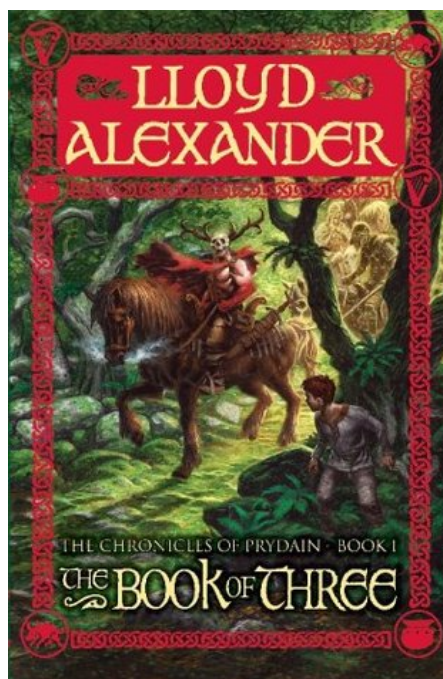




The Book of Three

Lloyd Alexander

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Taran wanted to be a hero, and looking after a pig wasn't exactly heroic, even though Hen Wen was an oracular pig. But the day that Hen Wen vanished, Taran was led into an enchanting and perilous world. With his band of followers, he confronted the Horned King and his terrible Cauldron-Born. These were the forces of evil, and only Hen Wen knew the secret of keeping the kingdom of Prydain safe from them. But who would find her first?

The Book of Three Details

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Author : Lloyd Alexander

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From Reader Review The Book of Three for online ebook

Ryen says

I really liked this book but I liked it even more because I got to read it with my dad.

Daniel says

Kazimo 3.5/5

Jos jedna od knjiga za koju mi je zao sto je nisam citao kada sam bio jedno 20tak godina mladji. Odlicno napisano i na momente mracno, sa finim likovima. prica je predvidiva al sobzirom od kada je to se moze oprostiti. Brzo se cita i ostavlja apetit za vise.

Mada mi je cudno da prva knjiga u fantastijskom serijalu ima samo 160 strana. Danas tako nesto ne bi pilo vođu :P

[Name Redacted] says

A childhood favorite which remains one of the most wonderful books I've ever read.

Part of what makes it so engaging is the unconventional nature of the protagonists, all of whom are defined as much by the faults as by their virtues: Taran, far from being a "Marty Stu", is infuriatingly impetuous, hotheaded, and stubborn (a character so well-defined that until others pointed it out, i never noticed that his appearance was never described); Eilonwy, far from being a "Mary Sue", is scatterbrained, tempermental, and acid-tongued; Gurgi, far from being a poor-man's Gollum, channels the ancient myth of the Gruagach mingled with Enkidu and is trapped between man and beast, unable to truly relate to either; Fflewddur Fflam is addicted to exaggeration and a near-failure at his chosen profession; Doli is foul-tempered and sarcastic; so are all the heroes and so we feel them fully-developed people in their own right rather than simple author (or reader) self-insertion/wish-fulfillment. We follow them in their adventures because we care about them and rejoice as they succeed despite their faults.

Ashley says

The Book of Three is not the most impressive book on first reading, even despite there being some things that set it apart, first and foremost its Welsh-inspired settings and characters of myth and legend. Mostly, it seemed a bit like a Tolkien clone with a plot barely even trying to be anything more: Collecting the group of adventurers. The beyond evil bad guy. Swords and sorcery, kings and princesses and princes. Wizards who commune with animals.

Right away *The Book of Three* did demonstrate a contradictory and rather cheeky sense of humor, with the main quest (at least for our main character, Taran) being a search for his white pig, Hen Wen, rather than the

defeat of some evil lord or other (although that is a side benefit for Taran). Taran is an Assistant Pig-Keeper (a title that will follow him with persistence all the way through book five and beyond). It took me an embarrassingly long time to realize that Hen Wen wasn't just any old pig that evil beings wanted to kidnap. She is an Oracular Pig--she can tell the future. So yeah, let's rescue her.

On his quest, Taran picks up many companions (and this is the bit that felt most like Tolkien): Gwydion, the Prince of Don, a warrior who looks very unlike the royalty he is; the bard Fflewddur Fflam, a former king who 'gave all that up', and whose harp has strings that break whenever he stretches the truth (which is quite a lot); Gurgi, the strange beast that is not an animal nor yet a man, who speaks in the third person and has obsessive tendencies about food and such (Gurgi especially felt like a Gollum clone to me at first, though he distinguishes himself--not necessarily for the better--pretty quickly after the first book); Doli the Dwarf, the obligatory member of the fair folk, who complains while doing anything; and of course, the Princess Eilonwy, who is a complete delight from the first moment we meet her. She's probably the best thing that Lloyd Alexander ever created.

This is very much children's literature, and the first book is the roughest of the five. Alexander has a tendency to give his characters one or two traits and have them stick to them like mad, but luckily Taran and Eilonwy especially are wonderfully fleshed out. In fact, after this book, Taran's inner journey and growing characterization is the highlight of the series. The ending is also pretty sudden and felt rather convenient. No idea why it's called *The Book of Three*, as that titular book--owned by the enchanter, Dallben, who is also Taran's guardian--actually gets more focus in future volumes than it does here.

So, not the best beginning of the series, with as much predictable fantasy cliché usage as there is turning of those clichés on their heads, and as much cutesy-wutesy character stuff as there is genuinely insightful inner development. I definitely recommend reading further in the series if you liked this one even in the slightest.

[3.5 stars]

Aj the Ravenous Reader says

The Chronicles of Prydain is a classic fantasy adventure that does what great classics, fantasies and adventures do to readers- make them love them. Who says classics cannot be as fun as Percy Jackson series? :)

Alana says

Whenever I'm at my parents' home, surrounded by the books of my childhood, I will inevitably pick one up and read. This time, I selected the first of Lloyd Alexander's Prydain Chronicles: *The Book of Three*. If you haven't read Lloyd Alexander at all, then I feel terribly sorry for your sad and empty childhood.

The basic plot should seem quite familiar: a peaceful land threatened by evil and the people who must band together to save it. It's the telling of the story that really makes it unique, though. The Prydain Chronicles consist of five books with an epic fantasy storyline, heavily modeled upon Welsh lore. The first book in the series is *The Book of Three*, where we are introduced to our key players and get our first taste of the threat to Prydain. The dark lord Arawn is mustering forces in his kingdom of Annuvin, led by his champion the Horned King. For years the Sons of Don, who rule Prydain, have kept Arawn in check, but nevertheless, Arawn appears to be making movements to start a war.

Taran is a young man, hungry for adventure and excitement, though he spends his days working on the farm of *Caer Dallben*. Of course, it isn't quite a normal farm -- among the animals is *Hen Wen* (an oracular pig of great fame and importance, though Taran has seen no evidence of her powers) and the owner of the farm is *Dallben* (a scholar and wizard who is over three hundred years old). Still, Taran wishes to learn swordplay and fight like his hero, *Prince Gwydion*. When he longs for a title and destiny, *Coll* (a middle aged farmer that is clearly more than he appears to be) names Taran "Assistant Pig Keeper." So when a disturbance causes the animals to flee and *Hen Wen* to escape, Taran feels responsible and so he runs after her. Almost immediately, Taran discovers that the animals fled because the *Horned King* is near and Taran becomes injured. He wakes up to find his hero, *Prince Gwydion*, caring for his injury. *Gwydion* had been traveling to learn something from *Hen Wen*, and so he joins Taran in his search for the pig.

As they search, we meet several important characters along the way. *Gurgi*, a half-animal/half-human creature, tells them that he saw *Hen Wen* being pursued by the *Horned King*. After being captured by some of *Arawn's* fearsome *Cauldron-Born* (soulless warriors created from the dead), they meet the evil enchantress *Queen Achren*, who offers *Gwydion* the chance to join her and with her help, rule *Prydain* and overthrow *Arawn*. When he refuses, she throws him and Taran into separate dungeon cells. Taran then meets *Princess Eilonwy*, a young enchantress of the *House of Llyr* who is supposed to be learning from her Aunt *Achren* (though *Eilonwy* is not convinced that they're related). *Eilonwy* helps Taran escape and also manages to free "his companion in the other cell," though once they escape and the castle has somehow collapsed, killing everyone still inside (which we later learn is due to *Eilonwy's* removing a particular sword of power from the castle as they fled), it's discovered that the man *Eilonwy* rescued from the other cell is not *Gwydion*. He is *Fflewddur Fflam*, a king who has given up his kingdom to be an unofficial bard, though he owes his talent to his magic harp, whose strings snap when *Fflewddur* bends the truth -- which is quite often. Believing that *Gwydion* must be dead, Taran takes it upon himself to travel to *Caer Dathyl* to warn the *House of Don*, but he is not alone, as *Gurgi*, *Eilonwy* and *Fflewddur* (not to mention *Gwydion's* very wise horse *Melyngar*) insist on accompanying him. After a chance meeting with *Medwyn*, a healer who protects animals, and an encounter with the *Fair Folk* adds a dwarf named *Doli* (who cannot turn invisible, unlike the rest of his family, to his intense irritation) to their party, they ultimately must fight and stand against the *Horned King*.

Not to worry -- we're just at the beginning of the story, so all ends well (*Hen Wen* is found! *Gwydion* isn't dead! The *Horned King* is defeated!), but it's clear that there is real danger afoot that will enter into future books. I challenge you to try and not fall in love with Taran, a very real young man with a good heart who gets the adventure he wants, yet still comes to understand the importance of home and peace. He learns and matures through lots of errors, but is also capable of making the right decision in the face of pressure. He ultimately prevails in this first challenge with the help of his traveling companions. As with all *Lloyd Alexander* novels, the best part is the sense of comedy and whimsy. *Eilonwy* talks a great deal and is quick to take Taran down a few notches whenever he's too uptight. As a princess with red-gold hair, it's not hard to understand why this redhead always loved her, but she is a charming and outspoken girl, an excellent role model for young ladies, as she never shies away from a fight and always speaks her mind. *Fflewddur* is charming as he repeatedly exaggerates, causing harp strings to snap. And *Gurgi*, well... *Gurgi* is a bit annoying, but he means well, so the reader, like Taran, ultimately decides that *Gurgi* isn't so bad.

As a kid, I loved these books. They're notable in my past as being responsible for my first (and only) request for an extension on a paper. In sixth grade, I asked for a single day extension on a book report, which was granted, as I was writing about the whole series and not just one book. I rather wish I still had that paper, as I'd be curious to read my initial impressions. I'm sure it touched on my elementary understanding of Welsh mythology, but I seem to remember a lot of summarizing of the books... kind of similar to this. Hm.

So if you know a young reader aged 10-12 and they're not quite ready for *Tolkien* or other, similar fantasy novels, you might point them in *Alexander's* direction. A bit of a warning for the kiddies, though: there's frequent violence and people do get hurt. Also a word of warning to parents: if you buy the first book, you might as well just buy the whole series for your kid, as s/he will certainly want to keep reading about Taran,

Eilonwy, and their friends. When they've finished those, you can then start buying the rest of Alexander's oeuvre. He wrote many gems (my favorite series being, of course, the Vesper Holly books) and frequently played with mythology. He's a funny and charming writer and whether the reader is young or old, I think everyone can find something compelling and delightful about this series.

Wayland Smith says

I don't know when I first read this. When I was a kid, this was one of the first fantasy series I branched out into after Lord of the Rings and Chronicles of Narnia. Based on Welsh legend but with some creative twists from the writer, it's a classic series.

Taran is your typical (even stereotypical) bored farm boy. Of course, he dreams of adventure while he does chores on the small farm of Caer Dallben. But it isn't exactly a normal farm. Coll the blacksmith teaches him farming and even, as the story starts, basic blacksmithing. When Taran complains of wanting to be something more, he gets the title of Assistant Pig Keeper. But Hen Wen, the white pig, is also not normal, having the gift of prophecy. When the pig escapes, Taran chases her, and ends up in a lot of odd adventures, meeting a bard, a princess, and whatever the heck Gurgi is.

Eventually, they find their way home, save the pig, and learn there's a lot more going on than Taran suspected. It's a good startup to a fantasy series. It's called juvenile fiction, and I could see it for younger readers, but there's a simple charm about it that I still enjoyed on this reread.

Xime García says

Desde que supe que *The Black Cauldron* estaba basado en una saga de libros de fantasía épica infantil, SUPE que debía leerlos. Esto pasó hace ya un par de años, así que la espera por leerlos fue larga y esperanzadora. Nunca pensé que los terminaría comprando y teniendo en físico.

Muchos acusan al libro de ser una copia para niños de *The Lord of The Rings*. Si bien veo las similitudes, hay que dejar en claro que son dos sagas completamente distintas. Una utiliza un lenguaje arcaico y pretende mostrar una alegoría del cristianismo, con el pecado por un lado y la lucha contra el mismo por el otro. La otra saga busca simplemente entretener, con palabras sencillas, un humor gracioso (que, a pesar de haber pasado alrededor de sesenta años, sigue siendo inteligente) y personajes que serían más identificables para los niños. Todo bien con *The Hobbit*, pero no me parece una lectura adecuada para un niño, preferiría darle de leer Narnia o estos libros.

Así que, sí, es de esas sagas de libros que comparten un mundo muy parecido al de *The Lord of the Rings*, con magos, reinos, guerreros, príncipes. Sin embargo, nuestro protagonista es Taran, un chico de 13 años (o al menos la edad se supone) que quiere convertirse en héroe, pero que no es más que un Asistente Porquero, que debe cuidar de Hen Wen, una cerdita (sí, una cerdita) oráculo (sí, leyeron bien, una cerdita oráculo). Por supuesto que el mal se desata, la cerdita se pierde, y Taran, con su escasa edad y sus pocos conocimientos del mundo, se larga a buscarla por toda Prydain. En el camino se topará con Gwydion, príncipe de Caer Dathyl (que no aparece en la película de Disney y no sé por qué), Fflewddur Fflame, un bardo que no toca muy bien, Gurgi, una criatura que solo pide *crunchings and munchings*, Doli, un enano un tanto quejoso, y Eilonwy, sin duda la estrella de la noche.

La narración es simple, desde el punto de vista de Taran, quien se deja sorprender por todo. Los diálogos los encontré ingeniosos, en especial los de Eilonwy; la personalidad de cada personaje se nota bien a través de sus palabras, y me parece que esa es la característica mejor desarrollada del libro. Tiene sus cosas, sin embargo: a Alexander le gustaba mucho la palabra "*plunge*", que de tanto leerla ya la puedo usar en un lenguaje cotidiano más o menos, y que, después de tanta espera, le había puesto muchas expectativas al libro. **Me habría gustado mucho ponerle cinco estrellas, pero se queda corto en algo, no sé en qué.** Eso no quita que tengo muchas ganas de leer los siguientes.

Me alegra por un lado que el protagonista sea un niño que va a ir creciendo a lo largo de los libros. Una de las mejores cosas que puede hacer una saga es dejar al lector crecer con sus personajes. No es determinante, obvio, pero es un factor que a mí me gusta mucho. Se dejaron muchas puertas abiertas en este primer libro, que espero pronto dilucidar en los siguientes.

Recomendado! Una lectura fresca, tierna, tal vez un poco más de lo mismo ya conocido (excepto por lo de la cerdita oráculo, en serio), pero no por eso menos valioso.

Terence says

For some reason, I've had a hankering to reread these books for a few months. A yen I gave in to this weekend when I checked out a Science Fiction Book Club omnibus edition of all 5 novels and a collection of short stories (the latter of which, I haven't read).

Having read *The Book of Three*, I can see where my moral compass may have begun to form. I first read these books in sixth grade as an extracurricular project, and then made a filmstrip of the final book, *The High King* (yes, a "filmstrip" - for the young'uns out there, think PowerPoint presentation without the laptop :-). The characters are honorable, kind & loyal to their friends, and they fight only when they must.

Even looking at it today with a sadly more jaundiced eye, I enjoy reading it, and am happily plowing through *The Black Cauldron*, book two.

Bryce Wilson says

Blast From The Past Year Zero:

Hooboy. I have conflicted feelings about the book, and my feelings about those conflicted feelings are also conflicted. So there's that.

To make a long story short I loved this series when I was kid, I needed to pick up a gift for my nephew who is apparently Mini-Me, so I grabbed him the first couple of books in this series. Figured I'd give him something better to read than the Eragon type crap he's reading now. Of course I couldn't resist but take a look at them first, after all it's been about ten years since I've read these things.

I was both satisfied and disappointed. To get the bad out of the way what my twelve year old self didn't notice is that Lloyd Alexander is not a particularly graceful writer. One could even call him clunky. If one was cruel one could say that he lays on exposition like it's fucking mortar. Also it's pretty clear now that

Alexander is basically doing Tolkien for kids, right down to the grotesque man creature with a panache for talking in the third person, a wise mentor who "falls into darkness" only to come out with a greater understanding of the world and Olde English mythology. The characters who once lived in my mind now come off as pretty flat and the quest that once seemed so important is now kind of pat. Some of these things would deepen as the series went on, some wouldn't.

That said, what still holds this above the crap mill of JK Rowling wannabes that passes as young adult fantasy literature today, is the fact that there is a real imagination burning beneath this thing. He didn't write it because that's where the money is, he wrote it because he felt he had too. Also I have to love the fact that someone apparently told Lloyd Alexander that the purpose of Young Adult literature is to scare the shit out of young adults. The main antagonist The Horned King, goes around wearing a human skull his arms literally stained red from blood, and is introduced burning men alive inside wicker baskets.

I'm always going to have an affection for these books, as far as I can recall they are the first ones that made me write. So I owe my life of poverty and degradation to Mr. Alexander at least in part. Still I couldn't help but be a bit disappointed. Was I unfair? It is after all a children's book, the point of which is not to confuse the shit out of children.

Yeah I probably was unfair, but what can I say? You always expect more from the one's you love.

Paul Christensen says

Lloyd Alexander to Welsh tradition
As Tolkien's Germanic: noble mission.

But worse than 'The Hobbit' - please explain?
Because the prose style's more mundane.

The rest of the series, though, remember,
Only gets better, fanning the embers

Fiercer and brighter in later books;
From *The Black Cauldron* onwards, you're hooked.

Jon says

4 stars

Lyndz says

Kids who cannot understand or don't have the patience for the Lord of the Rings but who want to read fantasy novels may enjoy this.
As for me, if I wanted to read Fellowship of the Ring I would have just read it. I didn't like this book at all,

there were too many obvious similarities to the Lord of the Rings and I just kept becoming more and more irritated with the parallels as the book progressed.

(ahemmm... *fake cough* blatant ripoff *end fake cough*)

Sorry to my friends that love it, but I just could not get into it. At least I finished it though, I deserve a cookie for that at least.

Cathy says

Great book. I think this is the first time I've read Lloyd Alexander, although I can't believe that's true. As a parent, I would like to put the main character, Taran in the corner quite a bit, but he's a boy that likes danger. It seems like the adults treat him like an adult way too easily, even though he's probably twelve years old, if that. I like the fantasy aspects of the book, and I like that the fantastical creatures aren't all happy and tra-la-lally (not a word, I know). The book is quite dark in spots, so I might recommend it for people who like Harry Potter, but probably not those who like Ella Enchanted. :)

Madeline says

Back in the days before Harry Potter, I was too young to get through Tolkien and wasn't interested in The Chronicles of Narnia - fortunately, I had The Chronicles of Prydain.

The series (there are five books in all) takes place in a setting similar to Wales in the Middle Ages. The main character is an assistant pig-keeper named Taran - the reason there's a need for both a pig-keeper and an assistant is because the pig in question can predict the future. The books are full of witches, magic swords, evil kings, and zombie armies. (I'm not joking - Taran and his friends have to fight off an army called the Cauldron Born, which are magically reanimated corpses.)

I don't mind saying that Taran was probably my first literary crush back in 4th grade. He's not the typical hero at the start of the series - he's clumsy, impulsive, and kind of a dork - and by the time the series end he's matured a lot and is totally hot. Just thought I'd share that.

By the way, Disney made an animated version of The Black Cauldron a while ago that I was unfortunate enough to see. Some advice: don't see it. Don't buy it for a child. Write angry letters to the Disney Corporation complaining about how they butchered Lloyd Alexander's story in every possible way. Just don't watch it. Thank you.

Karl Marx S.T. says

I have often heard about the Chronicles of Prydain as it said to set standards of excellence in fantasy for children's literature. Honestly, I really wanted to read fantasy books from the past for it evoke a sentimental feeling in me, maybe because of it written in the year of 1964? For I believe that fantasy from the past (The Lord of the Rings, The Chronicles of Narnia, etc...) are more original for they are less influence by technology and just based on pure thoughts, humble opinions that makes heroic deeds much more believable and rooting, the quality of its magic and adventure is much grounded which makes it somehow much more possible to happen. Its wisdom is not totally old-fashioned but has a sentimental quality in it for it is picked from troubled times. And that's how I've decided to read about the land of Prydain.

In The Book of Three --the first of the five books in the series-- we are introduced to Taran, an assistant pig

keeper who grumbles on just how he lives his life and yearns to go into battle and search for an adventure like his hero, Prince Gwydion. An unfortunate incident I wouldn't spoil makes the pig, Hen Wen that Tarran keeps escapes from her pen and thus the adventure of the just pig-keeper begins. He starts his journey together by meeting an unexpectedly companion he yearns to meet, and then starts a new with a strange assortment of companions on a dangerous mission to save his beloved land of Prydain (this part reminds me of the Final Fantasy series for its recruiting allies, though this would remind me that the latter doesn't own the concept). At times, Taran irritates me by his clumsiness and finds it as his necessary weakness, which makes me care for him through his adventure. He is also carefully illustrated by the author for sometimes when he tries to act sincere and heroic; he is suddenly mocked by his companions which I think is funny and gives the novel a jolly atmosphere even though in times of impending troubles. But I'll conclude that is Taran's way of coping with the situation, he knows he isn't capable, but to act as if can somehow lift the situation. Facing the evil leader who threatens the peace of Prydain; makes me wonder how Tarran could have defeated such powerful creature. And I wouldn't want to read something far-fetched and contrive. But that aspect is the one that what makes the book unpredictable. The characters fragility makes you care for them until the end. All of them are carefully described and characterized. I can't recall if I was depressed while reading this one, but I find myself on the verge of tears as I reached the end. I am very sentimental but it is not often and is rare for a book to make me cry.

I really can't put a finger on any particular part, aspect or scene of the book that makes it special, I guess the book as a whole is what I should be referring. After I've finished this one I had to read the next book to see what happened. Not that the first book can't stand alone, it is simply because of the fact that it's too exciting and compelling that I just wanted to know what's next.

I recommended this not just for fantasy readers but for everyone who wants to read something entertaining in a short sweep, for its wisdom and sense of heroism. The prose is easy to read and the story flows smoothly and fast that makes it much readable. It can also be classified as a coming-of-age story for after the adventure, Tarran learns of his growth and maturity and what quality he admires for his hero, he unconsciously possessed. And that is something far more rewarding for the reader as Tarran accomplished. The book contains everything a great book should have, great adventure, foreboding danger, sense of evil, and love and death.

There are books you feel warm that stays with you and never be forgotten and The Book of Three is one for me. I highly recommend it to everyone.

Opening Sentence: Taran wanted to make a sword; but Coll, charged with the practical side of his education, decided on horseshoes.

Ending Sentence: "Hwoinch!" said Hen Wen.

.

Luffy says

I have very little to say on this book and why I gave it 5 stars. I read it in the past. A re read has revealed many deft touches that the author has meant us readers to discover at our leisure. The book has a boldfaced naivety about it. I enjoyed it from start to finish. I regret so few people will want to give it a chance. I'm thinking of going through the entire series. Ta.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Book of Three (The Chronicles of Prydain, #1), Lloyd Alexander

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Anthony Ryan says

This is really where it all began for me. Over three decades ago this book set me on the path to a lifelong love of, and later career, in fantasy fiction. Between the ages of ten and thirteen I must have read this book six times or more, along with all the others in the series. Alexander's blend of Welsh legend and modern fantasy tropes is both enchanting and compelling and the adventures of Taran, orphan and assistant pig-keeper, are a truly classic example of the hero's journey from boy to man. If there are any young people in your life in need of an addiction that won't see them in rehab one day, this is an excellent first fix.

Jason Koivu says

The Book of Three is one of those classic fantasy novels you see on "Top ____" lists and the shelves of used bookshops with a fantasy section of any redeeming value. However, it doesn't rank up there with the best of the bunch and you don't hear people raving about it. I needed to find out what was up with this little book and so I did.

It's a fun, mostly-light fantasy adventure about a headstrong boy who wants to live life, not wallow in the wake of a blacksmith or spend his days as an assistant pig keeper. He gets more than his wish in a fast-paced, action-packed journey that pits him and his new friends in a battle with the land's greatest evil.

The Book of Three is indeed fun, as well as interesting for its take on Welsh myth. It is however a little more silly than I care for these days. It treads too much on gags, like a toady's repetitive speech pattern and a bard's truth-detecting instrument that breaks a string whenever he lies. He must break nearly ten strings throughout this book and such a short book is just not long enough to sustain that kind of repetition. One last quibble, the only female figure in the book is annoying. Everything that comes out of her mouth sounds like "I told you so!" and that sucks.

Right now I'm up in the air about continuing on with the Chronicles of Prydain series, but I've wanted to read this book for as long as I can remember and I'm glad I did.

