

ELDEST

Book Two in the Inheritance cycle



ABOUT THIS BOOK

Eragon's quiet life explodes with drama when he accepts the inheritance that is his: to become a Dragon Rider who can change the course of history in his embattled land of Alagaësia. Together with his telepathic dragon Saphira, Eragon trains with the elves so that he will be ready for the inevitable clash with Galbatorix, cruel ruler of the empire.

READERS GUIDE

DISCUSSION TOPIC: History and Beliefs

- Compare the different historic traditions of Alagaësia as they are explained in *Eldest*. Why do the dwarves, the elves, and the humans all have such different mythologies? What do their stories tell us about each of their races?
- What does Saphira tell Eragon about the dragons' beliefs in *Eldest*? Compare what the dragons believe with what the dwarves and elves do.
- After reading *Eldest*, explain the origins of the animosity among the races of dragons, elves, dwarves, and humans. What are the effects of those ancient wars on the present-day situation in Alagaësia?
- Why are the elves vegetarians? Why does Eragon become a vegetarian after living with them and studying with Oromis in *Eldest*?

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Family and Home

- Does Nasuada take control of the Varden because she is Ajihad's daughter or because she has special qualities of leadership? Compare Nasuada's relationship with her father in *Eragon* with Arya's relationship with Islanzadí in *Eldest*.
- Why does Hrothgar make Eragon a member of his clan before he leaves Farthen Dûr in *Eldest*? What does this mean to Eragon?
- When Murtagh tells Eragon who he really is at the end of *Eldest*, what effect does it have on him? Do you think what Murtagh tells him is true? What does it mean for Eragon's future?
- In the last chapter of *Eldest*, Eragon thinks: "Fathers, mothers, brothers, cousins . . . It all comes down to family." What does he mean? Who is Eragon's true family? Where has he found his greatest sense of belonging?

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Destiny and Responsibility

- Discuss the importance of names in Christopher Paolini's novels. 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 in the first book? In *Eldest*, how is Eragon affected by others calling him "Shadeslayer"? How has Galbatorix gained control over Murtagh and why is that control so complete?
- How does it affect Roran when people start to call him "Stronghammer" in *Eldest*? Why does Roran take most of the village of Carvahall with him in his quest to rescue Katrina?

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DISCUSSION TOPIC: Trust and Fear

- In *Eragon*, how does Eragon know that he can trust Brom enough to travel with him? Why does he leave his home and all that is familiar to him?
- Who are the Ra'zac and what do they represent to Eragon when he first encounters them in *Eragon*? Why do the Ra'zac return to Carvahall in *Eldest*? Why do they take Katrina away with them? Is it trust or fear that makes the people of Carvahall follow Roran into the wilderness?
- In the first book, 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 safety in jeopardy? What is it that keeps Arya from returning Eragon's affection in *Eldest*?

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Use and Abuse of Power

- In *Eldest*, Oromis says: "As Galbatorix has demonstrated, power without moral direction is the most dangerous force in the world." What does he mean by this? By the end of *Eldest*, what other characters have "power without moral direction"?
- Discuss the connection of magic to power in this story. Why does Eragon have to learn the use of magic so slowly, first from Brom (in *Eragon*) and then from Oromis (in *Eldest*)? Who are the other characters that can use magic and what are the limits on their magical powers?
- Why does the use of magic drain the energy of the person performing the magic? What are the ways that Eragon learns to control his use of magic and his energy in *Eldest*?

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Good and Evil

- Many fantasy novels deal with the struggle between forces of good and evil. Discuss the ways in which the Inheritance books explore this theme and which characters represent good and which represent evil. Are there some characters that you are still not sure about by the end of *Eldest*?
- How did Galbatorix establish his rule of Alagaësia? According to the history Brom shares in *Eragon*, what experiences turned Galbatorix into a cruel and feared ruler?

DISCUSSION TOPIC: One Step Beyond: Predictions

- 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 and Roran be able to return to the farm when their adventures are over?
- At the end of the first book, Eragon hears a voice in his head, someone helping him to escape the horrors of Durza's memories. In *Eldest*, we learn that person is Oromis, who will become Eragon's trainer. What foreshadowing comes at the end of *Eldest*? Predict some of the plot of Book Three of Inheritance. What do you expect to happen?
- Who are the characters that might play a major role in the next book? Will Eragon come face-to-face with Galbatorix? Will he fight Murtagh again? Will Eragon and Roran be able to rescue Katrina? Who will provide the most assistance to Eragon?

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Connecting Fantasy to Real Life

- What kinds of good and evil do you hear about in the news of our world? Discuss examples from news stories that report events representing the good and evil in our society and in international news.
- What circumstances can bring people together to become friends and what can make those friendships grow and develop? What circumstances can hurt a friendship? What are some of the ways people have difficulty with family members?
- 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 might be Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., for good; and Attila the Hun, Adolf Hitler, and Josef Stalin for evil.)
- Name some characters from legend, literature, or film who represent the causes of good or evil. (Possibilities might be Luke Skywalker, King Arthur, Frodo for good; Darth Vader, Mordred, and Sauron for evil.)