

The Saxon Shore Study Guide

The Saxon Shore by Jack Whyte

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Plot Summary

The Saxon Shore by Jack Whyte tells the story of Merlyn Britannicus who realizes his destiny when he comes across his infant cousin, Arthur Pendragon. It's Merlyn's task to protect the child and prepare him for his own destiny - to unify Britain's clans and protect Excalibur.

The story begins with Merlyn saving the life of his cousin's infant child. The two are cast into peril as their small boat is taken over by soldiers, and the child is tossed into the water. Merlyn dives in and saves him, but the two are brought onto the galley as captives. Merlyn realizes that he speaks the language of his captors, and he tells them his story. They give him a chance to prove that he is telling the truth. He claims to be a good friend of his captor's brother. They hold the child until he can bring back the brother.

Merlyn travels to his home, Camulod. Along the way, he finds his murdered cousin and realizes that his cousin is innocent of the wrongdoing of which he had been accused. When he gets back to Camulod, Merlyn realizes that he has lost touch with the people there. He determines to be a better leader. He brings his friend, Donuil, back to his homeland so he can prove his friend's existence and get the child back. Along the way, they stop at a leper colony so Merlyn's friend Lucanus can bring supplies to the lepers. Lucanus stays there while Merlyn and the other soldiers are in Eire.

Although it's a strange country and a new experience, Merlyn finds a connection with the people. The king recognizes him as family and returns Arthur, the baby, to him. They discuss politics, and Merlyn shows the people of Eire the benefits of using horses in battle. He returns back to Camulod with the child, and finds that his brother, Ambrose, is struggling to unify the people of Camulod. They have a harsh winter together, which helps them develop a stronger bond, uniting the infantry and cavalry. They set out to defeat their enemy. Along the way, they stop at the leper colony and find it filled with dead lepers. There is evidence that one survived, and Merlyn joins the others in search of the man. He finds him, tries to save his life, but fails.

The soldiers find their stolen horses, completing their mission. Through negotiations, war is avoided, and alliances are established. When Merlyn returns home, he faces a time of peace where he can concentrate on rearing Arthur. During this time, he goes on a trip with his brother. They encounter many people from different lands. It offers Merlyn a new perspective on the unification of peoples. On the way home, he becomes ill.

Back at home, Merlyn confronts the fact that he has leprosy. Even as he faces this fact, attackers kill one of his friends and harm the children, including Arthur. Merlyn and his comrades realize they must get the child to safety, but Merlyn is fearful of the fact that leprosy will keep him from caring for the child properly. His friends veto this thought and may make plans to keep Arthur safe in the lands of their enemy Derek, King of Ravenglass.



Book 1, Cornwall: Prologue - Chapter 5

Book 1, Cornwall: Prologue - Chapter 5 Summary

The Saxon Shore by Jack Whyte tells the story of Merlyn Britannicus who realizes his destiny when he comes across his infant cousin, Arthur Pendragon. It's Merlyn's task to protect the child and prepare him for his own destiny - to unify Britain's clans and protect Excalibur.

Prologue

The prologue, written in first person, tells of an old man looking back on his past. He realizes the importance of breaking down stories to keep them alive, and feels that he has a story that needs to be told. The writer had been called Merlyn, the Sorcerer, when he was a young man. Now he is 80 years old, and he is reflecting on the story of young Arthur, a baby who would become a man, a cane, and a champion under his guidance.

Chapter 1. Merlyn Britannicus is sleeping with a young baby in the bottom of the boat, and he is woken by the sound of a huge galley near him. The fighters on the ship are ready to kill him with their bows and arrows. The baby is crying from hunger, and Merlyn grabs the golden signet ring with the Red Dragon crest that is hanging around his neck so that the child will remain anonymous. Three enemies come onto his small boat, and one of the men picks up the child and throws him overboard. Merlyn kills the man, defeats the other two and dives into the water to rescue the child.

Although the child should be dead, he survives, and Merlyn rescues him. The two are brought onto the large galley where Merlyn waits to discover his fate. He recognizes the language his captors are speaking, and tells them that he will answer their questions since he learned the language from a friend. He tells them how he found the baby crying after a battle. Merlyn had been looking for his cousin when he came across the carnage. Upon questioning, he tells them that he can find the place of battle to further demonstrate his innocence. Merlyn recognizes the image on the mast and realizes who his captors are. The leader is the brother of his friend who taught him the language. The friend had once been his captive, but now is free. As the captors determine his fate, they see the evidence of battle on the dunes, backing up Merlyn's story.

Chapter 2.

Merlyn tells them about a grieving woman he had come across who might become a wet nurse for the baby. They go after her and find her. Connor, the brother of his friend, Donuil, is waiting to see if Merlyn will come back to the galley. Connor decides that he might be truthful after all. They share some mead, they talk about Merlyn's background and his unique bow, then go to check on the child who is now nursing.

Connor is considering all that has happened. He does not find his sister, Ygraine, who Merlyn claims died during the battle. Many of the bodies had floated out to sea. He



refuses to believe that she is one of the dead. Connor tells Merlyn that he knows what he is going to do with them. He is going to keep the baby until Merlyn goes back to his home, Camulod, and brings back his brother Donuil. Meanwhile, he will continue looking for his sister. As Merlyn heads to Camulod, he rides his horse past rotting bodies. He reflects on how he had been hunting for his cousin, Uther, thinking that he had killed his beloved wife. However, when he comes to the battle scene on the beach, he realizes that it is someone else wearing his cousin's armor. His cousin is dead. Merlyn also realizes that his cousin might not have killed his wife. He rides by another battle scene, and he discovers Uther's body amidst seemingly hundreds of corpses. Merlyn makes a funeral pyre for his cousin. He promises the dead man that his infant son will think well of him.

Chapter 3.

Merlyn continues on toward Camulod sickened by the carnage he witnesses. The journey is relatively pleasant otherwise, with one brief encounter with a possible enemy who leaves after a wordless challenge. Merlyn spends a pleasant evening with some friends where he hears about some of the local politics. As he rides closer to Camulod, the land is devoid of warfare. In a secluded place where he plans to camp, he encounters a man and a woman. It is his friend Lucanus and a woman who is carrying bone pieces and a shiny skull.

They decide to set up camp together, and Merlyn discovers that the girl is training to be a physician. After a pleasant dinner, Lucanus tells Merlyn that he heard a rumor that Uther died in battle. Merlyn confirms this and says that he saw it with his own eyes. He tells him that Derek of Ravenglass killed him, and that now Derek is dead, also.

Ludmilla seems very familiar to Merlyn, and he asks about her. She says they have met before many times in his aunt's house. She nursed him when he was recovering after a head injury.

Chapter 4.

Merlyn learns that a plenary session of the Council of Camulod is scheduled for the afternoon he returns to Camulod. He goes to visit his aunt who is extremely happy to see him. He shares the sad news of his cousin's death with her. He also tells her about the baby, little Arthur, pointing out that he is heir to Pendragon, Camulod, and Cornwall. Merlyn tells his aunt that the child will fulfill the dream of uniting all the peoples into one, the Britons. His aunt is frightened at the thought. Merlyn leads his aunt over to the armory where he shows her a weapon she has never seen before. It was made by her husband, and its name is Excalibur. It is the most beautiful weapon anyone has ever seen.

As the two talk together, the aunt catches Merlyn up on the political situation of Camalod. He learns about divided loyalties and factions. Arriving at the Council, Merlyn discovers that it has grown. There are two obvious groups - one supporting Peter Ironhair, an ironsmith, and the other group supporting Lucius Varo, a farmer. Merlyn



speaks to them all, stating that he is back in action. The years when he was suffering from his head wound are over, and he has regained his faculties.

After the meeting, Merlyn once again talks with his aunt, telling her the details of the meeting. She offers more background information on the split among the Council. Merlyn comes up with a way to fix the problem.

Chapter 5.

Merlyn meets the Council for a second time. He attends in garb denoting his status. He speaks with authority, and makes changes to nullify the rift among the people. Creating order, he reverts back to old rules where no group has more power than others.

After the meeting, Merlyn goes to the infirmary to talk with Lucanus, but he discovers that Lucanus isn't there. Ludmilla is surprised since she thought he went to the Council gathering, but he didn't. She tells Merlyn that Popilius Cirro is recovering. Popilius is a senior soldier in Camulod. Merlyn goes to talk with him. After he has reassured the old soldier that everything is going well, he visits with his aunt. She tells him that his father and her husband and brother would have been proud of him after what he did in the Council.

Lucanus talks with Merlyn, and they discuss the possible trouble Ironhair might cause in the future. When they are finished talking, Ludmilla comes in with refreshments. As she leaves, Luke teases Merlyn about his attraction to the woman, which he immediately denies. As they talk about attractions, Lucanus points out to Merlyn that he never consorts with women. This makes Merlyn very uncomfortable, and they talk about judgment of people. Merlyn isn't very tolerant of those who have relationships other than man and woman. Lucanus encourages him to open up his mind before telling him that he is not one who is in love with men, either. Rather, he has chosen to live a celibate life. Merlyn opens his mind to the new concept.

Book 1, Cornwall: Prologue - Chapter 5 Analysis

Prologue.

Although this is the fourth book in the series, the author takes time to introduce the main character, Merlyn. He is old, and is reflecting upon the past. It shows a man who is serious about his duties, inspired by those around him, yet one who also uses humor. In this chapter, Merlyn announces his mission, his destiny. It's up to him to raise Arthur, a little boy who becomes High King.

Chapter 1.

Chapter 1 sets up Merlyn's character. He is a man who risks his life several times to save a tiny infant. When danger is around him, he is able to think clearly. This is demonstrated when he has the wherewithal to grab the heavy signet ring from the



infant's next neck even when a score of bows and arrows are aimed at him. Merlyn knows how to fight, and kills one of his captors.

He has an impressive lineage, and knows more than one language. This gives him the ability to converse with his captors. He is articulate and knows how to defend himself. Using his skills of observation, he determines where his captors come from, and he considers the best way to communicate with them. He realizes that his captor is the brother of his friend Donuil. Merlyn uses this connection to help improve the situation. It works well enough that they decide to give him a chance, based on evidence that they might find on the beach where Merlyn says he witnessed a battle and found the child. The captors have an understanding that the child is very important, although they don't know why. As the chapter ends, they see bodies on the sand, proving Merlyn's truthfulness.

Chapter 2.

Connor asks about Merlyn's horse. He's astonished that the horse is still in the area even though Merlyn has been gone for almost a day. This gives insight into the knowledge and training Merlyn has of horses, and also to the fact that Connor is unaware of what one can do with horses. Even though evidence shows that Merlyn is telling the truth, Connor does not believe him regarding his sister. Perhaps this is because the familial bond is too deep. As Merlyn heads back to Camulod, he has time to consider his situation. He realizes that his assessment of his cousin's guilt might not be accurate. This shows the reader that Merlyn is an impetuous man with a human flaw.

Chapter 3.

Due to recent events, Merlyn is looking at the world around him with a new eye. He is suddenly much more aware of carnage. Camulod seems like a true haven. The closer Merlyn gets to Camulod, the greener and more peaceful land becomes. He lets down his guard, and is startled when he encounters others. He is happy to find that the others are friends of his. Although the woman says that she knows him, he doesn't have a recollection of her. She says she nursed him, and this shows the reader that something has happened in Merlyn's past. The reader finds that he was gravely wounded, but doesn't know fully what happened to him.

Chapter 4.

Things appear to be going well when Merlyn arrives in Camulod. His aunt is very happy to see him, and it's obvious that they have a close relationship. Through conversations about politics, Merlyn discovers that there are problems in Camulod that might threaten its future. He is very willing to listen to his aunt and listen to her insight, even though she is a woman. Merlyn tells the old woman about Arthur, and explains that he feels that the child will fulfill the dream of his ancestors. He also shares the fact that he feels that it's his destiny to raise the child to be king.

Merlyn goes to the meeting, knowing that the colony is splitting into factions. He observes what is going on, then later talks with his aunt about what might have led up to



the split among the people. He realizes that he is out of touch with the people. Once again, he listens to his aunt's insights, and he also listens to his friend, Lucanus. As they are talking, Lucanus is working. He is very meticulous about washing his hands on a regular basis. This is a foreshadowing of problems that might result from uncleanliness. As Merlyn listens to his friend, he comes up with a solution to the splintering of the people of Camulod.

Chapter 5.

The next time the Council meets, Merlyn is clearly establishing authority. He looks the part, and he speaks the lines. He lets everyone know that there is no division in Camulod's future. He clearly addresses his past brain injury and tells the people that he is now in his right mind. This behavior earns him the respect of nearly everyone. He knows that he has not won over Ironhair, though. Merlyn is aware that this will cause problems in the future. Merlyn once again talks with his friend, Lucanus. They talk about sexuality, and it's obvious that Merlyn has strong views on what's appropriate. Lucanus encourages him to open his mind.



Book 1, Cornwall: Chapters 6-10

Book 1, Cornwall: Chapters 6-10 Summary

Chapter 6.

Merlyn wakes up the next day hung over from the night before. He spends the day visiting the sick, inspecting troops, and going for a ride on his horse. As he approaches the main gate, Ironhair blocks his path in a standoff. Merlyn who knows that it would be disastrous to back down, especially with everyone watching. Merlyn threatens to confiscate his load if Ironhair doesn't move, and he is supported by the people surrounding him. Merlyn warns him not to challenge him in the future, and says that he wants what's best for Camulod.

Merlyn has a wonderful afternoon visiting a secret vale where he lived with his wife before she died. He grieves for her before heading back to Camulod the next day. He is lulled by his peaceful surroundings and realizes, too late, that he is not alone. Bracing for an attack, he is pleased to discover that it is his brother Ambrose and Donuil.

On the way home they talk about battle strategies, and Ambrose tells him that his men fight like Saxons. Merlyn gets to see this firsthand as two of the men spar. They camp that night, and Merlyn catches Donuil and Ambrose up with everything that was going on in Camulod. They discuss the boy. Ambrose announces that he has decided to stay in Camulod. He will help Merlyn with his duties, especially since Merlyn plans to focus more on the child. Donuil states that he, too, is staying, even though his time as a hostage is complete.

Chapter 7.

Ambrose is overwhelmed with the beauty and power of Camulod. He realizes, and comments on, the power of the infantry. He asks if the infantry and cavalry ever combine, and Merlyn responds to the negative. In Camulod, everyone is astounded by Ambrose and Merlyn's identical looks. Merlyn tells Ambrose that he will be second-in-command as soon as he is ready. Merlyn takes out Excalibur, shares it with Ambrose, then tells the story behind the sword. The two hear the sword sing for the first time. It's magical. Merlyn tells Ambrose about Arthur, stating that he could become High King.

Within a month, Donuil and Merlyn are ready to set out for Eire. Lucanus asks to join them for part of the trip since he wants to take some supplies to friends. Merlyn tells him to take whatever he needs, and Lucanus confesses that the friends are lepers. This makes Merlyn very uneasy, but he still supports Lucanus. They decide to bring some horses as a gift to Donuil's father, and Donuil wonders about transporting the animals. Merlyn isn't ready to think about that yet. Donuil suggests that they bring some candles to his father. They head out on their journey.

Chapter 8.



The trip is postponed for several reasons. The day they were supposed to leave, Merlyn wakes up from a pleasant dream in which he was flying. Usually he tries to avoid his dreams since many are dark and frightening as well as prophetic. He feels as if he can interpret this dream, and he decides to pursue Ludmilla as a romantic interest as a result of the dream. He goes to the infirmary to find her, but she isn't there. Ambrose comes into the room to talk with him, and Ludmilla also arrives. Merlyn notices an instant attraction between the two.

The brothers are discussing weaponry when they receive the news that Popilius died of respiratory failure. They plan an elaborate funeral for him. After the funeral, Merlyn heads to the crowded bathhouse. He is stabbed, and as he lies in his sick bed, Merlyn insists that it is Ironhair's doing. Ludmilla and Ambrose come to his room to check on him, and thinking he is asleep, they talk, but Merlyn is actually feigning sleep. He realizes that the dream really represented his look-alike brother, not himself. Ludmilla would not consider him romantically.

Chapter 9.

They leave on their journey nine days later. Ambrose joins them for the first leg of the journey, and he and Merlyn discuss Camulod. He says he wants to talk with Merlyn privately. When they are alone, Merlyn teases him about Ludmilla. Ambrose wants his blessing, and Merlyn gives it, realizing that he doesn't feel anything except joy for them.

Ambrose thinks Merlyn knows about the relationship because he is a sorcerer. He confesses he overheard some people talking about Merlyn being a sorcerer. Merlyn says this is ridiculous, and says it was purely his observations that told him about the couple's romance. He admits, however, that he does have dreams that do come true. Ambrose asks if he's dreamt about Arthur. Merlyn says that he has not, he did have a dream about a sword standing in the stone.

As they travel on, they become aware of the fact that someone is following them. No one attacks, but they take extra precautions for safety. Merlyn discusses celibacy with Lucanus, and says that he's considering that sort of lifestyle for himself so he can focus his energy on raising Arthur. Lucanus agrees to talk with Merlyn more about it after the trip. They arrive at the leper colony, and Lucanus encourages Merlyn to go inside and meet the lepers. He insists there is nothing to fear. Merlyn is amazed at the cleanliness of the dwelling, and he sees how much it means to the lepers to have the supplies brought to them. He gives them one of the boxes of candles. That night, he dreams about seeing his own leprous image in a mirror.

Chapter 10.

Donuil goes hunting by himself, and when he returns, Merlyn is angry with him. He points out the possible ramifications for his actions, and Donuil expresses remorse. They discuss the transportation of the horses, and Merlyn concedes that they might have to send a group of them back to Camulod. When they reach the port town, they try to negotiate passage on a ship. They are attacked, but most of them escape. As they



look around, they realize that they are dealing with mercenaries who are taking apart old buildings in order to sell the valuable pieces.

As they move on, they are surrounded again. Donuil calls out, telling the men to hold their weapons since the new people are his people. The men have been sent by Donuil's father to make sure Donuil is all right. They talk about the dilemma of the horses and the ships, and determine a solution. Together, they decide to take a barge.

Book 1, Cornwall: Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Chapter 6.

As Merlyn spends more time in Camulod, he realizes how much he has lost a connection with the people. Showing that he is a good leader, he makes it a priority to get to know everyone and what they do. He even tries to make peace with Ironhair. However, the man won't give in. Ironhair is determined to confront Merlyn. Knowing that it could threaten his position as a leader, Merlyn stands up to him and wins. However, he once again notes that the man will cause trouble in the future.

The reader is getting used to seeing Merlyn as a leader at this time. When he goes to the vale where his wife is buried, the reader is reminded that he is human. His grief is overwhelming, and it shows that he is capable of great love and respect. This is affirmed when he runs into his stepbrother in the woods. There is no animosity between them. In fact, Merlyn openly welcomes him and offers to share his leadership.

As they travel together, Merlyn confesses that he's having a hard time relaxing with the men around them since they look like Saxons. Donuil remarks that many Saxons are very similar to them. Merlyn insists that they are savages, and refuses to see any resemblance. Just as he closes his mind to any type of sexual relationship other than man and woman, he also closes his mind to anyone who is not from Camulod. Donuil tries to change his mind, telling him that others are human, also, but he refuses to see this. As he sees the men fight, however, he is impressed with their weaponry and fighting style. This shows that he still has the mind of the warrior in spite of his prejudice.

Chapter 7.

In chapter 7, Merlyn once again shows how much he respects his family members. Although he wants to have some fun with the people of Camulod, showing them how identical he and Ambrose are, he listens when his stepbrother says that they should introduce him as a separate person. He respects that and is thankful that he did. Even though his brother isn't qualified to stand in as a leader, Merlyn has faith in him and tells Ambrose that he will become second-in-command as soon as he feels ready. Merlyn shares family secrets with him, including Excalibur. Merlyn shows that he is a generous man. When Lucanus asks to travel with him, and says he wants to bring supplies to a friend, Merlyn generously tells him to take anything he needs. He hesitates when Lucanus explains that it is for a group of lepers, but he doesn't change his mind. He has



a very real fear of the disease, in spite of Lucanus' reassurances that it's not very contagious. In this chapter, Merlyn once again shows his impetuosity when he decides to bring horses to the king in Eire. Donuil asks how they are going to transport them, and Merlyn decides to think about it at a later date.

Chapter 8.

This chapter begins with a vivid dream that Merlyn tries to interpret, but he gets it slightly wrong. He thinks he is the main character in the dream, but later realizes that it's his brother. This shows how prophetic his dreams are, yet also shows how he is not completely in tune with them. The men are about to head out on their journey, but the journey is delayed by the death of a great soldier. Merlyn once again shows respect for others as he takes the time to plan an elaborate funeral for the old man, delaying his journey. In previous chapters, he realizes that Ironhair will most likely cause more trouble. In this chapter, this comes to fruition as he is nearly killed.

Chapter 9.

As they head out on the journey, Ambrose joins them for the first part. Merlyn shows his good nature and understanding as his brother openly discusses his romantic interests in Ludmilla, the woman to whom Merlyn had been attracted. He teases his brother, but feels nothing aside from happiness for the couple. As they ride out, Ambrose asks questions, and Merlyn shows an understanding of how the lands work for the people in Camulod. As they talk, Ambrose comments that he has heard rumors about Merlyn being a sorcerer. Merlyn knows that he has dreams that come true, a fact that he doesn't share with many, but he knows he is not a sorcerer. In this chapter, it becomes obvious that Merlyn is a man who listens carefully to his inner voice. He knows his destiny lies with Arthur. Nothing can shake this feeling. He is even willing to become celibate in order to focus more on the child. When they arrive at the leper colony, Merlyn is fearful. However, he shows his respect for his friend by going inside the leper's home upon request. This opens his eyes to the fact that the lepers are not filthy beasts, but rather humans with a sense of orderliness and cleanliness. The chapter also helps the reader understand what it must be like to live as a leper. Mordecai's appreciation for any sort of help from the outside is tangible. The reader already knows about Merlyn and his dreams. The chapter ends with him having a dream about seeing his own leprous face in a dream mirror, leaving the reader wondering and feeling a foreboding sense that this is foreshadowing.

Chapter 10.

Merlyn establishes himself as a leader, even with his friends and loved ones. The chapter begins with his addressing Donuil regarding his foolishness in going off by himself to hunt. Donuil is properly chagrined. As they arrive in the port town, they seem naïve in their acceptance and ability to gain passage to Eire. Their prowess in battle shines through in their quick reactions to an attack and their ability to change course and tactics according to their needs.



Book 2, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 11-14

Book 2, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 11-14 Summary

Chapter 11.

Eire is first seen through the sheen of fog. The land is strange compared to what they are used to seeing. Because of the fog, they have landed in an area filled with enemies. Fortune is with them, and no enemies are in the immediate area. The men discover that there are no roads, so they can't travel as fast as they had hoped. They decide to head north following the coastline, keeping regular contact with those still in the boat. At one point something bellows then attacks them. It is an enraged boar. They kill it then collect their horses, which had run off in fright. Since no one comes after them even after all the noise of the attack, they decide no enemies are around and prepare a feast with the fresh killed pig.

Chapter 12.

Everyone is feeling great the next day after this huge dinner. They meet with the others on a beach, and tell about the boar experience. Dedalus shows the others the beast's spiraled tusks. The men from Eire are amazed. A man shows them a similar tusk that he wears, which is his great pride because of its size. It is much smaller than the tusk of the boar Merlyn and his men killed. The men learn about the animals in the land, and they decide to press on to the north.

Merlyn meets King Athol, and realizes he had been wrong in calling the Outlanders barbarians. The old king is very pleased to see his son, and introductions go well. Merlyn is told that Arthur is doing well, also. He meets many people and has an instant aversion to two people. One is named Mungo, the king's advisor, and the other is Donuil's brother, Finn. Merlyn also recognizes another man, but can't place him.

Fin is rude to Merlyn at the outset, and his father is angered. Merlyn has a verbal battle with Finn, and puts him down. Later, he finds out that the king has sent Finn away to hunt for a goat in the mountains. Merlyn spends some time with Arthur, and sees that he is well cared for. He realizes that he enjoys the company of the people he once thought of as barbarians. After the feasting, Donuil asks Merlyn if he plans to tell the king about his wife, the king's daughter. He tells Donuil that he has decided to wait until the next day. The king joins them and invites them to talk together.

Chapter 13.

The men go to the king's hut for conversation. As they talk, they discuss warfare and cavalry. Donuil brings in the candles, and the king is amazed. It's an incredible gift for a land filled with darkness and terrors of the night. As they share stories, Merlyn realizes



it's the right time to tell the king about his daughter. He also tells the king the details of Arthur's importance. The king agrees to help protect the child, and agrees that Merlyn is the one to train him. When the meeting is over, the king accepts Merlyn as a family member.

Chapter 14.

The next morning, Athol meets with Merlyn and asks for a description of the lands between Camulod and Glevum. In the afternoon, the men get ready for their cavalry display, as requested. They are nervous since they don't have the huge amount of horses and riders with which they are used to working. Before the display begins, a giant bear comes out of the woods, kills a man, then goes to attack the crowds. The men on the horses defeat the beast, with Merlyn giving the death blow using a rod meant to attack boars. As he recovers, he talks about the weapon with Donuil, and they discuss the usage of spears and javelins in warfare. The two head over to the smithy to see if he can form a weapon for them. While they are there, Sheelagh arrives. She invites them to dinner that evening. She has just come back after a hunting expedition.

Donuil tells Merlyn about Sheelagh. She is the daughter of Liam Twistback. Donuil asks Merlyn what he thinks about the area. He implies that Merlyn would find it lacking after Camulod. This makes Merlyn angry, and he defends the place stating that he finds himself fortunate to be there. Merlyn comments on the relationship that he sees between Sheelagh and Donuil.

Book 2, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 11-14 Analysis

Chapter 11.

This is the first chapter in Book Two, which focuses on Merlyn's time in Eire. The trip isn't going as smoothly as they had hoped. Intense fog makes it difficult to see, and they land in enemy territory. The horses are frightened, and their belongings are dumped into the water, but all ends well, and they are able to calm the horses and retrieve their items. As the men travel, they realize how spoiled they are in their own land with Roman roads. In this new land, not only do they have to contend with a different climate and unfamiliar plants, but they have to follow animal trails instead of a real road. This significantly increases their travel time. When they are attacked by a boar, the men show how well they work together as they fight and kill it.

Chapter 12.

The journey goes relatively well. When they arrive at their destination, the king is very happy to see his son. Merlyn finds out that Arthur is safe, and he understands that his prejudice against those unfamiliar to him might be misplaced. The people of this land are not the savages he imagined. Rather, they are hospitable people with their own law and code. There are two men he doesn't trust, but this could happen anywhere. He is troubled by the fact that he remembers one man, but can't place him.



Chapter 13.

Relationships between the king and Merlyn shift from potential enemies to precarious friends to family during Chapter 13. Merlyn learns more about the country as well as the people and traditions. He learns that they live in fear of the dark, and he has brought them the gift of light. Just as he and his men had taken roads for granted, they had also taken light for granted. This is not so with the king, who finds the candles to be a wondrous gift, dispelling evil. Merlyn shares a bond with the king since his beloved wife was the king's daughter. He fills the king in on the politics of his land, and shares his destiny regarding Arthur.

Chapter 14.

The people in Eire are not familiar with horses and warfare. Merlyn and the men plan to offer a demonstration, but are interrupted by a real emergency when a bear attacks the crowd. They are able to show the power of their horsemanship in action in a real-life situation. Even though the people are impressed, Merlyn is honest about what happens. He feels as if he killed the bear by accident. Forever a leader and a warrior, he takes the incident to analyze weaponry to see what might work better in the future.



Book 2, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 15-18

Book 2, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 15-18 Summary

Chapter 15.

Merlyn doesn't know what to expect when he goes to Liam Twistback's home for dinner. He decides to leave his armor and weaponry behind. Liam is a wealthy man known for his talents in breeding oxen, goats, and cattle. He is a hard worker, and makes friends easily. No one is jealous of him. He doesn't hold his wealth over anyone. He dotes on his daughter and enjoys spoiling her. The evening is pleasant, and Merlyn learns more about the local people. They don't use servants, and they work hard. Liam expresses an understanding of how strange it must all seem to Merlyn. He remembers how he felt when he traveled through Britain. He did this when he was younger and performed as a hunchback with a troupe of showman.

The evening is filled with fine food, fine music, and fine wine. As Merlyn gets to know more about Sheelagh, she reminds him of a hawk. He finds that he is attracted to her persona. Donuil is proud of her and brags about her. He tells Merlyn that the woman is also very gifted with handling knives. Merlyn sees an attraction growing between Sheelagh and Donuil and feels that his friend is lucky. As they are leaving for the evening, a man comes in and reports that another one of their men is missing. They offer to form a search party.

Chapter 16.

Donuil leaves with the search party, and Merlyn stays behind in the house. He asks Sheelagh what happened to the people who were preparing the feast. She explains that her father is more fortunate than others, and every once in a while he tries to prepare a feast, asking for help. He makes sure there is more food than necessary, and divides the remainder among the families. The trick is to find out how to share the food with others without it being obvious. The others have gone to bring the excess food to their families.

As they are waiting for the return of the search party, Sheelagh asks Merlyn what he thinks of her man. She knows that she and Donuil are destined to be together. She also knows that they are going to have two sons named Gwin and Gilleadh. As they talk, they discuss dreams. Sheelagh is fearful when she thinks Merlyn is accusing her of having dreams come true. He shares with her that he has prophetic dreams himself. She points out that it's dangerous for people to notice - it could even cause banishment by those fearful of sorcery. They share dreams, and try to interpret them.



The search party comes back, and they have not found the man. Donuil says that he feels as if something is amiss. Sheelagh encourages them to listen to his intuition and prepare themselves. They realize that if there's going to be an attack, it will be at the break of dawn. When the attack comes, they are prepared, and they bring out the horses, which the enemy has never seen. It terrifies the enemy, and they are easily defeated. Athol, who sees the whole thing from a rise, is delighted.

Chapter 17.

As they celebrate their victory, they learn that the invaders were the Wild Ones that they had been concerned about upon the landing. The celebration is cut short in the afternoon as the man who disappeared reappears, and Finn comes home early. The man had been found tied up in the woods. Finn arrives a few hours after he does. When Finn had been out hunting, he heard of another attack. The men fill Merlyn in on the politics of the area. Merlyn asks about their defenses and learns more about their military strategies. After they talk, Merlyn develops a case of food poisoning. He is laid flat for several days. As he gains strength, Athol comes to talk with him. He says that he wants Merlyn to take his grandson back to Camulod before the winter comes. They make plans for the trip, and Athol mentions that he is going to move his people north. Donuil and Sheelagh will go to Camulod with Merlyn.

Merlyn goes to visit the wet nurse who is raising Arthur. She is abrasive at first, but opens up when she learns that she is welcome to travel with them. Merlyn is amazed at the way she takes care of the child, and promises to protect her and keep her with them as long as she wants.

Chapter 18.

As the men ready to sail back to Camulod, Merlyn is very aware of Sheelagh's presence. He feels a sense of foreboding as they leave. A large group is there to see them off, and Merlyn notices that there is some disturbance along the riverbank. He knows something is wrong. Donuil argues with the king before Donuil gets on the ship. He feels that he should stay behind, but the King wants him to move on.

Merlyn realizes that he feels a foreboding because of a dream he had. He remembers his dream in detail for the first time. He pulls Sheelagh aside and tells her about the dream, knowing that Donuil won't listen to him since he doesn't know about the prophetic dreams. Merlyn knows who set up the attacks in Eire and the political implications behind the attacks.

Sheelagh talks to Donuil, and together they listen to Merlyn's story. They know that Donuil must go back to help his father. He leaves the ship, promising to join them in the spring. The trip goes well, and soon they are on the way back to Camulod, after stopping at the leper colony on the way.



Book 2, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 15-18 Analysis

Chapter 15.

It seems as if many friendships are formed in Eire, yet Chapter 15 shows how tenuous the friendships are. Merlyn isn't sure whether he should or should not wear armor and weapons to dinner, but he chooses to go without them. This is a good choice, and he has a pleasant evening with his host and his host's daughter, Sheelagh. He learns more about how non-barbarian like the people in Eire are as he learns about the generosity of his host. When someone goes missing, the people go out of their way to find him. In this chapter, the reader also gets to know Sheelagh better. She is an impressive woman who has a bond with Donuil. Merlyn, himself, finds her very attractive.

Chapter 16.

The power of Merlyn's dreams comes into focus as he and Sheelagh stay behind when the others search for the missing man. They talk on the subject of dreams, and Sheelagh is fearful, worried that Merlyn will think she is a sorceress, which could mean banishment. He tells her about his dreams, which are often prophetic. This creates a common bond between the two of them. When a search party comes back, Donuil feels as if something is amiss. Sheelagh is the first person to suggest that they follow his instincts. No one objects. Even though they are fearful of sorcery, they seem very cognizant of the fact that there are feelings and situations beyond the obvious. The power of fighting with horses comes to light once again as they defeat the enemy with very few casualties.

Chapter 17.

They live in an era of constant warfare. Even as they celebrate their victory, they learn of other problems coming their way. The king is planning to move his people, and it's a lesson to Merlyn that a king of a people is more the important than a king tied to the land. This is how they live in Eire. They make plans for Arthur's safety, and Merlyn goes to visit the wet nurse. He realizes that although he saved the child's life and he is a warrior, he is nothing compared to the wet nurse who kept the child from starving and continues to monitor his safety and well-being. He shows generosity in offering her refuge and protection for as long as she wants. He also gives her the freedom to choose her own path.

Chapter 18.

Merlyn is getting more in tune with his dreams. Instead of fearing them, he's embracing them. He sees one clearly and knows he must pass the message on, even though he has to reveal his secret of prophetic dreaming. With Sheelagh's help, he is able to advise Donuil of a plot he discovered within a dream. He also realizes why the man he felt was familiar yet couldn't place seemed like someone he knew. He realizes that he had seen the man before in his dreams. Donuil places his trust in his friend and in his love, and he goes back to help his father, promising to meet them in the spring. This

shows great signs of faith in the dreams as Sheelagh and Donuil plan to reunite so they can have the two boys she has seen in her own dreams.



Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 19-23

Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 19-23 Summary

Chapter 19.

They are very happy to be back on familiar soil. As they travel, a body of armed men come near them. They hide, and by sheer luck, they are not found, but they are able to witness the men. Dedalus recognizes them as barbarians - not ones that are uncivilized, but actual barbarians from Asia Minor.

Lucanus is thrilled to see them. He thought that they would be gone for at least six months, yet it is only six weeks. As they catch each other up on news, Lucanus says that some men attacked the leper colony. Merlyn decides that after they return to Camulod, they will send troops back to help protect the colony. As he travels back towards Camulod, Merlyn thinks about how quickly the child is growing. He imagines Arthur as a king. He also thinks about Sheelagh and has a hard time falling asleep because he is lusting after her. He goes to a pool of cold water to calm himself down, and when he comes out, Sheelagh is there with the baby. They talk about Arthur then go to sleep. The next day they arrive in Camulod. The people from Eire are overwhelmed and impressed. Merlyn finds out that Ambrose has made some significant changes trying to unite the cavalry and the infantry, who hate each other.

Aunt Luceiia is thrilled to see the child. She sees her husband, her brother, and her grandson in him. She and Merlyn talk about religion and God's will, and the aunt tells him to keep his mind open. She invites the wet nurse and Sheelagh to stay with her.

Chapter 20.

Merlyn plans to meet his brother at the training area, but he stops along the way to bathe. The men are practicing at the shooting range, and looking around, Merlyn realizes that he is out of touch with the people of Camulod. There are many men he doesn't recognize. One man, Huw Armstrong, challenges him. The man makes bows and has an impressive one. It's a tight match as they both shoot towards a small brooch planted in a haystack. They have great respect for each other, and Merlyn wins. The fine shooting yields approval of all the men witnessing the competition.

When Merlyn and Ambrose are alone, they talk about things that have gone on while Merlyn was gone. Ambrose shares some of his ideas for relieving the hostilities between the cavalry and the infantry. Merlyn tells Ambrose that he is planning to travel to Cambria to check out the land. Ambrose tells him to discuss it with Huw. When he does, the man calls his former home, Cambria, a bog of waste and treachery. When Merlyn insists that he still needs to go there, Huw tells him that the land belongs to him. He can



give Merlyn the right to go on the land, but he can't promise safety. As Merlyn tries to fall asleep that night, he contemplates the dangers surrounding them. He knows he hasn't heard the last of Peter Ironhair. Turning away from the negativity, Merlyn decides to think of more positive things, such as the baby. He realizes that just the thought of the child makes him happy.

Chapter 21.

Five days later, Merlyn goes away for a week on his own. He hunts during the week, leaving his kill at predetermined points for soldiers to pick up. He thinks about a mistake he had made by being careless. He had run into Sheelagh in the hallway, and she had been carrying baby Arthur. She had asked him to watch the baby for a while. Merlyn had taken him to the armory, and shown him Excalibur. The boy had gripped it with authority and didn't want to let go. Merlyn had been so engrossed in the situation that he hadn't heard Sheelagh come up behind him, and she had seen the sword. Knowing that a little bit of information is often more damaging than knowing the whole story, he had asked her to take care of the child then come back to get the whole story. By the time she had come back, he had put the sword away, and he had told her the sword's history and the importance of keeping it secret. The whole time they had been talking, he had been fighting his attraction to her.

His first days back in Camulod are eye-opening. He realizes that Ambrose had been correct in his assessment of the animosity between the cavalry and the infantry. Dedalus suggests that Ambrose and Merlyn talk to the men. They look nearly identical, and one is an infantry man while the other is a horseman. It would offer the people a visual demonstration of how the two groups could collaborate. After deciding to talk with the troops on the day of parade and festivities, Merlyn is increasingly nervous. Ambrose and several other of his friends send him hunting until the festivities.

On the last day of his hunt, Merlyn experiences a phenomenon of which he has never heard before. The weather is extremely miserable, and a herd of deer comes near where he is hiding. He shoots down a stag, and due to the wind and other weather, the rest of the herd never notice. Because of this, Merlyn is able to shoot down a score of deer.

Merlyn rests when he gets back to Camulod, and is woken with a hurried summons. They find out that 50 of their garrison soldiers have been killed. The enemies are gone now, but they realize they have a problem on their hands. The arrows are from a Pendragon bow, but they realize that it's not prudent to wage a war on the entire Pendragon clan since many are friends. They need to respond, but they need to do it wisely. They decide to send out a force of 1,000 men on horse and on foot. They will go after the enemy, assess the land as Merlyn had planned to do, and protect the lepers all at once. Meanwhile, the infantry will have to work alongside the cavalry, hopefully developing a tighter bond between the two.

Chapter 22.



Before the troops head out, it begins to snow. It's only November, and no one is ready for it. Ambrose realizes that this could be a good opportunity for the troops. If they are stuck in Camulod, it gives them more time to work together and train together. It also means their enemies will be kept at bay.

It is very cold on the day of the events where they are going to have a parade and speak to the men. Merlyn goes to the armory and finds Sheelagh analyzing the knives and daggers. She shows him her prowess with the blade. She also confronts him directly about having an awareness of his lust for her. She confesses to lusting after him, also. However, they both know that nothing should come of it, and she knows that her destiny lies with Donuil. They agree to acknowledge what they have, yet keep a physical distance from each other to avoid too much temptation. This lightens a load in Merlyn, and he feels freer.

The ceremonies go well, and the people of Camulod are inspired to join forces without strife. As the parade is dismissed, Merlyn notices a single snowflake drifting down. More follow. By the time they are dismissed, it begins snowing heavily. It makes them wonder whether or not they are really going to head out the next day.

Chapter 23.

The snow is the beginning of the harshest winter anyone has ever heard of. Many people freeze and starve to death and so does much of the livestock. Luceia dies during the winter, also, but she dies of natural causes. The ground is too cold to bury the dead so they make a huge fire to thaw the ground then give their loved ones a proper burial. One positive aspect of going through the hardship together is that it unifies the people of Camulod.

Lucanus has a conversation with Merlyn, and he mentions the fact that even though he is celibate, he is attracted to a woman named Julia. She is happily married and has children. This makes Merlyn feel better about his feelings for Sheelagh. In the spring, when the snow finally melts, the men begin training in earnest once again. Merlyn finds out that Sheelagh has been training with them, and she is a natural on the horse. They head out on an expedition with Sheelagh joining them. They are off to recover their horses. When they arrive at the leper colony, they find everyone dead. There is evidence that one person has survived, and Merlyn realizes that it is Mordecai. However, Mordecai had left earlier that day, heading off to the woods. They decide to go after him, each heading in a different direction.

Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 19-23 Analysis

Chapter 19.

This chapter is the first chapter in Book Three, The Saxon Shore. They are safely back on land and heading to the leper colony to pick up Lucanus. They have a new appreciation for their roads and the importance of them. They realize they have to take care of things or they will be destroyed. Their journey has made them see the world



differently. As they journey, they come across soldiers unlike anything they have seen before. It reminds them that there are people in the land with whom they are unfamiliar. When they get to the leper colony, they find that the lepers have been attacked. Merlyn's generosity shows through as he offers to send troops back to protect the lepers. He is more comfortable talking with Mordecai, and he points out that people are not afraid of the lepers, they are really scared of the disease. Merlyn looks forward to going back to Camulod and his future there with Arthur. He still lusts after Sheelagh, but he knows that it is inappropriate.

Chapter 20.

When Merlyn gets back to Camulod, he finds that his brother has made many changes. He still fully supports his brother and doesn't show any jealousy or animosity. Rather, he listens to what his brother says about the issues that need to be addressed for the benefit of Camulod. He backs up his brother formally. As they discuss military strategy, they realize that it's important to know their enemy so they must go out and see what surrounds them.

Chapter 21. Merlyn and Ambrose both plan to talk with the men at the big celebration. Merlyn is very cranky. Those who love him send him out hunting to get him away from the preparations. While he's gone, he thinks back on previous events. He realizes that he is letting his guard down. This is demonstrated when he accidentally lets Sheelagh see Excalibur. While that thought is negative, he also focuses on the positive reaction that young Arthur had had to Excalibur. The child had gripped Excalibur as if he knew that it was his. This is a foreshadowing of the legend. Even though he had been caught unawares by Sheelagh, Merlyn still had the wherewithal to sit her down and tell her the whole story. He trusts her, and wants to make sure she knows the whole truth since partial truths often result in damage. It seems as if he is blessed in his hunting and in his thoughts. Merlyn has an unbelievably good catch on his last day out, killing a score of deer. This bodes well for the events that happen in the next few chapters. When Merlyn arrives back in Camulod, things are peaceful for a very short time, but unrest once again intervenes. It looks like they are going to have to declare war on Pendragon for the murder of men and over some stolen horses. The thought of battling Pendragon makes Merlyn uneasy.

Chapter 22.

The day before the celebration, it begins to snow. Merlyn sees this as a negative thing, while Ambrose sees it as a possibly positive thing. He explains that if they are stuck in Camulod, the men will be forced to live together and work together, unifying the people. Merlyn is impressed with his brother's brilliance, once again showing that his appreciation for his brother takes precedence over any type of jealousy. Merlyn has a talk with Sheelagh, and the fact that they have a mutual attraction comes out in the open. He is happy they had a chance to discuss it, and the two come up with a plan to make sure it never goes too far. He is very respectful of his friends and family.

Chapter 23.



The winter is brutal. Once Merlyn had bragged about the strength of Camulod, yet the winter shows how quickly things can change. The storms leave many dead. Once spring finally comes, the troops are ready to move on and go on their mission after the thieves who stole their horses. Merlyn realizes that Sheelagh has trained as a horsewoman. Instead of putting her down, he admires her and is proud of her. She joins the men as they move out. They stop at the leper colony, and in spite of Merlyn's fear of the leprosy, he is devastated to find the colony empty. When they see a small sign of life that had been there hours before, they decide to go after the survivor, who Merlyn realizes is Mordecai. As they head out searching for the man, a crack of thunder scares Merlyn's horse, depicting an unsettling feeling and foreshadowing of tough times ahead.



Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 24-27

Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 24-27 Summary

Chapter 24.

The searchers agree to go out for two hours then return home. Merlyn finds Mordechai, but the man has fallen down a precipice and has severely broken his leg. He is unconscious. Merlyn struggles to find a way to rescue him and realizes that his only choice is to go down using a rope secured to his horse. As he tries to rescue the man, thunder and lightning scare his horse, and the horse runs away. Merlyn realizes he is stuck on the precipice with the leprous man without a rope. He knows he just has to make it through the night, since the others will come searching for him the next morning. When he wakes the next day, he discovers that Mordechai is dead. Sheelagh and Rufio rescue him, and he cleans himself then attempts to get warm. He has several cuts. Sheelagh is worried about all the blood, but Merlyn reassures her saying that the blood is not all his. Most of it belongs to Mordechai.

Chapter 25.

They continue on with the search for the horses, and Merlyn is troubled by the fact that he realizes he doesn't want to declare war on the Pendragon people. As they camp on the trail, there is time for talk. They discuss the fate of the lepers and everyone feels sad for them. Merlyn realizes that they are humans like he is. They are just victims of a horrible disease for which they didn't even ask.

As they move on, Sheelagh suddenly shoots ahead, and Merlyn finds out that she has noticed ships sailing by. It's Donuil. They had prearranged signals, and thanks to their plan, she knows everything is all right with him. She goes to meet him then sends Merlyn on with his troops. Before she leaves Merlyn, she gives him a deep kiss telling him that it's for his friendship, his love, and his restraint. She tells him she will love him in a way she'll never love anyone else. She reminds him of his task with Arthur, and this helps Merlyn to make a decision on how he is going to face the next few days.

Chapter 26.

The soldiers find evidence of their horses right near the hanging bodies of 30 men. Two of the renegades are Pendragon, but the rest are landless. The men decide to follow the trail of the horses, knowing that they aren't far ahead. They are confronted by Deryll, Uther's cousin. The situation is tense as Deryll and Merlyn face each other. Deryll shows that he has men ready to fight, and they have powerful weapons. Their bows. Merlyn expresses that he is not there to fight, he just wants his horses. He explains what happened before the winter in Camulod. Deryll asks Merlyn about his relationship



with Peter Ironhair. Merlyn tells him that the man tried to kill him. Deryll sees the truth of the story in his face. Ironhair has betrayed Deryll, claiming a link to Camulod. The two decide not to battle, and the troops camp together amicably. The leaders discuss terms of renewing their alliance.

Chapter 27.

Merlyn reunites with Donuil and Sheelagh. It's the beginning of a five year period of peace. Donuil and Sheelagh marry and have their two sons, and Ambrose and Ludmilla marry and have daughters. Arthur continues to grow and delights everyone with his joy, his energy, and his inquisitive mind. Ambrose and Merlyn decide to visit Vortigern since Ambrose never went in person to say goodbye to him when he chose to live in Camulod.

Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 24-27 Analysis

Chapter 24.

Merlyn sticks to the proposed plan, carefully monitoring the time. He finds Mordechai, and realizes that the man needs help. In spite of his fear of leprosy, and knowing that he, himself, might die since the man lies on the edge of a seemingly bottomless precipice, Merlyn chooses to do what he can to save the sick man. He is used to relying on his horse during war, and realizes that his only chance of saving Mordechai is by trusting his horse once again. He ties a rope to the horse then lowers himself down to Mordechai. The thunderbolt in the last chapter foreshadows the climax of this chapter. Another thunderbolt strikes, and the horse scares once again. This time, when he runs away, he takes away Merlyn's only means of getting back up the cliff. Merlyn isn't angry, however. He realizes that the horse just doesn't have the brains to understand his predicament. After Merlyn is rescued, he talks about his injuries. He specifically points out that although he has some small cuts, most of the blood on him belongs to Mordechai. Readers in the current century know that mixing blood with a contagious person can yield dire results.

Chapter 25.

As they continue after the enemy, Merlyn is troubled by the fact that he realizes he doesn't want to battle with Pendragon. At this point in the book, the reader has seen several instances where a person's gut instinct overrides concrete facts. When they get back to camp, Liam, the twistback, expresses pity for the lepers. He of all people knows the hardship of living with a deformity of nature. Merlyn is reminded that it's the disease that is so horrible, not the people. Even when things seem the darkest, some light comes in. As they are traveling, they catch sight of Donuil's ships. They know he is all right. When Sheelagh kisses Merlyn then leaves to go to Donuil, Merlyn feels joy for the couple rather than feeling resentment.

Chapter 26.



They continue on their way and find signs of the horses. Merlyn discovers that he had been correct not to attack the Pendragon clan immediately. Only two of the thieves are Pendragon while the rest are Outlanders. Merlyn shows growth in character when he confronts Deryll. He holds his tongue and speaks carefully. Because of this, battle is avoided. The two leaders work through their differences and discover that they have a common enemy in Ironhair.

Chapter 27.

When Camulod is experiencing a time of great peace and prosperity, Merlyn has a sense that things are going to be fine with Arthur. The child is growing stronger, and he is bright. He also shows compassion for others. Merlyn and Ambrose decide to go on a trip together so Ambrose can go back to the man with whom he had lived for years to tell him face-to-face that he is going to stay in Camulod.



Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 28- Epilogue

Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 28-Epilogue Summary

Chapter 28.

Two weeks later, the brothers continue to travel and sleep in a barn. Before they leave, they observe the interactions of the farm's family and they appreciate the close relationships between family members. Approximately one mile from the farm, Ambrose hears someone coming. They hide, and discover that soldiers are going to attack the farm.

Ambrose has an idea on which they follow through. He and Merlyn go near the farm, they throw on identical clothes, and smear mud on their faces. They take turns coming out from behind some rocks to shoot down at the soldiers. This terrifies soldiers who know that it is not humanly possible for a single man to move that quickly. They are sure the brothers are a spirit, and run away, panic-stricken.

Merlyn goes down the hill to meet the family, following Ambrose's suggestion that they keep up with the farce that there is only one of them. Merlyn enjoys a nice meal with them, even though they don't speak the same language. He takes extra food with him and shares it with Ambrose. They travel on, and soon they are in Vortigern's territory. It's a happy reunion, and Merlyn is amazed at the variety of people he meets with different backgrounds. He realizes that the term Saxon refers to a mix of many different tribes.

Chapter 29.

Merlyn and Ambrose attend a formal dinner in the evening. Afterwards, Ambrose and Merlyn talk about politics and trust. As they head back to Camulod, the weather turns vicious. It is summer, but it is very cold and stormy. Merlyn becomes ill, and Ambrose has to take care of him. After three months away, they return to Camulod. Merlyn asks Ambrose not to mention his strange sickness. Arthur is excited to see them, but he is also shy. Merlyn kneels down to greet him to the boy's delight. The next day, Connor arrives. He brings Arthur a gift of four horses. The boy asks if he can share the horses with his friends. Merlyn notes that this act of unselfishness marks a change in which he sees the future man in the boy.

Chapter 30.

Arthur is getting a well-rounded education thanks to the adults in his life. He is learning about politics, science, languages, and other subjects that will help him when he becomes a ruler. Merlyn is impressed with his brain, and they have many discussions.



During one discussion, Merlyn realizes that the boy thinks about his father more than he realized. He defends Uther stating what a great leader he was. In June of 440, Merlyn finds himself gripped with terror. Lucanus observes him and leads him in conversation. They begin talking about Mordechai, and Merlyn abruptly leaves and goes off on his own. He realizes that he has leprosy. The realization is so agonizing that he almost kills himself, then he almost kills his horse by running him too hard. As he is dealing with the trauma, he sees Sheelagh coming towards him with riders after her. He kills them then asks her what has happened. He finds out that the boys are injured, and Julia is dead. He goes to comfort the boys and take care of Julia. When they return to the fortress, Sheelagh tells the men the story. The woman and children had been enjoying a pleasant afternoon and then five men came upon them. She tricked the men then killed them with her knives. Merlyn praises her for being such a good warrior, in spite of her fear.

Chapter 31.

In a meeting, the men discuss the situation regarding the women and children and try to determine what to do with Arthur to keep them safe. Somehow the news about the boy's importance has leaked out. They realize there is a traitor in Camulod, but they don't know who it is. When the meeting is over, Lucanus tells Merlyn that he has to take the boy away. Merlyn says that he can't do it. Lucanus asks Merlyn when he learned about the leprosy. At Merlyn's startled reaction, he points out that there had been signs that Merlyn thought that he had leprosy, but that he is most likely wrong since it's hard to contract. Merlyn insists that he knows what he is talking about since he has the lesions. He tells Lucanus that he thinks he might have been exposed to it the night Mordechai died. Lucanus hadn't known about that story. Once he hears that Mordechai's blood mixed with Merlyn's, he isn't so positive that Merlyn hasn't contracted the disease. Somehow, sharing the information with Lucanus makes Merlyn feel better.

At the meeting the next day, Merlyn feels as if something is different. The men discuss the situation with Arthur, and they agree to send him to a place that's far enough away from Camulod to be secure, yet close enough to give them easy access. They think Merlyn should take Arthur away, under Conner's protection. The boy's friends and their families will go with them. When Merlyn protests that he can't do it, Lucanus comes in and says that not only can he, but he must. They all agree he is suited for the task. At this point Merlyn realizes that Lucanus has told everyone about the leprosy. They decide to go to Cumbria. To Ravenglass. This feels right to Merlyn.

Epilogue.

Merlyn wonders what will come of them since they are going to approach an enemy in order to seek sanctuary. He has a strong belief that he can trust him, although he can't explain the feeling. He looks forward to a future in Cumbria.



Book 3, The Saxon Shore: Chapters 28-Epilogue Analysis

Chapter 28.

As the brothers journey, Merlyn still struggles with his prejudices towards those with whom he is not familiar. They take shelter in a man's barn, and when he almost discovers them, Merlyn is ready to kill him. The man does not see them, so he walks away unscathed. The brothers observe the man and his family before they leave. Merlyn is impressed with the closeness between the husband and the wife and the obvious love between children and parents. Ambrose uses this as an example to Merlyn of how quickly he judges people. He reminds him that if he had killed the man, that woman would be a widow trying to feed those poor children. Merlyn begins to see the ramifications of his quick judgments. As they travel, they find out that the farm is going to be attacked, and they go back to help rescue the farmer and his family. They do this by staging magic. This shows once again how Merlyn might have received his reputation as a sorcerer. When they arrive at their destination, it's easy for Merlyn to see how loved Ambrose is. As they discuss the different people in the region, Merlyn discovers that many different people from different backgrounds work together and form the people of the land. It shocks him.

Chapter 29.

On the way home, Merlyn becomes ill. He has a bizarre itching along with fevers. Putting together the fact that he had a dream of seeing his leprous face in the mirror, and knowing that he mixed blood with Mordechai, the reader is aware that there is a good chance Merlyn has leprosy. Merlyn asks his brother to keep the strange illness quiet, and his brother respects him. When they arrive back home, Merlyn observes Arthur and remembers what it was like when he had been the boy's age. He treats the child with great respect. When Connor visits, he brings the child gifts, which Arthur is quick to share with others. He is showing that he has a generous nature, just like his mentor, Merlyn.

Chapter 30.

This chapter shows how Arthur is not just growing in body, but also in mind. Merlyn is very serious about the boy's education, and so are the other adults around him. They are determined to make his education well-rounded, with everyone, male and female, offering their talents for instruction purposes. They also make sure the boy does not feel alienated, and include his closest friends in the lessons. It's during this chapter that Merlyn confronts his own mortality as his worst fear comes to light. He realizes he definitely has leprosy. Even as he is struggling with the reality, he sees horrors affecting those around him as Julia is killed, and the children are wounded. Sheelagh shows the hero that she is as she faces the attackers with her knives and kills them.

Chapter 31.



The people of Camulod work together for the good of all once again. They determine a plan for Arthur, insuring his safety. They also find out about Merlyn and his leprosy, yet they don't reject him. Instead, they welcome him and reassure him about his future. It helps him feel as if he is carrying a lighter load.

Epilogue.

As they take the child to safety, they choose to do it by seeking out a man who previously has been an enemy. However, Merlyn's intuition tells them that it is the right move. As the reader has seen consistently throughout the book, intuition is enough.



Characters

Merlyn

In this novel, 80-year-old Merlyn is looking back over his life. He writes about the time when Arthur came into his life, and the child became his destiny. Merlyn is a strong man with a pleasing personality. He is a leader of his people, but doesn't abuse his power. He knows a lot about horses and uses them in battle. Although he is the leader of his people, Merlyn does not set himself above others. Rather, he surrounds himself with trusted friends and relatives for whom he cares deeply and to whom he listens. Some call him a sorcerer. He scoffs at this, but he does know that he has prophetic dreams. Because of his belief in the dreams, he realizes that Arthur is his destiny. He is willing to give up the rest of his life in order to rear the child to be High King. An impetuous man, Merlyn is quick to judge and struggles with prejudice throughout the book. However, he is open to learning more and opening his mind when others point out that he should.

Lucanus

Lucanus is a very close friend to Merlyn. He is the physician in Camulod, but he is also a trusted friend and one who helps make some of the political decisions. A caring person, Lucanus is always reaching out to help others. He trains Ludmilla to be a physician, uncaring of the fact that she is female. He dedicates himself to a life of celibacy so that he can focus on healing others, and he goes out of his way to take supplies to a colony of lepers. Not only does he drop the supplies off with them, but he stays with them and lives with them when he has the opportunity. He has the ability to think clearly, and he knows how to research. Lucanus is also diplomatic. When he feels that Merlyn is wrong in his thinking, he gently encourages his friend to see matters differently, but he doesn't get angry at his friend. He regularly encourages Merlyn not to judge others just because they are different.

Ambrose

Ambrose is Merlyn's stepbrother. They look identical, but Ambrose is more of an infantry man than cavalry. He is a very smart man who often impresses Merlyn with his insight and ideas.

Donuil

Donuil was once a captive, but is now a friend who stays in Camulod voluntarily. He is the brother of Merlyn's dead wife.



Athol

Athol is king in Eire. He is Donuil's father.

Uther

Uther is Arthur's father and Merlyn's cousin. He was killed in battle when the child was an infant.

Arthur

Arthur is the child destined to become High King, but he doesn't know this. He is a likable lad who is growing stronger throughout the book. His mind is sharp, and he demonstrates that he cares for others.

Aunt Luceiia

Aunt Luceiia is Merlyn's aunt. The old woman is very familiar with the politics in Camulod. She is very close to Merlyn and feels that meeting Arthur is a great gift.

Sheelagh

Sheelagh is a beautiful huntress with a great talent for throwing knives. She and Merlyn have a mutual attraction on which they don't act . She marries her love, Donuil.

Mordechai

Mordechai is the physician in the leper colony. He, himself, has leprosy.

Ludmilla

Ludmilla trains under Lucanus to become a physician. She marries Ambrose.

Julia

Julia is a good friend for whom Lucanus as feeling, in spite of his celibacy. Her children are friends with Arthur.

Derek of Ravenglass

Derek is the enemy with whom Merlyn plans to live to keep Arthur safe.



Deryll

Deryll is the leader of the Pendragon soldiers. He and Merlyn form an alliance.

Daffyd

Daffyd is the Druid who raised Merlyn.

Turga

Turga is Arthur's wet nurse.



Objects/Places

Cornwall

Merlyn finds Arthur after a battle on a beach in Cornwall.

Galley

Merlyn and Arthur are taken onto a galley where their captors try to determine whether or not to kill them.

Camulod

Camulod is Merlyn's home. It's a beautiful, large area filled with many resources from abundant food to a strong cavalry and strong infantry.

Excalibur

This sword, made by Merlyn's ancestors, is unmatched for its beauty and strength. It sings with its purity. Someday it will be Arthur's sword.

Port Town

When the soldiers try to find transportation for the men and the horses to Eire, they are attacked in the port town.

Eire

Eire is a land different from Camulod. It doesn't have roads, and it rains frequently.

King's Hut

The men are surprised at the simplicity of King Athol's dwelling, even though it's not his main house.

Candles

Merlyn gives Athol the gift of candles. The king is amazed. He knows that his people will appreciate the light that will chase away the evil spirits of the dark.



Leper Colony

The leper colony is surprisingly clean and orderly. The lepers don't own much, and their belongings are falling apart since people are afraid to go near and help them.

Barn

Ambrose and Merlyn stay in a barn on a farm while they are traveling. The experience shows Merlyn how people from different lands are similar to him as a human.

Cumbria

Cumbria is where they bring Arthur for safety.



Themes

Dreams and Destiny

Destiny is a very clear theme in this book. Merlyn states many times that he realizes that young Arthur is his destiny. He finds this out through his dreams. Sheelagh also has an awareness of destiny. She discovers her destiny through dreams as well. She knows that she is going to have two sons with Donuil, and she knows the names of the sons. She and Merlyn have such faith in their dreams that when Donuil chooses to stay behind to help his father and they contemplate his safety, Merlyn reminds Sheelagh that Donuil will be fine because he has to come back so they can have their children together. Aunt Luceiia makes the argument that destiny comes from God, and Merlyn seriously considers this. He realizes that it might be so.

Merlyn believes that it is Arthur's destiny to grow up to unite all the peoples into one. The child will then become High King of a unified country, Britain. Merlyn also believes that Excalibur is part of Arthur's destiny. The belief is solidified the first time he shows Excalibur to the child. Even though the child is still extremely young, he grabs hold of the sword as if he is familiar with it, and he doesn't let go even when Merlin tries to take the sword away from him. The child holds on to the sword so tightly that Merlyn lifts him off the ground before he is ready to let go. In fact, even then, Merlyn has to pry the child's fingers off the sword. At the end of the book, Merlyn takes the child to an enemy to keep him safe. Although it seems strange, Merlyn is confident in the fact that this is the path they must follow to achieve their destiny.

Prejudice

Merlyn is a strong character with a great love for his people. Therefore, it's somewhat of a surprise that throughout the book he immediately closes his mind to accepting others who are different than he. If somebody is from a group of people with which he is not familiar, he quickly cuts them off and doesn't want to listen when others try to tell him that the people are people just like him. When he meets up with Donuil and Ambrose, he is uncomfortable because the surrounding men remind him of Saxons. When Donuil tries to explain the goodness of the people, he refuses to listen. When he goes over to Eire, he is amazed to discover that he likes the people that he meets. He looks at their family relationships and sees similarities to the people he knows.

As he and Ambrose travel, Merlyn is ready to kill a farmer just because the man might notice that he has been sleeping in their barn. He is also a foreigner. Ambrose holds Merlyn back, and they have the opportunity to observe the farmer and his family. Merlyn realizes that he respects the family, even though they speak a different language than he and obviously come from a different place. Ambrose points out how his harsh judgment and willingness to kill due to his ignorance could have created a disastrous situation for the wife and children. Merlyn opens his mind up more when he discovers



that the people of the land consist of groups of different people with different backgrounds who have merged to work and live together.

Illness and Injury

Merlyn is no stranger to the sickbed. In the beginning of the book, the reader discovers that the man has literally been out of his mind on the sickbed for many years after a head injury that occurred during a battle. This makes him lose touch with the inner workings and the people of Camulod. When Merlyn is ready to go to Eire, the trip is delayed because he is stabbed. Merlyn seems to take his injuries and illnesses in stride, not resenting them, but trying to recover as quickly as possible. He then moves on with his life. When he finds out that they are going to visit a leper colony, he is very fearful.

When he visits the leper colony, he judges the people as unclean and does his best to stay away from them. However, when Lucanus asks him to come in and examine the dwelling, he goes out of respect for his friend. He is amazed to discover that the lepers are clean and orderly. Even then, it isn't until much later in the book, after he has seen more of what the lepers experience, that he makes the startling discovery that the lepers are just people who are stricken by a horrible disease. It is the disease that he wants to stay away from, not the people themselves. Even though he is worried about the illness, he risks his own life to save one of the lepers, holding him in his arms throughout the night.

Merlyn develops some strange illnesses himself, and he eventually realizes that he, too, has leprosy. He is worried for himself, but it makes him even more concerned about infecting others. The knowledge that he has the disease almost drives him to suicide, but he doesn't yield to that temptation.

Style

Point of View

The Saxon Shore by Jack Whyte is written from Merlyn's point of view. In the introduction, the reader is informed that Merlyn is now an old man. He's 80 years old, and he is looking back to a time long ago, recording the details of his life. He mentions in the introduction that he is the only one from his story who still survives. The novel is written in first person, but because of the fact that it is written almost as if it is a journal entry, the reader doesn't feel as if they personally are Merlyn. It does, however, give the reader insight into reactions, thought processes, decisions, and observations Merlyn might have had for those around him and for situations he gets into.

Comments from others in the book fill the reader in on relevant background. When the men refer to Merlyn's previous illnesses, the reader is aware that Merlyn had sustained a head injury at some point. The reader is aware of this before Merlyn announces to his men at the meeting that he has fully recovered from his injury.

The story is told in a straightforward manner, with more focus on events and conversations than on emotions. The reader knows that Merlyn is a regular man with a passion for women and a loyalty to his family and friends. These points are addressed, but are never discussed in great detail emotionally. Merlyn expresses an attraction or feeling, then moves on with the story. He's very pragmatic. Someone dies in his arms, and Merlyn points out that he will miss the person, then moves on.

Setting

The setting of the story constantly changes since Merlyn is a military man, and he is always on the move. The book opens with him in a small boat out on the water. It then moves to a shoreline, then to a road he travels as he takes his journey back to Camulod. A large portion of the book is located in Camulod, which feels like a haven from the rest of the world. The fortress is strong and well-guarded. It provides safety and provisions for its people. The leaders take great care to do the best they can for their people and strive to create unity among all who dwell in Camulod. Outside of Camulod, the land is more harsh. The leper colony carries an aura of desolation. As they travel through woods, the soldiers are always on guard for possible enemies. In the port town, renegade barbarians are pulling apart all the ancient architecture to sell in foreign markets.

When Merlyn and his men arrive in Eire, they notice foliage unlike anything they have seen before and they meet new animals. They are surprised to find that there are no roads, and realize they are blessed by the Romans in their own homelands. The dwellings are simple, and the people are ready to get up and move if the need arises.



The setting is important to the novel because it shows a time of great unrest. It also shows how even the greatest men who are orderly and have a solid fortress need to get away to their own respite at times. This is shown a couple of times during the story when Merlyn escapes to his secret vale. The beautiful location is a place of rest for him where no one else goes. It is where he lived with his wife who was murdered.

Language and Meaning

One of the greatest strengths of this book is in its use of language. It's extremely poetic, without coming across as actual poetry. It's tone is serious, but interjected with subtle humor beginning right from the very first paragraph in which Merlyn is introducing himself. He explains that the traditional belief is that wisdom comes with age. Now that he is old, he realizes that he is old enough to be considered wise by others, and this shakes his faith in all his other beliefs.

The author uses a large quantity of intricate vocabulary, describing incendiary situations and serried ranks with ease. He uses the language in a manner in which the reader is never lost, but is constantly exposed to new words. The definitions of the words are easily understood based on their placement in sentences and paragraphs as well as in the story. Literature enthusiasts might find themselves reading purely to increase vocabulary skills. Many novels are a quick read, but this book is not one of them. The author uses language so beautifully that a reader might want to take the time to savor each sentence. Although the novel takes place in the 400s A.D., the language is very readable. The word usage is more in-line with today's vocabulary than the "thees" and "thous" of the past.

Structure

The Saxon Shore by Jack Whyte is comprised of 31 chapters as well as a Prologue and an Epilogue. The book opens with a poem and a map of the region in which the entire story takes place. The poem tells the legend of the skystone. This is the stone used to make Excalibur, the sword that Merlyn keeps hidden in the armory. Only a few, highly-trusted people know about the sword. Merlyn believes the sword is linked with Arthur's destiny and will be his when he is older.

The poem is followed by a family tree, showing the genealogy of Arthur Pendragon. The Prologue is only two pages long, and the Epilogue is only four pages long. In the Prologue, Merlyn introduces himself and explains what the book is documenting. The Epilogue shows where Merlyn and Arthur's story is going. This is book four in a series of seven novels.

This novel is broken up into three books. The first 10 chapters are part of Book One: Cornwall. Chapters 11-18 are part of Book Two: Eire, and chapters 19-the end are part of Book Three: The Saxon Shore. The chapters are numbered with Roman numerals, but they don't have actual titles. Although the chapters vary in length, they generally run from 25-35 pages.



Quotes

"I recalled the pride and passionate, exultant tenderness that had swept over me in realizing who he was, in knowing that this was he, the one who would arise to call the peoples of our land to action and to unity; the future champion for whose hand Publius Varrus had crafted the sword Excalibur." (Chapter 1, The Saxon Shore, pg. 10)

"I was conscious that I stood on a threshold of some kind and that the next few moments might decide my future, for I knew that here, immediately, could lie life or death for me and for my helpless, hungry ward." (Chapter 1, The Saxon Shore, pg. 23)

"He will fulfill the dream, Auntie... The Dream of Caius Britannicus and of Publius Varrus. The unification of two peoples, Roman and Celt, beneath one leader." (Chapter 4, The Saxon Shore, pg. 70)

"In the space of a week, in other words, I had become a politician vying for office." (Chapter 5, The Saxon Shore, pg. 92)

"Excalibur singing. I read about it in my uncle's books, but I had never heard it before now." (Chapter 7, The Saxon Shore, pg. 151)

"Haven't you heard details about Merlyn? They say I have magical powers, and divination is the least of them." (Chapter 9, The Saxon Shore, pg. 191)

"My duty, my life's purpose, is to train the boy, to teach him all I have learned from all the sources to which I have been exposed, to make him High King of all this land." (Chapter 9, The Saxon Shore, pg. 205)

"Here, in the midst of a strange, unchristian people, in conversation with a man I would have dubbed a barbarian short months before, I was hearing talk of morals and philosophy the like of which I had seldom heard in Britain." (Chapter 12, The Saxon Shore, pg. 293)

"Destiny, I think, is a wondrous but perilous thing for those selected to attain it." (Chapter 13, The Saxon Shore, pg. 314)

"This training all took place in an atmosphere of good-natured raillery, but there was serious intent beneath the laughter." (Chapter 23, The Saxon Shore, pg. 544)

"Not all bad days are born of ill beginnings." (Chapter 23, The Saxon Shore, pg. 548)

"I had found, quite suddenly, that I had no wish to declare or prosecute any form of war on the Pendragon people, and the beleaguered realization, within the past few days, had caught me unprepared." (Chapter 25, The Saxon Shore, pg. 564)

"Well, we all know your feelings, Merlyn. Let's hope you're right again this time." (Chapter 26, The Saxon Shore, pg. 581)

"It was then, in that moment of courage, determination and unselfishness, that I marked a change in my young ward, and saw the future man within the boy." (Chapter 29, The Saxon Shore, pg. 664)



Topics for Discussion

What was Arthur's relationship to Merlyn?

What is so important about Arthur?

Why does Merlyn feel that he should raise the child?

How do Merlyn and his friends treat the women in their lives? Give specific examples backing up your response.

Name some of Merlyn's weaknesses, and offer examples of how he overcomes them.

What is Merlyn's relationship like with his stepbrother?

Describe some of Merlyn's interactions with the lepers. What is the result of these interactions?

Where does Merlyn go with Arthur at the end of the book, and why are they going there?