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Merlin (The Pendragon Cycle , Book 2)



Synopsis

A stunning saga of courage and destiny in a legendary time of chaos and kings. He was born to greatness, the son of a druid bard and a princess of lost Atlantis. A trained warrior, blessed with the gifts of prophecy and song, he grew to manhood in a land ravaged by the brutal greed of petty chieftains and barbarian invaders. MERLIN: Respected, feared and hated by many, he was to have a higher destiny. For it was he who prepared the way for the momentous event that would unite the Island of the Mighty—the coming of Arthur Pendragon, Lord of the Kingdom of Summer. MERLIN—entertains and tantalizes . . . an exciting and thoughtful addition to the ranks of Arthurian fantasy. • “Locus

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

These books sold very, very well for the author in what can only be described as an impossibly crowded genre. It seems every fantasy novelist attempts, at some point, a re-telling and definitive edition of the Arthurian myth. It is the only subject more trampled and copied than Tolkien. It is also the genre that lapses in to the most astonishing absurdities. Lawhead, with these three books (Taliesin, Merlin, and Arthur) has contributed something very relevant and very new to the genre. It gives the myth a burst of idealism and Christianity not seen since Tennyson with the Celtic traditions not seen since the Mabinogion. Sadly, with the publication of the latter three--and far lesser novels (Pendragon, Grail, and Avallon) the series is much damaged and diminished. We believe that Lawhead would've been far better served to let the trilogy stand on its own where it's not so

intimidating and probably would've enjoyed subsequent reprinting. As it stands, our rating for this book is slightly tarnished by these later publications and endanger the proud work of a very, very good author.

WHO SHOULD READ: Readers who enjoyed Tolkien a great deal and who read Terry Brooks, Robert Jordan, and others searching for that same idealism will come closest to finding it here with Lawhead. Readers who enjoyed Marion Zimmerman Bradley's feminized version of the legend in *The Mists of Avalon* will find this work operating as a kind of opposite: Bradley employing the traditional pagan religious elements and feminism while re-working the French side of the myth while Lawhead invoking Christian theology and masculinity in the Celtic side of the myth. They are very interesting to read together. These books are excellent choices for teenagers for whom idealism is second nature. Oddly, readers deeply impressed with the idealism of the people living in "The Land" in *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever* will find themselves deeply compelled by this work.

WHO SHOULD AVOID: Scholars of Arthuriana, those more versed in Malory, Monmouth, Eschenbach, de Troyes, and even Tennyson, will probably be a bit disappointed. They are going to be much less impressed with what they might regard as overly-dramatic prose and much more sensitive to the liberties--particularly the Christian liberties--that Lawhead takes with the story. Certainly those readers who are inclined to much more cynical writing styles of the late 20th and 21st century--people who enjoy the subtle undercurrents and "un-heroism" of more modern irreverent works--will probably become bored and irritable with the constant nobility (just as they would become bored with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*). People looking to investigate the actual history and evolution of the mythology would not be well-served by reading this book but should look to the actual source material of Malory and perhaps some of the earlier Celtic works such as Monmouth and *The Alliterative Morte d'Arthure*.

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I started out the Pendragon Cycle with "Taliesin", as was the chronological thing to do. After that came "Merlin" - and maybe it was the anticipation after reading "Taliesin", or maybe it was only the fascination I've held for Merlin ever since the first time I discovered Arthurian legend...whatever it was, I absolutely fell in love with this book. Now that I've finished reading the cycle, I can say without a doubt that "Merlin" surpasses all others in the series. Arthur is a genius, Llenlleawg a talented warrior, Pelleas a loyal companion...but Merlin is REAL. Merlin has gifts and flaws; he has a distinct personality that makes him come to life as a flesh and bone human (however immortal). For example, I found him to be vain and more snobbish as the story progressed! He is definitely one of the most well-written characters I've ever read. After finishing this book in less than four hours, I

eagerly acquired the rest of the Pendragon series, thinking that they would live up to the standard of "Merlin", if not surpass it. I should have known that such a perfect book full of plot and characterization is one of a kind. However, to my delight, Merlin's character only develops more in depth as the Pendragon series continued on. After all, Merlin's name is etched in legend...but in Lawhead's writing, he lives.

You know, I could really dig into this book and pull out stuff like the symbolism of the hawk, and color symbolism of the golden eyes. I could give you the significance of the choice of diction, tell you about the underlying themes, but you don't want to hear about that. Merlin is the son of Taliesin the bard and Charis the Fair Folk princess. Merlin spends most of the year with his mother on Ynys Avallach and the summers with his grandparents in their caer training with the warriors and the bards. His father's people call him Myrddyn (pronounced Mur- then). The plot details his childhood and how he grows to be a warrior and a bard, and his life as he deals with his immortality. There are plenty of battle scenes for those of you who like that stuff, and also a bit of romance here and there for those of you who like *that* stuff. Lawhead paints realistic and vivid pictures of life in Celtic Britian. The character developement is nothing short of incredible. There are stories that you read, and then there are stories that you experience. This is one of those stories you experience. The story is so concrete, you feel yourself a part of the narrative. Words cannot describe the emotions this book conjures. It is an incredible piece of literature. Read. And experience the wonder, the romance, and the battles of...Merlin.

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