

BookReport Guide:

Alanna: The First Adventure by Tamora Pierce



How to Use This Guide:

- Briefly read the headings in this Guide to review the elements of a book report.
- Read any handouts or guidelines from your child's teacher about the book report or book review assignment.
- Using your understanding of the assignment requirements, select and ask your child relevant questions from this Guide to draw out responses from your child.
- Encourage your child to write down or type their responses, even if they are incomplete. These responses can act as an outline for the book report or even the initial draft text.
- This draft or outline can now be expanded with refinement of incomplete thoughts, quotes from the text (with cited page numbers), and/or additional thoughts from your child.
- Discuss how they can edit or simply rearrange their written thoughts into the appropriate format for their assignment which will result in a completed and well-done project. This might be in essay form with paragraphs, short written responses on a handout or form, the filling-in of details in a graphic organizer or other original materials as provided or directed by your child's teacher.

TIP! Allow your child to talk out their partial or full answers to you first as you take quick notes. Your child can then convert the notes to complete sentences for their written responses.

TIP! If your child is a kinesthetic learner, have them move through a small space with smooth intention as they share their thoughts out loud, i.e. step forward, step back or step right, step left.

TIP! As you pick out the relevant questions for your child's assignment...feel free to combine questions, rephrase questions, and/or (best of all!) invent your own questions with your child.



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS BOOK:

Alanna: The First Adventure, is the first book of the “The Song of the Lioness” quartet. It was first published in 1983 and remains a very popular read to this day. Rather than a traditional single main plot-driven novel, this book can be seen as a progression of experiences over the three year period of training as a page as served by Alanna, a girl of nobility with a passionate and stubborn dream to be a knight.

QUICK STORY SUMMARY:

In the magical and feudal lands of Tortall, Alanna really, really wants to be a knight. But girls aren't supposed to be knights. And certainly not **noble** girls. Disguising herself as a boy, ten-year-old Alanna faces the triumphs and challenges of the first three years of early knight training as a page in the Royal Court of Tortall. Along the way, she learns the nature of true friendship, begins training in weapons and knight's lore, accepts and uses her gift of healing magic, collects a sworn enemy or two, and earns more than a few knocks.

STORY ELEMENTS:

CHARACTERS

1. What are three traits that first come to your mind about Alanna?
2. Other important characters are the friends Alanna makes during the story. Name three of her friends and describe them in two to three sentences.

What is your evidence these three people are Alanna's friends? (Don't forget to include page numbers!)
3. Who her friends are says important things about Alanna as a person, and so do her enemies. Name two notable enemies she makes in this novel. How did they become her enemies? (Hint: One is a fellow page and the other is an adult.)
4. Alanna is 10 years old when the story starts and she disguises herself as a boy to start the eight years of training it takes to be a knight. At the end of the book, she has been mostly successful in keeping her secret and she is now almost 13 years old.

Besides getting older, do you think Alanna has changed as a person by the end of the book? Why or why not? What is your evidence (and on what page(s))?



5. Alanna is lying the whole time in this book since almost everyone thinks she is a boy in training to be a knight.

Is this admirable in her or not? Does she have other traits that are admirable or not admirable?

SETTING

1. Tortall is the fantasy world that author Tamora Pierce has created. What are at least three clues you have (and on what page(s) is your evidence) that Tortall is not our world?
2. If you had to describe Alanna's world, Tortall, to someone who has not read the book, what would you say in three sentences to give this person the best idea of what Tortall is like as a place?
3. A lot of the action takes place at the Royal Court of Tortall at King Roald's palace in the capital city of Corus.

Please name and describe some of the places Alanna works, visits, studies, and lives in during her training and what she does there. Use one or two sentences for each place.

STORY OR PLOT

1. Since this book is about Alanna's adventures as a page in training over several years, the story is more a collection of events that help shape Alanna as she grows up rather than one main plot.

Examples of these events or adventures include: how she deals with her first enemy, Ralon of Malven; the way her friendship with George, King of Thieves, unfolds; how she finds and claims an important sword for herself; the price and reward of finally using her gift of magical healing to save Prince Jonathan from the Sweating Sickness.

Pick one of these or another adventure and describe what happens and how this adventure or part of the story affects Alanna.

2. Several times Alanna has to make an important decision and then act on it, which profoundly changes the story and her life.

Describe one of these decisions to act and the consequences to Alanna, other characters, and the story.



THEME

1. Theme can be thought of as the story “behind” the story. So an action story might have a theme of ‘Good triumphs over evil’ if the events and characters support this idea or theme. *Alanna: The First Adventure* has several themes. For example, Alanna finally uses her Gift to heal as one of the adventures and so the theme might be “Not using your gifts or strengths is harmful”.

Pick one of the adventures in this book and share what you think a theme could be for that adventure.

2. If you were talking about this book to someone who hasn’t read it, what would you tell them overall story or theme “behind” the book is about?

STORY STRUCTURE:

BEGINNING

1. The first scene or event in this book is the conversation between 10-year old twins, Alanna and her brother Thom, after their father has refused to reconsider his decisions to send her to a convent for training as a lady and Thom to the royal palace for eight years of training to become a knight. Decisions that Alanna and Thom strongly disagree with since they both have different dreams for their lives then what their father has decided.

In your opinion what event or scene would mark the end of the beginning of the book and the beginning of the middle of the book and why? Briefly describe what happens between the first scene and the scene you picked.

2. How would you describe the beginning of the book overall? Is the problem clear to you? Can you describe it?

MIDDLE

1. In your opinion what scene would mark the end of the middle of the book and the beginning of the end of the book? Briefly describe what happens in each the scenes you have picked.
2. Has the story gotten more complicated? List three things that have happen in the story in the order they happened.
3. Did the middle of the book do a good job in making you excited, interested, angry, happy, or worried so that you wanted to read to the end?



END

1. In your own words, what is the ending of *Alanna: The First Adventure*?
2. Was the ending satisfactory to you? Do you feel it fit the whole book overall? Why or why not?

REVIEW OR PERSONAL RESPONSE:

FIRST REACTION

1. What was your first thought or feeling about the story after the first chapter or two?
2. Right after you finished *Alanna: The First Adventure*, did your feeling about the book match up to how you felt or thought at the beginning of the book?

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

1. What is your feeling now about the book and the adventures of the story overall after thinking it over, writing, and talking about it?
2. Do you think you could keep a secret as big as Alanna's for three whole years?
3. Do you think you could keep working so hard and for three full years for a dream like Alanna does?

THINKING RESPONSE

1. Now that you've read *Alanna: The First Adventure*, what worked for you as a reader?

Were there specific characters, settings, or experiences that you enjoyed or appreciated in some way? Use details from the book to support your answers and don't forget to note the page number(s).

2. How about the other way around, as a reader did anything about *Alanna: The First Adventure* not work for you?

Were there characters, events, or examples of writing that you felt were flawed or confusing or didn't work for you? Again, use details from the book to support your answers and don't forget to note the page number(s).



I RECOMMEND OR I DON'T RECOMMEND

1. Would you recommend this book to everyone? To certain people? Why or why not?
2. Would you be interested in reading the next book in this quartet *In the Hand of the Goddess*? Why or why not?

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS AUTHOR:

Tamora Pierce is a significant writer in the field of fantasy novels for middle school children and young adults. She has been writing since childhood, her first book was *Alanna: The First Adventure* in 1983, and she has published well over 25 novels. Most of her books are from one of her numerous series.

Tamora Pierce has contributed many terrific novels, original characters, and fully-realized worlds to the literary fields of children's literature and fantasy. However, her work is particularly notable for these three traits:

- Strong primary female characters
- Unique and richly detailed magical fantasy world-building
- Dynamic adventure plots involving lots of action and consequences

A current series is the "Beka Cooper" trilogy. The third book, *Mastiff*, is due out in 2011. Additions to the "The Circle Reforged" series are also expected in the next two years.

More about Tamora Pierce can be found at her official website: www.tamora-pierce.com and at her Wikipedia encyclopedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamora_Pierce

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