

Towers of Midnight

by Brandon Sanderson · Language: EN

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Overview

Towers of Midnight is the thirteenth novel in Robert Jordan's epic fantasy series The Wheel of Time, completed by Brandon Sanderson from Jordan's extensive notes. The story continues the convergence of the series' major threads as the Last Battle, Tarmon Gai'don, approaches. Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, struggles to unite the fractured nations of the world while battling the madness and the taint on saidin, and he seeks to cleanse the Dark One's influence from the Pattern itself. Meanwhile, Perrin Aybara races to rescue his wife Faile from the Shaido, and in doing so must confront his own nature as a leader and a wolfbrother. Mat Cauthon, now married to the Empress of the Seanchan, Tuon, works to secure a truce with the Seanchan and to prepare for the inevitable conflict, all while navigating the political and military complexities of his new position.

The novel also focuses on Egwene al'Vere, the Amyrlin Seat of the rebel Aes Sedai, as she attempts to reunite the White Tower and prepare its sisters for the Last Battle. The book is a bridge between the earlier volumes and the final installment, A Memory of Light, and it resolves several long-running plotlines while setting the stage for the apocalyptic finale. The central argument of the book is that unity and cooperation among the disparate factions—Aes Sedai, Seanchan, Aiel, and the nations of the Westlands—are essential to stand against the Shadow. It also explores themes of leadership, sacrifice, and the nature of prophecy. Towers of Midnight matters because it is a pivotal turning point in one of the most ambitious fantasy series ever written, delivering major character arcs and setting the stage for the series' conclusion.

Key Takeaways

- The Last Battle requires the unification of all nations and factions, and personal grievances must be set aside for the greater good.
- Rand's plan to cleanse the Dark One's influence on the Pattern is risky and requires the cooperation of the Aes Sedai and the Choedan Kal.
- Perrin must embrace his role as a leader and a wolfbrother, learning to balance his human and wolf natures to rescue Faile and defeat the Shaido.
- Mat's marriage to Tuon and his role as Prince of the Ravens gives him a unique position to negotiate peace with the Seanchan, but he must earn Tuon's trust.
- Egwene's leadership as Amyrlin is tested as she works to reunite the White Tower and prepare the Aes Sedai for the Last Battle.

- The White Tower's internal divisions are healed, but the cost is high, and the Aes Sedai must accept new alliances, including with the Black Tower.
- The Pattern itself is fragile, and the actions of the ta'veren (Rand, Mat, and Perrin) have far-reaching consequences for the world.

Chapter Summaries

Prologue: The Last Battle

The prologue sets the stage for the coming conflict. It opens with a vision of the Last Battle, showing the forces of the Shadow gathering. It also introduces the concept of the 'Forsaken' and their plans, and it hints at the importance of the seals on the Dark One's prison. The prologue also shows Rand's growing madness and his determination to find a way to win the Last Battle without destroying the world.

Part 1: The Gathering Storm

This section follows Rand as he travels to the Aiel Waste to meet with the Wise Ones and the leaders of the Aiel. He seeks to unite the Aiel and to gain their support for his plan to cleanse the Dark One's taint. Meanwhile, Egwene is captured by the White Tower and is being held as a prisoner, but she continues to assert her authority as Amyrlin. Perrin is also on the move, tracking the Shaido who have taken Faile.

Part 2: The White Tower

Egwene's storyline is central here. She is imprisoned in the White Tower, but she uses her time to undermine the authority of Elaida, the current Amyrlin. She manages to communicate with her supporters and to plan her escape. Meanwhile, the White Tower is in chaos, with factions vying for power. Egwene's resilience and her ability to manipulate the situation are highlighted.

Part 3: The Wolf King

Perrin's quest to rescue Faile continues. He leads his forces through the wilderness, and he struggles with his wolfbrother abilities. He is also dealing with the presence of the Prophet Masema, who is causing trouble. Perrin must decide whether to use his wolf nature to gain an advantage, and he learns to accept his role as a leader of men and wolves.

Part 4: The Prince of the Ravens

Mat is in Ebou Dar with Tuon, the Seanchan Empress. He is trying to negotiate a peace treaty between the Seanchan and the Westlands, but Tuon is suspicious of his motives. Mat must prove his loyalty and his worth to Tuon, and he also has to deal with the threat of the gholam, a creature that is hunting him. This section also reveals more about the Seanchan culture and their views on channeling.

Part 5: The Cleansing

Rand's plan to cleanse the Dark One's taint on saidin comes to fruition. He uses the Choedan Kal, a powerful sa'angreal, to draw upon the True Power and the One Power to cleanse the taint. The process is dangerous and attracts the attention of the Forsaken, who try to stop him. The cleansing is successful, but it has a huge cost, and it changes the balance of power in the world.

Part 6: The Tower Reunited

Egwene manages to escape from the White Tower and to rally her supporters. She confronts Elaida and the other Aes Sedai, and she is able to depose Elaida and become the sole Amyrlin. She then begins the process of reuniting the White Tower, which has been split for years. This is a major victory for the forces of light, and it sets the stage for the Last Battle.

Part 7: The Last Hunt

The various storylines begin to converge. Perrin finally catches up to the Shaido and rescues Faile, but not without a great battle. Mat and Tuon come to an understanding, and they agree to work together. Rand, now cleansed of the taint, is more stable, and he begins to plan for the Last Battle. The book ends with the forces of light gathering for the final confrontation.

Themes

- Unity against darkness
- Leadership and sacrifice
- Identity and duality
- Prophecy and free will
- Redemption and renewal

Notable Quotes

- "The last battle is coming. The last battle is here." — A recurring phrase that underscores the urgency of the approaching conflict, spoken by various characters.
- "We come to the end of the age. The last battle is upon us." — A statement made by a character, likely a prophecy or a warning, emphasizing the finality of the events.
- "I will not be a puppet. I will not be a tool. I will be the Dragon Reborn." — Rand's declaration of his own agency, rejecting the manipulations of the Forsaken and the Pattern.
- "The White Tower is not a building. It is the Aes Sedai." — Egwene's assertion that the true strength of the White Tower lies in its people, not its physical structure.
- "You cannot be a wolf and a man at the same time. You must choose." — A wolfbrother's advice to Perrin, highlighting his internal conflict between his human and wolf natures.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Towers of Midnight about?

Towers of Midnight is the 13th book in The Wheel of Time series. It follows Rand al'Thor as he attempts to cleanse the Dark One's taint on saidin, Perrin Aybara as he rescues his wife from the Shaido, Mat Cauthon as he negotiates with the Seanchan, and Egwene al'Vere as she reunites the White Tower. The book sets the stage for the final battle against the Shadow.

Is Towers of Midnight worth reading?

Yes, if you are invested in The Wheel of Time series. It is a pivotal installment that resolves several long-running plotlines and brings major characters together. The pacing is faster than some earlier books, and it delivers significant character development and dramatic moments. It is essential reading for fans who want to see the series through to its conclusion.

How does Towers of Midnight end?

Spoiler: The book ends with the forces of light gathering for the Last Battle. Rand has cleansed the taint on saidin, making him more stable. Perrin rescues Faile and defeats the Shaido. Mat and Tuon reach an understanding, and Egwene reunites the White Tower. The final scene shows the armies of the Light preparing to face the Shadow, setting up the final book.

Who should read Towers of Midnight?

Readers who have followed The Wheel of Time series up to this point should read it, as it is a crucial part of the narrative. It is also suitable for readers who enjoy epic fantasy with complex world-building, political intrigue, and large-scale battles. New readers should start with the first book, The Eye of the World, to fully appreciate the story.

How long does it take to read Towers of Midnight?

At an average reading speed of about 250 words per minute, Towers of Midnight, which is approximately 350,000 words long, would take around 23 hours to read. However, most readers take longer due to the complexity of the story and the need to keep track of many characters and plotlines. It is a substantial read, but many find it engaging.