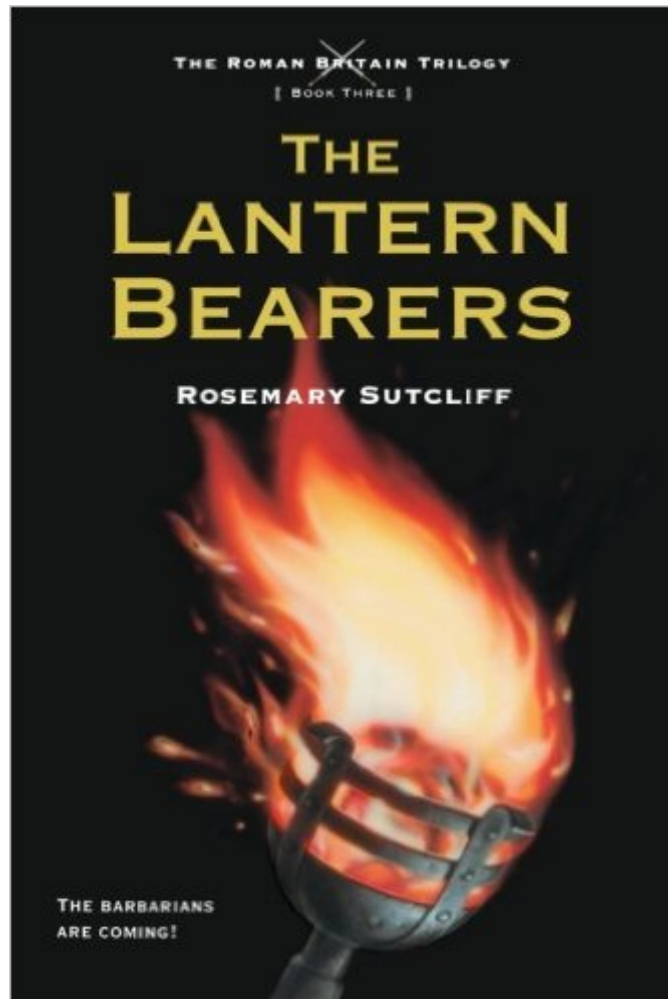


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The Lantern Bearers (The Roman Britain Trilogy)



Synopsis

The last of the Roman army have set sail and left Britain forever, abandoning it to civil war and the threat of a Saxon invasion. Aquila, a young Legionnaire, deserted his regiment to stay behind with his family, but his home and all that he loves are destroyed. Years of hardship and fighting follow, and in the end, there is only one thing left in Aquila's life—his thirst for revenge . . . The Lantern Bearers is the winner of the 1959 Carnegie Medal in Literature.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1210L (What's this?)

Series: The Roman Britain Trilogy (Book 3)

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (November 9, 2010)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (51 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 15 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Set in the brief Romano-Celtic twilight between the end of the Roman Empire and the creation of Anglo-Saxon Britain, this is the story of Aquila, a Roman soldier who chooses to stay among his adopted people. However, his world crashes to pieces when he and his sister are enslaved by the Saxons, their father slain and their farm destroyed. Aquila eventually escapes, but his sister, now married with a Saxon son, makes her own choice to stay with the invaders. Aquila is embittered and angry, and the remainder of the story is his redemption, helped by a kindly priest, his Celtic wife from an arranged marriage, and the Romano-British leader, Ambrosius, whose friend he becomes. I first read this book in my early teens, and it has stayed with me ever since. The themes of irreparable

loss, vengeance and redemption are quite adult, but not at such a level that adult or teen cannot appreciate them. Sutcliffe brilliantly captures the heroic twilight of the Dark Ages, and makes it utterly convincing. She also wrote a longer sequel called "Sword at Sunset" (use the out-of-print service) based on the Arthur legends - Aquila appears as a minor (older) character, Arthur appears as a young warrior Artos in "Lantern Bearers". Both books are highly recommended for adults, "The Lantern Bearers" for teens and adults.

This is a book that I have to force myself to read, despite the fact that I love it dearly. The first time that I ever read it I was reduced to tears several times and even now, almost twenty years later, I still have to steel myself before dipping into it again. This is a book about a lost world, the moments when the Roman Empire in the West flickered and died and the black cloak of the Dark Ages descended, almost swamping the light of civilisation. This is a book about the start of the fall of Roman Britain as it began to fall under the sway of the Saxon barbarians. This is a book about a small group of people who, as in the title, became lanternbearers, trying to keep alight the flame of civilisation as the darkness and chaos of the Dark Ages threatened to swamp Britain. It is not a cheerful book for obvious reasons, and as such is more for older children who are starting to look into darker literature. It is a book that deals in issues such as anger, despair, revenge, fortitude and resolution. It is also a book about loss, about what Britain lost when the English came, and speaking as a Welshman it has more than once reduced me to tears.

I brought this book with me a month ago for my first trip to London a month ago and reread it for likely the fourth time in 40 years under an oak tree in Hyde Park. Ranking along with *Flowers for Adonis* as one of Sutcliffe's most bleak but sweeping books, *The Lantern Bearers* features a classically great and complex hero who is a tough, thorny, quiet brooder caught between old and new worlds. As both the young romantic risking all to give his world one last blaze of hope and the bitter general fighting to hold back the enemy tide, Aquila is an engrossing study of a man trying to make sense of his duties to his families, friends, and ruler. The choices he is forced to make at the twilight of British-Roman England are heartbreaking but of a piece with the man and his world. Arguably the most complete of Sutcliffe's novels as she weaves the bits of recorded history into a tale that pulls together an important era for England, this a hard but rewarding novel. Full of great settings including the Roman lighthouse, Saxon war camp, British mountain stronghold, and various battlefields, the book also includes the dolphin ring that ties together a string of Sutcliffe's novels from early Roman Britain to Norman England as she highlights the many peoples who made England.

Most people know the drill already regarding Rosemary Sutcliff: she wrote beautiful, melancholy children's books on key moments in British dark ages history that are so complex and beautiful that they appeal to adults as well. As many reviewers have noted, "The Lantern Bearers" is just such a "children's" book, but will appeal to readers of any age who enjoy rousing tales based on both fact and legend. This book follows the adventures of a Roman soldier who decides to stay in Britain when the legions depart in the early 5th century. He is quickly captured and enslaved by the invading Saxons but manages to escape and join the Romano-British resistance to the Saxon onslaught. This is one of Sutcliff's finest--surpassed only by its adult-oriented sequel, "Sword At Sunset"--and her prose captures the sadness of seeing the end of an era. But like many of her books, it also has a message of redemption and hope and ends on an uplifting note. The action is gripping, the characters are three dimensional and interesting, and the historical detail is astounding. Highly highly recommended.

Wonderful story of Aquila, a young Roman cavalryman who chooses to remain in Britain after Rome recalls her armies to defend her crumbling frontiers. His friendship and loyalty to his sister is tested through captivity by the invading Saxons. Aquila joins the legendary leader Ambrosius in his fight to preserve the last dregs of Roman civilization in Britain against the invading Saxon barbarians. He meets the boy who becomes the even more legendary Arthur. This story is an excellent prequel to Sutcliff's best book: Sword At Sunset.

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