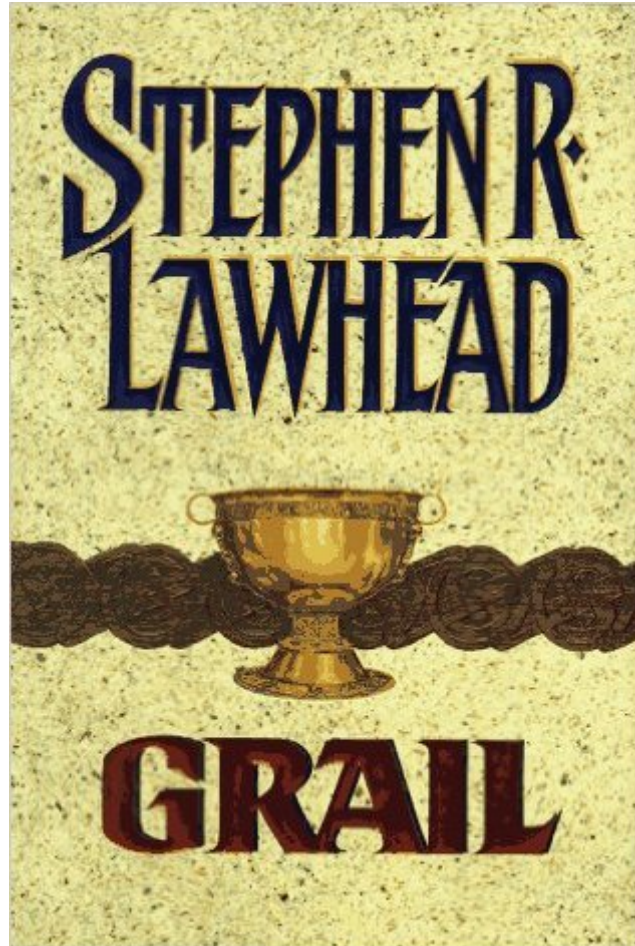


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Grail: Book Five In The Pendragon Cycle



Synopsis

When plague comes to Britain, King Arthur, awed by the healing power of the Grail, is determined to build a shrine for the holy cup, but one of Arthur's most trusted men kidnaps Arthur's queen and steals the Grail, revealing the diabolical plot of the evil Morgian, Queen of Air and Darkness. 35,000 first printing."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stephan Lawhead all but ignores the Grail legend in his first three books of the Pendragon Cycle, and limits its presence in Pendragon. It would seem that he set it aside for this faithful telling from the perspective of one of Arthur's Guardians of the Grail. Consistent with the other books, Lawhead finds new voices to tell this tale using Gwalchavad as the principle storyteller and Morgian as an occasional foil to him. Many fans of the first three books will not care for this one. It is steeped in religious context that the other books only alluded to. This is actually part of Lawhead's gift. If the reader takes the time to understand the perspective of the storyteller, he will understand Lawhead's need to cloak it in religious mysticism. This book is an excellent re-telling of Grail legend, and a wonderful use of the characters that Lawhead has given life to in his Pendragon cycle. It seems a shame that this saga should ever come to an end.

This is one of my favorite Pendragon books, perhaps because it was so different. First of all, it was all in the viewpoint of Gwalchavad, with little inserts from Morgian in between, believe it or not. I loved that. Lawhead did pure, humble Gwalchavad wonderfully; immediately the reader likes him.

Hearing from Morgian was very revealing, both to her character and to her plot. It enabled some of her schemes to be discovered by the reader, but never by the Cymbrogi. I actually began to understand her and her motives. (The statement about Avallach's favoritism had me almost sympathetic. Quite moving.) Also, the atmosphere was very dreamlike to the point of being surreal. When the whole episode is finished, reality and sunshine break through once more. Morgian's veil of fear is tangible. Thirdly, the adventure is impeccable. It is suspenseful, scary, and satisfying. Llenlleawg's betrayal added a whole new aspect to the fear of Morgian. Nothing is safe from her. He was one of my favorites in past books, which made it worse. The power of evil is revealed through him. Fourthly, Merlin is back to his old self. He was beginning to get rather prudish in former books. I love the part where he slams his stick on the ground and yells at Arthur. One more thing I liked, and this might be just me. Arthur had his troops go to confession and Mass beforehand. That reminded me of Joan of Arc. Spiritual health added credibility to their almost miraculous escape. I suppose I can see why some readers would not like this book as much, but it has definite unique appeal. A nice change!

Lawhead's Done It Again! It is truly the mark of a good author when a relatively long book series retains all of its brilliance and originality to the very end. Lawhead has accomplished this and more with his wondrous Pendragon Cycle. Grail is the 5th and final installment in the series (unless you include Avalon in the list). While I think that this is the weakest book of the series, it is still superb and certainly worth the read. The atmosphere of the book is very unique. Unlike the previous books in the series, the enemy is largely supernatural - a much more frightening enemy than the Picti, Angli, or Vandali. Morgian is definitely at her worst - and she even gets a few opportunities to narrate the story (a very peculiar twist.)! Really my only complaint about the book regards Lawhead's choice of characters. It seems that many of the major characters that were seen in Arthur and Pendragon have faded to the backdrop - replaced by relatively new characters. These characters are fine, but I would have rather seen more of characters like Bedwyr, Cai and Arthur.

Classic Lawhead, this book explores a more personal conflict that many will relate to: that of truth, trust, and betrayal. Grail demonstrates Lawhead's personal spiritual position, which brings some to fear and disgust. Yet do not attempt to read beyond the "Christian" theme, for that is exactly what the author wishes us NOT to do. Gwalchavad is you and me. He battles ultimately with the question of to whom he should submit. His passions and lust? His friends? His Pendragon? His God? The adventure is fast paced, do not doubt that. The new perspective of a new narrator is refreshing.

Lawhead will break your heart, make you jump for joy, make you hate the villain, and love the victor. That's what fantasy should be about. We all can find ourselves in one of the characters of this book. The question we must ask is, which one am I?

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