Joanna also finds a friend in the wife of one of Llewelyn's closest friends, a woman is also Norman. This friend, Catherine, informs Llewelyn of Joanna's unhappiness. As a result, Llewelyn sends Joanna home to visit her father.

While in England, Joanna speaks with Isabelle about her affections for Llewelyn and the fact that they have yet to consummate their union. Isabelle gives Joanna a few suggestions, including the suggestion that Joanna be the aggressor in seducing her husband. Also during the visit, Joanna learns that John is having a quarrel with the Pope over the appointment of the new Bishop of Canterbury. It has always been the right of the King to name the Bishop, but this time the Pope has appointed a man of his own choosing. John is refusing to recognize the Pope's choice, which has caused the Pope to threaten to place all of England under Interdict, therefore making it impossible for any citizen to attend church services or receive any sacraments. Not only this, but it is possible the Pope will also excommunicate John, damning his soul. Amidst all this turmoil, Joanna begins to realize that she misses her husband. Joanna decides to return to Wales nearly two weeks before she planned. Loaded with gifts for her husband and his children, Joanna arrives at Aber in the middle of the night.

Early the next morning, Joanna takes a gift she bought her husband and enters his bedchamber to give it to him. Unfortunately, Llewelyn is not alone. Llewelyn's mistress and mother of two of his children is with him. Joanna rushes out of the bedchamber and locks herself in her own bedchamber. Llewelyn tries to talk to her, but Joanna is too angry. Joanna's servant convinces her that if she does not forgive Llewelyn, she could spend the rest of her life hated by her husband. Joanna returns to Llewelyn's bedchamber to ask forgiveness for her actions, but discovers he has already left. Cristyn, however, is still there. Joanna is so jealous of Cristyn that she orders Llewelyn's men to take his bed where the lovers had their tryst and to burn it in the yard. When Llewelyn learns of this, he is amused. Llewelyn goes to Joanna and apologizes for his indiscretion, informing her that under Welsh law it is within her rights to ask for a



divorce. Instead Joanna confesses to her love for Llewelyn. That night, the marriage is consummated and Llewelyn has Joanna moved into his bedchamber.

Book One, Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Joanna moves to Wales with her new husband but finds it to be a lonely, difficult transition. Joanna is only a child. Despite her marriage, Joanna is nothing more than a guest in Llewelyn's home and an unwelcome one at that. No one in Wales likes the English because of their long history of discord; therefore, they are not welcoming of the daughter of the King of England. Joanna is often alone, isolated in a court where she does not even speak the language. The children, who might have been a source of pleasure for Joanna, are as hostile as their adult counterparts, especially Gruffydd. Gruffydd is Llewelyn's eldest child and, as the reader saw in a previous chapter, is very close to Llewelyn. Gruffydd appears to feel threatened by Joanna and because of this, he is cold and cruel toward her. The reader hopes for Joanna's sake that this will change, but questions this possibility as Gruffydd's attitude only worsens. However, this situation does show the reader Joanna's strength of personality in that she does not go running home to her father at the first moments of despair.

Llewelyn is only kind to Joanna, though he does tend to be a little forgetful and does not seem to notice Joanna's unhappiness until a mutual friend points it out. Llewelyn is only human, however. When Joanna returns from a trip to visit her father, she finds Llewelyn in bed with another woman. On the one hand, this seems morally wrong because Llewelyn took a vow of loyalty to Joanna. However, when the reader takes in to account the fact that his marriage to Joanna was never consummated, it seems almost understandable. It also shows the reader how infidelity was viewed during this time period, since it is Joanna who feels as though she is in the wrong despite the fact that Llewelyn is clearly the perpetrator. This also introduces the theme of infidelity to the novel, a theme that will be recurrent and of significance as the novel continues to develop. This entire situation, however, does resolve itself, bringing Joanna and Llewelyn closer together as they finally admit their affection for each other and consummate the marriage.

One last important detail in these chapters is the quarrel King John is having with the Pope. John wants to appoint his own candidate to the post of Bishop of Canterbury, which has been the tradition for over a hundred years. However, the Pope has appointed his own candidate and John refuses to recognize him. As a result, the Pope is threatening to cut all of England off from the Church and excommunicate John. These things show the Pope's power, which seems almost more significant than John's, and the importance of religion during the time period the novel is set. It also shows the reader John's thirst for power in that he will not back down on this small issue, even though it could end in his soul being damned for eternity.



Book One, Chapters 21-26

Book One, Chapters 21-26 Summary

Less than a year later, Joanna and Llewelyn welcome a daughter, Elen, while Isabelle and John welcome a son, Henry. Gruffydd is pleased that Joanna had a daughter because a son could have meant trouble. Not only is Gruffydd afraid he might lose his father's affection upon the birth of a son in wedlock, but he is also concerned that Llewelyn might be convinced by his Norman wife to follow the laws of inheritance set by the church in which the first born son born in wedlock inherits all, rather than the Welsh law that allows all sons to inherit equally without concern to the circumstances of their birth. Unaware of Gruffydd's concerns, Joanna is focused not only on her new baby and loving husband, but the rumors circulating about her father. Joanna has learned that John has had a falling out with his friend, William de Braose, calling in loans William has owed for many years. Joanna discusses this with Llewelyn only to be interrupted by a messenger with the news that the Pope has ordered an Interdict over all of England and Wales. Joanna is frightened by this news because she believes she is pregnant again and worries about the baby receiving the sacrament of baptism.

William de Braose goes to John, hoping to make him back off by threatening to go public with certain information. However, John has surrounded himself with a number of allies and William realizes he could never speak publicly of the things he knows about John. However, Maude does not feel the same way. In front of several witnesses, including her grandson William, Maude accuses John of murdering his nephew, Arthur. Soon afterward, William de Braose attempts to reclaim with force the castles he surrendered to John. John proclaims William de Braose an enemy of the crown, causing the Prince of Lower Powys, Gwenwynwyn, to attempt to seize all the lands belonging to de Braose and his neighbors that border Wales, causing John to fight back with more force than Gwenwynwyn can handle. John subsequently has Gwenwynwyn arrested, leaving his lands unprotected. Llewelyn takes advantage of this opportunity despite both John's warning to all Welsh Princes not to attack Powys and Joanna's advanced pregnancy. Richard, Joanna's brother, comes to visit. During this visit Joanna confesses a growing tension between herself and Gruffydd. Also during this visit, Joanna has a very difficult labor and delivery, presenting Llewelyn with a son, Davydd.

Joanna and Llewelyn visit John's court a year later so that Llewelyn and the other Princes of Wales can pledge their loyalty to John. During the ceremony, the Welsh Princes also offer allegiance to Llewelyn, causing John to become angry with his son-in-law, even though it was not something that Llewelyn had planned or anticipated. As a result, John decides to release Gwenwynwyn and give him the support he will need to take back his lands from Llewelyn. A few months later, Llewelyn offers sanctuary to William de Braose and his grandson, Will. While there, William warns Llewelyn that he has made an enemy out of King John and he should watch his back. During that same visit, William's grandson is witness to a quarrel between Joanna and Gruffydd in which Gruffydd disrespects Joanna in front of her children. Will comes to Joanna's defense,



causing her to find honorable qualities in the grandson of Maude de Braose. A short time later, news of the arrest of Maude de Braose and her sons reaches Llewelyn's court. Joanna assures everyone that her father would not hurt them, but her reassurances fall on deaf ears. William rushes to England to make peace with King John, but John's conditions prove to be too difficult for William to satisfy. William visits his wife and tells her there is nothing he can do, then he leaves the country with his remaining family.

Book One, Chapters 21-26 Analysis

Joanna and Llewelyn welcome two children into their family over the next couple of years, but the births are very difficult and Joanna will most likely not have any more. Of importance is that one of the children is a boy. Gruffydd's worst fear has come true and this causes the tension between Joanna and Gruffydd to become unbearable. At one point Gruffydd calls Joanna an unkind name in front of her child and a visitor, causing the visitor, Will de Braose, to jump to Joanna's defense. Joanna does not like any member of the de Braose family because of her unfortunate experiences with the matriarch of the family, Maude de Braose, but finds that she feels empathy for Will and is grateful for his defense to her reputation. This first meeting between Joanna and Will de Braose is of great importance and the reader should remember Joanna's feelings of empathy for this child because these emotions will play an important part in events later in the novel.

The situation between William de Braose and King John is also of significant import to the developing plot. William de Braose is a nobleman who has lands near the border of Wales. William de Braose and King John have been good friends since before John was King, as the reader will recall from early chapters. However, something has changed between the two men which has caused King John to cast de Braose out of his inner circle. Not only this, but John has also called in markers on loans he has made to de Braose over the years. When de Braose attempts to blackmail the King into letting him out of his debt, he is placed in a position of having to make claims against the King in front of witnesses. William de Braose decides he cannot do this and instead agrees to the King's terms. William's wife, however, is not so cautious and she accuses the King in public of the murder of his nephew. As a result, the de Braose are named enemies of the crown and find themselves fighting for their lands. Eventually it becomes necessary for the de Braose family to leave England. King John, however, manages to arrest Maude de Braose and several of her sons. William attempts to rescue them, but John sets conditions that are impossible to meet; therefore, William is forced to leave Maude in prison. All of this is critical to the plot because it sets in motion certain events that will have a huge impact on Joanna's life, as well as those of the de Braose family and King John himself.

Tension is building between Joanna and Llewelyn as tension builds between Llewelyn and King John. Joanna believes her father to be a kind, gentle man, but Llewelyn is beginning to see another side to John. Granted, Llewelyn crossed John first by taking Lower Powys while Gwenwynwyn was in prison against a direct order from John, but



Llewelyn felt this was in the best interest of Wales. King John sees it as a direct slight to him. Later, when all the Princes of Wales come to England to pledge allegiance to John, they also kneel down to Llewelyn. Llewelyn is not aware this is going to happen, but again it is a slap in the face to John. John feels as though his treaty with Llewelyn, secured when he gave Joanna to be married to Llewelyn, has been broken. John now dislikes Llewelyn and plans to make him pay for what he has done. John chooses revenge over his daughter, showing the reader that his ambition is a priority over all else, paralleling John's schemes as a young man to steal the crown from his own brother, Richard. Now the reader anxiously awaits the next move and wonders what Llewelyn will do in response. The reader also finds themselves watching as Joanna is pulled into things she does not completely understand and placed between the two men she loves the most, forced to choose sides. The reader wonders which side she will choose.



Book One, Chapters 27-31

Book One, Chapters 27-31 Summary

In the past year, Llewelyn has been fighting English led armies throughout Powys, causing him to lose much of the land he gained during Gwenwynwyn's imprisonment. The following spring, Llewelyn learns that John is gathering a large army with the intention of invading Wales. Llewelyn is not concerned, however, because he knows the terrain of Wales and the migratory nature of its people will cause John's army to starve to death before they can win many battles. Llewelyn is correct about this. However, John rebuilds his army and outfits it in such a way that it can survive months in Wales. After a long series of battles, Llewelyn finds himself backed into a corner and faced with the choice between surrendering or hiding in the hills. Joanna offers to visit her father and work out the surrender on Llewelyn's behalf. Llewelyn reluctantly agrees. John agrees to accept Llewelyn's surrender, for Joanna's sake and the sake of his grandson but is determined to humiliate the Welsh Prince for his disobedience. John takes Llewelyn's sword in front of his court and Llewelyn's men and then holds it to his throat before ordering it broken. John then makes it known to everyone within hearing range that John only agreed to accept Llewelyn's surrender because of his daughter. Joanna, devastated by her father's actions, runs out into the crowd and kneels before Llewelyn, causing her father to once again be humiliated.

As a condition of his surrender, John insists that Llewelyn hand over thirty hostages. However, John wants those thirty to be the children of highborn Welshmen and to include Llewelyn's own son, Gruffydd. Llewelyn has no choice but to agree. Before leaving England, Joanna begs her brother Richard to make sure Gruffydd is well cared for. Joanna does not want this for herself, but for Llewelyn. Joanna is afraid that if Gruffydd is harmed in any way by her father that Llewelyn would never forgive her. Gruffydd enjoys his first year of captivity, though he would never admit it. Gruffydd travels extensively through the English countryside with John and the other hostages, finding himself indulging in pastimes that he might not have enjoyed as the son of the Prince of Gwynedd. At Easter, Llewelyn comes to John's court to visit his son. During the visit, Llewelyn tells Gruffydd that several of the Welsh Prince's have begun to retake lands John took the year before because of a declaration by the Pope relieving the people of Wales of their allegiance to John. John has grown concerned that Llewelyn plans to join them. Gruffydd realizes that his father has been holding back in concern for his safety, so he urges his father to do what is best for Wales without thought to his safety. Llewelyn is pleased with his son's encouragement and tells him that this is exactly what he intends to do.

Upon his return to Wales, Llewelyn meets with all the Princes of Wales and suggests an allegiance against the King of England. All the Princes agree to work together. This pact frightens Joanna, who still cannot believe that John could do anything to hurt Llewelyn or take away Davydd's inheritance. Unknown to Joanna, when John learns of Llewelyn's actions, he orders all of Llewelyn's hostages hung, including Gruffydd. Richard tries to



talk his father out of it, but is not successful. As the hostages, mostly children, are hung, John receives a letter from Joanna warning him that several of his own noblemen are scheming with the Welsh Princes to assassinate John the moment he sets foot on Welsh soil. As a result, John decides to spare Gruffydd to reward Joanna. When news of the hangings reach Wales, Llewelyn is not aware that Gruffydd's life has been spared. Llewelyn leaves the castle to grieve alone, but Joanna follows. Joanna is convinced that the hostages are still alive and that the messenger is only repeating a rumor. Llewelyn turns on Joanna and tells her that she lives in a fantasy land where John is a good man, but in reality he is a cruel man. Llewelyn then tells Joanna how John threw Maude and one of her sons in a prison cell and ordered them starved to death. Not only this, but Llewelyn also tells Joanna that John either killed Arthur himself or had him murdered. Joanna refuses to believe these things about her father. However, when the messenger tells her that he saw the six-year-old son of a Welsh lord hung himself, she has no choice but to believe. Finally word comes that Gruffydd is still alive, but with it comes the news that Joanna sent a warning to her father. Llewelyn accuses Joanna of betraying his trust. Joanna is overwhelmed by everything and decides to leave Wales. Llewelyn refuses to allow her to take Davydd with her.

Book One, Chapters 27-31 Analysis

War breaks out between Llewelyn and John. Joanna is forced to watch as her husband battles against her father, unable to believe that her kind, gentle father could place her husband in a position where he could be maimed or killed and Joanna continues to make excuses for her father. When it appears that Llewelyn will lose, Joanna jumps at the opportunity to make peace between the two men she loves. However, Joanna is an innocent who does not understand the depth of anger and hatred that exists between these two men. John feels as though Llewelyn has questioned his authority and thinks he is more powerful than the English King. Llewelyn feels as though John is standing in the way of what Llewelyn needs to do to insure a united Wales. Both of these men feel they are right and neither cares how their battle is affecting Joanna. Llewelyn surrenders, with Joanna's help, putting Joanna in a position where she must choose between these two men. This time, Joanna chooses Llewelyn, paying homage to him even as King John is attempting to humiliate him, causing a rift between herself and her father.

As part of his surrender, Llewelyn must hand over thirty hostages that he handpicks himself. Llewelyn does and he obeys the rules of his surrender for a time. However, after the Pope excommunicates King John and announces that the people of Wales no longer have to obey him, Llewelyn takes the opportunity to unite with the other Princes of Wales and run the English out of their country. John again feels as though Llewelyn is purposely attempting to usurp him, so he fights back by hanging the hostages. Both these actions are typical of the men who enact them, showing the reader again the characteristics that make these men powerful, but also make them enemies. This time, Joanna cannot go to her father and ask for forgiveness on Llewelyn's part. In fact, this cruel act on John's part finally allows Llewelyn to feel comfortable in telling her a few truths about her father. One of these truths is that John had Maude starved to death.



Although Joanna never liked Maude, hated her in fact, she cannot imagine anyone deserves to starve to death. This revelation is deeply important to the plot because it is a truth about John that Joanna will have to live with for the rest of her life, and it will govern some decisions she will make as the plot continues to develop. One of these decisions is to leave Wales while she comes to terms with her father's cruelties. At the end of these chapters, the reader is left wondering if this is the end of Joanna and Llewelyn's marriage. It is impossible to imagine how they might overcome this situation.



Book One, Chapters 32-37

Book One, Chapters 32-37 Summary

Joanna goes to Richard and learns that he was present during the hangings. Joanna accuses him of doing nothing to stop them. Joanna also asks Richard about Maude de Braose and learns that she was starved. Joanna cannot understand how Richard can know all these things about their father and still continue to serve him. Six weeks later finds Joanna at a priory where she is still struggling over her feelings for her father and her loyalty to Llewelyn. While she is walking in the gardens one day, Joanna learns that Llewelyn has arrived and taken Elen away. Joanna rushes back to the guest house Joanna finds Llewelyn waiting for her. They discuss the status of their marriage and Llewelyn tells Joanna that he cannot continue to be married to her if she continues to be loyal to John. Joanna swears that she is finished with her father and that her loyalties lie with Llewelyn and their children. Joanna returns to Wales with Llewelyn.

Gruffydd is still being held by King John, but this does not stop Llewelyn from continuing his alliance with the Welsh Princes to kick all English out of Wales. At the same time, John makes amends with the Pope as the French King begins to plot with several of John's barons against him. John, however, manages a truce when he captures a castle belonging to one of his enemies. John organizes a battle against the French and his plotting barons, but loses the support of a key ally. The French begin winning large victories and he manages to take captive several of John's most trusted friends. John realizes that these victories will lead to struggles with his barons in England. In Wales, Joanna has refused to see her father since learning the truth about him, but when she receives a letter that expresses the depth of his depression, Joanna begins to wonder if it is not time to forgive. Joanna writes to John, but is afraid of Llewelyn's reaction. However, Llewelyn understands. In response to Joanna's letter, John agrees to release the remaining Welsh hostages, with the exception of Gruffydd.

John convinces the Pope to support him in his fight against the barons, which causes the Pope to threaten an Interdict on Wales and to excommunicate all the Welsh Princes, including Llewelyn for their support of the barons. Llewelyn is not concerned, however, and continues his fight, taking Shrewsbury Castle. Shortly afterward, John goes to Runnymede to sign a charter the barons have written that sets in writing the rights of the people of England as well as creating a committee to oversee the King. John is unhappy with the charter because it does limit his power; therefore, he goes to the Pope and asks that the Pope annul the charter. Llewelyn gets a copy of the charter to show Joanna and can hardly contain his excitement when he points out that the charter includes a passage that forces John to let Gruffydd go free. Gruffydd appears happy to be home when he first returns, but Joanna can see that he is still the same dark, angry child who left Wales so many years before. Gruffydd runs into Davydd in the stables and tells him that he is not a true Welshman, causing Davydd to go to his father in fear that he truly is not Welsh.



Book One, Chapters 32-37 Analysis

Joanna's reaction to her brother's continued alliance to his father leaves her further confused by her own emotions. Touching on the theme of overcoming childhood trauma, Joanna has come to realize that everything she believed about her father, this man who was like a white knight when she needed rescuing, was based on lies. Joanna is heartbroken, grieving for a man who never really existed. This grief spills into Joanna's marriage, making her wonder if Llewelyn can continue being married to John's daughter. Joanna is so kind, so empathetic, that she feels as though her father's sins are her own. Llewelyn, however, is so in love with his wife that he decides he cannot end the marriage just because her father is a cruel man. Joanna decides to cut herself off from her father, but relents and writes to him when she receives a letter that appears to reveal his deep depression over their separation. In response, John releases the last of the Welsh hostages with the exception of Gruffydd. It takes a charter to finally release Llewelyn's son, proving to the reader how deeply John dislikes Llewelyn.

John becomes embroiled in a war between himself and his barons. The barons have enlisted the help of the French as well as the Welsh. John quickly finds himself overwhelmed despite making amends with the Pope and garnering his support. Eventually John is forced to concede the battle by signing a charter that spells out the rights of the English people. This charter, called the Runnymede Charter in the novel, is also known in history books as the Magna Carta, one of the most famous charters in English history and one of the first to address the rights of the average citizen. However, almost immediately upon signing it, John decides to ask the Pope to annul it. This action again shows how powerful the church was at the time and shows John's driving need to retain the powers given to him as King of England.

Gruffydd is allowed to come home after the signing of the Runnymede Charter. Llewelyn does not see the hurt and anger in his son, but Joanna does. Davydd, too, experiences his brother's anger and jealousy, a theme of the novel, when Gruffydd tells Davydd he is not Welsh. Pride in one's country and one's heritage runs deep in Wales, so telling this to Davydd is equal to telling a modern child he was hatched out of an egg. Davydd is devastated by his brother's words, setting a tone to the relationship that will develop between these two sons of Llewelyn.



Book One, Chapters 38-42

Book One, Chapters 38-42 Summary

John calls Llewelyn and the other Welsh Princes to England to do homage to their King. Gruffydd is not happy with his father's decision to heed the call, and Joanna refuses to accompany him, reluctant to see her father. John is bedridden with an attack of gout and holds meetings in his bedchamber. It is here that John tells Llewelyn he wants peace with Wales. While Llewelyn makes no promises, John argues with him about Joanna. John is convinced that Llewelyn has refused to allow Joanna to visit him and that he has poisoned her mind with lies about John. A few weeks later, the Pope chastises his Bishops for not supporting John in the Barons War and John has a decisive defeat against the remaining rebels who had offered the crown of England to Louis, Prince of France. At the same time, Llewelyn continues to move his armies through south Wales, ridding his country of the remaining English strongholds. A short time later, the Princes of Wales rally around Llewelyn, addressing him as the Prince of Wales, an honorary title that suggests he has finally brought unity to his country.

The Pope continues to support John in his fight against the rebels and France, eventually excommunicating Louis and his followers. It seems John's war is won, yet Louis continues to fight. Some of John's most trusted associates defect to Louis' side, including his half-brother, Will. John is devastated by this defection. John continues to fight against the rebels, finding himself in the seaport of Lynn where his presence is so happily received that the townspeople throw a great feast in his honor. The following morning, John and his army move out following directions given to them by a local Bishop. Unfortunately, the directions caused John's supply wagon, including his treasury, to cross a river at high tide. Everything is lost. Adding to his troubles, John has contracted an intestinal bug and has become quite ill. John tries to continue his journey, but is eventually forced to stop. John lies dying in a bed in an abbey, spending his final hours issuing orders and arranging the shift of power from himself to his son, nine-year-old Henry. When John dies, he dies alone, as his men have already rushed off to ensure Henry's safety.

Book One, Chapters 38-42 Analysis

John's health seems to be declining. First he falls into a terrible depression, then he has an attack of gout. John also clearly misses his daughter who has not come to see him since learning the truth about his crueler side. John blames Llewelyn for this, reluctant to see that it is his own actions that has caused Joanna to end their relationship. Joanna knows where her loyalties lie, a theme of the novel, and John refuses to see that her choice stems from his own actions. John raised Joanna to be intelligent, strong, and self-aware, and it is these characteristics that have made her a loyal wife to Llewelyn, the husband John chose for her.



John continues to fight the rebel barons who are determined to put Prince Louis of France on the English throne. John is saddened to learn that his brother Will has joined his enemies, paralleling exactly what John did in the final days of his father's life. However, everything seems to be going well. John is winning battles and the Pope is on his side. Unfortunately, John falls ill and dies quickly, leaving his nine-year-old son to take the crown.



Book Two, Chapters 1-5

Book Two, Chapters 1-5 Summary

After John's death, most of his enemies pledge loyalty to his son rather than continuing to support Louis. Eventually the war ends and Louis returns to France. Joanna returns to England and rekindles her relationship with her young, half-brother. Isabelle is unhappy with her new position in the kingdom, having fallen from being the Queen of England to the mother of the King. It seems Isabelle no longer garners the respect she feels she deserves. Back in Wales, Gruffydd continues to make Joanna's life difficult. Even Elen no longer likes Gruffydd because of his open hostility toward Davydd. Gruffydd has married and his wife is just as dark and angry as he, causing Joanna twice the discomfort. When Gruffydd learns that Llewelyn intends to go to England and pledge his allegiance to Henry, he is outraged, more so when Llewelyn announces he must go with him. In Worcester, Joanna encounters her Uncle Will and learns the reason he betrayed John was because he believed John made a pass at his wife. Joanna can clearly see Will's wife lied to him, but she cannot blame her for doing what she thought she had to do to save her family.

In Worcester, Davydd befriends the young Henry while Llewelyn suggests a partnership with Lord Chester, a nobleman who has lands near the Wales border. Gruffydd overhears this and becomes enraged, accusing Joanna of having bewitched his father. Llewelyn is finally beginning to see the problems Gruffydd represents. Llewelyn gathers his closest friends and tells them that he has decided to go against Welsh law and to embrace Church law where it applies to the laws of inheritance. Llewelyn has decided to make Davydd his sole heir. Gruffydd is outraged when he hears the news, leaving Llewelyn's court for an extended period of time. A short time later, Joanna and Llewelyn attend Henry's coronation, during which Henry receives the news that his mother has remarried and does not intend to ever come back, leaving Henry and his four siblings without a parent. While Llewelyn is in Shrewsbury a year later, word reaches Aber that Gruffydd has raised an army and is attacking Llewelyn's lands. Llewelyn is forced to raise an army against his son. However, when they meet on the battlefield, Gruffydd surrenders and asks for his father's forgiveness. Llewelyn welcomes him back to his court with open arms.

A year later, Elen is engaged to marry an English nobleman, but is unhappy with the match. Elen tries to talk her parents out of going through with the match, but Llewelyn makes her see how important the match is politically. Finally Elen relents. Elen is married in the same church where Joanna and Llewelyn exchanged their vows sixteen years before. Joanna is concerned, however, because she can see how unhappy her daughter really is. During the reception, Joanna runs into Will de Braose and attempts to speak to him, but de Braose is clearly angry with her because of her connection to John and the death of his grandmother. However, Will later finds Joanna on the stairs and kisses her. Joanna quickly leaves, deciding not to tell anyone because Will is clearly drunk and she feels sorry for him. Later, Joanna discovers that Llewelyn has



arranged for them to sleep in the same bedchamber they shared on their wedding night and for Morgan to bless the marriage bed, something that was not done the first time around.

Book Two, Chapters 1-5 Analysis

Isabelle, John's wife, shows her true colors in these chapters. Isabelle is unhappy being a widow, feeling as though she does not get the same respect she got as the wife of the King of England. Isabelle decides to leave her son's court, leaving behind all five of her children, and marries a man with whom John once thought she was having an affair. In an ironic twist, Isabelle marries the son of the man John stole her away from. Henry is saddened by this, but he is King now and does not have time to dwell on such things, showing the reader that Henry is still a child forced into a job with which only an adult should have to deal.

Gruffydd is still causing trouble, arguing with his father's every decision and making it clear that he hates everything having to do with England. Llewelyn finally sees what Joanna has known for many years and decides he must take action to protect Wales. Llewelyn does what Gruffydd has always feared, he makes Davydd his sole heir. This is important because it goes against Welsh custom, something Llewelyn rarely does, and it puts Davydd in the role of Gruffydd's enemy. Gruffydd is filled with jealousy, a theme of the novel, and attempts to take what he believes is his now, but realizes he cannot fight against his father on the battlefield. Instead, Gruffydd makes amends with his father, suggesting that he plans to wait until Llewelyn is dead to take back what is his.

Joanna's daughter gets married to a man she does not love, causing her to be miserable. Joanna worries about her daughter even though she knows what Llewelyn has done is in the best interest of everyone, including Elen. At the wedding, Joanna encounters Will de Braose, the same young man she once felt a great deal of empathy for after he rescued her from a quarrel with Gruffydd. Now Will is filled with anger and Joanna finds herself the object of his scorn, causing the feelings of guilt she has always had regarding Maude de Braose to grow deeper. The reader and Joanna alike are confused when Will kisses her, suggesting that he might have more complicated feelings for her than first assumed.



Book Two, Chapters 6-11

Book Two, Chapters 6-11 Summary

Despite attempts at peace, Wales and England find themselves at war again. This war brings Llewelyn up against members of the de Braose family. Once again Llewelyn finds himself on the losing side and decides to make peace with Henry, another act that causes Gruffydd a great deal of disappointment and further convincing Llewelyn that he has made the right choice naming Davydd his heir. Three years later, Joanna is visiting Henry when he surprises her with a letter from the Pope, declaring her birth legitimate in all aspects except to make claim against her father's title. The day is only marred by Elen's clear displeasure in her marriage. Two years later, one of Llewelyn's closest friends dies, bringing home his own growing age. Therefore, when Gruffydd brings his father a wild horse and dares him to ride it, Llewelyn cannot walk away. Unfortunately, Llewelyn is thrown from the horse, and it appears Gruffydd dared his father on purpose in hopes that the fall would kill him. Davydd confronts Gruffydd and they fight. Joanna and another of Llewelyn's friends stumble on the argument. Joanna is frightened that Gruffydd might try to kill Davydd one day and schemes to get rid of him.

Joanna goads Gruffydd into an argument in the great hall of Llewelyn's court, causing Gruffydd to disrespect her in front of an audience. Rather than exile Gruffydd as Joanna had hoped he would do, Llewelyn orders Gruffydd imprisoned in one of his castles. Llewelyn is devastated by what he is forced to do, and when he discovers that Joanna set Gruffydd up, he refuses to forgive her. Joanna and Llewelyn allow the tension to build between them, resulting in Llewelyn going off to battle without forgiving Joanna. Davydd, too, is angry with Joanna, leaving her feeling isolated in her own home. Joanna's unhappiness increases when Gruffydd's wife comes to Llewelyn's court and then Llewelyn sends Will de Braose, whom he has taken hostage in battle, to stay at his court until his ransom can be paid. Joanna begins taking long walks alone on the beach. Will follows her on several occasions. One afternoon Joanna finds an abandoned hafod as it begins to rain and hides inside to enjoy a picnic lunch alone. Will arrives and they begin to talk. Will tells Joanna about his anger toward John for what he did to his grandmother. Joanna is heartbroken for the child Will once was. In her pity, Joanna allows herself to be seduced by Will.

Their affair lasts only a week, then Joanna realizes what a mistake she is making and ends the affair. When Llewelyn returns home, he and Joanna make amends and resume their loving marriage. As Llewelyn continues to be tormented over Gruffydd's situation, Joanna travels to Shrewsbury to meet Davydd and visit with Elen. There Joanna encounters Will again. Joanna tries to convince Will that their relationship is over, but he refuses to listen. A year later, Will, whose daughter is to marry Davydd, comes to Aber for a visit. Joanna is not happy to see him especially since Llewelyn is not in court. Not only that, but Gruffydd's wife is in court. Joanna decides to go to bed early to escape Will's advances. However, Will misunderstands her intentions and follows her to her bedchamber. Joanna is outraged, insistent that she does not want



him, especially in the bed she shares with Llewelyn. Will refuses to listen, instead undressing as he attempts to seduce Joanna. Before Joanna can convince Will to leave, Llewelyn arrives, having received a message that Joanna is ill. Llewelyn walks into the bed chamber and finds Will there, half naked, and sees the guilt on Joanna's face. Llewelyn has Will arrested and places guards outside the door to keep Joanna from leaving.

Book Two, Chapters 6-11 Analysis

Gruffydd's attitude only continues to worsen until Joanna is convinced that both her husband's and her son's lives are at risk. Joanna devises a plan to get rid of Gruffydd, but the plan works so well that Llewelyn is forced to imprison his own son. Joanna has taken it into her own hands to protect the men in her life, something she has been doing all her life, but this time it backfires on her. Joanna finds herself an outcast in her own home, the object of anger from both her husband and her son who are both offended that she believed they could not take care of themselves. This sets up a situation in which Joanna is feeling cast out, leaving her vulnerable to the affections of another man. Joanna is forced to play hostess to Will de Braose, a person her husband knows she wants nothing to do with because of his association with Maude de Braose, but Llewelyn sent to her anyway. Joanna feels as though Llewelyn has once again ignored her feelings to convenience himself. Again, this sets up a situation that makes Joanna vulnerable to seeking the affections of someone not her husband. Therefore it is no surprise when Joanna begins an affair with Will de Braose.

The theme of infidelity explodes in these chapters. Joanna has a short affair with Will de Braose, but Will is not happy accepting that the affair has ended. Will, more like John that he would ever admit, pursues Joanna mercilessly until they are caught in Llewelyn's bedchamber together. Joanna is devastated, but not nearly as much as Llewelyn. Llewelyn has Will arrested, after nearly killing him where he stood. This appears to be a clear declaration of love, but now the reader wonders if this love will survive. Joanna wants to speak to Llewelyn, to explain herself, but cannot because there are guards on her door not allowing her to leave. It seems Joanna's time as the Princess of Gwynedd has come to an end.



Book Two, Chapters 12-17 and Epilogue

Book Two, Chapters 12-17 and Epilogue Summary

The following morning Joanna is taken in shame to one of Llewelyn's seaside castles where she is to be held a prisoner until Llewelyn decides what to do with her. It is Llewelyn's right to have her killed, or he could divorce her and exile her. It is expected that Llewelyn will divorce her and send her back to England. Richard visits Joanna and tells her Will de Braose was hanged. Joanna shows no emotion, causing Richard to wonder aloud why she had an affair with a man she did not love. Joanna tries to explain, but cannot. Joanna wants to explain to everyone, especially Llewelyn, but Llewelyn refuses to take her letters. Months pass and Llewelyn refuses to do anything about Joanna. Llewelyn even takes a lover, but still he cannot stop thinking about Joanna. Finally, Llewelyn decides he needs to know the truth. Llewelyn visits Joanna and asks for the truth. Joanna gives him the letter she wrote to him explaining everything. Llewelyn is still not sure he can trust her again, but his love is so deep that he has no choice.

Llewelyn restores Joanna to her rightful place at his side despite the shock and surprise of his people. Joanna is accepted because of the respect people have for Llewelyn. Joanna and Llewelyn settle back into their marriage and life goes on. Joanna learns that her daughter, Elen, is embroiled in an affair despite what she saw happen to her mother and her lover. Joanna urges the girl to be careful. Will's daughter has come to live at Llewelyn's court until she is old enough to marry Davydd. Isabella attaches herself to Joanna, believing that her father died because of his love for her. Joanna accepts the child's devotion as the burden she must bear for her sins. Llewelyn decides to allow Gruffydd his freedom now that Davydd is old enough to protect himself, forcing Joanna to accept the reality of her son's maturity. Joanna dies in 1237, Llewelyn three years later.

Book Two, Chapters 12-17 and Epilogue Analysis

Again the theme of infidelity is explored in these chapters. Unlike the morning Joanna found Llewelyn in bed with his mistress, Llewelyn has the right to hang Will, which he does, and imprison Joanna. Joanna does not see this as unfair, but her daughter Elen does. Joanna accepts her punishment because she is so full of guilt for the sins of her father, touching on the theme of overcoming childhood trauma, that she believes she should be punished even if she had done nothing wrong. It also seems that Joanna's choice of lovers has something to do with her father's sins. Joanna chooses Will de Braose not because he is handsome, but because he is the grandson of Maude de Braose. Joanna set herself up to be caught because she needed to be punished for her father's decision to starve Maude to death.



Llewelyn, however, is so deeply in love with his wife that he cannot cast her out just because she made a mistake. Llewelyn forgives Joanna, proving that he can forgive a grudge, unlike John. Llewelyn then takes Joanna back into his court and they go on to live several more years together in wedded bliss. Even the return of Gruffydd can do nothing to spoil Joanna's happiness.



Characters

Joanna, Princess of Wales

Joanna is born to a disgraced noblewoman and spends the first five years of her life living hidden away in a small, two room hovel. Joanna's mother yearns to return to her father's house, anxious to return to the life she knew before she became pregnant with her illegitimate daughter. However, when her father dies, this woman knows she will never return to the luxury of her childhood. Falling into a dark depression, Joanna's mother drinks herself to death. The mother's family is contacted, but when they learn of the death of their sister, they want nothing to do with the child that led to her downfall. Instead, the brother tells who the father was and suggests they place Joanna with a family who needs a girl to work for them. Instead, the noblewoman who has taken Joanna in has decided to send Joanna to her father.

Joanna goes to live with Prince John, the brother of the king of England, who is her father. John accepts Joanna with open arms, thrilled with the idea of having a daughter. John spoils Joanna, treating her as though she is his true child rather than an illegitimate child. Joanna grows up in castles, wearing rich clothing and expensive jewels. When Joanna is fourteen, John tells her that he has arranged a marriage for her to a prince. This will mean a crown for Joanna, a social status that is nearly impossible for an illegitimate child to achieve. Instead of being happy about this, however, Joanna is terrified at the thought of being sent away from everyone and everything she has always known and forced to live in a foreign land.

The marriage is difficult for Joanna at first. Llewelyn is very kind to Joanna, but his people do not trust this daughter of the English King. Joanna cannot speak Welsh and finds that Llewelyn's children and friends are unwilling to accept her place in their home. On top of all this, Joanna falls in love with Llewelyn, but does not know how to express these emotions to him and let him know that she is ready to share the marital bed. Joanna takes the advice of her stepmother and surprises Llewelyn in his bedchamber the morning after returning from a visit to England. It is Joanna who is surprised, however, when she finds Llewelyn in bed with his mistress. Joanna argues with Llewelyn and then has his bed burned. Llewelyn is amused by Joanna's reaction. Llewelyn explains to Joanna that under Welsh law she now has grounds for divorce. Joanna prefers, however, to make the marriage work.

The marriage lasts more than twenty years with the only difficulties those caused by Joanna's loyalty to her father. Joanna watches as Llewelyn and John battle many times, even going to her father to ask for Llewelyn's right to surrender after John gets the better of Llewelyn on Welsh land. Joanna also sends John a letter warning him that several of his noblemen are scheming with Llewelyn to assassinate John. This letter wins Llewelyn's son, Gruffydd, his life. However, it drives a wedge between Llewelyn and Joanna that is deepened when Llewelyn tells Joanna the truth about her father's cruelty.



Joanna falls away from John, choosing her husband over her father. However, John's cruelty stays with Joanna for many years, leaving her struggling to understand how such a gentle father could be such a cruel tyrant. During this struggle and a troubled time in her marriage, Joanna has an affair with the grandson of a woman King John imprisoned and starved to death. Joanna regrets the affair right away, but her lover pushes her to rekindle the romance until he is caught in her bedchamber. The lover is hung and Joanna is imprisoned for almost a year before Llewelyn decides to forgive her and welcome him back to his court.

Llewelyn ab Iowerth, Prince of Gwynedd

Llewelyn is the son of a Welsh prince who spent several years of his childhood in England after his mother remarried an English nobleman. Llewelyn has a fierce love of his native country and counts the days until he can return and reclaim the lands his uncles stole from his father. At fourteen, Llewelyn does exactly that, building an army with the help of another uncle, eventually taking control of Gwynedd while still in his twenties. Llewelyn then begins to look at the larger picture, trying to find ways to unite all Wales under one government and protect her from England.

Llewelyn takes a mistress who bears him four children and another who gives him twins. Llewelyn does not marry either woman, however, aware that the marriage he makes must come with political advantage. This advantage comes when the King of England offers his illegitimate daughter in exchange for a peace treaty between the two countries. Llewelyn quickly agrees and marries Joanna even though she is just a child and a Norman, unable to speak his own language. Joanna is not accepted well in Gwynedd, by Llewelyn's people or his children.

Llewelyn breaks his treaty with John a short time after the marriage takes place. Llewelyn believes he has the upper hand with the English, and it appears Llewelyn will beat the Normans at first. However, John is a smart man, and soon has Llewelyn on the run. Joanna goes to her father and arranges for Llewelyn to surrender. However, in return for accepting his surrender, John insists on taking thirty hostages, including Gruffydd, Llewelyn's oldest son. Llewelyn again breaks his treaty with John, enraging John to such a point that he decides to hang all of Llewelyn's hostages, including Gruffydd. However, John receives a letter from Joanna warning him of a plot against him by some of his own noblemen, causing John to allow Gruffydd to live to repay his daughter's loyalty.

When Llewelyn learns of the hangings, he and Joanna argue. Llewelyn tells Joanna about her father's cruelties, including the starving death of Maude de Braose, the wife of a nobleman who crossed the king. Joanna leaves Wales, ashamed of her father and confused about her future. Llewelyn finds Joanna and suggests that they might end their marriage because he can no longer fight her loyalty to John. At that moment Joanna agrees to remain loyal to Llewelyn and forsake her father. The marriage continues for many more years until once again tensions over loyalty come between them.



Joanna causes Gruffydd to disrespect her at court, a situation that causes Llewelyn to imprison his own son. Llewelyn is angry when he learns that Joanna set up Gruffydd. Llewelyn goes to battle without forgiving Joanna and then sends Maude de Braose's grandson, a hostage of war, to stay with her at their castle. Joanna has an affair with this man, leading him to believe they have a future together. Sometime later, Joanna is caught in Llewelyn's bedchamber with her lover. Llewelyn is devastated because he loves Joanna. Llewelyn has Joanna's lover put to death and then imprisons Joanna in one of his seaside castles. Llewelyn tries to forget Joanna for almost a year, but finally goes to visit her to learn the truth. Finally Llewelyn forgives Joanna.

John, King of England

John is the youngest of King Henry's children and the only one who remains loyal to his father during the power struggle between the sons to be King Henry's heir. However, John defects from his father's side to his brother Richard's side when it appears Richard will win the struggle. John then begins to scheme behind Richard's back to steal the crown from him. John makes enemies of Richard and his own mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine with his scheming. Eventually, however, John realizes the best way to get the crown is to support Richard. In the end, Eleanor insures that Richard will name John his heir when he dies of battle wounds because Eleanor would rather see John crowned and keep the crown in the direct family, rather than allow Arthur, her grandson, take the crown.

John is a womanizer, a man who enjoys moving from bed to bed, unconcerned with the emotional damage he leaves behind. As a result, John has many illegitimate children, including his only daughter, Joanna. John uses Joanna to make a truce with the Prince of Gwynedd, a truce that does not last. When one of John's enemies is about to make a marriage that will give that enemy power over territories in Aquitaine, John approaches the bride's father and makes a better offer. John marries Isabelle of Angouleme, making her queen. This marriage will remain childless for many years because Isabelle is only a child when they marry.

John is not the great soldier his brother Richard was, making an enemy of the French king and losing Normandy to the French. As John's reign matures, he makes many enemies among the Welsh as well as his own noblemen. John finds himself the target of assassination plots and discovers traitors among those he once thought he could trust. John begins to display the famous temper associated with his father's family. John is rumored to have killed Arthur, his rival for the crown, to have starved the wife of an enemy to death, and to have hung more than twenty children he held as hostages from the Welsh. It is these acts that cause Joanna to cut her ties to her father and chose her husband. Eventually John and Isabelle have five children. When John dies, his son Henry becomes king of England.



Gruffydd

Gruffydd is Llewelyn's eldest child by his mistress Tangwystl. Gruffydd is very close to his father as a small child and as a result feels threatened when Llewelyn marries Joanna. Gruffydd is concerned that should Joanna give birth to a son, she will influence his father to follow the Church's rule of inheritance and make that child Llewelyn's sole heir. Gruffydd is also concerned about losing his father's affections to both Joanna and a new son. Gruffydd does his best to make Joanna feel unwelcome in Wales, encouraging his three sisters to do the same. When Gruffydd's sisters begin to warm to Joanna, he sabotages the budding relationship with cruel tricks carefully concealed to protect him from his father's wrath.

When Gruffydd is a teenager, his father engages in battle with King John of England. Llewelyn is pushed into a corner and forced to surrender. Gruffydd is ashamed of his father's decision to allow Joanna to arrange the surrender. To add insult to injury, King John insists that Llewelyn turn Gruffydd over as a hostage. Gruffydd goes reluctantly and discovers that being a hostage is almost enjoyable. Gruffydd travels and hangs out with friends among the other hostages, even visits bars and embarks on other avenues of adulthood. However, all that ends when Llewelyn decides to break his allegiance with John again. John decides to hang all the hostages, leaving Gruffydd for last.

Gruffydd awaits his death with the courage and strength he believes any Welshman would show. However, Gruffydd's life is spared when John receives a letter from Joanna warning him of a plot against him by several of his own noblemen. John decides to spare Gruffydd for Joanna's sake, but locks him in a room for the remaining years of his confinement. Gruffydd will be released, but not until John signs the Runnymede Charter several years later. Gruffydd returns to Llewelyn's court an angry young man, filled with hatred toward everything English, including Joanna and her son, Davydd.

Gruffydd makes trouble for Joanna and Davydd. Joanna becomes convinced that Gruffydd intends to kill Davydd, especially when he becomes enraged upon Llewelyn's announcement that he intends to make Davydd his sole heir. Joanna launches a plan to force Llewelyn to exile Gruffydd. However, the plan goes so well Llewelyn is instead forced to imprison Gruffydd. Gruffydd will spend many years trapped in one of his father's many castles until Davydd is old enough to defend himself against Gruffydd.

William de Braose and Maude de Braose

William de Braose is a trusted friend of John's for many years, a man with whom John would often go carousing. However, something causes a falling out between John and William de Braose. No one knows for sure the cause of the falling out, but it is rumored that de Braose knows that John either killed his nephew, Arthur, or ordered his death. The rumor suggests that de Braose held this information above John's head, threatening to go public with the information if John did not give de Braose all he wanted. However, de Braose pushed John too far and John decides to call his bluff.



William de Braose is ordered to repay debts owed to the King. When de Braose cannot pay these debts, he makes a deal with John that allows him to remain out of jail, but takes from him a large portion of his estate. When de Braose arrives at his home in the company of several of the King's guard, his wife becomes enraged. Maude de Braose does not feel that her family should have to pay the debt for which King John is asking payment. Maude announces to everyone in hearing distance that King John murdered his nephew and does not deserve respect. This pronouncement leads to King John arresting Maude, her son, and several of her grandsons until William de Braose can arrange to pay the debt that has now increased by several thousand dollars. William de Braose cannot pay the sharply increase debt and decides to leave the country, leaving his wife to face John's wrath.

Maude de Braose is not a polite woman. Maude often speaks without thinking, expressing her thoughts even when they are unpleasant. Joanna dislikes Maude because she does not hide her opinion in regards to Joanna's illegitimacy. However, when Joanna learns that John had Maude starved to death along with her son, it is a cruelty that haunts Joanna for many years. Joanna grows uncomfortable around anyone related to the de Braose, causing a great deal of tension between Joanna and Llewelyn when he arranges marriages between his daughters and several members of the de Braose family.

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Eleanor of Aquitaine is John's mother. Eleanor was once married to the King of France, but fell in love with the young King of England. Eleanor received a divorce from her husband and quickly returned to England where she married King Henry, making her the first woman to be both the Queen of France and the Queen of England. Eleanor bore King Henry eight children, including four sons. However, after the birth of her last child, King Henry took a mistress who he brought into his court and treated equally with Eleanor. Eleanor was so outraged by this that she left the King's court and refused to obey his request that she return. As a result, King Henry placed Eleanor in prison where she remained until his death sixteen years later.

Upon her release from prison, Eleanor immediately joins her favorite son, Richard, in ruling the country. Eleanor arranges for Richard to marry a young woman in order to produce an heir; however, no children are ever born to this union. Eleanor also works behind the scenes to influence her son's reign. Eleanor adores Richard, causing a great deal of friction between her and John. To make this relationship more difficult, John works to steal the crown from Richard, causing Eleanor to reprimand him more than once. However, when Richard is killed after sustaining a battle wound, Eleanor works to make sure that John becomes his heir rather than her grandson, Arthur.

After John becomes king, Eleanor is nearly kidnapped by Arthur during the war he waged against John to take the crown. John is pleased he could rescue his mother, but does not feel as though his efforts are appreciated. Eleanor continues to attempt to influence John's reign as she did Richard's, but John resists her efforts. When Joanna



spends a summer with her grandmother, she expects to find a hard, unkind woman, but instead finds a wise, gentle woman full of advice and stories of triumph. Joanna mourns her grandmother when she dies, but John does not due to his conviction that his mother never really loved him.

King Richard

King Richard is the second son of King Henry and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Before his father's death, Richard is ruler of Aquitaine with his mother, Eleanor. Richard is a gifted soldier, constantly waging war against his enemies or fighting crusades against the enemies of the Church. Richard marries after his mother arranges a match, but does not have any heirs. This causes a great deal of speculation over who will be his heir. Geoffrey, one of John's brothers, left behind a son who is young, but can be named heir. There is also John, Richard's younger brother.

John has schemed behind Richard's back many times in attempts to steal the crown, causing Richard not to trust John. Richard reaches a breaking point when John conspires with the King of France to pay a foreign ruler, who has kidnapped Richard for ransom, to keep Richard longer. However, Richard forgives John when he comes to him and apologizes. Some time later, Richard is surveying a battlefield when he sustains a wound to his shoulder. The wound will fester and cause Richard massive infection that will end his life. Eleanor is with Richard at his death and claims that Richard named John as his heir. Arthur does not believe this, so he battles John for the crown. However, John manages to outmaneuver Arthur and take him hostage. Arthur is never heard from again.

King Henry II

King Henry II is John's son. Henry is only nine when his father dies and leaves him heir to the English crown. Henry has several trusted advisors around him, men his father trusted; therefore, he rules with some confidence despite his young age. However, Henry is devastated when his mother decides to leave England, leaving behind not only Henry but his four siblings as well. Henry remains close to his younger brothers and sisters, as well as his aunt Joanna. Joanna visits Henry frequently, developing a bond with him that is as strong as the one she once shared with her father.

Henry and Llewelyn come to an understanding early in Henry's reign, allowing peace to settle between Wales and England. At the same time, Henry continues to bond with Joanna, going to the extremes of having her birth declared legitimate by the Church based on the fact that neither of Joanna's parents were married at the time of their affair. However, this declaration does not allow Joanna to make claims against her father's estate or to the crown of England.



William de Braose

William de Braose is the grandson of Maude and William de Braose. William was close to his grandmother during her lifetime and mourns her death with a deep passion. William is angry with King John for what he is rumored to have done to Maude, hoping for any opportunity to destroy him. However, William has also nursed a crush on John's daughter, Joanna, since he was a teenager and visited Wales with his father.

Joanna is sensitive about Maude's death and her father's role in it; therefore, she is uncomfortable around anyone related to the de Braose. Llewelyn is aware of Joanna's feelings, but disregards it when arranging marriages for his daughters, many of which have taken place among members of the de Braose family. Therefore it is no surprise when, after taking William hostage during battle, Llewelyn thinks nothing of sending William to stay at his court with Joanna. William repeatedly seeks Joanna out despite her reluctance to be alone with him. Finally, one afternoon William forces Joanna to speak to him about John and Maude's death. Joanna is so overwhelmed with grief for the child William was at the time of his grandmother's death that she allows herself to be seduced by William.

Joanna and William have a torrid affair for a week. At the end of the week, Joanna ends the relationship. However, William does not take no for an answer and makes advances on Joanna every time they meet. When William is visiting Aber one night while Llewelyn is absent, he follows Joanna up to her bedchamber, believing that she left the great hall early because she wanted to have a rendezvous with him. This is the last thing Joanna wants, however, and she attempts to frighten him away by screaming. Before William can leave, Llewelyn returns home unexpectedly. Llewelyn catches William in his bedchamber with his wife. Llewelyn has William arrested and later he is hanged.

Welsh Princes

Wales is divided into three sections. The northernmost section is called Gwennydd. Gwennydd is the region of Wales Llewelyn's father hailed from and is the area that Llewelyn wins back from his dishonest uncles and reunites for the first time in many years. The central section is called Powys. This section is ruled in part by Gwenwynwyn, a mortal enemy to Llewelyn. When Gwenwynwyn is arrested by King John, Llewelyn goes against strict orders from King John and seizes most of Powys for himself. However, this land is quickly returned to Gwenwynwyn after John uses it as an excuse to wage war on Llewelyn. Finally, the southernmost section of Wales is called Deheubarth.

Wales is ruled by many princes, all men who have inherited sections of their homeland under the laws of inheritance in Wales. These men have never worked together for the common good of their country. However, Llewelyn changes this. Llewelyn gathers these princes together and ignites in them a love of their country that makes them see the importance in uniting against the English King. As a result, the Welsh Princes are able to keep King John out of Wales. This unity brings Wales together in a way it had never

been before. Llewelyn is given the title of Prince of Wales as a result, making him the honorary leader of all of Wales, something the country has never seen.



Objects/Places

Joanna's Letter to John

Joanna sends a letter to King John to warn him about several noble men who are scheming with Llewelyn against John. This letter comes just in time to save Gruffydd from hanging along with all the other Welsh hostages King John has decided to hang to punish Llewelyn for disobeying King John.

Ransom

Eleanor of Aquitaine is forced to pay a ransom to have her son, King Richard, released after he is kidnapped by a foreign government. At the same time, John attempts to have his brother's kidnapping extended a year by paying more than the expected ransom. John's actions cause a rift between he and his brother that is later healed.

Llewelyn's Bedchamber at Aber

Joanna walks into Llewelyn's bedchamber early one morning and finds him in bed with his mistress. Unbeknown to Joanna, this is grounds for divorce in Wales. However, instead of ending their marriage, this act brings Joanna and Llewelyn closer together. More than twenty years later, this same bedchamber will be the scene of Joanna's downfall when she is caught with William de Braose.

Runnymede Charter

King John is forced to sign a charter at Runnymede that reduces his power over his people and establishes the people's rights after he is forced to concede a war fought against his barons. Among the stipulations in this charter, King John is forced to release Llewelyn's son, Gruffydd, who has been his hostage for many years.

Welsh Inheritance Laws

Welsh law says that sons inherit equally in their father's estates and title rather than only the oldest son inheriting as it is traditionally done in a Norman family. Llewelyn decides to ignore this Welsh law and leave his title and lands to only one of his three sons, Davydd, the son he has with Joanna.



Hafod

A hafod is a small hut in which Welsh peasants live. Joanna and Willaim de Braose have an affair inside an abandoned hafod while William is a hostage of Llewelyn's during a conflict with the Normans.

Aber

Aber is a castle in Gwynedd where Llewelyn most often keeps court. Aber is where Joanna and her children live and where Joanna and Llewelyn live out most of the significant moments in their marriage. Aber is also where Joanna is caught with her lover, William de Braose.

Dolwyddelan

Dolwyddelan is a castle in Gwynedd where Llewelyn occasionally keeps court.

Llanfaes

When Joanna is caught in her bedchamber with William de Braose, Llewelyn has her imprisoned at his seaside castle in Llanfaes.

Deganwy

Deganwy Castle is where Llewelyn imprisons his son after Joanna provokes him into a fight.

Gwenydd

Gwynedd is the northern section of Wales where Llewelyn's father was supposed to become prince, but lost his inheritance to his two brothers, who divided the area and ruled their separate portions. Llewelyn fights his uncles beginning at the age of fourteen and wins full control of all of Gwynedd.

Powys

Powys is the central territory of Wales ruled by Gwenwynwyn. When Gwenwynwyn is imprisoned by King John, Llewelyn goes against a direct order from King John and takes control of the territory. King John uses this action as an excuse to begin a war against Llewelyn.



Fontevrault Abbey

Fontevrault Abbey is an abbey in England where Eleanor of Aquitaine spends the final months of her life. It is also here that Joanna spends a summer with her grandmother, learning a great deal from Eleanor's stories of her younger days.

Shropshire

Shropshire is the region of England where Llewelyn lives during a short period of his childhood due to the marriage between his widowed mother and Sir Hugh Corbet.

Normandy

Normandy is a region of France that was under the control of the English until King John loses it in a battle with King Philip of France. Normandy is where most of the nobility of England hail from and is why French is the dominant language in England at the time the novel is set.

Angouleme

Angouleme is a region of France that is controlled by the father of Isabelle, the Queen of England, thus giving King John control of the region.



Themes

Loyalty

Joanna is the daughter of the king of England and the wife of the Prince of Wales. Wales is a small territory on the western edge of England, a wild land that has been ripped apart both by the rulers of England and its own people. Now Llewelyn has taken control of an entire third of Wales and dreams of uniting his country under one governing body. At the same time, King John wants to expand his holdings and stop the raids the Welsh make on the English settlements that border their country. Llewelyn and King John are working at cross purposes, placing Joanna squarely in the middle of their ambition and strategic maneuvering.

King John originally arranged for Joanna to marry Llewelyn with the hopes that the marriage would create an alliance between the two leaders. However, the marriage was not even a year old before King John realized that the alliance was not to be. Unfortunately, by the time King John realized his mistake, Joanna was already in love with her new husband. Joanna found herself torn between her love for her father, the man who took her out of an unhappy home and rescued her, giving her the kind of childhood she had only dreamed of before; and her husband, the only man who has ever really loved her for the person she is and not the person she is supposed to be.

Joanna and Llewelyn's marriage is marred only by Joanna's insistence on defending every action her father makes, even those actions that are indefensible. When Llewelyn and King John go to war against each other and Llewelyn is forced to surrender, it is Joanna who arranges the surrender with her father, saving Llewelyn from certain death. However, this surrender forces Llewelyn to hand over thirty hostages, including his own son. When all these hostages are hung, except Llewelyn's son, Llewelyn is devastated, causing him to tell Joanna some truths he had not wanted her to know about her father.

Joanna learns how cruel her father can really be when he hangs more than twenty children out of anger and spite. However, Joanna still wants to believe that her father is still the kind man who took her out of a terrible childhood and gave her the life of which an illegitimate child might only dream. Joanna goes against her husband's wishes and writes her father a letter, warning him of the noblemen who are scheming against him, plotting his death, and is rewarded when King John decides not to hang Llewelyn's son. However this action will cause Llewelyn to doubt his wife's loyalty and cause him to wonder if he can ever truly love the daughter of King John.

Overcoming Childhood Demons

Llewelyn's childhood is marred by the death of his father and the apparent theft of his inheritance when his father's lands are divided between Llewelyn's uncles rather than given to him. To add insult to injury, Llewelyn's widowed mother marries a Norman lord



and moves her family to England. Llewelyn, a proud Welshman, is outraged at his mother's choices and embittered when a group of Norman children beat him for attempting to stop the theft of his horse. Llewelyn never forgets these slights. When Llewelyn is of legal age in Wales, fourteen, he raises an army with the help of an uncle and goes into battle against his own uncles to reclaim the land that should have been his upon the death of his father. Llewelyn wins his land and becomes Prince of Gwynedd. Years later, Llewelyn comes across one of the boys, now a man, who beat him as a child. Llewelyn humiliates the man in front of his men and in this way exacts his revenge.

Joanna's childhood was also difficult. Joanna was born the illegitimate child of a woman of noble birth. Joanna's mother is humiliated by her fallen state and angry with the man who caused her situation. Joanna's mother suffers great depression and when Joanna is five, her mother dies during one of these great depressions. Joanna is taken in by the nobility in the castle near her home, but when these kind people contact her mother's family, they learn that they want nothing to do with the child. Not only this, but the mother has told the biological father that the child was stillborn. Joanna is left an orphan with no one to care for her. The noblewoman decides to have Joanna taken to her father, aware that he has never sent away one of his illegitimate children.

Joanna is taken in by Prince John, her biological father, and given a life of such riches that it almost seems like a dream. Joanna adores her new father and soon the ugly memories of her past slip away. However, when Joanna marries Llewelyn, she begins to see her father, now the King of England, without the tunnel vision of a child. Joanna soon learns how cruel her father can be, hears rumors of how he starved prisoners to death and killed his own nephew. Joanna wants to believe her father is a kind man and desires to love him as she always has, but finds it difficult to ignore the truth that is right before her eyes.

Joanna never forgives her father for his bad deeds, refusing to visit him for the final few years of his life. After his death, Joanna finds it difficult still to reconcile the loving father she knew with the cruel king she has come to realize he was. When a relative of the woman King John allowed to starve to death makes advances on Joanna, she finds herself incapable of pushing him away. Despite her deep love for her husband, Joanna begins a love affair that is emotionally tangled with her anger and grief for her father. The affair threatens to ruin Joanna's marriage, but it also allows Joanna to forgive herself for loving her father.

King John, too, has demons from his childhood he must overcome. King John is the last born son to King Henry and Queen Eleanor. Shortly after John's birth, Eleanor is imprisoned for shunning her husband when he flaunts his mistress at court. John is raised for sixteen years without his mother, becoming a man before she is released upon the death of King Henry. Upon her release, Eleanor becomes a champion for her son Richard, helping him rule the country as king. Eleanor makes it clear to John that of her two surviving sons, Richard is her favorite. John lives the rest of his life with the knowledge that he is not a priority to his mother. This knowledge leaves John



emotionally handicapped and lacking in empathy. As a result, John will commit some unforgivable acts against his enemies and his own people.

Jealousy

Gruffydd is Llewelyn's oldest child by his mistress, Tangwystl. As Llewelyn's only son, Gruffydd is threatened by his father's marriage to Joanna for several reasons. First, Gruffydd dislikes Joanna because she is Norman and because in her country, only the eldest son who is born within the bonds of matrimony can inherit his father's titles and lands. Gruffydd is concerned that should Joanna give birth to a son, she will influence his father into going against the Welsh tradition of allowing all sons, regardless of order or circumstances of birth, to inherit. Second, Gruffydd is a normal child who does not want to share his father's affections or accept a new woman in the place his mother once held.

Gruffydd refuses to accept Joanna despite her kindness and multiple attempts at friendship. Not only will Gruffydd not accept Joanna, but he encourages his three sisters to shun her as well. When Gruffydd sees that Joanna is slowly winning over his sisters, he becomes cruel, using both words and action to make Joanna's life as difficult as possible. This situation only becomes more difficult when Joanna gives birth to a son. Gruffydd hates the little boy. Gruffydd is jealous of Llewelyn's attention that is lavished on this little boy and this makes Gruffydd's behavior toward Joanna even more unpleasant.

After Llewelyn is forced to surrender to King John, he is forced to turn over more than thirty hostages to King John, including Gruffydd. Gruffydd quickly becomes a pawn in a deadly game being played by the two powerful and ambitious men. When Llewelyn betrays King John, John begins hanging the Welsh hostages. Moments before King John is to hang Gruffydd, a letter arrives from Joanna warning him of a plot against him by some of his own noblemen. King John spares Gruffydd's life for Joanna, but continues to keep him imprisoned until the signing of the Magna Carta. When Gruffydd is released, he is angrier than ever at Joanna and everything English.

Joanna fears for her son, Davydd. Joanna knows that when Llewelyn dies, Gruffydd will stop at nothing to destroy Davydd and take his entire inheritance. Joanna knows this will mean sure death for her young son. To stop this from happening, Joanna puts into action a scheme to dishonor Gruffydd at court. Gruffydd falls for her ploy, creating a situation in which Llewelyn is forced to imprison him for many years. This ploy saves Davydd, but puts a strain on Llewelyn and Joanna's marriage. At the same time, Gruffydd lives in isolation in his plush prison, allowed to marinate in his increasing hatred for Joanna, Davydd, and England. Eventually Llewelyn frees Gruffydd when Davydd is old enough to protect himself from his older brother, but Gruffydd returns the same angry, bitter man he was before his imprisonment.



Infidelity

In the time in which this novel is set, it is common for marriages to be arranged between grown men and little girls, marriages between couples who rarely meet until the days before the wedding. As a result, it is expected that the men in these marriages will take mistresses to ease the physical needs that a loveless marriage cannot provide. King John takes many mistresses throughout the novel, particularly during his first, unsuccessful marriage, resulting in the birth of nearly half a dozen illegitimate children, Joanna included. Llewelyn, too, takes a mistress before his marriage to Joanna, resulting in four children. Llewelyn has another mistress during his marriage to Joanna that produces twins in the months before the wedding.

Joanna is only fourteen when she marries Llewelyn; therefore, she is unprepared to be his lover on their wedding night. However, Joanna quickly falls in love with her new husband and desires to share every aspect of their married life together. When Joanna returns unexpectedly from a trip to England, she finds Llewelyn in bed with his mistress. Joanna is shocked, jealous, and afraid that Llewelyn will beat her for her expression of anger. It turns out, however, that under Welsh law this situation gives Joanna grounds for divorce. Rather than make use of that law, Joanna expresses her affection for Llewelyn, leading them to consummate the marriage.

Joanna and Llewelyn have a happy life together for more than twenty years, marred only by the tensions that Joanna's affection for King John thrusts between them. However, after learning the truth about her father, how he starved Maude de Braose to death and more than likely killed his own nephew, Joanna is lost in an emotional abyss of grief and uncertainty. Llewelyn goes off to battle and sends home William de Braose, the grandson of Maude de Braose. Joanna is uncomfortable around any de Braose, afraid they blame her for her father's actions. However, William seeks Joanna out, anxious to be near the woman he has had a boyish crush on since his early teens. William and Joanna begin a torrid affair that Joanna quickly puts a stop to within the week. However, William is persistent and one night sneaks into Joanna's bedchamber. Llewelyn comes home and finds Joanna with her lover.

Llewelyn is devastated, just as Joanna was when she found Llewelyn with his mistress. However, Llewelyn has the power to execute both William and Joanna. Llewelyn has William hung, but sends Joanna to be imprisoned in one of his seaside castles. Joanna is devastated by Llewelyn's actions, aware that he will never forgive her for her own actions. Joanna's daughter, Elen, points out the inconsistencies in Llewelyn's actions, suggesting he sinned far worse by taking lovers when away at battle. Joanna disagrees, however, holding firm to the train of thought that suggests a woman's duty is to be true to her marriage vows while a man is allowed some leeway. Eventually Llewelyn forgives Joanna, accepting her back into his court against the sentiment of his people.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. This novel covers a great deal of time and includes a great variety of characters; therefore, the author has chosen a point of view that allows her to move from character to character, showing the reader not only the actions of the plot but also the thoughts and emotions of the character through whom the author is speaking at that moment. This novel also includes another point of view that is referred to as the authorial voice. At various points throughout the novel it is necessary for the author to explain certain aspects of history that pertain to the plot of the novel and she does this by summarizing these events in an authorial voice.

The point of view of this novel works for many reasons. First, the third person point of view allows the author to include many characters rather than restricting the author to one narrative character as another point of view, such as first person, might do. Second, the third person point of view is omniscient, allowing the reader to see the thoughts and emotions of the narrating character rather than just a report of the actions taking place around the character. Finally, this point of view works because it allows the reader to keep track of the many characters while still developing an amount of intimacy with each major character.

Setting

This novel is set in Europe from 1183-1234. The setting is primarily the castles of England and Wales. Wales is described as a wild, mountainous place with a unique beauty that only a Welshman can appreciate. As a contrast, England is described as a flat, civilized place with a beauty only a Norman can appreciate. The castles are amusingly similar, each enclosed by massive walls and containing baileys, dining halls, and bedchambers, designed more for ease of defense than comfort. In Wales, Joanna and Llewelyn often walk the beaches or cliffs near their castles, enjoying the wild beauty of their homeland. In England, King John and Queen Isabelle often stroll in gardens and travel by carriage or horse.

The setting of this novel is of the utmost importance to the plot because the plot revolves around the historical accuracy of this setting. The novel is based on real people who lived during this time period and participated in many of the events dramatized in the novel. Therefore it is important that the author research her setting in detail and provides for the reader an accurate picture of the life these people lived. The setting works because each chapter is rich in details, from the description of wall hangings to the offhand mention of a drink a character might enjoy or the writing implements a character is using to communicate with a distant loved one. The setting



becomes almost a character all its own, keeping the reader grounded in the time and environment of the novel, bringing history to life.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is not the same stilted, hard to read Old English that Shakespeare used in his plays, but contains some of the same elements of Shakespeare's language. The dialogue uses words that have not been a part of the English language for several centuries and grammar that is bulky and unfamiliar to the modern ear. The exposition also uses some of this old grammar, giving the reader a sense of the language that might have been used during the novel's time period without making the language so difficult to read that the reader cannot get past the first page. The novel also includes many words and names that are Welsh, adding a certain amount of authenticity to the story.

The author uses language as another device to underscore the setting of the novel. There is no slang, no contractions, nothing that a modern reader might recognize in their everyday life. However, the language continues to be simple despite this technique, keeping the unfamiliar words to a minimum and often explaining foreign words, such as the many Welsh words, within the text when it is to be used often within the plot. The use of these strange words adds authenticity to the novel, adding to the sense of time and place while keeping the language simple enough that even the youngest, modern reader can understand it.

Structure

The novel is split into two books, each containing its own set of chapters, the first with more than forty chapters and the second with only seventeen. The novel also includes a prologue and epilogue. The author has also provided an author's note that explains the research she did on the book, notes one instance in which she changed history to make the plot more congruent, and explains the title of the novel. This author's note, while the shortest passage in the book, includes information that helps the reader assimilate the information given in the story with factual history.

The novel has many plot lines. The novel begins when Llewelyn is a boy and King John is a young man. These two, initial plots follow both men's rise to power. A quarter of the way into the novel, Joanna is introduced and the reader is given an overview of her early childhood and her life after coming to live with John. Later, King John initiates a marriage between Joanna and Llewelyn, effectively bringing their two story lines together. As the novel continues to follow the rise of both Llewelyn and King John, it also begins to show the difficulty Joanna finds herself in when she is torn between her love for her father and her love for her new husband. This situation is further complicated when Llewelyn's son expresses his hatred of everything English, including Joanna and her son, Davydd.



Quotes

"Theirs was a land of awesome grandeur, a land of mountains and moorlands and cherished myths. They called it Cymru and believed themselves to be the descendants of Brutus and the citizens of ancient Troy. They were passionate, generous, and turbulent people, with but one fatal flaw. They proclaimed themselves to be Cymry —'fellow countrymen'—but they fought one another as fiercely as they did their English neighbors, and had carved three separate kingdoms out of their native soil." Prologue, pg. xi

"He was ten years old and an alien in an unfriendly land, made an unwilling exile by his mother's marriage to a Marcher border lord. His new stepfather seemed a kindly man, but he was not of Llewelyn's blood, not one of the Cymry, and each dawning day in Shropshire only intensified Llewelyn's heartsick longing for his homeland." Book One, Chapter 1, pg. 3

"John was the youngest of the eight children born to Henry Plantagenet and Eleanor of Aquitaine. His sisters had been bartered as child brides to foreign Princes, were little more to him now than time-dimmed memories. His brothers had been, by turns, indifferent and antagonistic to this last born of the Angevin eaglets—with one exception. William Longsword was, like Geoffrey, a bastard half-brother." Book One, Chapter 3, pgs. 43-44

"The ancient river port of Rennes was the capital of Brittany. It was, as well, the favorite residence of Arthur, the young Duke who bore the name of a fabled Celtic King and never doubted that one day he, too, would be king." Book One, Chapter 8, pg. 96

"Turning to see what had so transfixed his brother, Will found himself staring, too, at the girl coming toward them. His mouth dropped open; the shock was all the greater because he'd instinctively cast Isabelle in Ela's image. Expecting an endearing, coltish clumsiness, bitten nails, and shy, sidelong glances, he saw, instead, a slender vision in turquoise and silver silk, a delicate oval face framed in a cascade of shimmering light." Book One, Chapter 10, pg. 121

"If the Welsh had such hatred for Normans, how would they ever accept her as Llewelyn's wife?" Book One, Chapter 15, pg. 189

"For nine years he had been Llewelyn's only son and heir; the birth, three years ago, of his brother Tegwared had been a severe shock to Gruffydd. But Tegwared did not live at Llewelyn's court, was born of a concubine, and Gruffydd had gradually come around to a grudging acceptance of Cristyn's son. Joanna's son would be a far greater threat, a far more dangerous rival; although Welsh law did not distinguish between legitimate and



illegitimate offspring, Holy Church did, would have to favor a child born in wedlock. If that woman ever bore Papa a son, he might lose all, even Papa's love."

Book One, Chapter 22, pg. 262

"She looked so desolate, so achingly vulnerable, that Llewelyn put his arm around her shoulders. She had, he thought, burned more than a bed this time; she had burned a bridge."

Book One, Chapter 28, pg. 345

"When she was little, their eyes would meet across a chamber, he'd wink, and she'd be flooded with happiness, reveling in reassuring the intimacy of their shared smiles. Had he smiled, too, as he gave the command to hang Maelgwn's son? He was just a lad, not yet seven. John had Maude de Braose and her son cast into a dungeon at Windsor Castle, and then he starved them to death. He hanged the hostages; they're dead...dead."

Book One, Chapter 32, pg. 391

"For more than six years, Joanna, you have been torn between us, between your love for John and your love for me. You've never been able to give me all of your heart, never been able to pledge your loyalty to me utterly and unreservedly."

Book One, Chapter 32, pg. 407

"On June 10, John rode to the meadow called Runnymede, between Windsor and Staines. There he gave grudging consent to the demands of his rebellious barons. The articles drawn up by the barons were affixed with John's great seal."

Book One, Chapter 36, pg. 450

"John turned his head, looked at him for a long time without answering. 'I always knew,' he said, 'that I would die alone...'"

Book One, Chapter 41, pg. 498

"Llewelyn looked from Will to Joanna, and despite the irrefutable evidence of infidelity, there was still a moment in which he half expected Joanna to offer a rational, convincing explanation for Will's presence, half dressed, in their bedchamber. But she had yet to utter a word, and all color had drained from her face. She looked up at him in stricken silence, silence more damning than any confession could have been, and he could read in her eyes only horror, despairing entreaty, and an admission of betrayal beyond forgiving." Book Two, Chapter 11, pg. 631

"Joanna had been able to find a curious sort of comfort in that courtyard scene at Aber, in that sudden glimpse of Davydd in a new and unnerving guise, as a man utterly intent upon claiming a crown. She opened her mouth now, ready to reassure Llewelyn that Davydd would triumph, and then realized he was not speaking of Davydd's succession,

but rather of Wales. Her smile was both wry and resigned; whilst she worried about people, his concern would ever be for empires." Book Two, Chapter 17, pg. 700



Topics for Discussion

What is significant about Llewelyn's childhood in England? Why does the author feel the need to include in the early chapters Llewelyn's fight with the de Hodnet boy? How does this fight impact Llewelyn's character and affect his actions later in life? How does this show Llewelyn's deep dislike of England?

Who is Joanna? What is significant about her birth? Why does Joanna's mother lie to her biological father about her existence? Who does this lie hurt more? Why does Joanna's mother die? Is it suicide? Why does the mother's governess insist to the priest that it is not suicide? What impact would a suicide have on the mother in death? Why does the mother's family refuse to take custody of Joanna? How does this affect Joanna as a child? As an adult?

Discuss Prince John. Why does John want to be king? What does he hope to achieve with this title? Why does John scheme against his brother, Richard? What do these schemes achieve for John? Why does John dislike his mother? How has John's mother molded his ambitions? Why does John not accept his mother's expressions of love at the end of her life?

Discuss Gruffydd. Why does Gruffydd dislike Joanna? Why is Joanna a threat to Gruffydd? Why would Gruffydd feel threatened by a male child born to Joanna when one takes into account the inheritance laws in Wales? Are Gruffydd's fears well grounded? Would Gruffydd have lost out on his inheritance if he had not disliked Joanna and Davydd?

Discuss Gruffydd's imprisonment by King John. Why is Gruffydd imprisoned? What is his first year of imprisonment like? How does this shape Gruffydd's emotional maturity? What happens to change this situation? Why does Gruffydd become embittered against the English? Do the English deserve Gruffydd's anger?

Discuss Gruffydd's imprisonment by Llewelyn. Why does Llewelyn imprison Gruffydd? Is this imprisonment fair? How does this imprisonment affect Llewelyn? Is Llewelyn happy to be free of Gruffydd? Why or why not? How does this situation affect Llewelyn's relationship with Joanna? Why? What was Joanna's role in Gruffydd's imprisonment?

Who is Isabelle of Angouleme? Why does King John marry her? What is John hoping to achieve with this marriage? Why does King John not wait to consummate the marriage? Why does King John's brother, Will, feel he should wait to consummate the marriage? Does Isabelle prove to be a suitable wife? How does Isabelle impact Joanna's life? Is Isabelle a selfish person? Why does Isabelle leave England after John's death? How does this affect King Henry II?

Discuss the de Braose family. Who is Maude de Braose? Why does Joanna dislike her? How does her death affect Joanna? What is it about Maude's death that causes Joanna



to turn on her father? Why does Maude's death draw Joanna to William de Braose? Why does Joanna have an affair with William? Does Joanna stop loving Llewelyn?

Discuss infidelity. Why is infidelity treated differently based on who the offending party is? Why is Llewelyn not imprisoned for cheating on Joanna? Why is Joanna imprisoned for cheating on Llewelyn? Is this a double standard? Why or why not? Should women be held to a higher standard when it comes to infidelity? Could these standards be applied to modern men and women? Why or why not?