

# BOOKNOTES

READERS GUIDE

## introducing fantasy

Fantasy is a form of literature that presents psychological realities in an imaginative or fantastical way. Using myth and folklore as a background, modern writers of fantasy set their stories in an imagined world or in a real-life setting where magical events take place.

## pre-reading activity

**Ask the group to discuss folk tales and myths they remember hearing or reading in the past. Who were the characters who fought for good, and who were the evil characters? Ask them to describe to each other scenes they remember from those stories. How was magic used? What emotions did the stories evoke? What do they remember about dragons in those early tales? Make a list of character traits exhibited by heroes and villains from folk tales and myths. Which of these traits are most important in real-life situations?**



Grades 6 up  
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## about the book

***Eragon* is the first book of *Inheritance*, a stunning epic fantasy trilogy that will make imaginations soar.**

Gifted only with an ancient red sword, the brilliant blue dragon Saphira, and advice from the old storyteller Brom, the young man Eragon is entangled in an intricate tapestry of magic, glory, and power. His saga carries readers through a fantastical land filled with beauty and brooding danger, while an ancient legacy and an unexpected inheritance shape his destiny.



# questions for

## Family and Home

- ✦ Eragon's family is very important to him, although he never knew his parents. Who do you think Eragon's parents were? Why is his father's identity a mystery, and why did his mother bring him to her brother to raise and then disappear? Could Eragon have prevented his uncle's death?
- ✦ What was Eragon's life like before he found the dragon's egg? How did his discovery of the egg change his life? Do you think Eragon found the egg or the egg was deliberately sent to him?
- ✦ Why was Eragon comfortable exploring the Spine when everyone else in his village was afraid of the place? What does the Spine represent to the other inhabitants of Carvahall?
- ✦ Does Brom know that Eragon is special from the beginning? Has he been watching Eragon all along, knowing what his destiny will be? Why do you think Brom settled in Carvahall as the village storyteller?
- ✦ Do you think Eragon will ever be able to return to the Palancar Valley and Carvahall? He longs for his home in the midst of his adventures, but will he return to the farm when his adventures are over?

## Destiny and Responsibility

- ✦ The first line of the story reads: "Wind howled through the night, carrying a scent that would change the world." What does this opening tell you about the meaning of destiny in the tale? What does the author mean by "a scent that would change the world"?
- ✦ Names are very important in this story. How does it affect Eragon to learn that his name was also the name of the first Dragon Rider? How does he choose Saphira's name?
- ✦ What does Saphira mean when she says, "It is our destiny to attempt the impossible, to accomplish great deeds regardless of fear. It is our responsibility to the future"? Is this true for everyone? What is the responsibility of each of us to the future?
- ✦ Why does Eragon's magic diminish his own strength every time he uses it?
- ✦ Angela the fortuneteller says, "To know one's fate can be a terrible thing." Would you want to know your future if someone could tell you? Why does Eragon decide to hear her predictions? What does she mean when she says, "That freedom [to choose your fate] is a gift, but it is also a responsibility more binding than chains"?
- ✦ How does Eragon feel about his fate as a Dragon Rider? What are the benefits of his new life? What are the dangers? Would you choose to take on the responsibilities Eragon has—caring for Saphira, rescuing Arya, helping the Varden, fighting the Empire?

# group discussion

## Trust and Fear

- ✦ Why does Brom want to travel with Eragon when he is forced to leave his home? How does Eragon know that he can trust Brom?
- ✦ Who are the Ra'zac and what do they represent to Eragon?
- ✦ When Eragon realizes that Arya is an elf, does it change his feelings about her? Why does he rescue her from the prison even though it puts his own rescue in jeopardy?
- ✦ How does Eragon feel when he learns about Murtagh's parentage? Does the fact that Murtagh's father was Morzan affect Eragon's trust of him? Does it affect your feelings about his character?
- ✦ When Eragon finds the stronghold of the Varden, he is confronted by the Twins. Why does Ajihad trust the Twins? Why do they treat Eragon with suspicion?

## Good and Evil

- ✦ Many fantasy novels deal with the struggle between forces of good and evil. Discuss the ways in which *Eragon* explores this theme and which characters represent good and evil.
- ✦ The story begins with the Shade and his ruthless ambush of the elf Arya. How did this Prologue affect your anticipation of the story to come? Why is the Prologue titled "Shade of Fear"?
- ✦ Are there characters who represent pure good and pure evil? Discuss the ways in which an author shows us a character's true nature. How does a character's life experience shape his or her actions?
- ✦ How did Galbatorix establish his rule of Alagaësia? What experiences turned him into a cruel and feared ruler? What do we learn of the Shade's past when he is killed?
- ✦ The Urgals seem to be completely ruthless, yet Eragon is hesitant to kill them with his magic in Chapter 30. Why does he only use his magic to stun them? Why is he so upset when Murtagh kills Torkenbrand, the slave trader?

## Connecting Fantasy to Real Life

- ✦ What kinds of good and evil do you hear about in the news? Discuss examples from news stories that report events representing the good and evil in our society and around the world.
- ✦ What circumstances can bring people together to become friends and what can make those friendships grow and develop? What circumstances can hurt a friendship?
- ✦ Do you feel that some people have a destiny to fulfill or a special reason for living? Name people in history who had a strong responsibility to a cause for good or evil. (Possibilities would be Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King for good causes and Adolf Hitler, Attila the Hun, and Josef Stalin for evil.)

## other fantasy favorites

### **Prydain Chronicles**

**Lloyd Alexander**

Grades 5 up / Dell Yearling

#### **#1: The Book of Three**

0-440-40702-8

#### **#2: The Black Cauldron**

0-440-40649-8

#### **#3: The Castle of Llyr**

0-440-41125-4

#### **#4: Taran Wanderer**

0-440-48483-9

#### **#5: The High King**

0-440-43574-9

### **A Wrinkle in Time**

**Madeleine L'Engle**

Grades 5 up / Dell Laurel-Leaf

0-440-99805-0

### **Protector of the Small**

**Tamora Pierce**

Grades 6 up / Random House

#### **First Test**

0-679-88917-5

#### **Page**

0-679-88918-3

#### **Squire**

0-679-88919-1

#### **Lady Knight**

0-375-81465-5

### **His Dark Materials Trilogy**

**Philip Pullman**

Grades 7 up / Knopf Trade Paperback

#### **The Golden Compass**

0-375-82345-X

#### **The Subtle Knife**

0-375-82346-8

#### **The Amber Spyglass**

0-375-82335-2

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## about the author

**Christopher Paolini** was just fifteen years old when he began writing *Eragon*, Book One of Inheritance, a fantasy trilogy for a new generation. With the help of his family, Paolini self-published the book in February of 2002, and he went on to sell several thousand copies through hard work and diligent self-promotion. Paolini credits his “abiding love” of fantasy and science fiction as the inspiration for writing *Eragon*. The self-published version of the book was edited for its Knopf edition.

Now a worldly nineteen, Paolini lives in Montana, where he was born and raised, and is writing *Eldest*, the second installment in the trilogy. For more on the Paolini family, visit [www.factsource.com](http://www.factsource.com)

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