

Eragon

by Christopher Paolini

Teacher's Guide
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Synopsis

Prologue: Share of Fear

A creature called a "Shade," human-looking except for his crimson hair and maroon eyes, is standing with twelve Urgals, brutish monsters. They ambush a beautiful female elf who is carrying an odd sapphire stone. When her capture seems unavoidable, the elf makes the stone vanish. The Shade rides off, carrying the unconscious elf.

Discovery

Eragon, a fifteen-year-old farm boy, finds the marvelous blue stone in a mystical mountain place where he is hunting for food.

Palancar Valley

Eragon takes the stone to the butcher Sloan, who refuses to accept it as payment for meat. When the discussion gets heated, Sloan's daughter Katrina calls Horst the smith for assistance. Kindly Horst gets piles of meat for Eragon. Since he knows the teen has no money, Horst allows him to work off the debt. Eragon walks ten more miles to the hut where he lives with his uncle Garrow and his cousin Roran.

Dragon Tales

Eragon knows little about his birth parents, other than his mother's name was Selena. The family harvests their crops. Soon after, the traders arrive but they, too, are unwilling to accept the odd stone. The traders bring news of instability in the Empire. They tell stories of the legendary Dragon Riders, who protected the kingdom until the evil Galbatorix brought them down. He is now the kingdom's mad, evil ruler.

Fate's Gift

The egg hatches a beautiful sapphire-blue dragon, a race thought to be extinct.

Awakening

Eragon touches the tiny dragon and gets a shock. His palm is left with an odd white scar. Eragon and the baby dragon bond, reading each other's minds. Eragon takes tender care of the little dragon, which grows larger and stronger quickly.

Tea for Two

Eragon asks Brom, the storyteller, for advice about dragons. Brom explains that Dragon Riders live an extraordinarily long time and like their dragons, have magical powers.

A Name of Power

Roran is leaving the farm to work for a miller so he can earn enough money to marry Katrina. Eragon realizes that his dragon is female and she agrees to the name Saphira, one of the names that Brom had suggested.

A Miller-to-Be

Sad at his half-brother's departure, Eragon finds solace in his dragon's company.

Strangers in Carvahall

Creatures come around looking for Eragon's odd blue stone. Brom confirms what he suspected: Eragon has a dragon hidden.

Flight of Destiny

Eragon rides Saphira for the first time. They fly to the land called the Spine, far away. Eragon is injured by Saphira's rough scales.

The Doom of Innocence

Saphira has returned to where her egg was found. Saphira and Eragon fly back to the farm to discover that it has been destroyed by the marauding Ra'zac, the king's ghastly minions. They have mortally wounded Garrow as they search for Eragon. Garrow is barely alive.

Deathwatch

The town healer Gertrude skillfully tends to Garrow and



Eragon. Two days pass. Eragon discovers that Saphira is highly intelligent and has a keen sense of humor. She is totally devoted to him.

The Madness of Life

Garrow dies and Eragon grieves.

A Rider's Blade

Eragon and Saphira decide to pursue the creatures who killed Garrow. Brom comes with them, telling Eragon that the adventures will make a fine story. Brom gives Eragon a magnificent sword called Zar'roc. The weapon belonged to a Rider. Brom explains that the Ra'zac are the King's personal dragon hunters, as the king is determined to eliminate all dragons. Eragon is thrust into a new role as the first Dragon Rider in more than 100 years who is not under the evil king's control. Now Eragon's choices could save—or destroy—the Empire. Brom finally reveals that he is more than a storyteller; he is along on the quest to help Eragon.

Saddlemaking

Brom makes a saddle for Saphira so Eragon can ride the dragon without being injured.

Therinsford

Brom explains a lot of dragon lore, including how Saphira chose to hatch for Eragon. He also teaches Eragon how to fight with the sword. Training and traveling with Brom, the teen and dragon learn to work together in war and peace, using a combination of traditional fighting arts and magic. Brom buys them horses; Eragon names his horse Cadoc. Eragon discovers that he can read the minds of people and other creatures as well as Saphira's mind.

Thunder Roar and Lightning Crackle

On the third day, they are caught in a fierce storm and Saphira is wounded. Eragon tenderly ministers to Saphira's wounds.

Revelation at Yazuac

The travelers arrive at Yazuac to discover that the Urgals have committed mass slaughter. Brom and Eragon battle the remaining Urgals, Eragon using magic as a weapon for the first time. The mark on his palm glows like white-hot metal as he uses magic.

Admonishments

Eragon bandages Brom, who is badly hurt. Brom explains that magic has limits, not the least of which is that it exhausts the doer.

Magic is the Simplest Thing

Eragon discovers that he is the last of the Dragon Riders. He also learns the power of personal names, but he does not know his real name, only the name he has been called. Brom teaches Eragon more magic and the ancient language, as he has taught him to fight.

Daret

The men in Daret are wary and heavily armed, a result of the turmoil in the Empire.

Through a Dragon's Eye

Eragon rides Saphira, and looking through her eyes, finally experiences the joy of flying that she feels. They find a Ra'zac flask filled with acid and decide to trace its source to find the Ra'zac.

A Song for the Road

Eragon realizes that he is changing, becoming strong and hard. Brom decides they will assume false names for the next village: he will be Neal and Eragon will be his nephew Evan.

A Taste of Teirm

Brom locates his old friend Jeod, who gives them hospitality and information.

An Old Friend

The travelers learn that Jeod and the other traders are in trouble for helping people the Empire doesn't favor. Eragon learns that Brom found something in Gil'ead and went to Carvahall to hide, more than twenty years ago.

The Witch and the Werecoat

Eragon meets the witch Angela and the werecat Solembum. Angela tells his fortune, saying that he will leave this land forever, have a very long life, and have an epic romance.

Of Reading and Plots

Brom teaches Eragon to read, another skill he had lacked. Eragon has a bad dream about a beautiful young woman held captive.

Thieves in the Castle

Eragon and Brom break into the castle to read the shipping records and thus trace the acid. Based on this information, they decide to go to Dras-Leona.

A Costly Mistake

As they travel, Brom tells about his past and the history

of the Empire. Eragon increases his understanding of the complex political situation. Brom knew Eragon's mother but refuses to release any information about her. Horned Urgals chase them. Eragon uses magic to kill some of them, but he breaks his wrist in the process.

Vision of Perfection

Furious, Brom cleans up Eragon's mess, killing the rest of the Urgals. Saphira is equally annoyed at Eragon's foolishness, a result of his youth and inexperience.

Master of the Blade

Brom trains Eragon to think, plot, and plan. Eragon is an extraordinarily skilled swordsman.

The Mire of Dras-Leona

They arrive at Dras-Leona, a horrible place filled with misery and suffering.

Trail of Oil

Brom and Eragon find out that the Ra'zac are in Helgrind.

Worshippers of Helgrind

Eragon explores the city. He is sickened at a slave auction. Eragon is in the cathedral when the Ra'zac appear behind him. He runs back to Brom and Saphira as fast as possible, but the Ra'zac catch them.

The Ra'zac's Revenge

They drug Eragon so he cannot perform magic to extricate himself. Brom is stabbed.

Murtagh

The travelers are befriended by Murtagh, a human warrior with mysterious ties to the Varden and the Empire. With Saphira's assistance, Eragon heals Brom from the outside, but they are powerless to heal his inside. They take refuge in a cavern.

Legacy of a Rider

As he is dying, Brom reveals that he, too, was a Rider. His dragon, also named Saphira, was killed in battle. Before he dies, Brom gives Eragon his blessing in the ancient tongue. They bury him.

Diamond Tomb

Murtagh reveals that Brom helped steal the dragon egg from the king, was chased across the Empire, and killed the evil Morzan in a duel. Eragon is unable to read Murtagh's mind because it is fortified. Murtagh also reveals that Brom took Eragon's sword from Morzan in

their battle. Saphira, meanwhile, knows all this and more about Brom because he confided in her, much to Eragon's annoyance. Saphira makes Brom's body eternal by encasing it in a huge diamond.

Capture at Gil'ead

Back on the move, Eragon turns sixteen and spars with Murtagh. The Urgals attack.

Du Sundavar Freohr

Eragon is captured by the Urgals and wakes up in a cell. The beautiful elf woman of his dreams, Arya, is carried in, unconscious. Eragon realizes that his food and water are drugged to prevent him from performing magic so he starves himself to regain his powers. A Shade tries to coerce Eragon into revealing his real name so the Shade has power over him. Eragon would never do so, but he doesn't even know his real name, so he uses strategy and gives a false name.

Fighting Shadows

The drug worn off, Eragon frees himself from his cell by using magic. He fights with the Shade and Saphira carries him off to relative safety, with the Elf.

A Warrior and a Healer

Eragon realizes that the Elf has been brutally tortured and vows revenge. He and Saphira meld their minds to heal the Elf as best they can.

Water from Sand

Eragon figures out how to use magic to extract water from the desert so they can cross it to escape.

The Ramr River

They fly across the land on Saphira to reach the entrance to the Hadarac Desert.

The Hadarac Desert

Four days pass in the desert; Eragon supplies water. They reach the huge mountains and the Elf is still unconscious.

A Path Revealed

Through a mind meld, the Elf tells Eragon that she has been poisoned and will die without an antidote. They head toward the town that has the antidote, pursued by Urgals.

A Clash of Wills

In a fierce battle, Eragon decapitates the Urgals' leader, Torkenbrand. Saphira is proud of his decisive action.

Flight Through the Valley

Kull, the elite members of the Urgals, chase the travelers. They drop rocks on the Urgals to hinder their progress. Murtagh reveals the shocking truth of his identity: he is the son of Morzan, the first and last of the Forsworn.

The Horns of a Dilemma

Morzan had betrayed the Riders to Galbatorix and remained the king's favorite servant for the rest of his life. Brom had killed Morzan. Thus, Eragon's sword belonged to Murtagh's evil father. The travelers battle the Kull. Eragon is captured by a fierce bald man.

Hunting for Answers

Eragon learns that Arya is the dragon-egg courier, the elf from the beginning of the novel. The bald man probes Eragon's mind, a painful process. He cannot penetrate Murtagh's mind, however. The dwarf Orik helps Eragon recover from the ordeal. Murtagh tells more of his story. He is the only child of the Thirteen Servants, the Forsworn. His father was a brutal leader and Murtagh vowed to escape.

The Glory of Tronjheim

Eragon feels oddly bound to Murtagh. They are alike in many ways, and Eragon carries Murtagh's father's sword. The healers help Arya. The prisoners enter a massive volcanic crater. Crowds of people greet them, seemingly afraid of Eragon. The travelers arrive at a magnificent place.

Ajjihad

They are welcomed by Ajjihad. His men insist on probing Murtagh's mind, but Murtagh still refuses. Arya has recovered enough to live. Ajjihad was friends with Brom. Ajjihad explains that the Shade Druza can only be destroyed by a thrust through the heart. Readers learn about the history of the dragon egg: people waited more than a decade for it to hatch because the egg waited for the best rider. Ajjihad gives Brom's ring to Eragon. Its crest matches the tattoo on Arya's shoulder.

Bless the Child, Argentlam

Orik becomes their guide. Eragon blesses a child. Saphira adds her blessing, a dragon mark. Saphira says that Eragon is the icon for his age.

Mandrake Root and Newt's Tongue

The werecat Solembum and the witch Angela show up. Angela explains that Brom was chosen to guard and train Eragon but he failed. The only thing he succeeded at was killing Morzan, and a better deed he could not have done.

Half of the Mountain King

Saphira wants Eragon to wear his sword, so he does. They meet the dwarf King Hrothgar, who questions why they have come to his land. All the human mothers want Eragon to bless their children. Eragon tours the building, especially the library. He meets Ajjihad's beautiful daughter Nasuada.

Arya's Test

On the third day in Tronjheim, Eragon's skills are tested. He duels with Arya and passes her test. She tells him about her captivity and torture. Murtagh is being treated well and is happy in "captivity." Eragon learns that the Empire's cruel and oppressive king will stop at nothing to get Eragon and Saphira to serve him.

The Shadows Lengthen

The Neanderthal Urgals are on the march in the tunnels. Saphira is fitted with armor.

Battle Under Farthen Dur

They battle the evil Urgals. Eragon stabs the Shade Durza in the heart and kills him.

The Mourning Sage

They win the war and Eragon is a hero.

Pronunciation Guide and Glossary

Timeline of Modern Events Affecting Fantasy Literature

- 1970 liquid crystal watches go on market
- 1971 CAT scan
- 1972 pocket calculator
- 1973 car airbags
- 1974 barcodes on supermarket products
- 1975 home computers
- 1976 VHS and Betamax
- 1977 first complete genetic structure of an organism found (Great Britain)
first flight of the *Space Shuttle*
first commercial flight of supersonic *Concorde* between New York, Paris and London
USA admits testing neutron bomb
Trans-Alaska Pipeline starts oil flowing from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez

- 1978 Louise Brown born, (first in-vitro fertilization)
- 1979 graphical user interface developed
- 1980 Sony Walkman
- 1981 compact disks hit the market
- 1982 video keyhole surgery
- 1983 synthetic human insulin approved for sale
- 1984 DNA fingerprinting
- 1985 first dotcom registered
- 1986 laptop computer
- 1987 Prozac hits the market
- 1988 first Internet virus; 10% of online computers disabled
- 1989 toaster becomes first appliance controlled over the Internet
- 1990 first gene therapy (4-year-old girl with an immune disorder)
- 1991 Internet browser developed (spawns World Wide Web)
- 1992 text messaging
- 1993 Global Positioning Satellite
- 1994 genetically modified tomatoes
- 1995 *Toy Story*, the first entirely computer-generated feature film
- 1996 Deep Field photographs of universe at 10,000,000,000 BC
- 1997 Dolly the sheep: first mammal cloned from an adult cell
- 1998 first segment of the International Space Station launched
- 1999 electronic reusable paper invented
- 2001 implanted microchips give sight to three blind men
- 2002 iris (eye) scanners first used for airport security

Author Sketch



Christopher Paolini became a publishing success while still a teen when *Eragon*, the first novel of a projected trilogy, topped the bestseller charts. Paolini, who was home-schooled by his parents, began writing *Eragon* at the age of fifteen. His parents, who own a small publishing company, helped with the editing and publishing. After the Paolini completed the novel, Reed College in Portland, Oregon, offered him admission and a scholarship. He turned down the offer to take *Eragon* on the road. Paolini read from his novel and autographed copies in schools, libraries, bookstores, and at fairs around the country. He dressed in medieval costume for his appearances.

The Paolinis also placed copies of *Eragon* in Montana book stores, where novelist Carl Hiaasen's stepson bought one. After Hiaasen read the novel, he called his editor at Alfred E. Knopf and suggested that the publisher might want to publish it. Knopf accepted the novel with edits of 20,000 words. They added a new cover as well. The book has sold remarkably well, as explained earlier.

Critic's Corner

Eragon was a *New York Times* bestseller, a *USA Today* bestseller, a *Publishers Weekly* bestseller, a *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, and a *Book Sense* bestseller. However, reviews were not entirely positive. For example, *School Library Journal* reviewer Susan L. Rogers felt that "sometimes the magic solutions are just too convenient for getting out of difficult situations," but felt that fans of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy would nonetheless find the characters and plot twists appealing.

The *New York Times Book Review* contributor Liz Rosenberg cited what she saw as faults, including clichés and "B-movie dialogue." Rosenberg wrote that Paolini's "plot stumbles and jerks along, with gaps in logic and characters dropped, then suddenly remembered, or new ones invented at the last minute. And yet, as Beatrix Potter wrote, 'Genius—like murder will out.' *Eragon*, for all its flaws, is an authentic work of great talent. The story is gripping; it may move awkwardly, but it moves with force. The power of *Eragon* lies in its overall effects—in the sweep of the story and the conviction of the storyteller. Here, Paolini is leagues ahead of most writers, and it is exactly here that his youth is on his side."

Booklist's Sally Estes wrote that Paolini's "lush tale is full of recognizable fantasy elements and conventions. But the telling remains constantly fresh and fluid." A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer called *Eragon* "an auspicious beginning to both career and series."

Other Books by Christopher Paolini

Eldest, a sequel to *Eragon* and the second volume in the "Inheritance Trilogy," August 2005

Further Readings from the Author

Booklist, August 15, 2003, Sally Estes, review of *Eragon*, p. 1981.

Christian Science Monitor, August 7, 2003, Yvonne Zipp, "Teen Author Wins Readers Book by Book."

Kirkus Reviews, July 15, 2003, review of *Eragon*, p. 967.

Kliatt, September, 2003, Michele Winship, review of *Eragon*, p. 10.

New York Times Book Review, November 16, 2003, Liz Rosenberg, review of *Eragon*.

Publishers Weekly, July 21, 2003, review of *Eragon*, p. 196.

School Library Journal, September 1, 2003, Susan L. Rogers, review of *Eragon*, p. 218.

General Objectives

1. To understand the importance of heroism
2. To assess the effects of family on children's happiness
3. To recognize the themes of loyalty and determination
4. To appreciate the importance of role models
5. To understand the novel's title
6. To appreciate the elements of fantasy
7. To find examples of bravery and courage
8. To describe the novel's setting
9. To analyze unusual characters
10. To see the different manifestations of evil

Specific Objectives

1. To search for self-knowledge
2. To probe the clash of good and evil
3. To appreciate determination and stubbornness
4. To explore the power of dragons and other mythical creatures

5. To contrast Eragon and Brom
6. To compare and contrast appearance and reality
7. To assess dependence and personal responsibility
8. To understand the Riders and their role in society
9. To differentiate between fantasy and reality
10. To engage in a heroic quest

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Christopher Paolini's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Allusion is a reference to a well-known place, event, person, work of art, or other work of literature. Allusions enrich a story or poem by suggesting powerful and exciting comparisons. In *Eragon*, Paolini makes numerous allusions, including references to Norse legends and heroes.

Archetypes are an original model or type after which other similar things are patterned; a prototype. For example, Frankenstein, Dracula, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are the archetypes that have influenced all subsequent horror stories. Paolini works with the archetype of the iconic hero Eragon; his loyal steed Saphira the dragon; and his wise teachers Brom and Murtagh. Paolini even uses an archetype for Eragon's sword Zar'roc, drawing from the old English legends of *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. Archetypes help Paolini give his story the heroic dimensions he desires.

Description is a word picture of what something or someone is like. Description is made up of sensory details that help readers form pictures in their minds. *Eragon* is rich in descriptions such as this one of a battle: "A red bolt flashed from his palm toward the elven lady, illuminating the trees with a bloody light. It struck her steed, and the horse toppled with a high-pitched squeal, plowing into the ground chest-first." (p. 3)

The Importance of Setting

Science fiction is fantasy writing that tells about make-believe events that include science or technology. Often, science fiction is set in the future, on distant planets, or among alien races. *Eragon* is set in the mythical land of Alagaesia. Paolini roughed out the main history of his mythical country before he began writing the novel. He drew a map (and included it in the novel) to show the location of each of his make-believe places. Alagaesia is a world of thrilling battles, bitter treachery,

and true love. Since Paolini created the entire world of Alagaesia, he is free to suspend reality at will. As a result, the novel features mythical creatures such as dragons. The dragon Saphira in *Eragon* is an especially beguiling creature. She is like a best friend: loyal, funny, brave, intelligent, and noble. She is also fiercely independent, proud, and capable of being jealous when Eragon becomes interested in another "woman."

Further, people in Alagaesia have unbelievable powers, such as the ability to heal others, read minds, and meld their minds with creatures as well as humans. Thus, the setting is crucial to the novel, because the wild adventures that Paolini describes could not take place on a realistic world.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
 Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*
 Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*
 Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*
 Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*
 C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*
 Patricia A. McKillip, *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*
 Michael Moorcock, *Elric of Melniboné*
 James Morrow, *Towing Jehovah*
 Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass* and *The Golden Compass*
 J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
 Louis Sachar, *Holes*
 Mary Stewart, *Merlin Trilogy*
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*
 Vernor Vinge, *A Deepness in the Sky*
 T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*
 Connie Willis, *To Say Nothing of the Dog*
 Roger Zelazny, *The Great Book of Amber: The Complete Amber Chronicles, 1-10*
 Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon*

Nonfiction

John Clute, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*
 Vincent Di Fate, *Infinite Worlds: The Fantastic Visions of Science Fiction*
 Frank M. Robinson, *Science Fiction of the 20th Century: An Illustrated History*
 Robert Silverberg, *Reflections and Refractions: Thoughts on Science Fiction, Science, and Other Matters*

Audiocassettes

Camilla
Eragon
A Ring of Endless Light

Videos/Films

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen
Clamshell
The Dark Crystal
Edward Scissorhands
The Indian in the Cupboard
Labyrinth
Lord of the Rings
The Neverending Story
The Neverending Story II
Return to Oz
The Rocketeer
Superman - The Movie
The Thief of Baghdad
Time Bandits

Internet

Alagaesia Web site
<http://Alagaesia.com>
 Interview with Paolini
www.poweells.com/authors/paolini.htm
 Interview with Paolini in Teenreads.com
<http://www.teenreads.com/>
 Christopher Paolini Bibliography
www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/authors/Christopher_Paolini.htm
 Interview with Paolini
www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full.index.cfm?author_number=934

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* should include these aspects:

Themes

- bravery
- dragons
- determination
- role models
- fear and terror
- friendship
- individuality
- innocence and experience
- loyalty
- villains

Motifs

- training for life-and-death battles
- suffering painful injuries
- losing people you love
- forging new friendships
- riding on dragons and fighting with legendary swords
- facing danger head-on
- being in a world of fantasy and science fiction
- trying to distinguish the good forces from the evil
- choosing sides
- using both intelligence and common sense

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. Standing in front of him, licking off the membrane that encased it, was a dragon. (**Fate's Gift**, p. 37)
(Eragon is shocked when the mysterious "stone" turns out to be an egg and hatches. He is even more shocked when a dragon emerges from the shards of the shell. In the world of Alagaesia, dragons are thought to be extinct. This event launches the action as the boy and his powerful sidekick set off on amazing adventures.)
2. The deeds will give you new hope and purpose. (**A Rider's Blade**, p. 92)
(Eragon is despondent because his uncle/foster father Garrow has been killed. Saphira tells Eragon that they must avenge his death. He will find self-actualization through action, she counsels. His worth as a human being ceases when he surrenders the will to change things and experience life. By setting off on a quest for revenge, Eragon will give his life meaning.)
3. Brom smiled gently. "I am the one who is here to help you." (**A Rider's Blade**, p. 106)
(As readers find out later in the Book, Brom was a Rider. His career ended when his dragon died. Subsequently, he has failed at nearly everything he has attempted. However, his efforts to serve as a father/guide/tutor to Eragon will redeem him and make his life worthwhile.)
4. The energy inside him burned at an unbearable level. He had to release it, or it would consume him. A word suddenly leapt unbidden to his lips. He shot, yelling, "Brisingr!" (**Revelation at Yazuac**, p. 133)

(Eragon discovers that he has the power to perform magic. The white patch on his hand – the "gedwey ignasia"— glows like white-hot metal, showing that his power is linked to Saphira and his future role as a Rider. However, performing feats of magic require great physical exertion. When done to excess, magic can prove fatal to the magician.)

5. "Galbatorix wants your willing cooperation. Without that, you're worse than useless to him." (**An Old Friend**, p. 197)
(The central question of the novel is political: Will Eragon cooperate with the King or not? This moral dilemma gives the story its narrative drive and much of its suspense.)
6. "You're a Rider?" he asked incredulously. (**Legacy of a Rider**, p. 274)
(Eragon is shocked to discover that Brom was a Rider. Brom explains that he was chosen by the Riders to join their ranks when he was very young. There, he became friends with Morzan. However, when Morzan betrayed the Riders to Galbatorix, Brom's dragon Saphira was killed. Thus, in this scene many unexplained plot threads are knitted together.)
7. "You have a right to know. I...I am the son of Morzan, first and last of the Forsworn." (**Flight Through the Valley**, p. 368)
(Murtagh is the son of the betrayer, the man whom Brom killed. Thus, Eragon might be traveling with his worst enemy, a betrayer.)
8. You must retain your freedom, for in it lies your true power: the ability to make choices independent of any leader or king. (**Ajihad**, p. 415)
(Ajihad gives Eragon this sage advice, echoing one of the novel's main themes: the importance of freedom and self-determination.)
9. It is your wyrd that shapes you, said Saphira. (**Bless the Child, Argetlam**, p. 430)
(The dragon tells Eragon that his character and achievements are shaped by his fate. She is convinced that it is Eragon's fate to be an icon for his age.)
10. The Shade was gone. (**Battle Under Farthen Dur**, p. 491)
(Eragon kills the Shade Durza by stabbing him in his heart. This astonishingly feat of bravery makes him a hero. Thus far, he has become what Saphira predicted: a great hero.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place? Why is the setting significant to the plot?
(The story takes place in the fantasy land of Alagaesia. The time is not specified. The setting is important because Alagaesia is a land of fantasy and magic, including elves, monsters, and flying dragons. This allows the author to weave his tale of make-believe.)
2. Why does Saphira hatch for Eragon and Eragon only?
(She has chosen him to be her Rider. She senses his greatness and heroism.)
3. What happens to Eragon's uncle/foster father Garrow?
(He is killed by the Ra'zac, the king's ghastly minions. He is burned to death.)
4. Who is Brom and how does he help Eragon?
(Brom is a former Rider. He poses as a storyteller to guide Eragon on his path to becoming a Rider. He teaches Eragon to battle, use his magical powers, and act in a more mature and reasoned manner.)
5. How does Eragon change as the novel progresses?
(At first, Eragon is a slender and brave fifteen-year old farm boy. As the novel progresses, he becomes a tough and sinewy fighter, extremely skilled with a sword. He becomes more mature as well, learning to use his powers of magic and intelligence.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. What does the gedwey ignasia, the mark on Eragon's palm, represent?
(It marks Eragon as special, the anointed one. It is the visible symbol of his greatness.)
7. What lessons does Eragon learn from Brom?
(He learns the obvious lessons, such as battle and survival skills. He also learns about the complicated political situation, how to perform and channel his magic, and how to temper his childish immaturity with reason and caution.)
8. How is Eragon's name symbolic? How is Saphira's name symbolic?
(Eragon is named after the first Rider. Saphira is named after

Brom's beloved dragon. This history lends emotional weight to the names.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Eragon is tested in many ways. Which test do you think is the most important and why?
(Students are likely to see Garrow's death as Eragon's most important test because it sparks the conflict and shatters Eragon's fragile family life.)
10. Do you find the relationship between Eragon and Saphira believable? Why or why not?
(Those who do find it realistic can argue that it is similar to the love between a boy and his dog. Those who do not find it realistic can argue that Saphira functions more as a girlfriend than as an animal. She is jealous of Eragon's attention to other females, for instance.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss some ways that you might have coped with Eragon's situation had you been in his place.
12. Explain how Paolini makes his fantasy world seem believable.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. Paolini claimed that his Montana home, nestled in the scenic Paradise Valley, was an inspiration for his story. Draw your vision of his family's home.
2. When Knopf accepted the novel for publication, they designed a new cover. Create your own cover for the novel.
3. Draw a picture of a dragon. Use the descriptions in the novel to spark your creativity.
4. Choose background music for an especially dramatic scene. Read the scene to a group of classmates as you play the music in the background.
5. Write a ballad celebrating Eragon's heroic feats, especially his victory over the Shade. Perform your ballad for your classmates.

Geography/History/Social Studies

1. In a Teenreads.com interview, Paolini said that he has "always been fascinated with the sources of most modern fantasy that lie in Teutonic, Scandinavian, and Old Norse history." Trace some of the legends he uses in the novel. See what elements he adapted for his novel.

2. Paolini used Old Norse as the basis of his Elven language in *Eragon*, as well as many names. Choose any three names from the novel and find the original names that Paolini used for inspiration.
3. Brom knows how to value a horse. Find out what qualities people look for in a horse.
4. Choose an epic battle from medieval history. Explain how it is similar to the battles with the Urgals in *Eragon*.

Math/Science

1. In the novel, distance is measured in leagues. Find out how leagues relate to miles, yards, feet, and inches. Show your results on a chart.
2. Eragon has the dragon egg appraised. Find out what organizations appraise jewelry, stamps, coins, and other valuables. Choose one type of valuable that is appraised. Learn the requirements for being an appraiser in that field.
3. People in the novel navigate by the stars. Learn more about this ancient method of navigation and share what you learn with a small group of classmates. Be sure to include information about the North Star.
4. Frogs and toads figure in the novel. Explain how they are the same and different.
5. How many miles can the average horse cover in a day? Show your results in a chart, comparing the progress of a horse to that of a person walking and a person riding in a car.

Language Arts

1. Many reviewers have noted the similarities between *Eragon* and Tolkien's works. Read one of the *Lord of the Rings* novels. Compare and contrast it to *Eragon*.
2. Paolini said: "My whole intent with *Eragon* was to capture the awestruck feeling I always have at the end of a great book or movie. I wanted it to be so that when you, the reader, set *Eragon* down, you can only say, 'Wow!'" Write a letter to Paolini in which you explain what parts of the book you think succeed and which parts do not.
3. Garrow gives Eragon and Roran some advice. Paolini closely modeled the advice on Polonius'

advice to his son Laertes in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Compare and contrast Garrow's advice to Polonius' advice. Show how they are the same and different. Then decide which advice is more useful and why.

4. Names have a great deal of power in the novel. Rename yourself, choosing a name that reveals key aspects of your personality.
5. When asked what advice he would give to aspiring teenage writers, Paolini said, "Write about what excites and moves you the most, otherwise your enthusiasm will never sustain you through an entire novel." Based on his advice, write a summary of a novel that you would like to write.

Speech/Drama

1. Brom tells Eragon, "Keep in mind that many people have died for their beliefs; it's actually quite common. The real courage is living and suffering for what you believe." Working with a group of classmates, debate both sides of this issue.
2. Eragon is delighted when the troubadours come to his village. Working with a group of classmates, present a skit that the troubadours might have performed for Eragon and his neighbors.
3. In a roundtable discussion, explore which elements of *Eragon* your classmates liked the most and which elements they liked the least.
4. Give a speech in which you decide what stance Eragon should take regarding the political situation in the empire.

Alternate Assessment

1. Make a character list and explain the strengths and flaws of each individual. Include ten different characters.
2. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main themes.
3. Analyze Paolini's writing style in this novel, focusing on word choice, sentence structure, figures of speech, and description.
4. Explain what Eragon's sword Zar'roc symbolizes.

Vocabulary

Match each word on the left with its synonym on the right. Write the letter of your answer in the space provided.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ 1. stout | A. tactful |
| _____ 2. fetid | B. kill |
| _____ 3. rapier | C. purple |
| _____ 4. poise | D. proposal |
| _____ 5. stench | E. ecstatic |
| _____ 6. modicum | F. work |
| _____ 7. falter | G. extra |
| _____ 8. disdain | H. sword |
| _____ 9. regal | I. bad smell |
| _____ 10. smote | J. putrid, foul |
| _____ 11. curt | K. emaciated, scrawny |
| _____ 12. discreet | L. used up |
| _____ 13. taciturn | M. brusque, abrupt |
| _____ 14. surplus | N. hesitate |
| _____ 15. elated | O. small amount |
| _____ 16. gaunt | P. reserved, aloof |
| _____ 17. proposition | Q. heavy-set |
| _____ 18. toil | R. scorn, contempt |
| _____ 19. indigo | S. royal |
| _____ 20. depleted | T. self-assurance |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| ___ 1. the beautiful elf who is the keeper of the egg | A. Eragon |
| ___ 2. the kind smithy; he pays for the meat that Eragon brings to his family | B. Galbatorix |
| ___ 3. fierce, hideous beasts | C. Saphira |
| ___ 4. the novel's hero | D. Brom |
| ___ 5. Eragon's teacher and guide, disguised as a storyteller | E. Angela |
| ___ 6. the witch posing as an herbalist | F. Horst |
| ___ 7. Eragon's mother | G. Selena |
| ___ 8. the dragon | H. Urgals |
| ___ 9. the evil, mad ruler | I. Arya |
| ___ 10. the werecat | J. Solembum |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- ___ 1. Urgals are human-looking creatures except for their crimson hair and maroon eyes.
- ___ 2. Shades, in contrast, are brutish monsters, like savage cave men.
- ___ 3. Eragon finds an odd blue stone that the traders willingly accept in exchange for meat.
- ___ 4. Ra'zac, the king's ghastly minions, mortally wound Garrow as they search for Eragon.
- ___ 5. Saphira is highly intelligent and has a keen sense of humor.
- ___ 6. Eragon is the first Dragon Rider in more than 100 years who is not under the evil king's control. As a result, Eragon's choices could save—or destroy—the Empire.
- ___ 7. Eragon learns that magic is very easy to do and has no limits: he can even bring the dead back to life.
- ___ 8. Eragon does not learn his real name; neither do the readers.
- ___ 9. The elves realizes that Eragon has been brutally tortured and vow revenge.
- ___ 10. Eragon figures out how to use magic to extract water from the desert so they can cross it to escape.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. Eragon's sword
2. Brom
3. names
4. dragons
5. the mark on Eragon's palm

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Predict what will happen in the next installment of the trilogy. Include elements from at least two subplots in *Eragon*.
2. Which characters in *Eragon* do you find most admirable? Why?
3. Describe two realistic and two fantasy elements in the novel.
4. Summarize what you learned about dragons, mythical creatures, from the novel.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the correct word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. Eragon, a (**five, fifteen**)-year-old farm boy, finds a marvelous blue stone in a mystical mountain place where he is hunting for food.
2. Visiting traders tell stories of the legendary Dragon (**Slayers, Riders**), who protected the kingdom until the evil Galbatorix brought them down.
3. Eragon discovers that Saphira is highly intelligent and has a keen sense of (**humor, smell**).
4. At Yazuac, Brom and Eragon battle the remaining Urgals, Eragon using (**fire, magic**) as a weapon for the first time.
5. Brom teaches Eragon magic and the ancient (**herbal cures, language**).
6. Eragon finds a Ra'zac flask filled with (**perfume, acid**) and decides to trace its source to find the Ra'zac.
7. Brom decides they will assume false names for the next village: he will be Neal and Eragon will be his nephew (**Evan, Harvey**).
8. Brom teaches Eragon to (**read, sing**), another skill he had lacked
9. Saphira makes Brom's body eternal by encasing it in a huge (**hill, diamond**).
10. Ajihad's men insist on examining Murtagh's (**baggage, mind**), but he refuses to allow them.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with the names of characters from the list below. Place the letter of each response in the blanks provided at left.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| ___ 1. Eragon's second guide; a mysterious stranger | A. Katrina |
| ___ 2. Eragon's foster father, his uncle | B. Varden |
| ___ 3. Sloan's daughter, in love with Roran | C. Shades |
| ___ 4. the mean, stingy butcher | D. Sloan |
| ___ 5. Eragon's horse | E. Eragon |
| ___ 6. the evil creatures that can only be killed by piercing their hearts | F. Cadoc |
| ___ 7. the King's dragon hunters | G. Murtagh |
| ___ 8. Eragon's cousin | H. Roran |
| ___ 9. the rebel group | I. Ra'zac |
| ___ 10. the novel's hero, an icon for the ages | J. Garrow |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. the silvery mark on Eragon's palm
2. Eragon's name
3. the odd blue "stone"
4. the ruby
5. hatchlings

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the novel's theme or main idea.
2. *Eragon* made several best-seller lists. Explain its tremendous appeal.
3. Describe how Eragon changes as he experiences the events described in the novel.
4. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and resolution.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Q | 6. O | 11. M | 16. K |
| 2. J | 7. N | 12. A | 17. D |
| 3. H | 8. R | 13. P | 18. F |
| 4. T | 9. S | 14. G | 19. C |
| 5. I | 10. B | 15. E | 20. L |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. I | 6. E |
| 2. F | 7. G |
| 3. H | 8. C |
| 4. A | 9. B |
| 5. D | 10. J |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. Brom gives Eragon a magnificent sword called Zar'roc. The weapon belonged to the Rider Morzan. The sword shows that Eragon is part of a long, complicated tradition.
2. Brom functions as Eragon's teacher, surrogate father, and advisor. A former Rider, he is also a role model.
3. People who know your real name have power over you. The Shade, for instance, tries to get Eragon to reveal his real name to control him. This shows the power of identity.
4. Dragons are at the heart of the novel. Eragon's name is the same as the word "dragon" with one letter changed; his partner is the dragon Saphira. No doubt, this is because dragons exert a powerful pull on the imagination.
5. The scar on Eragon's palm, made by Saphira, indelibly marks him as the chosen one, the anointed one. This leads readers to expect great things from him as an icon and heroic leader.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| 1. fifteen | 6. acid |
| 2. Riders | 7. Evan |
| 3. humor | 8. read |
| 4. magic | 9. diamond |
| 5. language | 10. mind |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

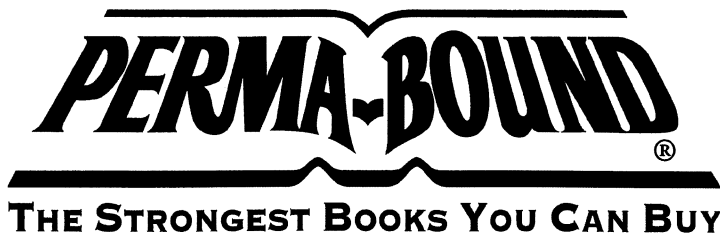
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. C |
| 2. J | 7. I |
| 3. A | 8. H |
| 4. D | 9. B |
| 5. F | 10. E |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. The silvery mark on Eragon's palm, made by Saphira, indelibly marks him as the chosen one, the anointed one. This leads readers to expect great things from him as an icon and heroic leader.
2. Eragon's name is very similar to the word "dragon," with only one letter off. This shows his link to the Dragons Riders and to Saphira.
3. The odd blue "stone" is Saphira's egg. It is a top priority in the kingdom, because both people and elves are willing to sacrifice their lives to protect it.
4. The ruby the size of a small egg forms part of Eragon's sword. It reveals the sword's great value.
5. "Hatchling" is the label that Saphira assigns to Eragon. She is saying that he is a mere baby struggling into the world. Even though Saphira is younger than Eragon in years, she is far older in wisdom.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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