

THE BOOK OF THREE

TEACHER'S GUIDE

FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS

THIS ANNIVERSARY EDITION IS FILLED WITH BONUS MATERIALS, INCLUDING AN INTERVIEW WITH LLOYD ALEXANDER, A PRYDAIN SHORT STORY, AND AN INTRODUCTION BY NEWBERY HONOR WINNER SHANNON HALE!



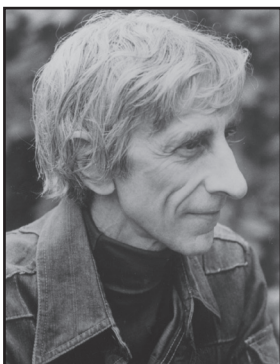
Grades 3–7 • Ages 8–12

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Taran is bored with farm life and longs for adventures like those of the heroes. His guardian, the enchanter Dallben, warns him not go looking for trouble and to take seriously his job of caring for the oracular pig Hen Wen. Named Assistant Pig-Keeper by Coll the gardener, Taran is hardly impressed with his title; but when Hen Wen escapes into the woods he pursues her, plunging into a journey that will test his courage and understanding in many ways. Battling the forces of the dreaded Horned King, warlord of Arawn Death-Lord, and aided by a disparate group of companions he acquires along the way, Taran learns that heroism is no easy task and that help can come from unexpected places.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LLOYD ALEXANDER (1924-2007) was the author of more than forty books for children and adults, including the beloved children's fantasy series the Chronicles of Prydain, one of the most widely read series in the history of fantasy and the inspiration for the animated Disney film *The Black Cauldron*. His books have won numerous awards, including the Newbery Medal, the Newbery Honor, and the National Book Award for Juvenile Literature.



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To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- ❧ **TARAN** (TAH-ran) grows in experience and wisdom in his journey from Assistant Pig-Keeper to high adventure in 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.
- ❧ **FFLEWDDUR 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 story.
- ❧ **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 DALLBEN** (kare DAHL-ben) was originally Coll’s farm; Dallben comes to live here, 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.
- ❧ **PRYDAIN** (prih-DANE) is an imaginary kingdom loosely based on the country of Wales and its ancient legends.



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? Which animals were important in the old stories? What were the settings that you remember the best?

CCSS: RL.4.9, 5.9, 6.9, 7.9

🔗 Look up the cycle of Welsh tales known as the Mabinogion. These stories may be less familiar, but there may be characters and plots that are similar to the folk tales you already know. Make a list of the people in these stories with their character traits and relationships.

CCSS: RL.4.9, 5.9, 6.9, 7.9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

1. Why does Taran wish for a more exciting life than he has at Caer Dallben? Why does he follow Hen Wen into the forest?

CCSS: RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

2. What does Dallben mean when he tells Taran: “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”? (p. 9) Discuss places in the story where this happens to Taran.

CCSS: RL.4.2, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2

3. What does Gwydion mean when he tells Taran: “It is not the trappings that make the prince, nor, indeed, the sword that makes the warrior”? (p. 17)

CCSS: RL.4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

Which of the characters in the story do you think this statement describes?

CCSS: RL. 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3

4. Why does Eilonwy help Taran escape from Spiral Castle? Why is Taran angry to find Fflewddur Fflam outside the castle? What makes Taran accept Gurgi as a companion? Why does Taran abandon his search for Hen Wen to go to Caer Dathyl? How does each of the companions contribute to the success of their mission?

CCSS: RL.4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3, 7.1, 7.3

5. What does Taran learn in the course of his journey? Discuss Medwyn’s advice to him: “Neither refuse to give help when it is needed nor refuse to accept it when it is offered.” (p. 120) Why does Medwyn offer Taran a chance to stay in his valley?

CCSS: RL.4.2, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2

6. When Taran returns to Caer Dallben, what has he learned about himself? What has he learned about his companions? Why is he content to return to his home?

CCSS: RL.4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

7. Look up meanings of unfamiliar words and the context in which they appear in the story: e.g., caer, cantrev, oracular, and any words that you do not know. Discuss how the use of unfamiliar Welsh words and names affects your reading of the story.

CCSS: RL.4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4

8. Discuss Taran’s decision not to kill the injured gwythaint: “I will not have it killed. It’s in pain and it needs help.” (p. 155) How does this statement reflect Taran’s growth of character? How does it affect the development of the plot and theme of this book?

CCSS: RL.4.5, 5.5, 6.5, 7.5

9. Discuss what is distinctive about the way each of Taran’s companions speaks. Discuss how the personality of each of the companions is expressed in the way they talk.

CCSS: RL.4.6, 5.6, 6.6, 7.6

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

10. Look back to the list of folktale characters you made before reading the story. Compare them to the characters in *The Book of Three*. How are they similar and how are they different?

CCSS: RL.4.9, 5.9, 6.9, 7.9

11. Look up the character of Nevvid Nav Neivion in Welsh folklore. Discuss the similarity between this character and one that Taran encounters in *The Book of Three*. What story do you know that is similar to both of these?

CCSS: RL.4.9, 5.9, 6.9, 7.9

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

1. 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.

CCSS: W.4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 7.3

2. Research information about the country of Wales. Draw a map of Wales and compare it to the map of Prydain included in the book. How are they similar and how are they different? What can you learn about Wales, its history, and its folklore that enhances your understanding of the setting, plot, themes, and characters in *The Book of Three*?

CCSS: RI.4.7, 5.7, 6.7, 7.7; RL.4.7, 5.7, 6.7, 7.7



Discussion guide prepared by Connie Rockman, a youth literature consultant, adjunct professor of children's and young adult literature, and editor of the *Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*.