

The White Dragon Study Guide

The White Dragon by Anne McCaffrey

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Plot Summary

"The White Dragon" by Anne McCaffrey is the final book in "The Dragonriders of Pern" trilogy. This book focuses mainly on Jaxom and his white dragon, Ruth, and the struggles they face. Young Jaxom will have to figure out whether he will become the Lord of Ruatha Hold or a dragonrider of Pern.

The story begins with Jaxom and the description we get of Ruth. Ruth is the only white dragon there is, and he is also much smaller than the other dragons. Jaxom feels conflicted about the fact that he is too young to be Holder of Ruatha but also unable to fly with the other dragonriders because it is too dangerous for the only heir to Ruatha to be in battle against the Thread that fall from the sky.

Jaxom becomes determined to teach Ruth to flame and fight Thread in secret which eventually earns him the right to train with the other young dragonriders. While attending a mating flight of a green dragon, the queen dragon's egg is stolen. It is known that it must be someone from the Oldtimers, Dragonriders from the past that have been banished to a Southern Hold and hate most of Benden's riders. It is dangerous to fly through time, but Jaxom does just that and is able to return the egg to the queen dragon. The egg is unharmed and Jaxom is able to stop what would have become a battle between the two sets of dragons. Jaxom remains quiet about what he has done in the hopes that Lessa, rider of the queen dragon and leader of Benden, will believe that one of the Oldtimers returned the egg in a quest for peace.

Jaxom goes to a cove on the Southern Continent with Ruth. There Jaxom becomes sick, and Ruth has to get help for Jaxom. Jaxom falls in love with one of his nurses named Sharra. Jaxom is joined by Robinton, and many others while they begin looking into the disappearance of the ancients from the Southern Continent. While they are unable to find all the answers they are looking for, they do discover the space ships that the ancients arrived in as well as detailed maps of Pern including the Southern Continent.

Jaxom continues to mature and finally gets to the point that he is able to take on the full responsibilities of Lord Holder of Ruatha and is able to perform many of the duties of dragonrider as well. There are many things in the story left unanswered to Jaxom and the others of Pern, but there is a determination to continue with their tries to stop the Thread and make Pern Thread free.



Chapter 1-3

Chapter 1-3 Summary

"The White Dragon" by Anne McCaffrey is the final book in "The Dragonriders of Pern" trilogy. This book focuses mainly on Jaxom and his white dragon, Ruth, and the struggles they face. Young Jaxom will have to figure out whether he will become the Lord of Ruatha Hold or a dragonrider of Pern.

The story begins with Jaxom, the young Lord of Ruatha, cleaning his dragon, Ruth. Ruth is a white dragon that was born a runt. Jaxom has been wanting to ride Ruth in the skies but some worry that Ruth is too small. Jaxom gets himself and his dragon ready for inspection by Weyrleaders, the riders of the bronze dragons, and Lords of other Holds (which is where most people of Pern live). They worry Ruth is so small that if he tries to fly with Jaxom riding, they will crash and die.

Jaxom's mother died at birth and his father died a few moments later in a duel. Jaxom's guardian is a former dragonrider named Lytol. He will appoint Jaxom as the Lord of Ruatha when he feels Jaxom is old enough. The woman that nursed Jaxom when he was a baby is named Deelan. She had a son born a few days before Jaxom and was able to raise them both. Jaxom's milk-brother, Dorse, constantly tells him that Ruth isn't anything but an overgrown fire-lizard. Fire-lizards are much smaller than dragons and not as smart. They are kept as pets. Jaxom is thinking about all these things when the Weyrleaders and Lords begin to arrive.

Lessa and F'lar, the leader of the dragonriders of Benden Weyr, agree that Ruth is large enough for Jaxom to begin flying. Jaxom is thrilled but is only in the air for a few moments when they are instructed to land. They are told that they will be able to ride a little farther each day. Jaxom takes Ruth off while the Weyrleaders and Lords gather in the Hall to discuss other matters.

Robinton is the masterharper, those that study the singing of tales and stories, and he begins to discuss with the others what is to be done about the excess heirs to the Holds. There is a fear that there will be fighting since there aren't enough Holds for all of them. Robinton explains that he wants young people from all the different Crafts and Holds to exchange ideas and see if a way can be devised to stop the Thread, which are spores that come from the Red Star and which devour all organic material. When Jaxom arrives, they tell him that there are going to be young lads about his age coming to Ruatha to foster with him and that he will be able to visit other Holds. They have decided that since Jaxom is the only blood heir to the Hold at Ruatha, he will not perform dragonrider duties since it will be too dangerous.

Some time later Robinton is visiting Benden Weyr and tells Lessa and F'lar about the South Continent of Pern, which has not yet been thoroughly explored. He was able to map part of the continent, but they know little about it and spend most of their time



fighting the Thread. Lessa is angered that the Oldtimers, dragonmen who were banished to the South, refuse to protect the people in the Southern continent against thread. Toric, Lord Holder of the Southern Hold, has come with Robinton and is explaining that they need more men to help map out the Southern continent but that the Oldtimer's won't let them come in. They devise a way to send six to ten men at a time into the continent so they won't be noticed by the Oldtimers.

Again at Ruatha Hold, Jaxom is at the Hall. He loses his temper at Dorse's chiding and leaves the hall to find Ruth, and they fly to a lake to be alone. Jaxom isn't sure why he lost his temper but spends the time at the lake thinking about why he is unable to control his anger and what has caused it. Jaxom realizes that Lytol isn't going to name Jaxom as the Lord of Ruatha until Lytol's health begins failing. Jaxom understands the reasoning but Jaxom isn't allowed to pursue dragonriding either since it is too dangerous. Jaxom notices all the fire-lizards that follow Ruth everywhere he goes.

When they are ready to fly back, Ruth and Jaxom discuss that Ruth and Jaxom have been "timing it." This is where a dragon takes his rider to another point in time. Ruth says that Jaxom isn't to worry because Ruth knows when he is going and few dragons can say that. When they reach Ruatha Hold, they are greeted by N'ton at Benden Weyr. He tries to reassure Jaxom that he will be able to be a dragonrider and tells Jaxom that he will speak on his behalf to Lytol and F'lar. Although Jaxom is forbid to do feed Ruth firestone, N'tol tells Jaxom to be sure and not get caught. Firestone is what gives the dragons the ability to breath the fire that kills the Thread but it is dangerous to do it without training.

Jaxom goes to the Smithcrafthall to listen to Wansor, master of the star chart, speak about the stars and their relationship to time. Jaxom wonders to himself if the new star chart Wansor has created could be used to travel through time more accurately. It is dangerous to travel through time and is not allowed regularly. Jaxom goes outside with his friends F'lessan and Menolly. F'lessan leaves Menolly and Jaxom alone to discuss the amazingly large number of fire-lizards that have accumulated around Ruth.

Ruth is different from other dragons and is able to see the images that the fire-lizards give him and pass them on to Jaxom. Some of them are odd and don't make much sense, but Menolly believes the fire-lizards have memories. Menolly asks Jaxom if he truly is being what he wants to be or if he is just a shadow of his tutors and mentors.

Chapter 1-3 Analysis

There is a lot of talk about the fact that Ruth is different from the other dragons. They also make a link between the personality of a dragon and the rider the dragon chooses. Dragons have only one rider and there is a significant bond there. The fact that Ruth is so different from the other dragons is notable, but it is not clear different in what ways. Later on in the story it will seem Jaxom is very worried that Ruth is taking so long to mature sexually. It isn't known for a fact that Ruth won't mature sexually until the end of the story.



Jaxom feels deeply for his mentors and that he is not considered an equal. It also seems to the reader that Jaxom is conflicted about what he wants to be. His path lies in two directions one as Lord of Ruatha Hold and one as a dragonrider. This will be pivotal in the coming chapters as Jaxom is forced to etch out his own path. He helps Lytol to find a new path as well at the end of the story.

There is a brief mention of marriage for Jaxom in this beginning of the story and the fact that he is not ready for marriage. A sub-plot of Jaxom's love life completes his journey from boy to man.

Jaxom has people that he loves and people that have treated him rudely, such as his milk-brother Dorse; these relationships will change as Jaxom changes. It appears to the reader that Jaxom is beginning to struggle with the things he is expected to be, the thing he wants to be, and the thing he is afraid he might be. He doesn't want to get angry and hates himself for having those feelings. He knows how he wants to act, how he thinks Lytol would want him to act, and the way he did act. There is as much going on within Jaxom as there is without. Ruth acts as a stable force for Jaxon as he becomes a man.



Chapter 4-6

Chapter 4-6 Summary

Jaxom begins looking for time to steal away and teach Ruth to eat firestone and practice breathing fire. He is constantly busy and when he can manage to get time away, there are fire-lizards that follow them no matter where they fly. Jaxom notices he is being treated differently by those in the hold since he got angry at Dorse. They refer to him as "Lord" Jaxom and treat him the same as they would treat Lord Lytol or a visiting dignitary. Jaxom decides he does not want to be the Lord of Ruatha as of yet and certainly doesn't want to be part of an arranged marriage.

Jaxom meets a girl named Corana and decides she will be useful as an excuse to steal time away without the fire-lizards and he will be able to feed Ruth firestone. Jaxom takes his opportunity and takes Ruth to a lake where he has a small stash of firestone. Ruth is unable to create a significant flame or to maintain it for long. When Ruth has eaten all the firestone, they go to find Corana so Jaxom's alibi will be in place should anyone ask where he has been. Jaxom and Ruth clean up before going back to Ruatha. Ruth throws up the firestone ash, the leftovers from what a dragon can't digest, but Jaxom is able to keep it a secret. The next night Jaxom is able to get more firestone and they fly off to practice.

Jaxom and Ruth have been practicing but not had a chance to fight Thread. Jaxom and Ruth arrive at Fort Hold, where the queen dragon Ramoth is having her eggs, and they are almost attacked by the other dragons. The dragons and the fire-lizards are angry. Menolly comes out to meet Jaxom and tells him that someone has stolen the queen dragon Ramoth's female egg. They immediately fly to Benden to see what is happening. The dragonriders are getting ready to go to the Southern Hold to fight the Oldtimers to get the egg back. They can't follow whoever took the egg because they went into the between and then through time as well. Lessa is greatly angered, and they are getting ready for war.

After a few moments there is another disturbance that no one can see, and when they get there, Ramoth's egg is back. Lessa is still angered but in the end is convinced that having the egg back is all that matters. The egg is unharmed but is days older and almost ready to hatch. The worry among many members of the dragonriders and others is that the battle that will come from this will be that dragon will fight dragon. Dragons are the only thing that protects Pern and that would be disastrous. No one knows who took the egg or why it was returned. Many of the fire-lizards are sending pictures to their masters that dragons are flaming them but no one knows what they are talking about. Ruth tells Jaxom that something is wrong in his head (Ruth's) and that he doesn't feel right. The images the fire-lizards are giving their masters are not making much sense. They transmit a vision of dragons flaming fire-lizards, blackness and then the glimpse of an egg.



Menolly and Jaxom travel back to their holds and retell the tale of what happened. Lytol confirms that he has feared that the conflict might entail dragon fighting dragon. Jaxom returned with many charts from Wansor's equations. Jaxom spends much time explaining the equations to Brand and Lytol and later uses the charts to locate a safe time he and Ruth can practice flaming.

Later on when it was time to feed Ruth, Jaxom notes that Ruth isn't sharing with the fire-lizards as he normally would. Ruth tells Jaxom that the fire-lizards have seen Ruth stealing the queen's egg but that he didn't do that and wouldn't do that. Jaxom decides that Ruth must have been the one to take the egg back and the fire-lizards are able to show Ruth exactly when the egg was taken. Jaxom has Ruth covered in mud so he won't be easily recognized, and they begin the trip through the between.

They are able to find the egg but can't travel through time all at once with the egg because it is too cold in the between to sustain the egg. They stop several times to warm the egg and catch their breath. Jaxom and Ruth are resting when they are caught in the middle of a Thread storm. Both Jaxom and Ruth are injured but manage to escape and protect the egg. They take the egg back and are able to remain unseen. When they return to Ruatha, they go to their quarters and Jaxom is tending to his and Ruth's wounds when Lytol walks in. He tells Jaxom that he knows some maneuvers that will be handy if he and Ruth are going to fight the Thread.

Chapter 4-6 Analysis

It seems to the reader up to this point that Lord Lytol has been hard and cold, but it is seen at the end of these chapters that he has a very soft side that is beginning to show. The loss of Lytol's dragon has affected the way he looks at Jaxom and Ruth. It seems harsh, but it seems that Lytol wants to spare Jaxom the hurt that he feels from the loss of his dragon. When Jaxom becomes ill with fire-head later on in the story, Lytol will show Jaxom much more affection and appear to soften towards his ward.

Jaxom seems to be developing feelings for Menolly. It seems to be respect more than anything at this point, but it will appear later that it bothers Jaxom when he finds Menolly embracing Sebell. The girl Jaxom has been seeing as an excuse to be gone from the hold to teach Ruth to chew firestone, Corana, will not hold his attention long term.

Lessa appears to be a great leader as the rider of the queen dragon, but she seems to be a slave to her emotions. Her emotions will guide much of her decision making with the voice of reason being that of her life mate, F'lar.

The author uses strong foreshadowing in these chapters when Ruth is discussing the things that have changed and the behavior of the fire-lizards. These are beasts that are unable to lie or to falsify what is seen. The way that the pictures the fire lizards offer is perceived also tells much about the characters as the story continues.



Chapter 7-9

Chapter 7-9 Summary

Lytol tells Jaxom to make sure that he is discreet about who knows he and Ruth have been fighting Thread. Lytol tells Jaxom that he can go train with the other weyrings, young dragonriders, to ensure that Jaxom will be safe. They make Jaxom promise that if he is allowed to go, he will not time it any more. He agrees and the talks continue. Lytol is informed that the grub, an organism that eat Thread, live underground in the Southern Holds and are enough to take care of any Thread threat. There is talk that the day may come when dragonriders are not needed in the North either. Some of the Lords are wondering if there are records in the Southern Holds that may hold information that they could use.

The next morning Jaxom wakes and tends to his and Ruth's wounds. He goes to Fort Weyr to start training with the other weyrings. Jaxom is able to steal time away each day to visit with Corana. She doesn't know much about the Southern Holds and the Threads but tries to talk to Jaxom about these things.

Ramoth's eggs are due to hatch and Jaxom is required to go. Lytol tells him that Menolly needs him get her and take her to the hatching. When Jaxom gets to where Menolly is, there are many dragons that would have been able to carry her to Benden, so Jaxom is confused why she called for him. She gives Jaxom some ointment that will camouflage the score mark on his face left by the Thread so that Lessa and F'lar won't see it. Menolly teases Jaxom about Corana. Jaxom realizes that Menolly may know that none of the Southerners had replaced the egg after it was stolen.

When they arrive at the hatching of Ramoth's eggs, they find Ramoth is unwilling to let any of them impress on the young boys that have been chosen. Impression is the joining of minds between dragons and their riders that happens at the dragon's hatching. Ramoth's mate, Mnementh, reassures her that she is just being silly and that once they are with men, they will be safe. After each dragon has picked a boy to impress, there is a meeting, and Jaxom is asked to attend as a Holder of Ruatha. Jaxom realizes that Lytol had him come for this reason.

In the meeting D'ram, Oldtimer Weyrleader at Ista Weyr, announces that he is stepping down because his Weyrmate, or lover, Fannon, is dying. D'ram announces that he wants to use an old custom to pick the new leader of Ista. There will be a contest for the new queen dragon's mating flight to all the young bronze dragons. The Weyrleaders agree that this is fair.

Later Jaxom and Ruth are at the Fort when fire-lizards sound and Ruth informs Jaxom that Fannon has died. When Jaxom tells Ruth to take him back to the Hold, Ruth instinctively takes him back in time to moments before the death is announced. Jaxom makes it up the stairs to Lytol as the dragons announce the passing of Fannon and



consequently the suicidal death of her queen dragon, as no dragon will live without their rider.

Robinton and Menolly greet F'lar and Mnementh as they approach. F'lar and Lessa are worried about D'ram. They are unable to find him and are worried that he may be in danger or have hurt himself. They are sure he has traveled in time but his dragon is too old to have taken him far. Robinton convinces F'lar that Ruth is able to communicate with the little fire-lizards and will be able to know when they saw a lone bronze dragon.

F'lar questions Jaxom about Ruth's ability to fly in time and his knowledge of where they are. Jaxom is sure of Ruth's ability, and they decide that Jaxom and Ruth find D'ram but will not do anything except give F'lar exact instructions about the location and time. Once F'lar is gone Robinton tells Jaxom that Menolly will go with him, since she has spent time in the Southern Holds. Robinton notes something in their reactions to each other as they fly off.

Chapter 7-9 Analysis

It appears there is a struggle going on inside Jaxom. He enjoys Corana's company, but the reader sees a deep appreciation for Menolly that has been growing. It will appear later on that Menolly has feelings for a young man that Jaxom is unaware of, but there is no hint of that at this point in the story. Jaxom later will decide there is much about Corana he doesn't like and finds a different woman, Sharra, with whom to spend time.

There are many secrets that are being kept by people with their own thoughts of rights and wrongs. Jaxom is keeping many secrets, but as they swell inside him, he increasingly needs someone as a confidant. The fact that Jaxom and Menolly are so very young is an addition to the story of two people coming of age. When they interact, it seems very childlike playfulness in both of them.

A rider can live without their dragon but their life is never the same, as we see with Lytol. It also seems to cause insane actions from a Southern rider later on in the story when he loses his dragon. When a rider dies, his/her dragon commits suicide because they can't live without the rider, as is shown with Fannon's dragon when she dies. For this reason, F'lar is unwilling to fight the Southern riders because he cares for the dragons. The comment has been made that the dragon is the man. The fact that Ruth and Jaxom are almost as one reveals much about Jaxom's nature.



Chapter 10-12

Chapter 10-12 Summary

Jaxom and Menolly arrive at the cove on the Southern Continent to look for D'ram. They wait for local fire-lizards to come to Ruth in the hopes the lizards will be able to tell them if they have ever seen D'ram and if so when. They enjoy a swim in the cove's waters and fall asleep on the sand. Ruth wakes Jaxom and Menolly when fire-lizards begin arriving. They remember a bronze dragon and a man that walked the beach but say that the man didn't stay long. They also remember men but not men like Jaxom or Menolly. Their images don't make much sense to Jaxom or Menolly and the fire-lizards soon leave. Jaxom flies back twenty-five turns to find when D'ram is and then returns to find Menolly.

Jaxom and Menolly mount on Ruth and head back to F'lar and Lessa at Benden Hold to inform them of D'ram's location. Ruth and Jaxom are weakened by the trip through time and spend the night at the hold. Early the next morning, Jaxom and Ruth are awakened so Ruth can give Mnementh a clear picture of when to go. When F'lar returns with D'ram, there is little credit given to the fire-lizards that helped them to find the dragon and its rider.

Menolly's friend, Mirrim, has a dragon that is ready to mate. Jaxom wonders if Ruth would want to mate with her, but Ruth is uninterested. Jaxom thinks Menolly knows something about Ruth that she is not sharing with him, but Menolly reassures him that Ruth is just taking longer to mature.

Jaxom takes Menolly home to find a young man waiting on her, and they embrace each other and kiss. Robinton takes Jaxom aside and has him retell what happened with D'ram and F'lar. Robinton takes extra interest in the fact that the fire-lizards remember men. Jaxom has Ruth take him to Corana. The two make love and then Jaxom and Ruth take their leave of Corana and head back to Ruatha.

Jaxom goes between with Ruth while his clothes are wet and realizes he is getting a cold. The next day he feels no better but is called out to fight the Thread for the first time. They do very well, and when the Thread are gone from the skies Jaxom has Ruth take him back to the cove at the Southern Continent.

Chapter 10-12 Analysis

It seems Menolly's relationship bothers Jaxom, though he doesn't name it a jealousy at this point. He was unaware that she had any sort of romantic relationship and the fact that she was able to hide something of that nature from Jaxom may bother him. It appears Menolly has a very strong attachment to her master, Robinton. It will not come out for some time in the book how they actually feel about each other. Robinton refuses to build a relationship with the girl because of the vast age difference. When Jaxom



becomes sick he begins to slowly develop a relationship with one of his nurses, Sharra, and will constantly compare her to Corana.

Jaxom is too quick to want to fight the Thread and prove Ruth. In later chapters, it is discovered Jaxom doesn't have a cold but has fire-head. Menolly contracted it as well, but since she hadn't been exerting herself as Jaxom had she was much better off than Jaxom. It seems Jaxom is very worried about the fact that Ruth doesn't want to mate. He tries for a time to conceal his worry from Ruth but is unable. Ruth simply explains that he is a white dragon. Ruth seems to find it to be a suitable answer that he doesn't want what the brown, green or bronze dragons want. Ruth is the only white dragon and Jaxom is worried for his friend.

Robinton has explained much at this point in the story but it seems that there is still much he is hiding from Ruth and Jaxom. They will be necessary for Robinton's cause later, but at this point it is unclear why. It happens that the dragons speak to Robinton later when he has a heart attack and are able to will him to stay and not die. This will reinforce the fact that Robinton plays a significant role with the dragonriders.



Chapter 13-15

Chapter 13-15 Summary

Jaxom awakens to find he is sick and being cared for. What he believed to be a cold was fire-head and nearly killed him when Ruth took him between. Ruth had enough sense to get help for Jaxom when other dragons would have been lost without their rider. Jaxom is nursed by Brekke and Sharra. It is days before he can open his eyes because fire-head often causes blindness. Jaxom is forced to stay in bed and take it easy for some time. He begins to develop feelings for Sharra and is thankful he is far enough away from Corana to easily break off their relationship.

Lytol shows up to check on Jaxom and embraces Jaxom. It is clear to Jaxom that Lytol cares for him much more than he knew. Sharra tells Jaxom that he was sick with the fever for sixteen days and that it will take a lot of time before he is fully well. Jaxom is worried that while under the fever he may have said something to give away the fact that he is the one that returned the egg. Jaxom begins to have dreams and nightmares that he can't remember when he wakes. Brekke is having a lot of dreams lately also. Jaxom is unable to fight Thread, but Ruth is allowed to go with the others and remain riderless.

Robinton goes to see who will mate with Caylith, the new dragon queen at Ista Weyr and ridden by Cosira. Robinton has had a pain in chest but ignores it as the festivities begin. Southern riders show up with their old dragons for a chance to mate with Caylith. The Southern dragons are so old, there is a good chance that they will die trying to keep up with the younger dragons. Their riders, Oldtimers, blame F'lar for banishing them to the Southern Holds and demand a chance to breed their dragon since their Wer is all too old to breed and will soon die out. One of the Oldtimer's dragon dies while trying to keep up with Caylith, and the man becomes insane and pulls a knife on F'lar. F'lar is able to win the fight and kills the man, but during all the excitement Robinton has a heart attack.

Strange voices call to Robinton telling him that they need him and that he can't sleep just yet. Lessa sends for the healer and Robinton is stabilized. It is odd that Robinton was able to hear the dragons calling to him since they only speak to their riders. Sharra, Berrek, and Jaxom are on the beach when Ruth and the fire-lizards alert them of what has happened. Jaxom wants to go to see about Robinton and F'lar but is told he is unable to go between for at least a month because the fire-head can still kill him at this point. Jaxom sends Berrek on to Robinton on the back of Ruth alone. Ruth sends back word to Jaxom that all is well with Robinton.

D'ram is accepted by the Oldtimers and volunteers to go and take the place of the one that died fighting F'lar. He is given permission to take other riders with him and rebuild what the Southern Hold has lost. Robinton has stabilized by this point, but Lessa is still



very worried. Lessa's dragon Ramoth and F'lar's dragon Mnementh tell Lessa that they will stay with Robinton and make sure he doesn't die.

Sharra, Brekke, and Jaxom are on the beach when Ruth and the fire-lizards alert them of what has happened to Robinton and the Oldtimer's dragon. Brekke and Ruth ready themselves for flight when Brekke and Sharra tell Jaxom that it will be at least a month before he can fly between because of his sickness. Jaxom is angry when he learns this but tells Ruth to take Brekke on without him. Shortly after Brekke and Ruth depart, Jaxom and Sharra are shocked by the arrival of Piemur. Piemur is an apprentice to Robinton and tells Jaxom that he has been looking for Jaxom per Robinton's direction.

The Oldtimer that died was a leader in the Southern Holds and D'ram offers to go and lead them. F'lar agrees that it is a good idea, and D'ram tells him that he will fly the dragons and fight Thread again when he gets there. Robinton is stable but in need of rest. Mnementh and Ramoth tell Lessa they will stay with him to ensure his well being.

Chapter 13-15 Analysis

Jaxom notes to himself that Sharra is not pretty but tells her that she is beautiful. It becomes clear that Jaxom disliked many things about Corana and compares Corana's faults with Sharra's attributes. He seems to be worried that Sharra will be unable to care for him since he has been her patient, but it appears the relationship may develop. Piemur slows this down and leaves Jaxom wishing that Piemur had waited at least half a day before arriving so that he and Sharra had time alone together.

Robinton was called back from death by the dragons. They are selective creatures and don't communicate with many people. The fact that they stated that they need him and kept him with them is significant in deciding Robinton's importance in the story. In the following chapters he will travel by ship to the cove where Jaxom is staying and along the way, the depth of Menolly's feelings for Robinton will become obvious.

Jaxom cares deeply for Lytol but it seems he has been very careful around the man not to mention anything about dragons or Ruth since Lytol still hurts over the loss of his dragon years earlier. It isn't until this chapter that it becomes clear how much Lytol cares for Jaxom.

Robinton now knows that someone not from the Southern Hold brought the egg back. The heart attack seems to be the only thing that has stopped him from thinking about it, but Jaxom seem sure that some suspected it.



Chapter 16-18

Chapter 16-18 Summary

Jaxom and Sharra explain to Piemur what happened to Robinton. Piemur tells them of the secret mission Robinton sent him on. Piemur has spent the last few years mapping the South. Piemur has found a clutch of fire-lizard eggs, and they agree to go get them. Ruth is keeping them updated as to what is happening with Robinton periodically.

F'nor arrives at the cove and tells Jaxom that they intend to build Robinton a home there on the beach where Jaxom has been staying. Robinton is too sick to fly between, so he is being brought by boat. F'nor has brought men to help begin construction but find the trees are very hard wood, and their axes don't cut very easily. At the end of the day, they have only felled a few trees. The next day F'nor arrives and with many more men. The cove is full of dragons and men to work on the Masterharper's new home. While construction continues, Jaxom notes to F'nor that the fire-lizards that are native to the South have disappeared.

Lord Groghe, Lord Holder at Fort Hold, calls a meeting with Sebell and N'ton. Groghe tries to convey the fact that there are many sons of the Northern Holds that are of the age where they will need their own lands and asks that his request be taken to F'lar. Sebell agrees and they leave Groghe's Hold. Sebell and N'ton travel to speak to F'lar about what has happened and the fact that Lord Groghe has asked F'lar's permission before trying to claim any of the South lands. F'lar is confused about this, and Sebell explains that Robinton has manipulated situations. Robinton gave Sebell the task of reinforcing the belief that Pern must look to Benden Weyr for leadership and permission. F'lar is astounded but very happy Benden will have ultimate say over what happens in the south since F'lar was wanting a Hold there for the Benden Weyr. There will be more than enough land for the Holds' sons and the dragonmen. Sebell shows them maps and explains to Lessa and F'lar that near the mountain is going to be the best part of the South.

Piemur tells Jaxom about some of the places he has been and mapped. Some beautiful and some frightening. Piemur notes that the Dawn Sisters, a trio of stars that can be seen from Pern, don't behave like stars should. Their position in the sky is making Piemur wonder about them.

Robinton is traveling aboard a boat called the Dawn Sister to the cove where Jaxom is recovering. Robinton also notes the Dawn Sisters are not behaving like they should. He makes a note to ask Wansor about the stars. Robinton has had a lot of time to relax and is looking and feeling much better. Menolly comes to talk to him and begins to cry at the thought that Robinton nearly died. He kisses her cheek and Menolly leans into his kiss. Robinton admits to himself that he has feelings for the girl, but he has tried to ensure that she would love Sebell. Menolly tells Robinton that she loved Robinton first. Robinton tries to convince himself that Menolly is nothing more than a child to him and



pushes away his feelings and tries to ignore the look she has for him. The Seamaster, ship captain, walks in and Robinton, happy with the interruption, begins to talk to him about the curious behavior of the Dawn Sisters in the night sky.

The new house being constructed for Robinton takes only eleven days to complete with so many volunteers. The ship arrives with Robinton, but because of his condition it had been there is no welcoming party to tire Robinton. Fandarel, the craft man who helped construct the house, is very excited to show Robinton what has been constructed. They take Robinton to the house and drink wine. Robinton yells for Piemur, and they discuss what has been discovered on the island.

That evening, Mneolly, Sharra, Jaxom, and Piemur are talking around a fire. Jaxom tells Menolly that he has been having dreams, but they are out of focus, and he can't figure out what they are. Sharra tells him she has been having the same kind of dreams. Sharra leaves to tend to Piemur's animal and Piemur goes to sleep. Menolly tells Jaxom that everyone is sure that no one from the Southern Weyr returned Ramoth's egg. Jaxom pretends to be surprised.

Chapter 16-18 Analysis

It appears that Jaxom does not need commitment. He has physical desires but is not real particular about who he satisfies these with. Earlier in the chapter, he was talking about how he didn't like Corana but by the end of this chapter, he is wishing he could go see her briefly. He will remain with Sharra, although it seems the decision may be Ruth's as much as it is Jaxom's.

Menolly casually mentions things to Jaxom that may be a warning of what she knows, but it is unclear at this point. It is apparent at the end of the story that many of the characters, including Robinton, have figured out Jaxom returned the egg. It seems Robinton has set much in motion to help the dragonmen at Benden Weyr. This could be one of the reasons Mnementh and Ramoth refused to let him go when he had the heart attack.

The mountain is important later on in the story but at this point it has only been talked about. The dreams are also an important aspect of the story. Later in the story, it will be shown that the dreams are caused by the Southern fire-lizards that sleep with Ruth. Jaxom notes in the story that the fire-lizards seem to have disappeared. The South holds many more questions than anyone seems to realize at this point in the story. They will even find the ships that the ancients used to come to Pern from another world.



Chapter 19-21

Chapter 19-21 Summary

Robinton asks Jaxom and Piemur if they have noticed the trio of stars in the sky called the Dawn Sisters and their odd behavior. They agree to invite Master Wansor, the Starsmith, to travel to the cove with his star gazing machine so they can get a better look at the three stars. Upon examination, they realize the stars are manmade objects and made of metal. Robinton and the others feel certain this must be proof of their ancient ancestors. F'lar and Lessa are invited to look at the metal objects hovering in the Southern sky. It is agreed by all that they will not discuss what they have found because it might alarm people.

Jaxom knows riders will be coming to the cove to start exploring more of the Southern continent. Jaxom wants to be the first to go to the mountain about which they have all been dreaming. His dream wakes him with visions of lava and people running from the mountain. Jaxom gets Ruth and prepares to fly to the mountain when he finds Piemur, Sharra, and Menolly looking at him. They demand to go with him because they have all been awakened by the same dream that Jaxom had. While in the sky they find the volcano they have been dreaming about, and from the sky they can see there are shapes in the ground that must have been dwellings for their ancestors. They are interrupted when they see Thread beginning to fall in the sky. Ruth takes them between and back to the cove where dragons are getting ready to fly. Jaxom is allowed to fly with them for the first time since he has been sick.

Sharra, Jaxom, Menolly, and Piemur are asked again and again to tell of what they saw when they went to the mountain. It is decided that an excavation team will go and look at the volcano site and begin excavations to see what has been left by the ancients. Jaxom tries to get Ruth to ask the Southern fire-lizards about the volcano and what happened to the people, but the lizards become frightened and leave.

The dig site contains houses that belonged to the ancients and are made from unidentifiable material. They arrive back at the cove and Robinton asks Jaxom and the others to gather their fire-lizards together to see if they can get the Southern fire-lizards to convey to Ruth what happened to the ancients. Robinton tells Jaxom in no uncertain terms that he knows Jaxom is the one that retrieved Ramoth's egg from the Southerners when it was stolen.

Jaxom goes to check on Ruth. Sharra comes up and tells Jaxom that Ruth called Sharra. When Jaxom became sick, Ruth called Sharra, and they have been able to speak ever since then. Sharra and Jaxom make love with Ruth beside them.

They go to the dig site at the bottom of the volcano again the next day and Sharra's brother, Toric, arrives. Toric doesn't like Jaxom and makes snide remarks to him while they are digging. Lessa suddenly remarks to Jaxom that she was cleaning out the



fireplace in Ruatha Hold the day that Jaxom's mother came to the hold and began her labor pains. They dig for a while with the help of the dragons but find most of the dwellings empty of anything that would have been of great value. Between Toric's remarks and Lessa's tale of Jaxom's dead mother, Jaxom decides to go home and reclaim his birthright as Holder of Ruatha from Lytol if Lytol feels it is time.

Jaxom returns to Ruatha Hold and Lytol agrees it is time for Jaxom to claim his birthright. Lytol tells Jaxom that Toric has been offering land to Holdless sons in return for their loyalty. Lytol is worried that Toric is going to try and claim as much of the Southern Continent as he can and fight the dragonriders for the land. Jaxom returns to the cove to escape the cold season that has begun in Ruatha Hold but tells Lytol he will be back soon.

Jaxom wakes early in the morning and takes Ruth to the sky to try and find where the ancestors would have gone when the volcano erupted. Jaxom find the spot, and the Southern fire-lizards are excited that Jaxom is there. They swarm Jaxom and Ruth and relay pictures so contrasting that Jaxom and Ruth can't make sense of the images. Ruth is able to calm them down and get one coherent picture. The pictures are of grayish cylinders with wings that landed and then a ramp extended. People ran out of the capsules, and then the pictures became jumbled again.

Ruth offers to begin digging at the mound of earth the fire-lizards are swarming around. Ruth soon hits something hard that isn't rock. Ruth tells Jaxom that Menolly and Piemur are awake, and they head back to the cove to get them. When they get back to the cove Robinton is awake and tells Jaxom that Sharra was taken away because of some illness at Southern and she was badly needed. Jaxom tells Robinton about his talk with Lytol and that he hopes that Lytol will be able to come to help with the excavating since he has such a gift with organization.

Robinton and many of the dragonriders and Lord Holders go to the site that Jaxom and Ruth have discovered and they begin to dig. They find the entrance to the capsule and after pushing many buttons the door opens. Inside the ship is empty but they find a detailed map of Pern. The Southern Continent is much bigger than they guessed, and the map shows details on every part of the land. In all of the excitement they suddenly realize that Toric had said he would come again that day. Jaxom realizes there is so much land in the Southern Continent that Toric can't possibly want to war over it because there is too much for one man to hold even with all the help he has recruited.

Jaxom goes back to the cove. Sharra has told Ruth that her brother is holding her captive and planning to force her to marry one of his own new Holders. Toric claims that Ruatha is worthless, which angers Lessa because she has Ruatha blood and is very proud of it. Jaxom tells them that he plans to go and get Sharra after Toric arrives with the permission of Robinton, Lessa and the others. Jaxom and Ruth fly to get Sharra. She tells Jaxom that she never wants to see her brother again. Jaxom confronts Toric who is angry that Sharra is with Jaxom. Jaxom tells Toric that he can go anywhere with Sharra and anywhen. He tells Toric that is how he managed to get the egg back, and



Toric becomes angry that it was Jaxom that ruined the plans. Toric gains respect for Jaxom and agrees to Jaxom and Sharra's union.

Chapter 19-21 Analysis

The fire-lizards were the ones causing all the dreams that Jaxom, Piemur, Menolly, and Sharra were having. It is clear they had something to do with it but they were ultimately the reason that Ruth and Jaxom were able to find the ancient ruins and the ships.

Toric may have had something to do with stealing Ramoth's egg although there is no clear indication of his part in the theft. He refers to the fact that Jaxom had ruined many plans but at this point realizing the difficulty that Jaxom had in locating the egg he ultimately gains respect for him.

Jaxom has worried for most of the story that Ruth would never be able to mate. This is confirmed towards the end of the story, but it doesn't bother Jaxom as much at this point as it did in the beginning. It also seems that the fact that Ruth has a connection with Sharra is significant. A dragon only speaks to his rider as a rule, but Ruth is willing to talk to Sharra because he knew that Jaxom would need Sharra.

In the Afterword it is explained about the day that Jaxom is to have his confirmation ceremony for his position as Lord of Ruatha Hold. Robinton and N'ton show up to tell Jaxom that they have deciphered the color coding on the map they found in the ancient's ships. Lessa is happy because long ago she gave up her birthright to Ruatha for Jaxom and now he will be the Lord of Ruatha.



Characters

Jaxom

Jaxom is the underage Lord Holder at Ruatha Hold. His guardian is Lytol because Jaxom's mother died in childbirth and his father died in a battle with F'lar moments later. Lessa was a blood heir to Ruatha but renounces her birthright to Jaxom and helps him to become the leader Ruatha needs.

Jaxom rides a white dragon named Ruth. Ruth is smaller than the other dragons. Jaxom feels at times that Ruth is not really a dragon and that he himself is not really the Lord Holder because he is too young, but he is not a dragonrider either because they restrict his dragonriding duties. The story consists largely of Jaxom growing up and finding his place in his world. He is someone who fights for what is right and is quick to act. Ruth appears to be his primary focus throughout the story, and it shows a lot about Jaxom's character to watch him care for Ruth.

Jaxom's mother was well loved but his father was feared and ultimately killed Jaxom's mother. It is revealed in the story that some of the characters fear that Jaxom may have his father's tendencies. Jaxom's father was a fearful man, but it seems that what attributes he takes on of his father are mixed with his mother's to the point that he is a good leader and a fair man as the story progresses.

Ruth

Ruth is the white dragon that belongs to Jaxom. Ruth is an odd dragon almost half the size of the other dragons. Jaxom touched Ruth's shell before he was born, and when Ruth began to hatch he couldn't get out of the shell. Jaxom helped him out and Jaxom and Ruth "impressed," which means they had a joining of minds that happens only with rider and their dragon. The dragon, not the rider, chooses their partner with whom they communicate telepathically.

Ruth is not always considered a "real" dragon because of his color and size. Later in the book it will be seen that Ruth has no desire to mate, which upsets Jaxom. Ruth will be a crucial key in solving questions revolving around the ancients and the images that the fire-lizards convey to the humans and dragons. Ruth and Jaxom are an unlikely pair, but it is Ruth's unnatural abilities that allow him to know where and when he is going at all times. This unique feature allows Jaxom to retrieve the egg that was stolen from Ramoth and prevent a war between dragons.

Ruth doesn't want to mate but it seems Ruth understands the needs of his rider and wants Jaxom to be happy. It says in the story that Ruth loves Jaxom and loves with Jaxom. There is so much about Ruth and his nature that are almost alien to the other dragons.



Robinton

Masterharper and friend to Jaxom. Begins the mapping of the Southern Continent and excavating of the ancient sites.

Lessa

Rides queen dragon Ramoth. She is the leader of the dragonriders at Benden.

Sharra

Nurses Jaxom when he catches fire-head. Becomes Lady of Ruatha, and Ruth is able to communicate with her.

Toric

Brother of Sharra. He is acting Lord Holder in the South and is very eager to solidify the land he wants to hold.

Menolly

Apprentice to Robinton. She is friends with Jaxom and is first to realize that Jaxom is the one that returned Ramoth's egg when it was stolen.

Lytol

Former dragonrider. His dragon died, and he is guardian of Jaxom and acting Lord Holder of Ruatha.

F'lar

Dragonrider and Weyrleader at Benden. Rides Mnementh and is life mate of Lessa.

Piemur

Robinton's apprentice. Has spent the last few years mapping out the Southern Continent, in secret, with his runner beast Stupid and his fire-lizard Farli.

Wansor

Called the Starsmith in part of the story. Helps to discover that the Dawn Sisters are not stars but ships.



Objects/Places

Ruatha Hold

Hold on Pern where Jaxom was born. Ruled by Lytol until Jaxom is of age.

Red Star

The Red Star is Pern's sister planet and from where the Thread comes. The atmosphere will kill human and dragon life forms if they try to invade the planet.

Pern

Pern is the planet where the story takes place. It is the third star of Rukbat's five planets and has two natural satellites.

Dawn Sisters

Also called the Day Sisters, they are a trio of stars but are later discovered to be man-made objects hovering in the sky.

Firestone

Firestone is the phosphorous rock that the dragons eat to create the phosphoric gas which ignites when it makes contact with the air. This is how the dragons fight off the thread.

Between

The between is a space of nothingness between here and there. Dragons and their riders can travel to any place in a just a moment by going between, but if the dragon stays for more than it takes a man to cough three times, they will die.

Thread

Thread are small spores that descend on Pern from the Red Star. They burrow into the land and devour everything organic. There are few ways known to fight the spread. Thread has kept the populace on Pern from expanding beyond their Holds.



Weyrleader

Typically a Weyrleader is the rider of a bronze dragon who has mated with the queen dragon, who is gold, during her mating flight. The Weyrleader is in control of the Thread-fighting tactics.

Oldtimer

Refers to the dragonriders who were banished to the Southern Weyr. They were brought forward in time more than four hundred turns by Lessa.

Turn

A Turn is the term used to describe a Pernese year.

Dragon

Dragons are winged beasts that live on Pern. They protect the planet from the Thread. They are empathically and telepathically bound to its rider for its entire life span.

Weyrleader

A Weyrleader is usually the rider of a bronze dragon that has mated with the gold queen of the Weyr during her mating flight. He is in charge of organizing the fighting tactics used during Thread Fall.



Themes

Coming of Age

The story is about Jaxom maturing and assuming duties of Lord of Ruatha Hold. While the story does not begin at Jaxom's birth or young childhood, it does focus largely on the point of his life where he begins the transition from a teenager with questions about his place in life and a man who has responsibilities. The story starts with Jaxom still being teased and harassed by those in Ruatha Hold about the size of Jaxom's dragon, Ruth, and other things. Jaxom commands respect from many of those people who teased or harassed him by the end of the story. It is also evident that Jaxom has issues with his place in life. The theme in his story focuses to an extent on the fact that he is too young to be the Holder of Ruatha and also he is not in a position to be a true dragon rider. By the end of the story, much has not changed about Jaxom's situation, but a lot has changed regarding his view of the way things are.

The Quest for Understanding

Many of the characters in the book want to learn about their past and the people who first brought humans to Pern and why their ancestors left the Southern Continent, which is where they first landed. The need to understand what has happened and who the ancestors were increases when Robinton and Wansor discover that the three stationary stars in the Southern night sky, called the Dawn Sisters, are not stars at all but are man-made, metallic-looking objects that always remain in the same place above Pern. There are many digs that occur into the past both literally and figuratively. Ultimately there is little found out about the objects in the sky above Pern and more questions than answers about the ancestors. The fact that the author left it this way mimics life and its mysteries. There is also a quest for understanding within the lives of the individual characters in the book—particularly Jaxom's quest to understand his dragon and himself. The dragonriders in the story are on a quest to understand the Thread that falls from the Red Planet. While they do not find out how to stop the Thread, they do gather information about it, and in the Afterword, it is understood that a new younger generation will take up the battle to defeat the Thread.

The Desire for Power

The author uses many kinds of power in the story. There is the power associated with the Hold Lords and the power that comes from knowledge and the power that comes from the dragons. Jaxom has more power than the other Lord Holders because he also has a dragon. There is a strong desire for power from the other Lord Holders in regards to the Southern Continent. It is also evident that the Weyrleaders at Benden want a piece of the Southern Continent so they will no longer be reliant upon the other Holds to provide needed food. The largest struggle for power is with Toric, Sharra's brother. He



wants what he believes will be a large piece of the Southern Continent and is able to convince sons who are not in line to take over their own Holds to come to his Hold with the understanding that Toric will receive their support. Toric is very ambitious and a threat to anyone who opposes him. Toric even tries to hold power over his sister and force her to marry one of his Holders instead of Jaxom. The dragons are a symbol of power, and many people envy anyone that has one. Even the small fire-lizards are coveted by people who don't own one. There are requests to Jaxom for fire-lizard eggs so that people can "impress" the smaller versions of the dragons.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person. This point of view is usually omniscient and reliable, proven by the fact that the narrator not only knows the actions of the events she reports upon, she also can tell the reader the emotions each of the characters feels. This is very helpful in understanding the thoughts and the intents of the characters. There are times in the book when the reader is left to wonder about the emotions and desires of people. The author chooses specific moments to reveal attitudes and motivations as well as thoughts of some people. Jaxom is the one character that the reader never has to wonder about his thoughts and his emotions, along with Ruth since Jaxom and Ruth are connected by telepathy.

While Toric is talking to Jaxom about the fact that Jaxom is the one that returned the queen dragon's egg when it was stolen, the reader is able to know some of Toric's emotions and the moment when begins to respect Jaxom. This is very helpful to the reader since Toric never says anything to signify this moment. In contrast Toric has a hidden agenda and makes underhanded remarks to several characters in the story but the reader is left to wonder about the meaning of the remarks and Toric's intentions. The majority of the story is told with Jaxom as the main focal point with detours to other significant characters.

Setting

The story takes place on the mythical planet called Pern. Pern has been plagued for generations by Thread that falls from the Red Planet when its orbit brings it close enough to Pern. While the planet and its people seem to be Earth like, the creatures of Pern are unique to that world. The dragons that fight the Thread are able to take their riders "anywhen" and any where on Pern by going to a place called "between." They are only able to take their rider to places of which they possess a clear mental image. There is mention in the story of that one of the dragons and his rider went to the Red Planet to discover a way to destroy the thread at its source, but other than mentioning this the story stays on Pern.

The setting is believable to the reader. During much of the story Jaxom spends a great deal of his time at a Cove on the Southern Continent. Pern is split into two known continents, but the majority of the story takes place either at the Cove or with the dragonriders at Benden Weyr. The Southern Continent is almost completely abandoned, and Jaxom's trip to the Cove marks the beginning of the move for the people of Pern towards the South. The beginning and ending of the book take place at Ruatha Hold where Jaxom is Lord. The reader learns at the end of the story that Ruatha Hold has been a main focal point of the story even if the story didn't always take place at this Hold.



Language and Meaning

The language is informal and very easy to understand for the most part. The author has a set of terms used only on Pern that take a while to learn. In "The Dragonriders of Pern" book, there is a Dragondex. It contains a sections called "Some Terms of Interest" in the back that briefly explain what individual terms mean. Also in the Dragondex there is a list of "The People of Pern." This section simply gives a description of the rank or job of each character in the book and what pets or dragon they own. The list in the back is very helpful because there are some things the reader won't understand if they haven't read the first books. For instance, the author uses the word "between" for the space that a dragon is able to fly to that takes a rider instantly between to places on Pern or in time. The author also uses "impress" to explain the mental connection that occurs between dragon and rider at hatching. These terms and the customs of the people take time to understand but once the reader knows what they are the book is easily read.

Since the dragons don't talk out loud, the author uses italics to signify when a person is hearing the dragon's thoughts. This is overall very effective but the reader has to be watching for the moments that the italics appear to avoid confusion about the meaning of the statements.

Structure

"The Dragonriders of Pern" is all three of the author's story put together into one book. The white dragon, being the last in the story takes up 317 pages with an "Afterword" added at the end of the story that takes up five pages as well as the "Dragondex" in the back. The story is divided into twenty-one chapters. Each of these chapters differ in length. The author begins and ends the chapters at points in the story where the story was at a stopping or starting point. For instance, when Jaxom goes to the Cove with Ruth, the chapter ends with them going "between." When the next chapter starts, Jaxom is sick the moment after going between and Ruth had to get help for him.

The chapters are labeled by Roman Numerals as well as a title for each one. The titles label the year as well as the location that the story takes place or the things that happen during the chapter. If the story takes place in more than one place or time the chapter title indicates it at such. For example chapter nineteen's title says "Morning at the Cove Hold, Star-gazing in Late Evening, Next Morning, Discovery at the Mountain, 15.10.20". Many different scenes occur in this chapter, and the numbers explain the year, or as it is called on Pern, the Turn.

Much of the story is dialog which makes the story easily read. There are breaks in the chapters when the author switches location or people that the story follows, which help the reader understand when a different scene has begun.



Quotes

"He's...More... All dragon shades than the lack of any,' N'ton continued." Chapter 1: page 488

"I asked permission of T'ron to continue the exploration,' The Southerner's expression mirrored contempt and dislike, 'but he barely heard me out and said I could do as I like just as long as the Weyr was properly supplied with game and fresh fruit.'" Chapter 2: page 508

"Jaxom knew he could never be a dragonrider because he had to be Lord Holder of Ruatha." Chapter 3: page 516

"He didn't want to be Lord of Ruatha-at least not yet. And he certainly didn't want to be saddled with a female not of his own choosing." Chapter 4: page 532

"If to be brave,' Robinton's voice laid scorn on the quality, 'means to pit dragon against dragon, I'd rather be a coward.'" Chapter 5: page 548

"No one must ever know that he, Jaxom, had returned the egg." Chapter 7: page 576

"He was uncomfortable in Menolly's company because he couldn't put aside his feeling that she knew he'd brought the egg back." Chapter 8: page 596

"Then the Harper stiffened. No Southerner had returned that egg, for surely T'kul would have discovered the culprit by now." Chapter 14: page 672

"Piemur pointed with several stabs of his right arm at the Dawn Sisters. 'Most stars change position. They never do.'" Chapter 17: page 718

"I can't for the life of me imagine why our long-dead ancestors left his fruitful and beautiful continent for the colder, duller North, but I assume that they had good reason." Chapter 19: page 733-734

"Surely people who could hold the Dawn Sisters in the sky in a stationary position for who knows how many Turns ought to be wise enough to identify an active volcano." Chapter 19: page 757

"I've a Hold to manage and cannot always please myself,' he said. Jaxom saw the Southerner's eyes on him, the implication obvious to Jaxom." Chapter 20: page 775

"Toric's composure deserted him. 'You!' He extended his arm, pointing at Jaxom; his face was a mixture of anger, indignant outrage, disappointment, frustration and, lastly, a grudging respect." Chapter 21: page 803



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Jaxom's growth in the story. What are the differences in Jaxom's attitude and character from the beginning of the story to the end? What does he do to show these differences?

Do you feel that Jaxom's attachment to Sharra is real? In the story he admits that if he can not be alone with Sharra, he needs to go visit Corana. What does this reveal about Jaxom's character? Does this tell you anything about his relationship with Sharra?

Lytol is Jaxom's guardian and cares about Jaxom greatly but you don't see a lot of emotion from him in the beginning of the story. How would you describe Lytol's character? Why and what does he do to cause you to define him this way?

Master Robinton has a heart attack and nearly dies but is held in place by Mnementh and Ramoth. Why do you think the dragons held on to him? What makes you think so?

Discuss the strong ties of Blood. Lessa discusses many times the fact that she has Ruathan blood and that she renounced her right for the Hold to Jaxom. What other instances do you see in the story where blood ties are strongly regarded? Why do you think it shows up so strongly?

Menolly has feelings for Robinton. He gives reasons why he wards off her advances, such as age, even though he admits he loves her, too. Do you believe he is right to stop Menolly and her feelings for him? Why? Do you think he is correct to encourage her to care for Sebell?

Lessa is angry enough to start a war when Ramoth's egg is stolen. Even after the egg is returned, she is mad enough to fight and has to be calmed down. Do you believe she should have had more compassion for the Southerners that stole the egg? Or do you believe that she was justified for her anger? Why?