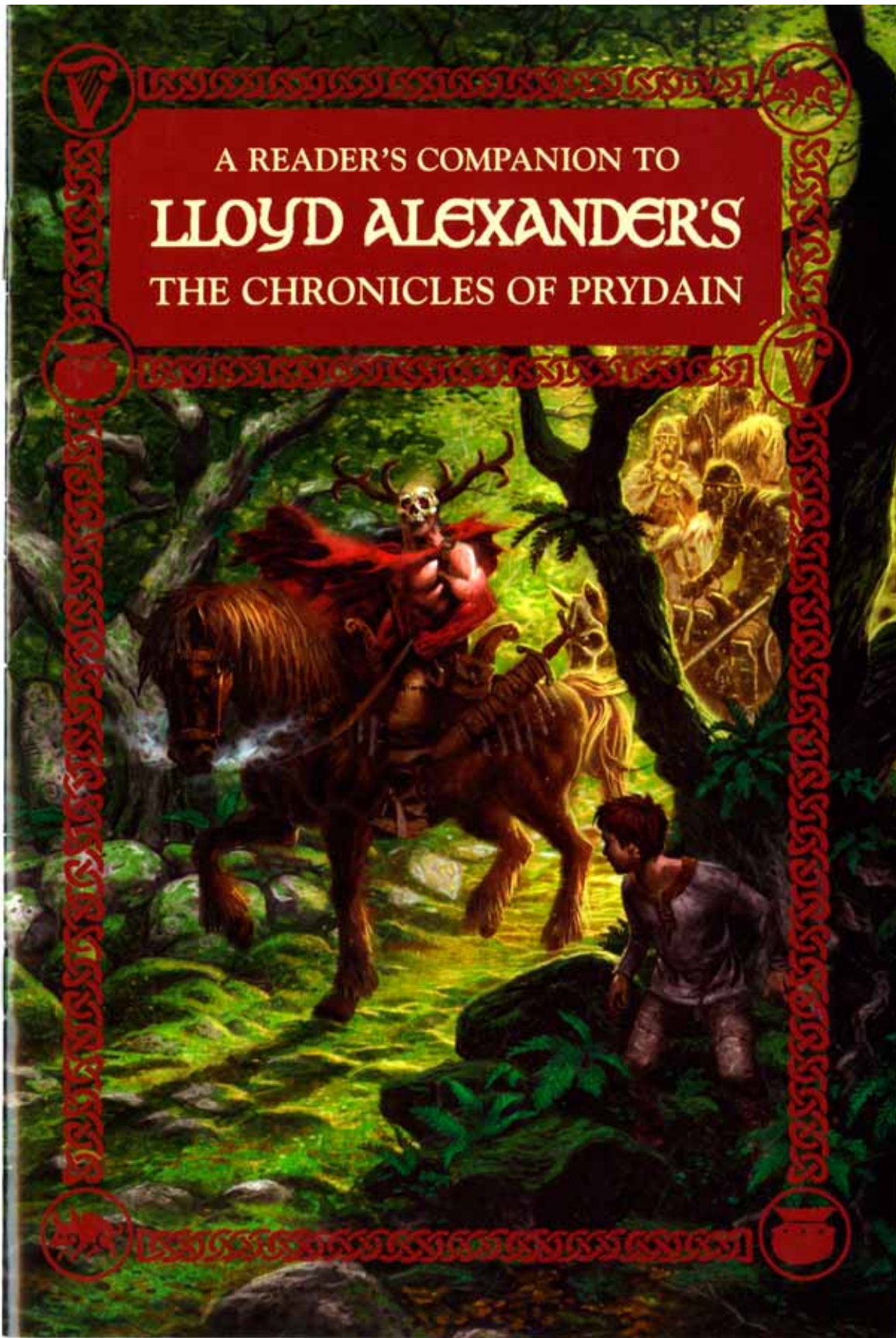


A READER'S COMPANION TO
LLOYD ALEXANDER'S
THE CHRONICLES OF PRYDAIN





Introduction to

THE CHRONICLES OF PRYDAIN

Taran, raised by the enchanter Dallben on a farm in the land of Prydain, has no idea who his parents were. Taran's job is to care for the oracular pig Hen Wen, under the direction of the gardener Coll, earning him the title of Assistant Pig-Keeper. When he leaves the farm in *The Book of Three*, Taran encounters a disparate group of companions who become his fast friends throughout a series of struggles against Arawn, Death-Lord, a dark force for evil. Aiding Prince Gwydion, war leader of the High King, Taran grows in courage and wisdom throughout the series until he is ready to accept his ultimate destiny.

In *The Book of Three*, Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper for the enchanter Dallben, is bored and longs for a life of adventure. When his charge, Hen Wen the oracular pig, escapes he pursues her, plunging into a journey that will try his courage and his spirit. Battling the forces of the dreaded Horned King, warlord of Arawn Death-Lord, Taran finds that heroism is no easy task.

In *The Black Cauldron*, Gwydion and Dallben decide that the magic Cauldron that creates Arawn's deathless warriors, the Cauldron-Born, must be destroyed. Gwydion gathers a group of warriors, including Taran, for the task. On his journey to find the Cauldron, Taran learns that sometimes heroism demands great sacrifice as well as great restraint.

The Castle of Llyr finds Princess Eilonwy on the Isle of Mona learning to be a "young lady," but she possesses magical powers that

are sought by Achren, the evil enchantress. When Eilonwy is kidnapped, Taran and the companions set out to rescue her against enormous odds, including the powers Eilonwy herself can command.

Taran sets off on a journey, accompanied only by Gurgi, to discover his parentage in *Taran Wanderer*. Throughout Prydain and among the common folk of the land, he encounters those who teach him various crafts and ways of life. Each of his new friends contributes to his growing self-knowledge in ways he never expected.

When the Sword Dyrnwyn falls into the hands of Arawn, Taran and his companions join forces with Prince Gwydion for their greatest battle against the forces of evil in *The High King*. Hardship and danger challenge them all on this journey, and finally Taran must make the most crucial decision of his life.





A Word About

PRONUNCIATION

The names used in the Chronicles of Prydain are Welsh in origin. In general, the emphasis is placed on the next-to-last syllable. There are three notable exceptions to this rule: Arawn is *ah-RAWN*, Llyan is *lee-AHN*, and Prydain itself is *prih-DANE*.

Major Characters

Taran (*TAH-ran*) grows in experience and wisdom in his journey from Assistant Pig-Keeper to High King of Prydain following the classic hero tales of folklore.

Eilonwy (*eye-LAHN-wee*), the sharp-tongued princess of Llyr, is resourceful and determined, preferring high adventure to being trained as a young lady.

Ffleuddur Fflam (*FLEW-der flam*), a king who prefers wandering as a bard to ruling his small kingdom, is kindhearted and brave, but has a tendency to stretch the truth, which causes the strings of his "truthful" harp to break.

Gurgi (*GHUR-ghee*), half human and half animal, is Taran's comical sidekick, always concerned with creature comforts but growing in bravery and devotion throughout the stories.

Doli (*DOH-lee*), an ill-tempered but kindhearted dwarf, is always at hand when his special skills are needed to guide or rescue the other Companions.

Place Names

Annuvin (*ah-NOO-vin*), Land of Death, is the realm of the evil Arawn.

Caer Cadarn (*kare KAH-darn*) is the stronghold of King Smoit. In Welsh, the word *caer* means a castle, fort, or stronghold.

Caer Colur (*kare KOH-loor*) is the ancient home of the House of Llyr.

Caer Dallben (*kare DAHL-ben*) was originally the Coll's farm; Dallben comes to live there, and this is where Taran is raised.

Caer Dathyl (*kare DA-thil*) is the stronghold of the Sons of Don in the northern mountains of Prydain.

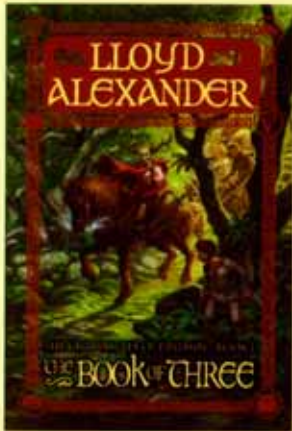
Llawgadarn Mountains (*law-GAD-arn*) rise in eastern Prydain, and it is here that Taran travels to find the Mirror of Llunet (*LOO-net*).

Prydain (*prih-DANE*) is an imaginary kingdom loosely based on the country of Wales and its ancient legends.





THE BOOK OF THREE



Pre-reading Activity

Discuss the fairy tales and folktales that you remember reading or hearing when you were younger. What stories do you remember the best? Who were the heroes or heroines of those tales? Who were the evil characters, the ones who caused harm to others? Which animals were important in the old stories? What were the settings that you remember the best?

Characters Introduced in *The Book of Three*

Achren	AHK-ren
Arawn	ah-RAWN
Coll	kahl
Dallben	DAHL-ben
Dyrwyn	DUHRN-win
Eiddileg	eye-DILL-eg
Gwydion	GWIH-dyon

Gwythaint	GWIH-thaint
Llyr	leer
Medwyn	MEHD-wihn
Melyngar	MELLIN-gar
Melynlas	MELLIN-lass

Discussion Questions

Why does Taran wish for a more exciting life? What does Dallben mean when he says, "In some cases we learn more by looking for the answer to a question and not finding it than we do from learning the answer itself"?

What does Gwydion mean when he says to Taran, "It is not the trappings that make the prince, nor, indeed, the sword that makes the warrior"? Which characters in the story do you think this describes?

Why does Taran abandon his search for Hen Wen to go to Caer Dathyl? What does he learn on this journey about himself?

Discuss the importance of Medwyn's valley. Why does Medwyn offer Taran the chance to stay? Why does Taran decide to leave the valley? What wisdom does he learn from Medwyn?

When Taran returns to Caer Dallben, what has changed for him and how do you think these changes will affect him in the future?

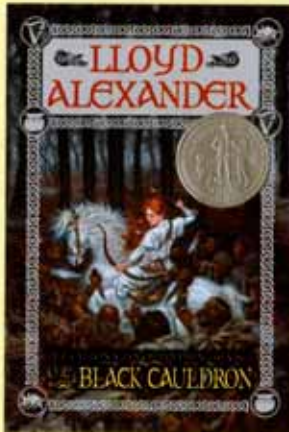
Post-reading Activity

Write a biographical sketch of one of the characters in *The Book of Three*. Create a life history for this character. What kind of childhood did he or she have? Describe physical features, clothing, feelings, and anything else that you think makes this character unique.





THE BLACK CAULDRON



Orwen	OR-wen
Smoit	smoyt
Taleisin	tally-ESS-in

Discussion Questions

Compare Taran and Ellidyr, their backgrounds and their personalities. How are they different? Are there ways in which they are similar?

What does Taran learn from Adaon as they travel together? What is the “magic” in Adaon’s brooch, and why does he choose Taran to have his possessions? Does Adaon know he is going to die?

Why do Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen have interchangeable personalities? What does Orddu mean when she says, “We’re neither good nor evil. We’re simply interested in things as they are”?

Why does Taran exchange Adaon’s brooch for the Cauldrion? What would you have done in his place?

Morgant offers Taran great power and the glory he has dreamed of; why does he refuse to follow Morgant? Why is Ellidyr willing to throw himself into the Cauldrion? Why does Gwydion honor both Ellidyr and Morgant after they die?

Pre-reading Activity

Look up information about the Fates in mythology. What role did ancient people believe that the Fates played in the affairs of men and women? Write a paragraph on what you learn about the concept of Fates in mythology and keep these ideas in mind as you read *The Black Cauldrion*.

Characters Introduced in *The Black Cauldrion*

Adaon	ah-DAY-on
Ellidyr	ELLI-deer
Gwystyl	GWISS-til
Islimach	iss-LIM-ak
Lluagor	lew-AH-gore
Orddu	OR-doo
Orgoch	OR-gahk

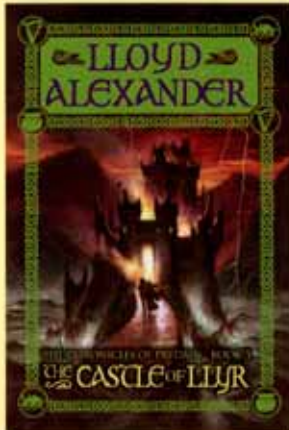
Post-reading Activity

Write about the role that Fate plays in this story. What do you think Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen represent? Are the things that happen in this adventure set up by Fate or do they happen because of decisions made by each character as the story unfolds? What decisions do you make that affect your life in the present and in the future?





THE CASTLE OF LLYR



Pre-reading Activity

Look up information about living in a castle in medieval times. How was life different for men? For women? What activities did they engage in? How did they dress? Write a description or draw a picture of life in a castle based on what you learn about medieval culture.

Characters Introduced in *The Castle of Llyr*

Glew	gloo
Llyan	lee-AHN
Rhuddlum	ROOD-lum
Rhun	roon
Teleria	tell-HER-ya

Discussion Questions

Compare the personalities of Prince Rhun and Taran. How are they different? Are there ways in which they are similar? Why does Taran agree when King Rhuddlum asks him to protect Prince Rhun?

Why does Magg betray his king and queen? What does Achren promise him? Do you think she would have kept her promise?

What part does Glew play in the story? Why did he want to make himself larger? Why does Taran spare his life when Glew would have taken the lives of the companions?

What does Gwydion mean when he says, "The destinies of men are woven one with the other, and you can turn aside from them no more than you can turn aside from your own"?

In the first chapter Dallben tells Eilonwy, "For each of us comes a time when we must be more than what we are." Eilonwy repeats this phrase to Taran in the last chapter. What does it mean to her and what does it mean to Taran? Can you think of a time in your life when you had to be more than what you are?

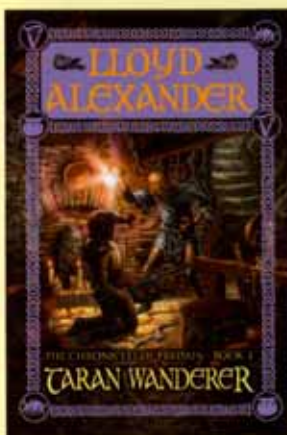
Post-reading Activity

Write about one of the characters who is introduced in this story: Magg, Rhun, or Glew. Imagine what the character was like as a child, how he interacted with others, what activities he enjoyed. In your character study, show how the background of this character affected how he acted when he was older.





TARAN WANDERER



Pre-reading Activity

Look up information about the crafts of blacksmithing, weaving, and pottery. What is required to learn each of these arts? How long would it take to become a master at any of them? Can a person make a living at these crafts today as they did in Prydain?

Characters Introduced in *Taran Wanderer*

Aeddan	EE-dan
Annlaw	AHN-law
Craddoc	KRAD-ok
Drudwas	DRUD-was
Dwyvach	DWIH-vak
Hevydd	HEH-vid
Llassar	LASS-ar
Llonio	LAHN-io

Discussion Questions

Why is it so important for Taran to learn who his parents were?

How does Taran solve the quarrel between Gast and Goryon? Why can't King Smoit settle their differences?

For a second time, Taran gives up an object of great value to him. Why does he give Angharad's crystal to Doli?

Compare the lessons Taran learns from Llonio, Hevydd the Smith, Dwyvach Weaver-Woman, and Annlaw Clay-Shaper. Which do you think is most important to him?

What does Taran learn when he finally finds the Mirror of Llunet? Would he have understood this truth if he had not made the journey to find the mirror?

Post-reading Activity

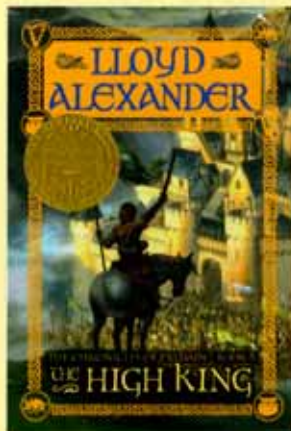
Joseph Campbell, in his classic work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, states: "The whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women . . . Who and where are his [or her] ogres? . . . What are his [or her] ideals?"* Using Campbell's quote write an autobiography, describing the triumphs and challenges in your life and what you believe to be your ideals at this point in your life.

*Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. (Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 121.





THE HIGH KING



Pre-reading Activity

Based on your reading of the Chronicles of Prydain so far and your research into myth and story, what do you predict will happen in this final book? Choose one character and write about what you think will happen to that character in this final journey.

Make a map of Prydain including all the places you have come to know by reading the series. Use your map to trace the journey of Taran and his companions throughout the story of *The High King*.

Characters Introduced in *The High King*

Briavael	bree-AH-vel
Brynach	BRIHN-ak
Pryderi	prih-DAY-ree

Discussion Questions

How has Taran changed when he returns to Caer Dallben from his journeys as Taran

Wanderer? What does Dallben mean when he says, "You found more than you sought, and gained perhaps more than you know"?

Why does Glew travel to Caer Dallben with Rhun and Eilonwy? Why does he decide to go with the others to King Smoit's castle and why does Gwydion agree to take him?

What does Taliesin mean when he says, "Memory lives longer than what it remembers, and all men share the memories and wisdom of all others"?

Gwydion says to Pryderi, "It is beyond any man's wisdom to judge the secret heart of another, for in it are good and evil mixed." How does this statement relate to the character of Pryderi, to Glew, and to Taran himself? Why does *The Book of Three* cause Pryderi's death?

Why do Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen appear to Taran on the night before he will sail to the Summer Country? Why does Taran choose to stay in Prydain? What does Gwydion mean when he says, "A true king wears his crown in his heart"?

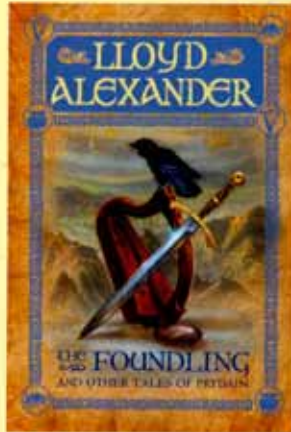
Post-reading Activity

Look back to the list of stories and myths you compiled as your first pre-reading activity at the start of the Chronicles of Prydain. Identify the themes of some of those stories. Which of those themes and messages do you see reflected in the Chronicles of Prydain. If you could sum up the entire series in just one paragraph, what would you say are the most important lessons to be learned from reading the Chronicles of Prydain?





THE FOUNDLING



The magical land of Prydain is rich in history and legend, and this collection of tales reveals many of its secrets. The grim history of the sword Dyrwyn, the youth of the enchanter Dallben, the early adventures of Coll and Fflewddur Fflam, and the family histories of Eilonwy and Kaw all provide glimpses into the background of the Chronicles.

Pre-reading Activity

As you think back over your reading of the Chronicles of Prydain, make a list of questions you have about the history of the land, the characters' family backgrounds, and the magical objects.

Characters Introduced in *The Foundling*

Angharad	An-GAR-ad
Edyrnion	eh-DIR-nee-on
Gwybeddin	gwih-BED-in
Iscovan	iss-KOH-van
Kadwyr	KAD-weer
Regat	REH-gat
Rhitta	RIH-ta

Discussion Questions

Why does Dallben choose the book rather than the sword or the harp? Which one would you choose?

In "The Stone," Maibon could ask Doli for any favor in the world. Why does he choose the one he does? What favor would you ask of Doli?

Compare Princess Angharad to her future daughter, Eilonwy. Make the same comparison between Kadwyr and Kaw.

Why does King Rhitta treat Amrys the way he does? Where in the story could he make different choices?

Why do you think Menwy is able to recognize Arawn when the other craftsmen cannot? How does he triumph over Arawn, even though the Death-Lord destroys his harp?

Post-reading Activity

Look at the list of questions you made before reading the stories in *The Foundling*. Which of them have been answered? Choose one question that has not been answered and write your own version of that part of the story.





A Conversation with LLOYD ALEXANDER

What inspired you to write the *Chronicles of Prydain*? Inspiration is very tricky to pin down. There are so many currents and crosscurrents, conscious and unconscious. After some dozen years of writing for adults, I felt a deep urge to write for young people. Call it an intuition. In any case, since I had always loved mythology, and the Arthurian legends above all, it was very natural for me to turn to the moods and atmosphere of those heroic tales, but to transform them into something of personal meaning to me.

Is *Prydain* based on particular people, places, or events? Well—no. But—yes. Not really. But really truly. Writers work with the raw material of their lives. The ancient, beautiful land of Wales had a tremendous impact on me when I was briefly stationed there before going to France and Germany in World War II. So that had to be part of it. And, yes, I really did try to learn weaving and pottery making (not good at either). The emotions expressed are certainly real; all of us, in one form or another, constantly face the dilemmas and decisions confronting even an Assistant Pig-Keeper. At heart, *Prydain* is based on the difficulties of learning how to become a human being.

Do you identify with any of your characters? If so, how? I've heard rumors the *Ffleuddur Fflam*, that exuberant, outrageous stretcher of truth, bears a strong resemblance to

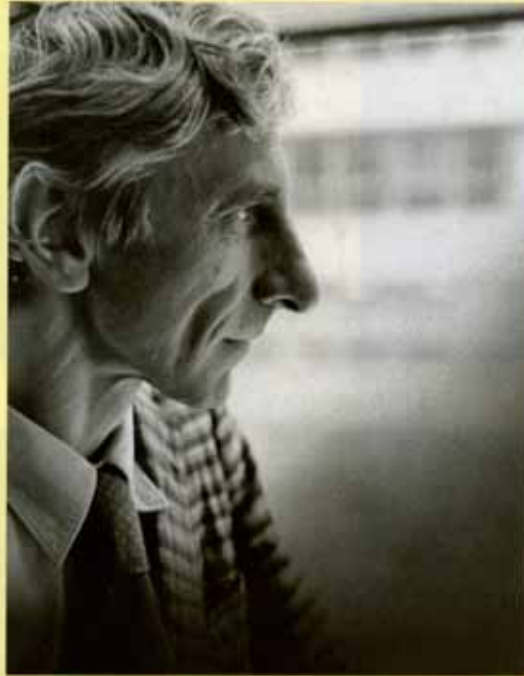
his author. Hmm. Well, I won't deny it. But I've been known to whine as much as Gurgi. I think writers draw from aspects of their own personality, and those aspects are infinitely multifaceted. In short, we write who we are. And what we are. And what we hope to be.

What do you think about the genre of children's fantasy books today? How has it changed since you first published the *Chronicles of Prydain* forty years ago?

I claim no expertise in the subject. But it seems to me that the most significant and durable change in fantasy (and realism, as well) has been the emergence of female characters as strong, bright, active—more so than ever before. That's not fantasy, that's reality.

What was your favorite book(s) as a child and why? As a child and as an adult, how to choose Shakespeare and overlook Mark Twain? Pick Lewis Carroll and neglect Charles Dickens? The real answer, I think, is that our favorite book is the one that speaks most clearly to us and gives us what we most need at a given time in our life. So our favorites change as we change. However, a new favorite doesn't replace an old one. We keep them all. They accumulate. They're always with us, helping to shape our personality and attitudes. As the saying goes, we are what we eat. I'd rather say: We are what we read.



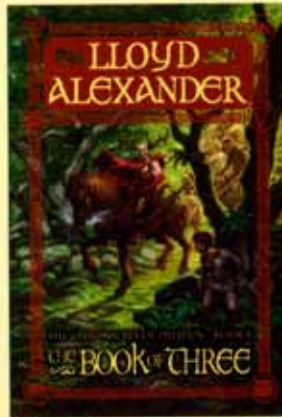


In 1964 the Chronicles of Prydain began with the publication of the first book in the series, *The Book of Three*, and over 40 years later, it remains one of the most widely read series in the history of fantasy. In fact, Prydain's creator, Lloyd Alexander, is one of the first writers to establish the high-fantasy genre in American children's books. From winning the Newbery Honor for *The Black Cauldron*, to winning the Newbery Medal for *The High King*, to a full-length animated feature film by Walt Disney Productions, Mr. Alexander's books have captivated the imaginations of people all over the world and will continue to do so for decades to come. For more information about the Chronicles of Prydain, please take a look at *The Prydain Companion* by Michael O. Tunnell (0-8050-7271-3, 1995).

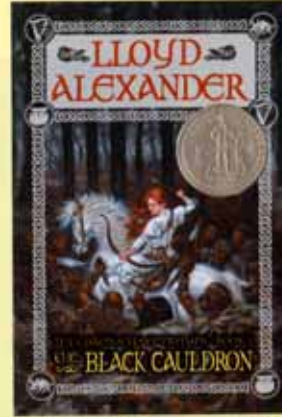
Discussion Guide prepared by Connie Rockman, Children's Literature Consultant, Adjunct professor of children's and young adult literature, and Editor of the H. W. Wilson *Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators* series.



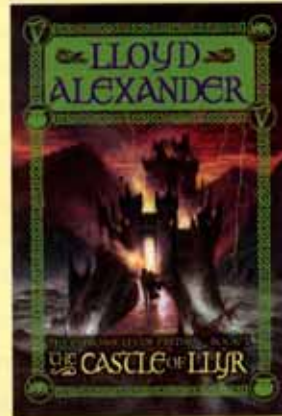
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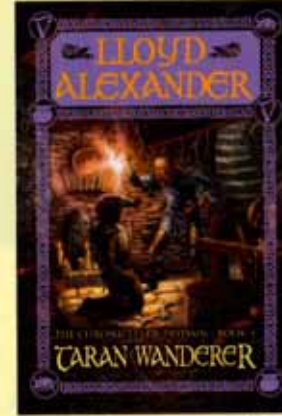
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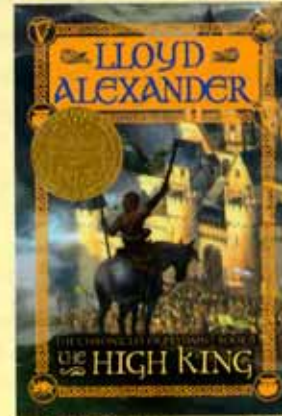
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