

Secrets of the Dragon Riders Table of Contents
With Essay Summaries

Introduction: Drawing Out the Dragons ~ James A. Owen

Here, There Be Dragons author James A. Owen introduces the book by explaining the value of stories, the resurgence of dragons' popularity, and why he owes Christopher Paolini dinner.

“Ten Things About Christopher Paolini” ~ Jeremy Owen

Author Jeremy Owens discusses the polarizing effect Christopher Paolini has on readers, and presents a tongue-in-cheek list of the ten reasons people hate him, and why they say more about the criticizer than Paolini.

“Riding the Dragon” ~ Tobias Druitt

Thirteen-year-old published author Tobias Druitt addresses the last group it's still okay to discriminate against—children—and how Christopher Paolini's membership in that group has influenced the responses of critics and of readers (himself included).

“Roran: The Reluctant Hero” ~ J. Fitzgerald McCurdy**

Author J. Fitzgerald McCurdy explains the proper way for critics to read literature (“in the spirit of the piece”), why Eragon's storyline in *Eldest* was such a disappointment, and why she believes Roran is the true hero of *Eldest*.

“The Magic of Anthropomorphic Animals” ~ Nancy Yi Fan*

Fifteen-year-old author Nancy Yi Fan compares Saphira to other anthropomorphic animals in literature, and shows why anthropomorphic animals remain such an enduring presence in stories: because of their ability to surprise, entertain, and teach.

“My Dragon, Myself” ~ Kelly McClymer**

Author Kelly McClymer examines the relationship between Eragon and Saphira, discussing the benefits and drawbacks of the bond between dragon and Rider and how together they may be able to become more than the sum of their parts.

“Eldest ≠ Wisest” ~ Susan Vaught**

Author Susan Vaught questions whether age really equals wisdom, comparing Eragon and Saphira to their older (and theoretically wiser) Rider and dragon pair, Oromis and Glaedr. While there is a wisdom that comes from experience, she says, in the Inheritance Cycle there is also another kind of wisdom, an instinctual wisdom that comes from the land, and from the heart.

“Q. How Does a Fifteen-Year-Old Do This?” ~ Carol Plum-Ucci

Author Carol Plum-Ucci uses Christopher Paolini's age and the world and characters he's created to discuss the writing process, Jungian archetypes, and the collective unconscious.

“The Modern-Day Perceval” ~ Joshua Pantalleresco**

Joshua Pantalleresco compares Eragon to Perceval, finding parallels between the two characters that enrich our understanding of both.

“It’s in His Character” ~ Jeremy Owen**

Author Jeremy Owen discusses different ways of interpreting Christopher Paolini’s Inheritance Cycle, and suggests that, while we may be able to draw broad conclusions about an author’s opinions by reading their work, we cannot truly know an author better by reading their work—but we can learn a lot about ourselves.

“The Thing About Elves . . .” ~ Gail Sidonie Sobat**

Author Gail Sidonie Sobat looks at the elves in the Inheritance Cycle, exploring the tradition of elves and fairies Christopher Paolini draws on as well as what makes Ellesmere’s elves uniquely Paolini’s own.

“How the Inheritance Cycle Differs From Fantasy Epics of the Past” ~ Ian Irvine**

Author Ian Irvine describes three distinct ages of storytelling—oral, written, and visual. The Inheritance Cycle, he says, belongs in the third: the way Paolini tells us Eragon’s story has more in common with fantasy film and RPG than it does the fantasy epics of the past.

While you don’t need to have read the Inheritance Cycle to appreciate most of the essays in this volume, pairing the essays with the text they cover will enrich their meaning.

* You only need to have read *Eragon* to understand or use this essay.

** You may need to have read the full series to understand or use this essay.