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Discussion Questions


1. 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 than we do from learning the answer itself?”

2. 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?

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

4. 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?

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

6. Discuss the fairy tales and folktales that you remember reading or hearing when you were younger. What stories do you remember best? Who were the heroes or heroines of those tales? Who were the evil characters? Which animals were important in the old stories? And how is *The Book of Three* reminiscent of all those things?
## Name Pronunciation Guide


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<th>Name</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achren</td>
<td>AHK-ren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arawn</td>
<td>ah-RAWN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coll</td>
<td>kahl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallben</td>
<td>DAHL-ben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyrnwyn</td>
<td>DUHRN-win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eiddileg</td>
<td>eye-DILL-eg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwydion</td>
<td>GWIH-dyon</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gwythaint</td>
<td>GWIH-thaint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Llyr</td>
<td>leer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medwyn</td>
<td>MEHD-wihn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melyngar</td>
<td>MELLIN-gar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melynlas</td>
<td>MELLIN-lass</td>
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Lloyd Chudley Alexander was a widely influential American author of more than forty books, mostly fantasy novels for children and adolescents, as well as several adult books. His most famous contribution to the field of children's literature is the fantasy series The Chronicles of Prydain. The concluding book of the series, The High King, was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1969. Alexander's other books have also won multiple National Book Awards. He was also one of the creators of children's literary magazine Cricket.

Life and career:

The author of over forty books, Lloyd Alexander is best known for his Chronicles of Prydain novels as well as numerous other fantasy novels for young people. Many of his works have been selected as ALA Notable Children's Books and School Library Journal Best Books of the Year. Alexander has also been awarded the Newbery Medal, the Newbery Honor Award, The Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, and the National Book Award. The 1985 Disney animated film The Black Cauldron was based on the first and second books in the Prydain series.

Despite being born to parents who had never read a single book, Alexander had an elderly aunt who loved literature, and she read to him often. He learned to read by the age of three, and his literary interests, which included Mark Twain and Charles Dickens, grew to embrace the King Arthur legends as well as Greek and Celtic mythology. By the time he was thirteen he was attempting his own poetry, and by fifteen he was determined to be an author, a career choice that his parents abhorred.

Having no money for college, Alexander took a job at Philadelphia bank, as a messenger boy. Eventually he had earned enough to enroll in school, but at age nineteen, restless and dissatisfied, he quit college to join the U.S. Army. In the Army he trained to help the French resistance but ended up stationed variously in Wales and in the German Rhineland, locations that later served as inspiration for the enchanted kingdoms of his novels. Scenes of violence and warfare also provided fodder for later works. As the war drew to a close, Alexander was finally transferred to Paris. After being released from service he attended the University of Paris. In Paris that he met author Gertrude Stein as well as future wife Janine Denni. Eventually he moved, along with his new wife and young step-daughter, back to Pennsylvania, to settle in the Drexel Hill area. He lived there until his death in 2007, just two weeks after his wife's death.
Initially he supported himself with an assortment of publication-related jobs (including cartoonist, advertising writer, and magazine editor) while trying to get his start as a novelist. After several years of rejections he published And Let the Credit Go (1955), the first of a series of early autobiographical novels. It was followed in 1956 by My Five Tigers, a book about his cats. Pets, and especially pet cats, soon became an recurring theme for Alexander, and in 1963 he made the switch to the juvenile fantasy market with Time Cat: The Remarkable Journeys of Jason and Gareth. Originally inspired by the mysterious comings and goings of his own cat, the novel featured a cat who spirits his owner to various significant places in history. It was while doing research for Time Cat that he revisited Welsh mythology and became inspired to write his extremely popular and award-winning Pyrdain novels.

Author of books:

And Let the Credit Go (1955, non-fiction)
My Five Tigers (1956, non-fiction)
August Bondi: Border Hawk (1958, non-fiction)
Aaron Lopez: The Flagship Hope (1960, non-fiction)
My Love Affair with Music (1960, non-fiction)
Park Avenue Vet (1962, novel, with Louis Camuti)
Fifty Years in the Doghouse (1963, novel)
Time Cat: The Remarkable Journeys of Jason And Gareth (1963, novel)
Coll and His White Pig (1965, novel)
The Book of Three (1964, novel)
The Black Cauldron (1965, novel)
The Castle of Llyr (1966, novel)
Taran Wanderer (1967, novel)
The Truthful Harp (1967, novel)
The High King (1968, novel)
The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian (1970, novel)
The King's Fountain (1971, novel)
The Four Donkeys (1972, novel)
The Cat Who Wished to Be a Man (1973, novel)
The Wizard in the Tree (1974, novel)
The Town Cats: And Other Tales (1977, collection)
The First Two Lives of Lukas-Kasha (1978, novel)
Westmark (1981, novel)
The Kestrel (1982, novel)
The Beggar Queen (1984, novel)
The Illyrian Adventure (1986, novel)
The El Dorado Adventure (1987, novel)
The Drackenberg Adventure (1988, novel)
The Jedera Adventure (1989, novel)
The Prydain Companion: A Reference Guide to Lloyd Alexander's Prydain Chronicles (1989,
non-fiction, with Michael O. Tunnell)
The Philadelphia Adventure (1990, novel)
The Big Book of Peace (1990, novel)
The Fortune-Tellers (1992, novel)
The Arkadians (1995, novel)
The House Gobbaleen (1995, novel)
The Iron Ring (1997, novel)
Gypsy Rizka (1999, novel)
How the Cat Swallowed Thunder (2000, novel)
The Gawgon and the Boy (2001, novel)
The Rope Trick (2002, novel)
The Xanadu Adventure (2005, novel)
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, 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 a 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 your characters? If so, how?

I’ve heard rumors that the Fflewddur Fflam, that exuberant, outrageous stretcher of truth, bears 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, and active—more so than ever before. That’s not fantasy, that’s reality.

What was your favorite fantasy book(s) as a child and why?

As a child and as an adult, how to choose Shakespeare and overlook Twain? Pick Lewis Carroll and neglect Charles Dickens? The real answer, I think, is that our favorite change as we change. However, a new favorite 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.