

Legendborn

by Tracey Deonn · Language: EN

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Overview

Bree Matthews, a sixteen-year-old Black girl, attends a residential program for high-achieving high school students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, hoping to escape the grief of her mother's recent death. On her first night, she witnesses a demon attack and discovers a secret society called the Legendborn, descendants of King Arthur's knights, who hunt these creatures. A mysterious Legendborn student, Selwyn Kane, attempts to erase Bree's memory, but his magic fails, instead unlocking a dormant power within her and fragmented memories of her mother's past connection to this magical world.

Determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's death, which she now suspects was not an accident, Bree infiltrates the Legendborn society. She navigates a world of ancient magic, courtly politics, and racial prejudice, all while grappling with her own burgeoning powers and a complicated relationship with Selwyn and the charismatic Arthurian heir, Nick Davis. As she delves deeper, Bree uncovers shocking truths about her lineage, the true nature of the Legendborn's magic, and a looming war that threatens both the magical and mundane worlds, ultimately redefining what it means to be a hero.

Key Takeaways

- Grief can be a powerful catalyst for discovering hidden strengths and truths within oneself.
- Challenging established power structures is essential for uncovering deeper, often uncomfortable, realities.
- Identity is complex, shaped by ancestry, personal experience, and the choices one makes, not just by inherited titles.
- The reinterpretation of classic myths can offer fresh, diverse perspectives on timeless struggles and heroism.
- Systemic racism can exist and thrive even within seemingly noble and ancient institutions.
- True power often lies in understanding and embracing one's unique heritage, even if it defies traditional expectations.
- Friendships and alliances can be forged in unexpected places during times of crisis and personal discovery.

Chapter Summaries

A Shadowed Beginning

Bree Matthews arrives at UNC for the Early College program, still reeling from her mother's sudden death. On her first night, she witnesses a demon attack and encounters the mysterious Legendborn, descendants of King Arthur's knights. When one of them, Selwyn Kane, attempts to erase her memory, his magic fails, instead awakening a dormant power within Bree and fragmented memories of her mother's past connection to this hidden world.

Unveiling the Legendborn

With her memory intact and new abilities surfacing, Bree realizes her mother's death was no accident. Determined to find answers, she infiltrates the Legendborn secret society, posing as a 'page' in their rigorous training program. She begins to learn about their ancient history, intricate magical system, and the strict hierarchy of the Arthurian bloodlines, all while seeking clues about her mother.

Training and Trials

Bree undergoes intense magical and physical training alongside other young Legendborn. She struggles to control her unique, unpredictable powers, which are unlike anything the society has seen. During this time, she forms complex relationships with Nick Davis, the charismatic current 'Arthur,' and Selwyn Kane, the enigmatic 'Merlin,' navigating their world of privilege and ancient duties.

Whispers of the Past

As Bree delves deeper into the Legendborn world, she uncovers more about her mother's past involvement and the true nature of the 'Scions' – those with direct magical lineage. She learns about the history of the Legendborn's power, the dangers they face, and begins to suspect a deeper conspiracy connecting her mother's death to the society's secrets.

The Rootcraft Revelation

Bree discovers her own unique magical lineage, known as Rootcraft, a powerful and ancient magic passed down through generations of Black women. This revelation challenges the established, predominantly white, Legendborn order, highlighting the systemic racism and historical suppression of other magical traditions within their society, and giving Bree new strength and purpose.

Confrontation and Betrayal

Armed with new knowledge and growing power, Bree confronts those she suspects are involved in her mother's death and the larger conspiracy within the Legendborn. She faces difficult choices, betrayals from unexpected sources, and the lines between allies and enemies blur as the threat of a looming magical war intensifies, putting everyone she cares about at risk.

The True Heir

In a climactic confrontation, Bree's full, extraordinary power is unleashed. She learns the shocking truth about her own identity and her profound connection to the Arthurian legend, revealing her as the true heir and challenging the very foundation of the Legendborn society. The battle leaves her with immense power and a new understanding of her destiny, but also with heartbreaking consequences.

Themes

- Grief and loss
- Identity and ancestry
- Systemic racism
- Reimagined mythology
- Power and privilege
- Secret societies

Notable Quotes

- "Grief is a house, and you can live there forever." — Bree reflects on her mother's death and the pervasive nature of her sorrow.
- "You are not a weapon. You are a person. And you are magic." — A moment of affirmation for Bree as she struggles with her identity and powers.
- "History isn't just what happened. It's also who gets to tell the story." — Bree realizes the Legendborn's version of history is incomplete and biased.
- "Sometimes, the only way to heal a wound is to rip it open again." — Bree contemplates the painful process of confronting her past and grief.
- "Magic isn't just something you do. It's something you are." — Bree comes to understand the intrinsic nature of her own unique abilities.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Legendborn about?

Legendborn follows Bree Matthews, a grieving Black teenager who discovers a secret society of King Arthur's descendants, the Legendborn, after witnessing a demon attack. She infiltrates their world to uncover the truth about her mother's death, revealing her own powerful magical lineage and challenging the society's prejudiced foundations and their version of history.

Is Legendborn worth reading?

Yes, 'Legendborn' is highly praised for its fresh, diverse take on Arthurian legend, its compelling protagonist, and its unflinching exploration of grief, identity, and systemic racism. It offers a

fast-paced plot, rich world-building, complex characters, and a powerful message, making it a standout in young adult fantasy.

How does Legendborn end?

Spoiler: Bree discovers she is not just a Scion but the true heir to Arthur's power, a 'Merlin-born' Scion, making her the next Arthur. She also learns that Nick is not the true Arthur, but rather a vessel for Arthur's spirit. The book ends with Bree embracing her power and preparing for the coming war, with Selwyn by her side, and Nick's fate uncertain.

Who should read Legendborn?

Readers who enjoy young adult fantasy, urban fantasy, and Arthurian retellings will find 'Legendborn' captivating. It's particularly appealing to those interested in stories with strong female protagonists, themes of racial justice, grief, and discovering one's true heritage and power against oppressive systems.

How long does it take to read Legendborn?

It typically takes approximately 8 to 10 hours to read 'Legendborn,' depending on individual reading speed. The book is around 500 pages long, offering a substantial and immersive reading experience.