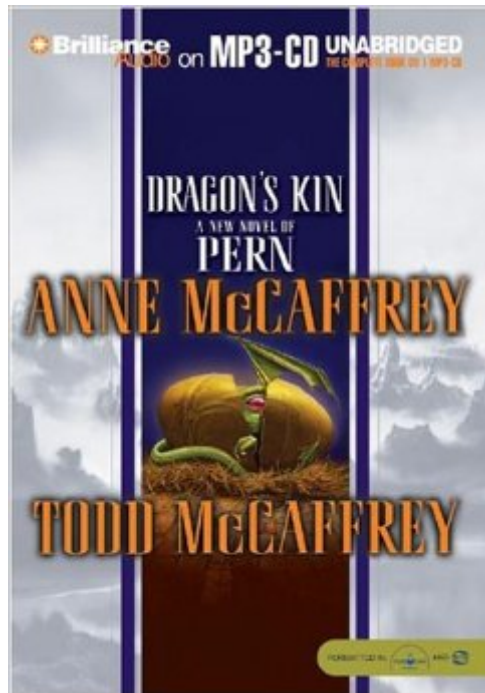


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Dragon's Kin (Dragonriders Of Pern Series)



Synopsis

Beginning with the classic *Dragonriders of Pern*, Anne McCaffrey has created a complex, endlessly fascinating world uniting humans and great telepathic dragons. Millions of devoted readers and listeners have soared on the glittering wings of Anne's imagination, following book by book the evolution of one of science fiction's most beloved and honored series. Now, for the first time, Anne has invited another writer to join her in the skies of Pern, a writer with an intimate knowledge of Pern and its history: her son, Todd. Young Kindan has no expectations other than joining his father in the mines of Camp Natalon, a coal mining settlement struggling to turn a profit far from the great Holds where the presence of dragons and their riders means safety and civilization. Mining is fraught with danger. Fortunately, the camp has a watch-wher, a creature distantly related to dragons and uniquely suited to specialized work in the dark, cold mineshafts. Kindan's father is the watch-wher's handler, and his son sometimes helps him out. But even that important job promises no opportunity outside the mine. Then disaster strikes. In one terrible instant, Kindan loses his family and the camp loses its watch-wher. Fathers are replaced by sons in the mine—except for Kindan, who is taken in by the camp's new Harper. Grieving, Kindan finds a measure of solace in a burgeoning musical talent and in a new friendship with Nuella, a mysterious girl no one seems to know exists. It is Nuella who assists Kindan when he is selected to hatch and train a new watch-wher, a job that forces him to give up his dream of becoming a Harper; and it is Nuella who helps him give new meaning to his life. Meanwhile, sparked by the tragedy, long-simmering tensions are dividing the camp. Far below the surface, a group of resentful miners hides a deadly secret. As warring factions threaten to explode, Nuella and Kindan begin to discover unknown talents in the misunderstood watch-wher—talents that could very well save an entire Hold. During their time teaching the watch-wher, the two learn some things themselves: that even a seemingly impossible dream is never completely out of reach and that light can be found even in the deepest darkness.

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Customer Reviews

It is appropriate that *Dragon's Kin* is set in a mining camp as ever since the earlier "Long Interval" series of Pern novels she has been "mining" the world of Pern for more ideas and stories. The quality of these later stories is seldom as strong as the earlier ones (referring to *Dragonflight*, *Dragonquest*, *The White Dragon*, and the Harper Hall trilogy), running a spectrum from almost as good (*All the Weyrs*) to merely adequate (*dragonsdawn*, *renegades*). *Dragon's Kin* falls somewhere in the middle, not nearly as good as her great works, not nearly as bad as the worst. If you haven't read any Pern, this book is somewhat independent, but does assume a basic knowledge of how the world works and therefore isn't a good starting place. Even more importantly, however, you should start with the strongest examples not the weakest, so begin with *DragonFlight* and move on through there before coming to *Dragon's Kin*. By this point in the series, McCaffery is down to picking out minor parts of the Pern world that have yet to be explored--she already did the explanatory prequels, she covered fire lizards and dolphins, she's covered harpers and traders and riders. She isn't left with much and so we get *Kin*, focusing on watchwhers and miners. This is set between the time of the original series and the prequel books. The disadvantage is that we don't get to see those characters most of us fell so in love with. The advantage is that she (I keep saying she but of course her son is co-author) doesn't have her hands tied as she did in the prequels with having to explain specific rituals, names, etc, a reason those prequel books tend to fall in the lower ranks of quality. In general, this is a solid book.

Dragon's Kin is Anne McCaffrey's latest offering in her long-running and best-selling *Dragonriders of Pern* series. It is also the first time she has permitted a co-author into the Pern universe: her son, Todd. This time McCaffrey tells the story of an earlier time in Pern's history. The time is more than halfway through the second Interval, 16 years before the next Threadfall and the next pass of the Red Star. We are several hundred years before the events in *Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern* and perhaps a hundred years from the events of

Dragonseye. So, this is the time period we are looking at. The story is set in the Natalon mining camp, and this is one of the first times we've had a look at the miners. This is the story of Kindan, a twelve year old boy who seemed older when I read the book. Kindan does not expect anything more out of his life than to follow his father into the mines when he is old enough. All of this changes when there is an accident at the mine and Kindan's father and brothers are all killed. He is left an orphan and he is taken in by the Masterharper, Zist. What the title of this book refers to is the watch whers (they appear in several of the Pern novels). The watch whers are dragon like, though smaller and nocturnal, and are used typically as a nighttime guard or as the first warning if anything is going wrong. They are kin to dragons (hence the title) from when humans first settled on Pern. Watch whers play a prominent role in this book (though, the watch wher egg does not appear until close to half way through the book). At times, Dragon's Kin did not feel like a Pern novel. Dragons play such a limited role, and this story is such a sub-set off of what became the primary storyline throughout Pern.

"Dragon's Kin," while not up to the standard of most of the earlier Pern novels, is far better than the last bunch about F'lessan. The basic plot is as follows. Kindan wants to be a Harper, and has vocal and musical talent. He's about eleven or twelve when the book opens, and is kind of at loose ends; his favorite sister is marrying, his brothers are distant, and as the youngest of nine children, his father seems rather remote. Kindan does have a close friend, Zenor, who's a few months older, but that's about it. And things are even more odd in this family than in most, because Kindan's father is bonded to a watchwher (distant cousins of both the fire lizards and the dragons), and lives different hours than most people as watchwhers are nocturnal. At any rate, Kindan doesn't realize how different his life is than most, although his friend Zenor does (and is envious of it). And because of where he lives, Kindan gets to know more about watchwhers than most people. This might be considered an advantage by many, but not by Kindan. His heart is elsewhere. Then disaster strikes, and most of Kindan's family gets wiped out in a mining accident. The watchwher dies helping to get the few miners who survived the accident out of the mine, and Kindan is left totally alone for the first time in his life. He has mixed feelings about this, but for the most part, those feelings are never brought to the fore. Because of this, Kindan doesn't feel totally fleshed out as a character; he's never allowed to fully grieve. And even amidst a bunch of folks who are also grieving, I doubt Kindan -- or any child, no matter how mature -- would be as matter of fact about losing all his family.

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