



The Chronicles of Prydain Boxed Set

Lloyd Alexander

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Millions of young readers have been enthralled by the adventures of Taran the Assistant Pig-Keeper and his lively companions as they journey through the magical land of Prydain. First published more than thirty years ago and translated into twenty different languages, Lloyd Alexander's beloved series has become the standard of excellence in fantasy literature for children. Among their many accolades, the award-winning *Chronicles of Prydain* count a Newbery Medal, a Newbery Honor, and more than two million copies in print.

The Chronicles of Prydain Boxed Set Details

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Author : Lloyd Alexander

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Noni says

I just finished reading the whole 5 books in sequence. Each book itself is not long. One book contains between 100-200 pages only. But the journey inside the land of Prydain was certainly a long one.

It began with The Book of Three, where Taran was still a teenage boy, eager to see the world, to become a hero, with his prideful attitude. Along the way, in The Black Cauldron, The Castle of Llyr, Taran Wanderer, with all the journeys and events, Taran grew up to become a man, kind, compassionate, and humble. And it ended in The High King, where Taran finally chose the tougher choice, and thus, fulfilled the prophecy.

I like the chronicles, because of its simple plot, and yet, deep in life values lesson. Noble character, didn't just build into a person when he was born, but because of the choices made during one's journey through life. And through every journey in the books, the characters grew these noble life values.

But the books' language wasn't always heavy. In fact, there were many funny remarks, and witty bantering, coming from Fflewddur Flam, the Bard, and Eilonwy, the princess of Llyr. Don't be misled, though, all the witty and funny remarks, are also part of a whole deep life lessons, when one takes time to do the munching and crunching, as Gurgi would say. I was sad when their journey ended.

This is the kind of book, that I would reread many times over later, as the characters already felt like old friends, and their life lessons are necessary to nurture me. My thanks to Mr. Alexander who had written such a beautiful journey into books.

Erik says

I was pretty much minding my own business, plucking the odd Encyclopedia Brown mystery from the elementary school library shelves when my third grade teacher told me to check these out. They began a lifelong affection for fantasy novels, specifically fantasy series.

It's natural to utter the name Tolkein while discussing these books due to numerous parallels between Middle Earth and The Realm of Prydain, not to mention both author's utilization the multi-volume format. Alexander's Prydain series distinguishes itself from The Ring books in that its message is specifically for young readers. In fact, volume four puts forward many of the existential questions just around the corner for the next generation.

This series is about finding and being faithful to one's purpose in life, chalking up failures to learning experiences, and never taking one's comrades for granted.

Abby-Rose Viveiros says

This is a very charming, loveable Fantasy/Coming of Age series and it definitely deserves more attention than it gets.

On behalf of all Prydain fans I'd like to ask: Where's our live-action movie version of this? All we have is one very cute (but let's face it, also dated and somewhat inaccurate) Disney animation film!

The story basically follows, along the course of five books, the coming of age of young Taran, an assistant pig keeper who dreams of being a hero. He makes (and in many cases loses, usually through death) many friends. Two of these friends are a king with a magic harp who loves skirting his responsibility to his kingdom and being a bard, and a very 'tell it like it is' red-headed princess. Early on, despite having nothing in particular against each other, he and the princess clash a lot, but by the third book he's pretty much already fallen in love with her.

Now I have to mention my favorite character of the series: GURGI!!! Oh, how I LOVE Gurgi. Remember all those friends Taran makes? Well one of them is a pitiful, shaggy creature (we never do find out exactly what he is) named Gurgi, and he **MAKES** this series. His remarks throughout, whether funny or clueless, always bring a smile to my face and is the main reason I'd want to re-read this series over and over again.

(Gurgi is also the reason I now and again say things like "Crunchings and munchings" or "lotions and potions" or "splashings and thrashings" despite the weird looks I get from people when I do so).

Anyway this is a five-star, delightful series. Highly recommended.

Amaryllis says

LOVE THEM ALL!!!

Heather says

1969 Newbery Medal Winner (for Book 5, The High King)

This was one of my favorite series when I was younger. It had a huge influence on my love of fantasy fiction. Now, re-reading it as an adult, I can see that it's not flawless, but nonetheless it's still a great adventure with wonderful characters.

I read the old book club edition that I've had for years. It includes the five novels, plus a short story collection set in the same world, which is loosely based on Welsh mythology.

I kind of floundered in the middle of the collection and took a long time to get through it all. Not sure I will re-read it again myself, but I would definitely read it to a potential future offspring.

The main character, Taran, learns that he's the only one who can choose what kind of life he will lead, regardless of his birth or what he thinks of as his fate (a very American theme from an American author!).

Taran also comes to understand that true leadership is a heavy burden, involving sacrificing for those one

would lead. The series brings him full-circle from a headstrong boy hungry for glory to a man who is willing to lay down his life for others.

"A true king wears his crown in his heart."

(view spoiler)

Ellen Lee says

One of the great fantasy series ever. Notice I didn't say "for children". This series is for everyone, with unforgettable characters (including faithful Gurgi!). What really makes this series is Taran's journey from a hot-headed, stubborn youth to a man fit to be king of Prydain. The most moving scenes of the series are in "Taran Wanderer", when Taran learns that to be a hero with a sword in your hand is no more worthy than to be a blacksmith, weaver or potter. The scenes when Taran finds his long-lost father are genuinely moving, and I cried several times with the mix of joy and anguish that Taran finds when he thinks he's finally solved the mystery of his identity, only to find that getting what you want is a mixed blessing.

What sets Lloyd Alexander apart from other fantasy writers is his humanity: Alexander doesn't glorify highborn heroes nor battle, and he shows Taran as a person who has flaws but is able to acknowledge them and fight against the darker parts of his nature.

And will there be an ultimate showdown with the Big Bad, Arawn, Death-Lord, Master of Annuwen? You're damn right.

Mike (the Paladin) says

I read these individually, having bought a boxed set years ago. They tell a wonderful fantasy story, much younger than The Lord of the Rings to which some try to compare it. While I can't say that I find it anywhere near as good as that epic, it is a worthy nominee to the crown of best Youth and YA fantasy. Adults can and I would think that if they are fantasy fans, will enjoy it also. The books are loosely based in Welsh mythology but they don't strain to stay with it and tell a story that's fun, interesting, and exciting.

So, get together with the assistant pig keeper and follow the adventure to the end. It's a good story whether you read it in individual volumes or in an omnibus edition.

Beth says

I fell in love with these books when they were first read aloud to me as a child, and they remain just as wonderful now that I'm an adult. My husband and I read them aloud to each other during our first year of marriage, and ended up staying up far too late reading on nights when we had to work the next day. The characters are unforgettable, and we find ourselves making allusions to what certain characters would do or say in our situation. I can't wait until our son is old enough to enjoy them as well.

The tale is of adventure and daring, of finding oneself and coming-of-age. The story unfolds in the fantasy realm of Prydain, a world steeped in Welsh mythology. Taran, a young Assistant Pig Keeper (to a very special pig) longs to be a hero, but finds heroism to be quite different than he expected when he is caught up in the strange deeds of his time. He is joined in his adventures by Eilonwy (a loquacious princess), Fflewddur Fflam (a bard whose harp strings break when his tales get a bit too "colorful"), and Gurgi (a loyal though scruffy creature who takes delight in his "crunchings and munchings"). One comes to expect the unexpected: deathless warriors, talking crows, invisible dwarves, melancholy giants, evil enchantresses,

giant cats, and prophetic pigs.

One of the things that I particularly love about this series is that it doesn't take itself too seriously. It has a healthy dose of heroism and characters reaching beyond themselves to help others, but the heroism stays rooted in humor and humanity. The characters still make mistakes, and people's personality quirks clash. This series doesn't fall into the vein of "He was the best warrior in the world. With the strongest sword in the world. Until he met this other warrior who was even the better-bestest warrior in the world. With an even longer sword." The trope of overly-heroic fantasy can get a bit laborious at times, and I find this series to be refreshingly down-to-earth. We can still escape from our daily lives into a world of wonder and adventure, but we have to chase some pigs and laugh at ourselves along the way.

If you appreciated this review, check out my blog pagesandmargins.wordpress.com

Dans Mon Arbre says

I received this set of books, I believe, back when I was about 9 or 10 years old. 1984.

While I'd been reading for as long as I could remember (my parents insisted we did, and I thank them for that), these books changed reading from something I was expected to do into something I wanted to do. An appetite that still hasn't been sated.

They tell the story of a young boy's journey into manhood within a world of fantasy and kings and knights. The boy longs to be a hero, but in the course of his trials he becomes that and much more. And we learn those life lessons along with him in stories filled with humor, sadness and adventure.

It's really a tale for boys, but I know many a girl who loves these books just as strongly as I do. The lessons and the adventures are not gender biased.

These books are on my mind now as I've been reading through them for the last couple of days. I'm nearly through the story again. I've read them at least once a year since I've owned them, so this is at least the 26th time I've read them. Why do I read them every year? I don't know...most of the time I don't plan on it. There just comes a point where I feel I need a centering...where I need to have those lessons taught to me again.

To be reminded that who we are is not as important as what we do.

To remember that life isn't something you can prepare for, and how he handle it makes us who we are.

That no matter how bad things can get, good friends and good deeds will pull you through.

It's a bit sad this time though...this is the last time I'll be able to read the copies you see in the image above. They're worn out beyond belief. If I didn't know them by heart, some pieces would be lost already and one practically fell apart in my hands and I read the pages in single sheets once I found their order again.

It will be sad to lose them and buy new copies, but the sentiment isn't in the paper...it's in the memories.

"Most of us are called on to perform tasks far beyond what we can do. Our capabilities seldom match our aspirations, and we are often woefully unprepared. To this extent, we are all Assistant Pig-Keepers at heart."

"Child, child, do you not see? For each of us comes a time when we must be more than what we are."

"There are those who must first learn loss, despair, and grief. Of all paths to wisdom, this is the cruelest and longest. Are you one who must follow such a way? This even I cannot know. If you are, take heart nonetheless. Those who reach the end do more than gain wisdom. As rough wool becomes cloth, and crude clay a vessel, so do they change and fashion wisdom for others, and what they give back is greater than what they won."

"Long ago I yearned to be a hero without knowing, in truth, what a hero was. Now, perhaps, I understand it a little better. A grower of turnips or a shaper of clay, a Commot farmer or a king--every man is a hero if he strives more for others than for himself alone. Once you told me that the seeking counts more than the finding. So, too, must the striving count more than the gain."

Chad says

One of my favorite series of fantasy novels. This series is for kids to young adults, but I reread them a few years back and still enjoyed them. It is often what I recommend to those who liked Harry Potter and want something similar. It is full of good morals mainly geared to growing men, and values honesty and integrity over flash and heroics. It's not all wholesome cheerios though, they are genuinely great books.

The series starts with *The Book of Three*. It is simple and a bit childish; frustrating to older readers. If you found this to be true, read the second book *The Black Cauldron* before retaining judgement. The books are designed to mature with both the main character and the reader, and the main character starts out as a bit of a fool.

Susan says

Terran reread these for his book club, and I had fond memories of reading them as a child, so I picked them up too.

The first three books were charming. I loved the combination of high epic characters and characters designed to mock high epic. The fair folk were particularly entertaining when compared to Tolkien-style epic. You could write a book on Eilonwyn's role as an adventure heroine. She's enormously complex and layered in a collection of characters that aspires to two dimensions.

As the series moves into the final two books, it sheds most of its quirky adventure and becomes a straightforward "Hero comes of age and saves the world," story. THAT doesn't hold up at all. I was bored to tears as we approached the epic climax.

Returning to Eilonwy, who was by far the most interesting character in the series, I wasn't really clear what Alexander was trying to do with her. On one hand, she's unflaggingly determined in the face of a cast of characters who wants to shove her into the proper princess mold for the entire series. By the final book, she's

quite a competent fighter. OTOH, none of the characters, even Taran, ever seem to give her much credit for it. They roll their eyes at her inappropriate behavior all the way to the end. Also, through the entire series, she is forced to incrementally give up her enchantress powers without ever really having used them. It's clear in the way that she always flaunts the men's attempts to contain her that *Alexander* believes in her, but it's strange that none of the other characters seem to.

All in all, kind of a disappointing, if thought provoking, romp through a childhood classic.

Amy says

Good fantasy story.

Ea Solinas says

Lloyd Alexander's "Chronicles of Prydain" have become a classic staple of fantasy literature, a few rungs below "Lord of the Rings" and a few inches down from "Chronicles of Narnia." In this volume, all six books in his series are brought together, showing all of Prydain's beauty, richness, humor and sorrow as one big book.

"The Book of Three" opens with Assistant Pig-Keeper Taran yearning for adventure -- and getting more than he bargains for when he chases the pig into the woods, and is nearly run down by a sinister horned rider. Soon he teams up with a wandering king-minstrel, a sharp-tongued princess and a furry creature called Gurgi to save Prydain from the power of the Horned King.

"The Black Cauldron" has Taran and the others setting out to destroy Arawn Deathlord's evil cauldron, which turns dead men into unkillable zombies. But other forces are after the cauldron, including three peculiar witches who insist on trading something for the cauldron. What is worse, the company faces treachery from someone in their own camp...

"The Castle of Llyr" ties up some loose ends from the first book, as Princess Eilonwy is sent to the isle of Mona to become a fine lady. But she has barely arrived when she is kidnapped by a minion of the evil enchantress Achren, her "aunt." Taran sets out to save her, but must team up with the young man who wishes to marry Eilonwy -- even though Taran is rapidly falling in love with her.

"Taran Wanderer" has Taran setting out to discover his past, since he feels he can't ask Eilonwy to marry him if he is lowborn. With only Gurgi at his side, he encounters evil wizards, malevolent bandits, and finally learns that his father just might be a shepherd... until a new revelation leads him to learn of his true worth.

"The High King" wraps up the saga, with Taran returning home. But no sooner has he arrived than he learns that noble Prince Gwydion has been half-killed -- and the magical sword Dyrnwyn has been stolen by Arawn Deathlord. Now the heroes set out one and for all to attack Arawn's stronghold and get back the sword -- but how can they defeat a deathless army and a shapeshifting enemy?

Finally, "The Foundling" fills in a few of the gaps with short stories that illustrate the backstory of the Prydain novels. Among the stories are the tragic history of Dyrnwyn, how the wizard Dallben was reared by

the three witches (and where he got the Book of Three), and the love story of Eilonwy's parents.

Take two parts "Lord of the Rings," add a bit more humor and comedy, and stir in bits and pieces of Welsh mythology. That pretty much sums up the Prydain Chronicles, which is one of the rare series that is meant for kids, but is as rich an experience for adults. Even better, if they know the origins of the old legends and myths that make up the edges of these stories. Alexander populates this little world with evil enchantresses, deathless warriors, eager teenagers and talking crows, all the while coming up with an original storyline that doesn't smack of lifted legends.

In a sense, the whole series is a coming-of-age story, where Taran learns wisdom, maturity, loss and love. Oh yeah, and that that Chinese curse about interesting times is quite correct. Princess Eilonwy and the bard-king Fflewddur Fflam add a bit of comic relief, but they are also strong characters in their own right, as is the fuzzy sidekick Gurgi, who goes from being an annoyance to a loyal and lovable friend.

"The Chronicles of Prydain" are fantasy at its best, mingling myth and legend with a fast-paced plot and endearingly quirky characters. Definitely not something to miss.

Greg says

I first read these in junior high, and loved them then. They are out of print now (bummer) but my local library had the complete collection in one tome (yay for libraries!). It's a nice mix of Arthurian legend; Welsh legend, vocabulary, and locale; and Tolkien-type fantasy.

The characters are wonderful and memorable--nobody stays a stereotype for long, there are strong female characters, and the heroes all have weaknesses that make sense given their histories and experiences (putting it a good bit ahead of most 1970s-1980s fantasy). Fflewddur, Eilonwy, and of course Gurgi are among the best fantasy characters you'll ever come across, and make protagonist Taran a bit dull by comparison (in that way Han makes Jedi Luke kind of dull, I guess).

There are lots of interesting twists and turns, and sometimes the good (and bad) characters don't last as long as you'd expect (Darth Maul, meet the Horned King!).

One of my favorite fantasy epics, and it still holds up, whatever your age. Someone should bring them back into print.

It's also worth noting there's a movie based on the books from Disney, circa the 1980s, called The Black Cauldron. It's very good, but takes huge liberties with characters and plots.

Bonnie says

I've been reading these books to my 9-year-old son, and we're both enjoying them. To give you a sense, other favorites of his have been all the Harry Potter books multiple times each, The Hobbit, and recently "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. These books are between Harry Potter and Tolkien in reading level, which I realize is a large gap. Our son, a relatively advanced reader who nevertheless chooses "Tales of a Wimpy

Kid" as often as "The Hobbit," could probably read these on his own, once he got past all the names (there's a pronunciation guide at the beginning, but really, why make the names so hard?)

In many ways this is a coming-of-age series, and a delightful one. For example, although there are plenty of battles (very black-and-white, good vs. evil ones), our hero, Taran, starts the series looking at these as exciting opportunities for glory, and to prove his manhood. But he is surrounded by older and wiser folk who would rather farm than fight, and as Taran gets older he sees the wisdom and honor in this.

Although this series may appeal more to most boys than to most girls, there is a delightful female character Taran's age, Eilonwy, who is smart, dating, funny, and challenges "girls don't do that" stereotypes at every turn. She's wonderful, and provides some great lessons for boys and girls alike.

Taran helps and befriends everyone he meets who will be befriended, and finds kindness and wisdom from a wide assortment of adults of all types. Great fodder for conversation about how different people see the world, how to solve petty disputes without fighting, and that everyone deserves fairness, regardless of rank, money, or power.

In short, these are fun books with lots of positive messages. We're enjoying them.
