

Taran Wanderer Study Guide

Taran Wanderer by Lloyd Alexander

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Contents

Taran Wanderer Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Chapter 1, Who Am I?.....	6
Chapter 2, Cantrev Cadiffor.....	7
Chapter 3, Goryon and Gast.....	8
Chapter 4, A Matter of Cows.....	9
Chapter 5, A Judgment.....	10
Chapter 6, A Frog.....	11
Chapter 7, Friends in Danger.....	12
Chapter 8, The Wall of Thorns.....	13
Chapter 9, The Hand of Morda.....	14
Chapter 10, The Broken Spell.....	15
Chapter 11, Dorath.....	16
Chapter 12, The Wager.....	17
Chapter 13, The Lost Lamb.....	18
Chapter 14, The End of Summer.....	19
Chapter 15, The Open Cage.....	20
Chapter 16, Taran Wanderer.....	21
Chapter 17, The Weir.....	22
Chapter 18, The Free Commots.....	23
Chapter 19, The Potter's Wheel.....	24
Chapter 20, The Spoilers.....	25
Chapter 21, The Mirror.....	26
Characters.....	27



Objects/Places..... 31

Themes..... 33

Style..... 35

Quotes..... 38

Topics for Discussion..... 40



Plot Summary

Taran Wanderer by Lloyd Alexander is the fourth installment in a series of books about the fairytale land of Prydain. Taran is an assistant pig-keeper who is in love with a princess. For this reason, Taran would like to find the parents who abandoned him as a child in order to learn if he is of noble birth in order to make him worthy to marry his love. However, Taran's adventure takes him in unexpected directions, causing him to learn more about himself than his parents ever could have done. *Taran Wanderer* is a touching novel of self-discovery that will entertain and enlighten readers of all ages.

Despite being happy living in Caer Dallben, Taran decides he would like to learn who his parents are. Dallben gives Taran permission to go on this quest, but does not give him any help. Taran's first stop is the home of three women who have powers of enchantment and who he feels might be able to help him. However, Taran has nothing to give them in exchange for the information so they send him away, suggesting he might find what he is looking for in the Mirror of Llunet.

Taran and his friend Gurgi travel deeper into the hill cantreys where their horses are stolen and they meet with a kindly farmer and his wife who give them a meal and a warm place to sleep. The next day they go in search of their animals and meet a lord who is more convinced in his own heroics than those around him. The lord believes that his men, who stole Taran and Gurgi's horses, stole them from giants and refuses to believe Taran's version of the story, until Taran proves his horse is his own by mounting the horse without the violence the lord had experienced in his own attempts. After taking their animals back, Taran and Gurgi meet another lord who believes more in his generosity than his actions prove. Here, Taran and Gurgi also meet again with an old friend, Fflewddur, who decides to join their adventure.

Taran and his friends continue to the kingdom of their friend, King Smoit. Smoit is a good friend who is very happy to have met with Taran again. During their visit, however, a battle breaks out over a herd of cows between the two lords Taran met the day before. Taran rides with Smoit to stop the battle, and finds himself saving the king when the king falls into a river. Smoit promises Taran he will give him any favor in exchange for his actions. A short time later Taran finds himself asking for this favor when he learns that the two lords have ruined the fields of the kindly farmer he had met a few days earlier. Taran convinces Smoit to force the lords to help the farmer repair his fields instead of imprisoning him in his dungeon. Later, Taran tells Smoit of his quest to find his parents and Smoit offers to take Taran in as his only son and to give him his kingdom upon his death. Taran refuses in hopes of finding his true parents.

Taran and his friends continue their adventure where they come upon a frog that could speak in the voice of an old friend. Taran learns that a wizard who stole jewels from the frog's people turned the frog into his current state. Taran and his friends agree to help their friend find this wizard and attempt to stop him. When Taran and his friends find the wizard's lair, they get caught in an enchanted thorn bush. The wizard imprisons them and attempts to change them into animals. However, Taran has in his possession a



bone that makes the wizard incapable of enchanting him. Taran and the wizard fight and Taran is able to break the bone, killing the wizard.

As Taran and his friends continue on, they run into a group of swords for hire headed by a man named Dorath. Dorath allows Taran and his friends to share their food, but expects repayment, assuming that Taran's quest will lead to treasure. Taran refuses to allow Dorath to join his adventure; Dorath challenges him to a fight for Taran's sword. Dorath cheats during the fight and wins. Taran leaves in shame, without his sword. As they continue on, Taran and his friends meet up with a sheepherder who tells Taran that he had a son that Dallben took to safety and that he believes Taran to be that son.

Taran does not want to be the son of a sheepherder and resists the idea, but decides to stay and help the man anyway. Taran spends a miserable summer improving the sheepherder's home, finding himself hating and loving the man all at the same time. When the sheepherder falls from a cliff near the home, Taran briefly thinks about leaving him to die but decides to help the man. Taran uses a magic horn to call for friends who help rescue him, Gurgi, and the sheepherder from the cliff: the sheepherder dies, but not before telling Taran he was not really his father.

Taran feels terribly guilty about the way he felt toward the sheepherder and has realized that he has no right to find out who he really is if he cannot be happy with finding himself to be anything less than of noble birth. Taran travels for a while with Gurgi, attempting to learn many trades but not finding one he enjoys. Finally, when he does find one he enjoys, he discovers he is not good at it. To find out who he really is, Taran continues to the Mirror of Llunet. Taran only gets a glance in the mirror, which is really a tiny pool, when Dorath confronts him. The two men fight and Dorath destroys the pool. Taran survives the encounter and decides to return to Caer Dallben, no longer interested in who his parents are because he feels as though he knows who he is without that knowledge.



Chapter 1, Who Am I?

Chapter 1, Who Am I? Summary

Taran Wanderer by Lloyd Alexander is the fourth installment in a series of books about the fairytale land of Prydain. Taran is an assistant pig-keeper who is in love with a princess. For this reason, Taran would like to find the parents who abandoned him as a child in order to learn if he is of noble birth. If he were, it would make him worthy to marry his love. However, Taran's adventure takes him in unexpected directions, causing him to learn more about himself than the knowledge of who his parents are ever could have done. *Taran Wanderer* is a touching novel of self-discovery that will entertain and enlighten readers of all ages.

Taran approaches Dallben and requests the right to find out who his parents are. Dallben expresses concern over this quest, feeling as though Taran should be happy with who he is without learning the answer to this mystery, but Taran is in love with a princess and does not feel as though he can ask her to marry him until he learns the secret of his birth. Dallben agrees to allow Taran to go and also gives permission for his friend Gurgi to go as well. The two set off the following morning.

Taran has decided that the first place they should go is the home of three enchantresses who might know the answer Taran is searching for. The enchantresses are more than happy to help Taran, but they want something of value to him in exchange, and Taran has nothing to offer. The enchantresses refuse to help without this exchange, and instead send Taran to a fabled mirror that is rumored to be capable of seeing all of a person when he looks into it. Taran decides this is where they must go now.

Chapter 1, Who Am I? Analysis

Taran is introduced as a young man who is in love and is intent in finding himself suitable to marry his love, hoping the mystery of his birth will bring him to the discovery that he is of noble birth just as his love is. Taran has proven himself brave in the past, fighting many battles, but feels that a noble birth would make him more worthy to marry his princess. Illustrating the theme of searching for one's identity, Taran starts out without fear and meets with a group of enchantresses who make quiet threats against him and Gurgi, suggesting they would like to turn them into animals. These remarks will come back to haunt Taran and Gurgi later in the novel. However, the enchantresses are not helpful when they learn Taran has nothing to exchange for the information he seeks. They suggest he travel to the Mirror of Llunet in the Llawgadarn Mountains. Taran decides this is where he should go, predicting the course of the novel for the reader as the plot continues to develop.



Chapter 2, Cantrev Cadiffor,

Chapter 2, Cantrev Cadiffor, Summary

As Taran and Gurgi continue on their journey, they come into the Valley Cantrevs and run into a group of bandits who insist on taking their horses in the name of their lord, Lord Goryon. Taran puts up a verbal fight, telling them the horse, though of nobler blood than an assistant pig-keeper could possibly own, was a gift from a lord. The men do not believe him and begin a fight, ending it by taking the animals. Another man had joined the fight, a kind man who takes Taran and Gurgi home with him. The man and his wife tell Taran how they had had a son who died in a battle with some raiders. They struggle now, attempting to work land that requires more hands than they have available. Taran feels bad for them and wants to stay, but he is anxious to get back to his quest.

Chapter 2, Cantrev Cadiffor, Analysis

Taran and Gurgi have their horses stolen, leaving them dependent on the kindness of a stranger who can barely afford to feed himself let alone two strangers. As angry and hurt as Taran is over the loss of his horse, he feels for this couple and would like to help them, but finds himself unable to do so. Taran believes he is capable of little until he learns the truth about his parentage. Taran's quest is his main priority, despite his empathy for the farmer and his wife. Taran moves on, looking for his horses, which alerts the reader to the events that will take place in the following chapters.



Chapter 3, Goryon and Gast,

Chapter 3, Goryon and Gast, Summary

Taran and Gurgi sneak onto the property of Lord Goryon and learn that Taran's horse, Melynlas, has proven difficult to ride for the lord and his employees. Taran goes out to the training field where the lord is attempting to ride Melynlas and marches up, insisting they let the horse go. Taran tells Goryon that the horse is his, and that Goryon's men stole it, and he should be allowed to take it back. Goryon refuses to listen, insisting that his men fought great giants for the horse. Taran proves the horse is his by mounting her and riding her without the difficulties Goryon and his men have suffered. Goryon, pleased to be rid of the demon horse, allows Taran to go.

Taran and Gurgi ride on until they find themselves at the home of another lord. Taran and Gurgi are welcomed inside where they find an old friend, Fflewddur Fflam, a bard who is a king in his own land. The lord, Lord Gast, offers them a feast that turns out to be nothing more than a piece of bread. The lord appears to be proud of a generosity that does not truly exist. The next day, before he will allow the group to leave, the lord shows them his stores of treasures, including a wine bowl that is finer than any of the other treasures the lord has, though it is not one the lord values. Finally, Taran and Gurgi are allowed to leave, with Fflewddur joining their adventure.

Chapter 3, Goryon and Gast, Analysis

Taran bravely takes his horse back by confronting the lord whose men stole her the day before. Taran proves his ownership by riding the horse, something the lord and his men have been unable to do since coming into possession of the horse. This episode proves Taran's bravery and his ability to talk his way out of a bad situation. This also introduces the character of Lord Goryon who so clearly believes in his men and his own bravery so deeply that he does not see the truth even when he is confronted with it. Later, Taran will meet another lord who suffers a similar delusion, his delusion being that he is a very generous man and has a good eye for treasure, though both these things are clearly untrue. Taran leaves these lords behind, annoyed by their delusions, but the reader must wonder if the men will return to the story later in the novel as the plot continues to develop.



Chapter 4, A Matter of Cows,

Chapter 4, A Matter of Cows, Summary

Late that afternoon, Taran and his friends arrive at the castle of King Smoit, an old friend of Taran's. Taran tells Smoit of his quest, but Smoit has no information to share that will help, except to suggest they go to the Free Commots. The next morning while Taran is attempting to refresh his supplies before going on, word comes to Smoit that Goryon and Gast are battling over a herd of cows. Taran and his friends accompany Smoit on horseback to confront the battling lords. On the way, Taran learns that Goryon and Gast have often fought this way, stealing the herd of cows from each other over and over until Smoit is forced to interfere and place the lords in his dungeon. Taran argues that perhaps another tactic might be employed to teach the lords a lesson, but Smoit is resistant to this idea. Within sight of the battle, Smoit must cross a raging river and falls from his horse, floating downstream toward a waterfall.

Chapter 4, A Matter of Cows, Analysis

Taran does not know anything about the Mirror of Llunet and Smoit has no information to help him except to suggest he go to the Free Commots where the people rule themselves. This should clue the reader in to a possible direction that Taran will take in his quest over the next few chapters. Later, before Taran and his friends can begin their journey once more, word comes that the two lords Taran had met in the days before this are battling over a herd of cows they have battled over before. Taran agrees to go with his friend to stop the fight, but does not agree with Smoit's choice of punishment for the lords, and suggests perhaps a new punishment could be found, but Smoit is not receptive. This again might lead the reader to believe the next chapter will involve Taran convincing Smoit of an alternative punishment.



Chapter 5, A Judgment,

Chapter 5, A Judgment, Summary

Taran chases after Smoit as he floats down the river and over the falls, jumping into the water to rescue his friend. Taran pulls Smoit from the water and suggests to his men that they take him to the home of the farmer Taran had met a few days previously, since it was close by. On the way, Taran and his party find the missing cows the lords have been fighting over and who scattered due to the fighting. Once at the home of Taran's friend, however, they find their welcome is not as warm as before because the fighting has ruined the farmer's fields. Before Taran can address the farmer's complaints, the battling lords appear. Smoit threatens to take the lords to his dungeon, but Taran, asking for the favor Smoit promised him upon saving his life, asks if he cannot pick the punishment for these men. When Smoit agrees, Taran suggests that the two men be forced to help the farmer repair and replant his fields. Taran also suggests they divide up the cow herd in a fair way and take one each of the prize cow's calves, while giving the cow to the farmer. This appeases the farmer, who apologizes for his bad temper, and is accepted by all involved. Back at the castle, Smoit asks Taran to remain with him and to be his heir, but Taran insists that he needs to know the truth of his birth.

Chapter 5, A Judgment, Analysis

Exploring the theme of honor, Taran shows again the depth of his character. Taran rescues Smoit, which allows him a favor that he quickly asks for as soon as he learns the damage the battling lords have caused to the fields of his friend, the farmer. Taran suggests a punishment for both lords that is better than sitting in a dungeon becoming more angry with each other and more resentful of Smoit. Taran proves himself a great negotiator and a good leader, even though this is not technically his role in the situation. This examines Taran's character in a way that will prove important later in the novel when Taran attempts to discover his true nature beyond the knowledge of his birth.



Chapter 6, A Frog,

Chapter 6, A Frog, Summary

Taran and his companions travel for several days until they enter the Hill Cantreves. Here, while they are taking a break, they find a friend, Kaw the crow, Kaw is a mischievous bird that steals Fflewddur's key he uses to fix the stings on his harp and drops it into a hollow tree. Fflewddur, who does not find the episode funny, sends Gurgi up the tree to retrieve his key. While reaching inside, Gurgi finds a coffer as well that he brings down to his friends. Taran breaks the lock on the coffer and finds inside a polished bone. Afraid the bone is enchanted, Fflewddur insists that Taran put it back and Taran agrees.

When Taran and his friends are about ready to go, Llyan, Fflewddur's mount, runs off toward some bushes. Llyan, who is more an oversized cat than anything else, has found something and brings it back to her master. Fflewddur does not see what it is at first, but Taran recognizes it as a frog. The frog has been out of water too long and is dying. Taran quickly realizes too that the frog is not an ordinary one, but a friend who has been enchanted. The frog is Doli, a dwarf friend of Taran's from the land of the Fair Folk.

Chapter 6, A Frog, Analysis

A new character is introduced in this chapter as Taran and his friends find an old friend, Kaw. Kaw is a crow that has been of great help to Taran in the past. Kaw is also a playful soul who steals Fflewddur's key and aggravates him, but the game results in the finding of a strange coffer containing a polished bone. This bone is an oddity that the reader should take note of because it will come back into the story later in the novel. Later the friends find a frog that turns out to be an old friend who has been turned into a frog by an unknown source, telling the reader that there is a story to be told in the next chapter. This also suggests a path that the characters will follow in the next few chapters, suggesting the direction of plot development.



Chapter 7, Friends in Danger,

Chapter 7, Friends in Danger, Summary

After the friends pour some water on the frog, Doli is able to tell them about the trouble he has gotten into. Someone had stolen some jewels from the Fair Folk and after two investigators had disappeared after attempting to find the jewels, Doli was sent to investigate. Doli found the source of the robbery, a wizard named Morda. When Doli attempted to sneak into Morda's compound under the cloak of invisibility, he was caught and changed into a frog and then dumped far from any source of water. Doli had attempted to travel back home but became weak from lack of water. Taran and his friends agree to help Doli if he can show them where to go, but Doli becomes ill from being wet all the time and finds it difficult to show the way to Morda's compound. However, Doli does manage to take them close to the compound. While traveling, Kaw returns to the hallow tree and brings Taran the polished bone. Taran decides to keep it this time.

Chapter 7, Friends in Danger, Analysis

Doli tells Taran and his friends a story about tracking a thief, causing Taran and his companions to want to help the poor frog. This again goes to Taran's strong character, his ability to lead, and his big heart when it comes to friends in trouble. Taran could be putting his life on the line by agreeing to help Doli but does not think twice about this possibility as he leads his friends to the compound of the evil wizard. This foreshadows the next chapter as Taran and his friends arrive at the compound at the end of this chapter and make plans to confront the evil wizard. The return of the polished bone also should suggest to the reader that it will play an important role in the following chapter or chapters.



Chapter 8, The Wall of Thorns,

Chapter 8, The Wall of Thorns, Summary

Taran and Gurgi take Kaw and approach the compound. They walk a short distance and find themselves face to face with a large wall of thorns. Taran suspects there must be an entrance at some point, so he sends Kaw to check out the perimeter. However, Kaw does not return. After waiting several hours, Taran and Gurgi decide to attempt to climb over the wall. However, the thorns tear into their skin before it somehow wraps itself around them and throws them over the wall.

When Taran wakes, he finds that the evil wizard, Morda, has taken him, Kaw, and Gurgi captive. Around Morda's neck is a necklace similar to the one Taran's princess wears. Taran learns that the princess's missing mother spent the night in this compound many years ago while searching for her missing daughter, and gave Morda the necklace in exchange for room and board. The mother would die from an illness during that stay. The necklace has powers of enchantment that Morda has since learned to use. It is the stone in the necklace that has aided Morda in his theft and the changing of Doli into a frog. Morda uses it now to turn Gurgi into a mouse.

Chapter 8, The Wall of Thorns, Analysis

Taran is determined to help his friend, so not even a wall of thorns will stop him. Again Taran's character is explored here, suggesting he is brave enough to be of noble birth even if it is proven that he is not. Taran is then captured along with his friends, implying to the reader that he will suffer a fate similar to Doli's. However, before Morda metes out his punishment, he tells Taran how he came to be in possession of a magic stone and how he has used it to steal more stones similar in powers in order to become ruler of the world. This suggests to the reader that Taran had better be brave enough to stop Morda from his evil plan, showing the reader the path the plot will take over the next chapter.



Chapter 9, The Hand of Morda,

Chapter 9, The Hand of Morda, Summary

Morda turns to Taran to turn him into an animal. Taran distracts him by suggesting he be allowed to pick the type of animal he is to become. While Taran discusses the merits of becoming a pig, Gurgi attempts to chew through the rope that holds Taran's hands tied behind his back. Finally, Morda becomes bored and begins the spell just as Taran's hands become free. Taran stabs Morda with his sword, but Morda suffers no wound from the attack, explaining that he cannot be killed because his life force is far from his person. Then Morda attempts to change Taran into an animal, but the spell does not work. Morda becomes confused, giving Taran a chance to realize the polished bone is Morda's bone, an enchanted piece of his body used to hold his life force. Taran reveals to Morda that he has possession of the bone.

Morda suggests that he can become Taran's servant, making Taran the ruler of the world as he had wanted to become. Taran does not want this, but refuses to kill Morda as well. Morda takes advantage of Taran's kindness by knocking the bone from his hands and fighting with him. Taran is nearly overwhelmed by the wizard when Llyan breaks into the house and attacks Morda. Taran finds the polished bone and attempts to break it in order to help Llyan who has been quickly overwhelmed in the fight, but it will not break.

Chapter 9, The Hand of Morda, Analysis

Morda is brave as he fights against Morda, using first his wits and then his brawn. However, Morda is incapable of being wounded, a fact that makes it difficult for Taran to fight him until he realizes that the bone he and his friends found was the life force that kept Morda alive. Taran now has the power to rule Morda and to become a very powerful man, but Taran turns this power down because he knows it is based in evil and he is basically a good person. This again touches on Taran's basic character and begins to show a pattern the reader will recognize later in the novel when Taran himself analyzes his character. Taran and Morda fight and Taran loses the bone, giving Morda an advantage once more. Llyan comes into the house just in time to rescue Taran, but Llyan, as big and strong as she is, is quickly overwhelmed and Taran attempts to help her by breaking the bone, but it will not break, predicting a struggle for survival in the next chapter.



Chapter 10, The Broken Spell,

Chapter 10, The Broken Spell, Summary

Morda sees Taran attempting to break the bone and he grabs for it. The combined pressure of Morda's strength and Taran's causes the bone to finally break. Morda falls to the floor like a pile of twigs and all his spells are undone, including Gurgi's shape as a mouse. Suddenly all of Taran's friends are there, Gurgi, Fflewddur, and Doli, back in their original shapes. Taran finds the jewel from the princess's necklace and learns from Doli that it was a gift to the princess's mother years ago. Taran insists that Doli take it back to his people, despite knowing he could convince the witches to tell him his parentage with such a gift.

Taran and his friends leave the compound and begin their travels to the Free Commots. Doli sees a battle horn Taran wears that was a gift from the princess. Doli recognizes it as a gift from the Fair Folk and teaches Taran a melody to blow into the horn that will call any Fair Folk who are nearby to help. However, this will only work one time, so Taran must chose his moment wisely.

Chapter 10, The Broken Spell, Analysis

In an ironic twist, Taran manages to break the bone with Morda's own help, resulting not only in Morda's death, but also in the reversal of all Morda's spells. Taran then remembers the jewel Morda wore and searches for it. When it is found and Taran learns its origins, it briefly crosses his mind to use it as a bargaining chip to learn the truth of his birth, but decides against this. Taran again shows his strength of character and his deep motivations to do no harm and to help people. Taran is essentially a good person, though he does not realize this about himself just yet. Later, Taran learns the battle horn his love has given him is a Fair Folk horn that will call the Fair Folk in a moment of danger. Taran is warned, however, to use it wisely because it only has one call left. This suggests that Taran will have cause to use it later down the road, causing the reader to anticipate some danger for Taran and his friends as the plot continues to develop.



Chapter 11, Dorath,

Chapter 11, Dorath, Summary

Doli separates from the group to return home and inform his people of Morda's death. Taran and his friends continue toward the Free Commots. A short time later, they come across a group of men who have food and a warm fire. Full of desire for the food, Taran and his friends decide to risk danger by asking to join the group for the night. They are quickly welcomed and fed, but Taran suspects the men are not honorable men. Soon he learns this is true. The men are a band of swords for hire led by a man named Dorath. Dorath learns that Taran is searching for the Mirror of Llunet and believes it to be a treasure hunt. Dorath insists that he and his men accompany Taran and receive half the treasure. Taran attempts to refuse but finds this to be a dangerous idea. During the night, Taran and his friends decide to sneak away when everyone is asleep. However, before they can reach the horses, Taran discovers that Dorath has suspected his plan and is waiting for him.

Chapter 11, Dorath, Analysis

Taran and his friends continue on their trip, but quickly find themselves in the company of some unkind men. Taran attempts to play the situation cool, telling only what needs to be said, and leaving out much information about himself and his friends. Dorath is as evil as Morda although he is not a wizard, and schemes to steal from Taran an imagined treasure he will find at the end of his quest. Taran hopes to find a treasure, but it more symbolic than the one Dorath hopes to gain. Taran then decides that he and his friends will escape in the night, once more revealing to the reader Taran's depth of bravery, but fails in his plan when Dorath predicts his actions and cuts him off. Now the reader must wonder what will happen to Taran and his friends in the next chapter now that Dorath knows they have no intention of sharing their imagined treasure.



Chapter 12, The Wager,

Chapter 12, The Wager, Summary

Dorath informs Taran that he wants payment for the food and the protection he and his men gave to Taran and his friends. Taran has nothing to offer but his sword, though he does not wish to give up the sword because it was a gift from Dallben. Dorath then offers to fight Taran and says that the winner of the fight gets to keep the sword. Taran agrees after Dorath promises to keep his men out of the fight. The two begin to fight. At first it is a fair fight, but when Dorath brings out a knife, Taran has no chance at winning. Taran argues that Dorath is fighting unfairly, but Dorath will have none of it. Dorath wins the fight and takes the sword, leaving Taran to bleed on the floor.

Chapter 12, The Wager, Analysis

Dorath's character comes out clearly in this chapter again as he first tells Taran he must pay him for the food and protection he had provided the night before and then agrees to fight with Taran in order to win his sword. Dorath is not a kind person, the opposite of Taran, symbolizing the proverbial evil versus good scenario. Taran stands up to Dorath bravely, but loses the fight because Dorath cheats, leaving Taran feeling lost and frustrated. This is a clear illustration of the theme of good versus evil, exploring both Dorath's character and Taran's, placing them both in clear categories.



Chapter 13, The Lost Lamb,

Chapter 13, The Lost Lamb, Summary

Taran and his friends resume their journey, coming to a rocky area covered in brambles. Fflewddur and Llyan find a lost lamb on the rocks. While Taran and his friends are wondering what to do with the poor creature, a crippled man comes toward them from a rocky slope. Taran immediately assures the man they do not intend to steal his lamb and then offers to help him return to his home at the top of the rocky slope. The man, Craddock, is surprised and grateful for their kindness, inviting them to join him for dinner despite the fact that he has very little to offer.

Over dinner, Taran tells Craddock about his journey to find his parents. The man becomes very quiet, and leaves his guests to see to his animals. When Craddock returns, he tells Taran a story about how his wife died giving birth to a son she had wanted to take from this unfriendly land and how the child had become sick after a year. Craddock did not want to leave his land, so when a traveler came through the area, Craddock asked him to take his child with him. The man agreed. Craddock reveals this man was Dallben and the child must be Taran.

Chapter 13, The Lost Lamb, Analysis

Taran finds a lost lamb, a symbol of his own quest for his parents, and meets a kind shepherd who gives Taran and his friends a meal and a place to sleep. Taran trusts this man and tells him his story with little prodding. The man is moved by the story and tells Taran a story of his own, surprising both the reader and Taran in this ironic twist by revealing that Taran is his son. Taran has completed his task, finding his father, though the man is not of noble birth as Taran had hoped he would be. Now Taran is faced with two problems, deciding whether or not he can believe this strange man and whether or not he can accept his less than noble birth. This explores the theme of searching for one's identity once again, as it seems that Taran's search is over. However, the reader is left wondering if this is true.



Chapter 14, The End of Summer,

Chapter 14, The End of Summer, Summary

The next morning, still reeling from Craddock's confession, Taran takes Fflewddur aside and tells him to go to Dallben and find out if Craddock's story is true and then to go to the princess and tell her that he can never see her again since it would not be proper for a princess to marry a shepherd's son. Taran wants Gurgi to go as well, but Gurgi refuses both because he wants to continue to serve Taran and because he likes the sheep. Taran then spends the rest of the summer working hard around Craddock's property, fixing up the buildings, clearing the brambles, and caring for the sheep. The whole time Craddock tells him stories of how he has fought for many years to keep his property and how much it means to him. Taran wants to love Craddock and his heritage, but finds it very difficult. Taran is unhappy being the son of a shepherd and unhappy with his current situation, though he finds himself deeply admiring Craddock, albeit not as a father but as a man.

Chapter 14, The End of Summer, Analysis

Taran, once again showing his noble character, decides to stay with Craddock in order to help him around his property and to get to know his father. Taran is unhappy with the situation, he does not like the idea of being less than noble by birth and is disappointed that he is not of a heritage that would make it possible for him to marry his love, the princess. Taran fights this disappointment throughout the chapter, taking it out on Craddock not through actions, but by hating him in his heart. However, Taran finds himself unable to keep from admiring Craddock as a person. This touches on Taran's character and his motivations. Taran has lost his love, but he continues to do the right thing, because that is the type of person he is deep inside. This predicts a time when Taran will come to know this and will change his mind about leaving his love.



Chapter 15, The Open Cage,

Chapter 15, The Open Cage, Summary

At the end of summer, Craddock comes to realize that Taran is not happy staying with him, but will not listen to Taran's desire to go back to Caer Dallben. One morning, early in winter, Gurgi runs into the house and tells Taran that Craddock is injured. Taran follows Gurgi and finds that Craddock has fallen off a rocky ledge. Taran climbs down to him, but cannot figure out how to get Craddock back up to the valley. It crosses Taran's mind for a moment that he could let Craddock die and he would be free, but only for a moment. Taran has injured himself climbing down to Craddock and quickly becomes weak, aware that he will never be able to get Craddock up to the valley alone, even with Gurgi's help. Before Taran can decide what to do, Craddock whispers in his ear that he lied. Craddock tells Taran that his son died at birth and that Taran is not his son. Taran decides to use the Fair Folk battle horn to get help.

Chapter 15, The Open Cage, Analysis

Taran has grown even more unhappy with Craddock, desiring to at the very least return to his home at Caer Dallben, but unable to do even that because he will not leave Craddock on his own and Craddock will not make the trip with him. Taran is trapped in life he did not want. However, when Craddock falls and is badly injured, Taran thinks about leaving him, but does not, because his character is so pure that even if it would mean saving himself he still cannot leave the crippled old man who claims to be his father. Even when Craddock announces that he is not Taran's father, Taran still refuses to leave him. Not only this, but Taran uses his only source of emergency rescue to save Craddock, the man who has imprisoned him with lies for months and made him miserable. This touches on the theme of honor as Taran once more proves himself an honorable man despite his inner desires.



Chapter 16, Taran Wanderer,

Chapter 16, Taran Wanderer, Summary

Taran wakes after having suffered a fever from his wounds and finds that Fflewddur has returned to his side. Fflewddur tells Taran that Craddock was not his father, but Taran already knows. Fflewddur also tells Taran that despite the Fair Folk's help, Craddock has died. Taran is sad and angered, ashamed for his thoughts of leaving Craddock and disappointed that his only opportunity of emergency rescue was wasted on a rescue that did not have a good outcome.

Taran and his friends stay the winter at Craddock's place and then Taran and Gurgi decide to move on while Fflewddur returns to his own kingdom. Taran has decided he no longer wants to find his parents because his reaction to Craddock's lies was less than honorable and does not want to cause pain to his real parents if their station in life is similar to Craddock's. After a few days, Taran and Gurgi find a small farm where they feel they can leave the sheep they took from Craddock's. The people on the farm have many children and seem very kind, though they oddly seem to believe in luck more than the average person.

Chapter 16, Taran Wanderer, Analysis

Taran is saddened by Craddock's death and is deeply shaken by his own reaction to the entire situation. Taran feels that he behaved less than honorably and his pain in his own reaction is so deep that he refuses to continue his quest, but he also refuses to go home because he does not want to bring shame on those who care about him. Taran has become the symbolic lost lamb in a much deeper way than he had before, as before he was simply curious about his past and now he is ashamed and embarrassed by his own behavior and is unwilling to inflict on others his shame. This goes deeper into Taran's character and his motivations than any of his actions earlier in the novel, suggesting to the reader that Taran will eventually be forced to examine his own character and discover who he truly is, with or without finding out who his parents are.



Chapter 17, The Weir,

Chapter 17, The Weir, Summary

Taran goes with the farmer, Llonio, down to the river to check his nets and finds that Llonio has set up a sort of dam to catch things that float down the river. Today, Llonio has caught a broken horse bridle that any other man would see as useless, but Llonio finds it miraculous. Llonio explains to Taran that it is not so much luck that sustains his family, but an ability to be open to possibilities and to find uses for things others might see as trash. The next day Llonio and Taran find a bag of wheat that they take back to the farm to grind and make bread out of. Taran finds the family's mill bulky and hard to use, so he finds several rocks and makes a much better mill for the family that is much easier to use. Taran enjoys his stay with Llonio and his family greatly, but finally decides he and Gurgi must move on, taking with him Llonio's advice to sharpen his wits so he will recognize luck when it comes.

Chapter 17, The Weir, Analysis

Taran and Gurgi happen on a family that appear to exist on luck alone, eating and surviving through things they find and things that wander onto their property rather than coming by more conventional means. Taran is fascinated by this way of life and remains on the farm much longer than he intended, and even spends time making a sophisticated mill for the family. Taran learns character traits from these people, such as to keep his eyes open for things that others might consider good luck, and to find unique uses for other people's trash. This begins a line of lessons Taran will learn during the remainder of his quest.



Chapter 18, The Free Commots,

Chapter 18, The Free Commots, Summary

Taran and Gurgi arrive in the first of the Free Commots, their intended destination when Taran was searching for the Mirror of Llunet, and Taran immediately convinces a blacksmith to make him an apprentice. The work is very difficult, but Taran toils at it faithfully, attempting to make himself a new sword as his first assignment as apprentice. The first sword Taran makes is very beautiful, but it shatters the first time he attempts to use it. After many tries, Taran makes a suitable sword that is not beautiful but functional. However, by this time Taran has decided that being a blacksmith is not something he can do happily.

Taran and Gurgi continue their journey and come across the home of a weaver. Again, Taran asks to become an apprentice. The woman agrees, forcing Taran to begin at the very beginning of her craft, by harvesting the wool and dyeing the thread. Taran then begins to make himself a new cloak, but has to start again after hours of hard work because he does not like the pattern. Eventually, Taran succeeds in making a nice garment, but again decides he cannot be happy at such a career and decides to move on.

Chapter 18, The Free Commots, Analysis

Taran, instead of trying to find his parents, touching on the theme of the search for one's identity, has decided to try to find himself by searching for a profession that will make him happy. However, despite the hard work and the good outcome, Taran has discovered that he is unhappy with the work. Taran is frustrated by his lack of success in finding himself and continues on, hoping he will still find something that defines him better than anything in his life has thus far. Taran is still searching for his identity; he has simply changed tactics.



Chapter 19, The Potter's Wheel,

Chapter 19, The Potter's Wheel, Summary

Taran arrives at a place called Commot Merin that makes him feel as though he has finally found home. Taran and Gurgi meet a man who is a potter and Taran convinces the man, whom he quickly learns is the artist who made the beautiful wine bowl he saw at Lord Gast's, to take him on as an apprentice. However, this time the work is not terribly difficult but Taran cannot create the beautiful works he sees the potter create. No matter how hard or how long Taran works, he cannot do what he wants. Taran becomes frustrated because he has found the thing he wants to do for his career but finds he cannot do it. Annlaw, the potter, sends Taran on a delivery so that he might clear his head and continue to try.

Chapter 19, The Potter's Wheel, Analysis

Taran has finally found something that satisfies his desires in a place that feels like home, but fails to perform the work as beautifully as he was able to do with the blacksmith and the weaver's tasks. Taran is frustrated because he has searched so long for an identity that will make him happy and when he finds one, in a sad twist of irony, he cannot achieve the desired result. The potter, Annlaw, is a wise and kind man who wants Taran to do well and to find his answers, but knows the answers are not in his wheel. Annlaw sends Taran to deliver some pottery, hoping the time away will clear Taran's mind, setting up the developments within the next chapter.



Chapter 20, The Spoilers,

Chapter 20, The Spoilers, Summary

Taran and Gurgi travel to the neighboring Commot to deliver Annlaw's pottery and find that the town is preparing for an attack by some outlaws who have been attacking the neighboring towns. When Taran hears a description of the outlaws, he knows at once that it is Dorath and his men. Taran schemes with the men of the town to fight Dorath by convincing the outlaws there are more people in town than they suspected and then ambushing them. While setting up the plan, Taran befriends a young man and his father. The young man is injured during the subsequent fight, causing Taran great anger and grief as he goes after Dorath, but Taran is unable to catch the outlaw. The outlaws are destroyed either through the fight or because they scattered and Taran learns the young man will survive.

Chapter 20, The Spoilers, Analysis

A showdown that was predicted in an earlier chapter has come to pass. Taran and Gurgi learn that Dorath has been torturing the people of the Free Commots, perhaps because he knows that Taran planned to come this way and he is trying to find the treasure Taran supposedly was after. Taran feels responsible and comes up with a trick that causes Dorath's men to scatter or otherwise become disabled, and destroys the gang. Taran does not, however, catch Dorath, suggesting he might still run into the outlaw later in the novel. Taran again shows his strength of character in this chapter, proving to the reader what kind of man he is even if Taran himself does not know. Not only does this touch on the theme of good versus evil as Taran again fights Dorath and his gang, but it touches on the theme of honor as Taran again proves himself to be of an honorable character.



Chapter 21, The Mirror,

Chapter 21, The Mirror, Summary

Still unhappy with his life and his direction, Taran returns to Annlaw. Annlaw sees this unhappiness and tells Taran of a mirror that is supposed to hold the answer to any man's identity if he will simply look into it. Taran finally agrees to go to this mirror, the Mirror of Llunet, even though he no longer believes it will show him his parentage. Taran and Gurgi find the mirror, which turns out to be a pool of water in a small cave, and Taran looks into it for a second. However, Dorath is waiting for Taran there and as he attacks Taran, he kicks the water out of the pool, ruining it forever. Taran and Dorath fight with their swords, Taran using the sword he made himself and Dorath using the sword Taran was given by Dallben. Dorath's blade shatters and he runs like a coward. Taran returns to Annlaw, telling him he did not see anything but his own face in the mirror, but believes he knows the man he is now. Taran has also realized his life is in Caer Dallben and that is where he will return.

Chapter 21, The Mirror, Analysis

Taran finally goes to the Mirror of Llunet that he has searched for since the first chapter of this novel. However, it is not a true mirror but instead is a pool of water that only reflects the image of the person looking into it, a symbolic reflection that suggests a person should look inside of himself to see who he is. Taran understands this in the split second he has to look and realizes that his quest was foolish from the beginning and he has always known who he was, a young man raised and living happily at Caer Dallben. Taran also fights Dorath in this chapter, ending what began many chapters before by proving himself to be the better man, once again touching on the symbolic good versus evil scenario and proving himself to be the good one, the honorable one, who deserved to survive and continue on with his life. This chapter wraps up all three major themes to the novel. The search for Taran's identity ends when he realizes living an honorable life is the only identity he needs. The theme of evil versus good also ends when Taran finally defeats Dorath and sends him on his way.



Characters

Taran

Taran is a young man who was abandoned by his parents as a small child and has lived with Dallben, a good wizard, ever since. Taran has become an Assistant Pig-Keeper while living with Dallben and his servants. Taran has also proven himself very brave in the past by going on many quests that resulted in heroic action. Taran now is in love with a princess and he desires to find his true identity in order to prove himself worthy to marry this woman. However, Taran expects to find out he is the child of nobility and is not prepared to face another truth.

Taran begins his quest by going to the home of three witches to ask for the knowledge, but they refuse because he has nothing of value to exchange for the knowledge. Taran then begins a quest to find the Mirror of Llunet that is rumored to reveal the truth to anyone who looks into it. However, Taran is distracted on the way first by the theft of his horse, then by the enchantment of a good friend, and finally by a lie from a crippled shepherd who claims Taran as his son. Taran is so ashamed of his own reaction from the possibility of being a shepherd's son that he stops searching for his parents and begins searching for a new identity in a new trade. However, Taran fails to find a trade he is both good at and enjoys. Finally, Taran takes the lessons he learned from all the trades he attempted and discovers the truth to his identity, which translates to him that a life is what you make of it, not what is given to you at birth.

Gurgi

Gurgi is a wooly, bear-like animal that is intelligent and behaves not unlike a human. Gurgi is the devoted servant to Taran and is his constant companion throughout his quest. Gurgi is not brave, nor is he nearly as honorable as Taran proves himself to be, but Gurgi stands beside Taran no matter what because he believes it is his place to serve Taran to the best of his ability. Gurgi is child-like in his behavior, often playing with animals and suffering the same fears as a child, such as being afraid of objects he believes are enchanted.

Gurgi becomes great friends with all the characters in the novel, including Craddock, even though Taran himself is resentful of Craddock. Gurgi is with Craddock when he falls from the ledge, getting help from Taran to help save him. Gurgi then spends several weeks nursing Taran back to health when he suffers a fever from injuries he suffers while trying to help Craddock. Gurgi is a good and loyal friend who stays beside Taran throughout the novel.



Fflewddur

Fflewddur is a bard who plays a harp and who is also a king in his own kingdom. Fflewddur is a good friend of Taran's and joins his quest when Taran finds him at the castle of Lord Gast. Fflewddur is a good person, but often tells fibs that are dramatically revealed to those he is speaking to when his harp breaks a string with every lie. Fflewddur tends to be a little weary of danger, however. When faced with the confrontation with a wizard, Fflewddur is left behind to care for Doli, who is in the shape of a frog at the time. However, Fflewddur finds some courage and attempts to find Taran when he does not return right away.

In the home of the wizard, Fflewddur is turned into a rabbit and placed in a box. When the fight is over, Fflewddur is released and returned to his normal shape, but he will spend the remainder of his part in the novel worrying about turning into a rabbit again. Fflewddur is also the one who goes to Dallben to find out if Craddock's story of being Taran's father is true and returns, too late, with the news that the story is untrue. Fflewddur leaves shortly after this to return to his own kingdom.

Doli

Doli is a dwarf from the land of Fair Folk. Doli's people suffered the theft from their kingdom of several stones that have magical powers. After several investigators disappear, Doli goes in search of the culprit and finds a wizard who changes him into a frog. Doli is then left in an arid climate, attempting to get home on his frog's legs. Doli eventually runs into Taran and his friends who give Doli water to save his life and then go with him back to the wizard's compound in order to stop the evil wizard from harming the Fair Folk people. By this time, Doli is ill from the constant dampness and cannot be of much help. However, he does arrive at the compound in time to be changed back to his normal shape and to receive the stones back from Taran. Doli returns the favor by telling Taran that the battle horn he has is an enchanted Fair Folk horn that has one emergency call left in it.

Morda

Morda is a man who has become a wizard thanks to a necklace that was a gift to him to give shelter to a sick woman. The woman, who turns out to be the mother of Taran's princess, dies while staying with Morda. Morda takes the necklace anyway and finds that the stone attached has special powers that can teach him to be a wizard. Morda spends many years learning the powers of this stone until he finds that he can change people into animals and he can use the stone's other powers to steal more stones. However, Doli finds him, and this brings Taran to his home. Taran fights with Morda and when he learns the secret of Morda's everlasting life, Taran manages to kill Morda, releasing his friends from the spells.



Annlaw

Annlaw is a talented potter who creates beautiful pottery for everyday use. Annlaw becomes Taran's teacher when Taran comes to him and asks to learn his craft. No matter how hard Taran works, however, he cannot learn how to succeed at Annlaw's craft. Taran is terribly disappointed until Annlaw teaches Taran an important lesson about life, as well as telling Taran where he can find the Mirror of Llunet that he has been searching for since the beginning of the novel. Taran goes to the mirror, but it tells him nothing that Annlaw has not already taught him. Annlaw taught Taran that life is what you make of it.

Dorath

Dorath is the leader of a gang of swords for hire. Dorath is a cruel and terrible man who tricks Taran into trusting him only to force him to fight in order for Dorath to win Taran's sword, a sword that was given to Taran by Dallben. Taran is upset by this fight, but continues on his quest. Taran will run into Dorath again when he is in the Free Commots and learns that Dorath has been raiding neighboring towns. Taran helps the people of this particular town fight Dorath and manages to break up Dorath's gang. However, Dorath gets away. Taran runs into Dorath again a few days later at the Mirror of Llunet. Dorath and Taran fight and Dorath's sword, the same he stole from Taran, shatters when Taran hits it with the sword he forged himself. Dorath runs away.

Craddoc

Craddoc is a crippled shepherd who lives alone in an unfriendly terrain, raising sheep. Craddoc meets Taran when one of his sheep escapes and Taran and his friends help Craddoc get it back to his farm. Craddoc is very happy with Taran's kindness and offers to serve him and his friends dinner. Over dinner, Taran tells his story of how he is trying to find his parents. Craddoc tells Taran a story of how he gave his son to Dallben to help the child's health and that he believes Taran to be that child. Taran has no reason not to believe Craddoc, so he decides to stay on the farm and help Craddoc fix his land and his home before winter. Taran is very unhappy with the situation, however, and wants to leave, but his honorable character will not allow him to leave. However, later, when Craddoc dies in a fall, Taran is torn up with grief for hating the man because he forced Taran to stay on the farm. This grief changes the method of his quest in response.

The Weaver, the Blacksmith, and Llonio

Llonio is a farmer with a large family who depends on luck and found materials to provide for his family. Taran is fascinated by Llonio, and thinks he must have a secret to his success. Llonio tells Taran he simply needs to keep an eye out for luck and to be smart enough to use it. The blacksmith teaches Taran how to forge a sword, telling him that life is a forge. The weaver teaches Taran how to make cloth and garments on her



loom, and teaches him that life is a loom. Taran takes all these lessons, adds to them the lesson that Annlaw taught him, and discovers that he does not need to find his parents to figure out his true identity.

Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen

Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen are three witches who live in the marshes. The witches are very moody and are apt to turn people into animals just because they feel like it. These witches also have access to knowledge that other people need. Taran goes to them hoping they can tell him who his parents are. However, the witches want something in exchange and when Taran says he has nothing, they send him in search of the Mirror of Llunet, which will be the object of Taran's quest until the end of the novel.



Objects/Places

The Mirror of Llunet

The three witches, Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen tell Taran that he can find the answers he is seeking by looking into the Mirror of Llunet. Taran spends the majority of the novel searching for this mythical mirror, finally finding it in the final chapter.

Sword

Taran carries a sword that was given to him by Dallben, the good wizard who cared for him as a child. Taran loses the sword to Dorath in a fight resulting from a debt Dorath felt Taran owed him. Later, the sword would shatter, saving Taran's life in a fight with Dorath.

Battle horn

Taran received a battle horn as a gift from his love, the princess, which will prove to be an enchanted horn of the Fair Folk. Taran uses this horn in an attempt to save the life of Craddock.

The Polished Bone

Taran and his friends find a polished bone in a box in a hollow tree that turns out to be the source of Morda's life force. Morda and Taran break the bone, causing Morda to die and his spells to end.

Fflewddur's Harp

Fflewddur has a harp that breaks a string every time he tells a lie.

Potter's Wheel

Taran attempts to find himself by learning several crafts, including that of pottery. Taran uses a potter's wheel, but finds he cannot master the skill.

Weaver's Loom

Taran attempts to learn to become a weaver using a weaver's loom, but discovers he does not enjoy the task despite becoming very successful at the task.



Fair Folk Stone

Morda has come into possession of a stone of the Fair Folks that he has begun to use in order to satisfy an evil plot to run the entire country. Taran defeats him and returns the stone to the Fair Folk people even though he could have used it to bribe the three witches into giving him the name of his parents.

The Thorn Wall

Taran is blocked from entering Morda's compound by a thorn wall that somehow manages to throw him onto Morda's property when he attempts to climb it.

Caer Dallben

Caer Dallben is the home of Dallben, a kind wizard, who has raised Taran from infancy after his parents abandoned him.

Hill Cantrevs

Hill Cantrevs is a hilly area between the Valley Cevs and the Free Commots where Taran finds Craddock.

Free Commots

The Free Commots is a group of towns that are not ruled by a king but are free and ruled by the townsfolk. The Free Commots is where Taran attempts to learn several trades and where he finds the Mirror of Llunet, as well as Dorath.



Themes

Search for One's Identity

Identity means many things to many people. To some it is simply a name or a title. To others it is a career. To more it is a heritage. Taran is unclear what his identity is because Taran had been abandoned as a child and therefore he did not know who his parents were. To Taran, his identity is wrapped up in the knowledge of who his parents might be. Taran hopes to be of noble birth because he desires to marry a princess, but is willing to find out the truth even if it brings certain disappointment. However, through the course of his search, Taran learns certain truths about himself that he finds not only disappointing but also dishonorable and less than noble.

Taran proves to be a great leader, a brave soldier, and a kind man throughout his quest, but never finds out who his parents are. Taran is tricked at one point into thinking he is the son of a shepherd and is so disappointed by this possibility that he finds himself hating a man who is honorable in all other aspects of his character. When faced with the man's possible death, Taran considers allowing the man to die rather than risking his own life to save him, surprising himself with his lack of humanity and concern. This leads Taran to abandon his desire to find his parents and to concentrate more on finding a new identity for himself that does not involve his parents.

Taran has believed all along that to be a noble person he must be of noble birth. Failing this, Taran decides to find a trade that will make him happy as well as providing for himself and possibly a wife someday. However, Taran fails to find a profession he can enjoy and that he is good at. Taran is more lost than he was before. Finally, Taran meets a man who shows him that life is what you make of it and Taran has made his life as noble as it could be without having a title he was perhaps born into. Taran learns that it is okay to be satisfied with your life as you behave than to be given a life through birth.

Good versus Evil

Another part of a person's identity is often which side of the proverbial struggle he falls on: the good side, or the evil. Taran meets up with many characters in this novel that symbolize this struggle by placing themselves on the side of evil, causing Taran to prove himself to be on the side of good. Taran is a strong man, a good man, who often fights evil for the good of all people, putting himself at risk of death for his friends and his loved ones without thought to his own life. This is proven several times within the novel, including Taran's fight with Morda. Morda is clearly an evil man as he has already turn Taran's friend Doli into a frog and left him to die in an arid climate. Taran rushes to confront this man despite the dangers and eventually triumphs, with the ironic help of Morda himself.



Later, Taran is confronted by evil in the face of Dorath, a man who hires himself out to any evil lord who wants tasks done that are too unsavory for his own men. Dorath assumes that Taran is looking for treasure and first attempts to force Taran to take him to the treasure. Failing this, Dorath steals Taran's sword, a gift from Dallben, and then goes in search of the treasure on his own, torturing the townspeople around the area where Taran was intended to go. Dorath then confronts Taran, ironically losing a sword fighting when the sword he stole from Taran shatters after being struck by the sword Taran forged himself.

Honor

Another part of a person's identity is his honor. In the time in which Taran lives, honor is a huge part of his personal identity. A man's honor is like his calling card, his acceptance into circles he might not be allowed to travel in if his reputation were that of a thief or a liar. Taran has great honor in that he always attempts to be grateful, to give aid where he can, and to do the proper thing at the right time. Taran attempts to do these things throughout the novel, constantly jumping in to help his friends when he sees a need, always helping a poor farmer with his crops, and staying with Craddock, whom he thinks is his father, even when his heart is not in his tasks.

Honor is what makes a man a good man in the medieval period that this novel is set in. Honor describes everything about Taran and it is his true identity. Taran does not need to know who his birth parents are to have honor and he does not need a trade to give him an identity when he has already proven time and again that he has the honor to be the person he wants to be. Taran is a good and just person and with time, he soon realizes this and realizes this is enough of an identity to live the life he wishes to live.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of *Taran Wanderer* is third person omniscient. Taran is the primary narrator and most of the action is seen either through his eyes or through information told to him. The narration does not wander into the mind of other characters nor does it attempt to explain the emotions or actions of other characters, keeping the action focused on Taran, which also keeps the point of view narrow and to the point. Taran is the most important character in the novel and therefore is the focus of the novel, as suggested by the tight narration. What makes the narration third person omniscient is that the actions and emotions of Taran are reported on, but they are reported in the third person rather through a more intimate first person point of view.

This point of view works because it stresses to the reader, almost subconsciously, that Taran is the most important character in the novel, that the story is about Taran and not about the other characters who manage to become little more than window dressing to the story of one man attempting to discover his true identity. Since the novel focuses so closely on Taran, there is little room for subplots or stories surrounding the other characters, leaving the plot of the novel to follow the most important tangent, that of Taran's search. The point of view reinforces the importance of this story line, removing any obstacles that might distract from its main point, creating a tight and easily understood story.

Setting

The novel is set in the fictional country of Prydain. Prydain is a magical place where wizards and witches still exist, and men make friends with such beasts as the furry bear-like creature of Gurgi, or the cat-like creature Llyan. Prydain is a fictional place not unlike the wonderful worlds created in works such as the Narnia Chronicles or The Lord of the Rings trilogy. Prydain has a geological structure not unlike that of earth, with areas of lush grass and rolling hills, as well as deserts and rocky, bramble covered valleys. The creatures of Prydain are what make it unique.

Prydain appears to exist in an era that is not unlike the mythical time of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. There are kings who rule kingdoms and lords who fight amongst themselves and wizard who plot to control the world. There are farmers who must fight unimaginable horrors, and artisans who create beautiful works that, in the modern world, are done mostly by machines. Men live by a code in this time of lawlessness; fighting battles for the greater good rather than personal gain, creating men who were of a character rarely seen since in modern times. Taran is a product of this environment, despite not knowing his own true identity for the majority of the novel, and it is the setting of the novel that not only adds excitement to the novel through its



unique characters, but also creates a main character that is both honorable and exciting to know.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is clear, simple English that makes the novel simple to read even for the youngest readers. The novel was written with young readers in mind, so the language is structured in such a way that children should have little difficulty grasping its meaning. However, because it is a fantasy novel set in a fictional world, many of the names of the characters and of the property are strange and at times difficult to comprehend, while some are quite simple and hardly different from their English counterparts. The unique names and spellings of these names give the novel a more foreign feel, adding to the fantasy of the setting and giving the reader a real sense of being a part of something different and exciting.

The language in this novel works because it is both reader-friendly and imaginative. One drawback of the language, however, is the dialogue. The dialogue can be clunky and difficult to follow at the beginning as it is written as though the speakers live in the medieval period. If the reader is not accustomed to this type of writing, it can prove difficult to follow in the beginning. However, once the reader catches on to the style, the dialogue becomes easier to follow and can actually add to the imaginative feel of the novel, enhancing the reader's experience in reading a unique fantasy novel.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-one chapters. Each chapter is titled by either a brief description of the events that will transpire within the chapter or by the name of a location that will be key to the chapter. The chapters are normally between ten and fifteen pages long, fairly short, but long enough to finish the events begun at the beginning of the chapter or the end of the previous chapter. There is a note from the author at the beginning of the book explaining that this book is the fourth in a series of novels about Prydain. There is also a map of the areas Taran will visit throughout the book and an index of the chapters.

The book contains one major storyline and does not include any subplots except events that occasionally distract Taran from his main objective. The novel is simply put together, following a straight timeline that moves in a logical sequence, beginning with Taran's desire to find his parents and ending with his decision to return to Caer Dallben, the home he left in the first chapter. Taran meets with many characters and many adventures through the novel, but never wavers from his main objective, which is a desire to find out who he is. Taran does change the method of learning his identity, switching from finding his birth parents to finding a career that suits his emotional happiness to discovering the person he has always been. Despite this switch in methods, Taran never wavers from his main goal, and finally discovers the truth and

returns to where he started, taking him full circle from the beginning of the novel to its satisfying end.



Quotes

"It was full springtime, with promise of the richest summer the farm had ever seen. The orchard was white with fragrant blossoms; the newly planted fields lay light as green mist. Yet the sights and scents gave Taran little joy. To him, Caer Dallben was empty." Chapter 1, Who am I?, p. 15

"Taran rode slowly, head high, with all the assurance he could muster. But once out of sight of the stronghold, the companions clapped heels into their horses' flanks and galloped for dear life." Chapter 3, Goryon and Gast, p. 53

"Heart bursting in his chest, Taran doubled his pace; though before he could set foot in the rapids, he saw the King's red beard sink below the churning water, and cried out in despair as Smoit disappeared over the brink." Chapter 4, A Matter of Cows, p. 72

"Taran King of Cadiffor. The words rang more sweetly in his ears than Taran Assistant Pig-Keeper. Yet suddenly his joy turned cold. While Eilonwy might honor his rank, could she respect him for abandoning his quest even before it had begun? Could he respect himself?" Chapter 5, A Judgment, p. 83

"From deep in the frog's throat came another sound, hardly more than a whisper but clear and unmistakable. Taran's jaw fell. His eyes wide with bewilderment, he turned to Fflewddur. Barely able to speak, he held the frog in his outstretched hand and gasped, 'It's Doli!'" Chapter 6, A Frog, p. 96

"Taran drove his sword full into the wizard's breast. He plucked the weapon free. But his shout turned to a cry of horror and he stumbled back against the wall.

Morda stood unharmed." Chapter 9, The Hand of Morda, p. 121

"Instantly Taran caught up the polished fragment to snap it between his fingers. He gasped in dismay. The bone would not break." Chapter 9, The Hand of Morda, p. 128

"In his grasp lay the means to gain the knowledge he craved. But his heart sank. Though he had won the gem fairly, never could he claim to be its rightful owner. It was his to bargain with no more than it had been Morda's. If Orddu accepted it, and he should learn he was of noble birth—was a royal robe enough to hide a dishonorable deed?" Chapter 10, The Spell Broken, p. 133

"Even after his strength had come back and the pain in his side had dwindled to a dull ache, Taran sat a long while on the ground before gathering up his belongings—the torn cloak, the battle horn, the empty scabbard, and setting off to join Fflewddur and Gurgi. Dorath had gone. There was no sign of him, but the laughter still rang in Taran's ears." Chapter 12, The Wager, p. 157

"'Do you say,' Taran whispered, 'do you say then, you are father to me?'



'The promise has been kept,' Craddock answered quietly. 'My son has come back.'"

Chapter 13, The Lost Lamb, p. 166

"'Why my luck is no greater than yours or any man's. You need only sharpen your eyes to see your luck when it comes, and sharpen your wits to use what falls into your hands.'"

Chapter 17, The Weir, p. 205

"'Llonio said life was a net for luck; to Hevydd the Smith life was a forge; and to Dwyvach the Weaver-Woman a loom. They spoke truly, for it is all these. But you,' Taran said, his eyes meeting the potter's, 'you have shown me life is one thing more. It is clay to be shaped, as raw clay on a potter's wheel.'"

Chapter 21, The Mirror, p. 253



Topics for Discussion

Who is Taran? Why does he want to find his birth parents? Why is Taran not content with remaining an assistant pig keeper? Will finding his parents change anything in Taran's life?

Why does Taran believe himself to be of noble birth? Why is this important to Taran's future? When Taran believes he is not of noble birth, how does his ultimate goal change? Why? Why does learning the possibility of not being of noble birth stop Taran in the search for his parents?

Why does Taran begin searching for a trade to make his career? How will a trade change his identity? Why does Taran need to find a new identity? What was wrong with his original identity?

Why does Taran turn down Smoit's offer to become his heir to the crown? Why does Taran refuse to remain with the farmer and his wife, to work their land? Why does Taran refuse to become powerful through the evil wizardry of Morda? Why does Taran remain with Craddock despite being unhappy in the situation? What do these actions say of Taran's character?

What is identity? How is a person's identity defined? Why does Taran associate his identity with his birth parents? Are his parents the true definition of who Taran is as a man? If so, why? If not, why?

What is Dorath's role in the novel? Why does Taran continuously run into Dorath? What is the significance of Dorath stealing Taran's sword and then the sword shattering while Dorath is fighting Taran? What is the symbolism in Taran's sword, the one he made himself, shattering his old blade that he cherished so much and lost to Dorath?

Discuss symbolism in this novel. How many symbols and their meanings can you think of? Do you consider the Mirror of Llunet a symbol? If so, what of? How many other symbols can you think of?