

The Eagle of the Ninth Study Guide

by Rebecca Gilleland

For the novel by
Rosemary Sutcliff



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Eagle of the Ninth Study Guide
A Progeny Press Study Guide
by Rebecca Gilleland
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Note to Instructor

How to Use Progeny Press Study Guides. Progeny Press study guides are designed to help students better understand and enjoy literature by getting them to notice and understand how authors craft their stories and to show them how to think through the themes and ideas introduced in the stories. To properly work through a Progeny Press study guide, students should have easy access to a good dictionary, a thesaurus, a Bible (we use NIV translation, but that is up to your preference; just be aware of some differences in language), and sometimes a topical Bible or concordance. Supervised access to the Internet also can be helpful at times, as can a good set of encyclopedias.

Most middle grades and high school study guides take from eight to ten weeks to complete, generally working on one section per week. Over the years, we have found that it works best if the students completely read the novel the first week, while also working on a prereading activity chosen by the parent or teacher. Starting the second week, most parents and teachers have found it works best to work on one study guide page per day until the chapter sections are completed. Students should be allowed to complete questions by referring to the book; many questions require some cross-reference between elements of the stories.

Most study guides contain an Overview section that can be used as a final test, or it can be completed in the same way the chapter sections were completed. If you wish to perform a final test but your particular study guide does not have an Overview section, we suggest picking a couple of questions from each section of the study guide and using them as your final test.

Most study guides also have a final section of essays and postreading activities. These may be assigned at the parents' or teachers' discretion, but we suggest that students engage in several writing or other extra activities during the study of the novel to complement their reading and strengthen their writing skills.

As for high school credits, most Christian high schools to whom we have spoken have assigned a value of one-fourth credit to each study guide, and this also seems to be acceptable to colleges assessing homeschool transcripts.

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All websites listed in this study guide were checked for appropriateness at the time of publication. However, due to the changing nature of the Internet, we cannot guarantee that the URLs listed will remain appropriate or viable. Therefore, we urge parents and teachers to take care in and exercise careful oversight of their children's use of the Internet.

Chapters XVI–XVIII

Vocabulary:

In the blanks below, write the letter of the definition from the Definition Box next to the word it defines. In the space below each word, use the word in an original sentence of your own.

Definition Box

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. exhausting, tiring, demanding | g. intensely clear or bright |
| b. rummaged, searched | h. disappearing, shrinking |
| c. aloof and unfriendly in manner | i. soft sheen or glow |
| d. produce, call out, perhaps by magic | j. prey, something that is hunted |
| e. horribly, beyond endurance | k. a state of confusion and disturbance |
| f. a loud confusion of noise and clamor | l. deliberate, unprovoked, or cruel violence |
-

1. _____ turmoil

Your sentence:

2. _____ tumult

Your sentence:

3. _____ delving

Your sentence:

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4. _____ dwindling

Your sentence:

5. _____ remote

Your sentence:

6. _____ conjure

Your sentence:

7. _____ lustre

Your sentence:

8. _____ grueling

Your sentence:

9. _____ vivid

Your sentence:

10. _____ quarry

Your sentence:

11. _____ wanton

Your sentence:

12. _____ intolerably

Your sentence:

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Questions:

1. When the tribesmen begin searching through Marcus' packs, how does Marcus protect his medical supplies from damage?
2. Though Marcus regrets shaming Dergdian and his men, he still would not wish the Eagle back in their possession. Why?
3. How does Marcus use the superstitious nature of the tribes to arrange a private and separate place for him and Esca to stay in for three days while Esca "recovers" from an "old sickness"?
4. Esca proposes that Marcus go on ahead and he will slow the tribesmen, sacrificing his life to save Marcus. What is Marcus' response to this?
5. What is the hidden path that is death to travel without a guide?

Thinking About the Story:

6. An *extended metaphor* is a metaphorical comparison in which two things are compared at some length and in several ways. The following passages are examples of extended metaphors. Explain the general metaphor found in the passages, then describe at least three specific ways the comparison is being made. What does this particular metaphor demonstrate about the tribesmen, their behavior, and how Marcus views their pursuit?

"Here they come at last," he said to Esca; and then as a distant yell echoed down the mountainside, "Hear how the hounds give tongue."

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The lid of the bronze medicine box was wrenched back, and one of the hunters began to rummage inside like a little dog after a rat. Marcus said quietly to the Chieftain, who stood beside him with folded arms, also looking on, “Will you bid your hounds be less rough with the tools of my trade.”

7. We discussed foreshadowing in Chapters I–III. Looking at Chapter XVI, when Marcus and Esca are sitting in the ruined tower watching the sunset, what is being foreshadowed? What phrases and images does Sutcliff use to accomplish this?
8. *Juxtaposition* is the placing of two ideas or images side by side for contrasting effect or to startle the reader. In literature, a juxtaposition occurs when two images that are otherwise not commonly brought together appear side by side or structurally close together, thereby forcing the reader to stop and reconsider the meaning of the text through the contrasting images, ideas, motifs, etc. At the very end of Chapter XVIII, Marcus is waiting in the tower for the men who are hunting him, when he suddenly notices something totally unrelated to the danger he is in. Find this section and describe how the author is using juxtaposition here. What do you think the contrasting image represents?
9. Marcus alludes to the group chasing them as “The Wild Hunt.” Look up The Wild Hunt and explain what it is. Why does Marcus allude to them?

Dig Deeper:

10. Despite Marcus' lame leg, his pain, and their exhaustion, both Marcus and Esca continue to push grimly on toward the south as fast as physically possible. How are Romans 5:3–4 and Hebrews 12:1, 2, 12 even more applicable in this section?

11. As Marcus and Esca are pursued, they suddenly feel that the very countryside becomes hostile and menacing. Later, they are spotted and hunted with the “horror of the hunted in their racing hearts, while death with many heron-tufted war-spears stalked them through the dark maze.” Marcus and Esca are experiencing true fear. How do they seem to be handling their fear? Read the following verses. Psalm 46:1–3; Proverbs 3:21–26; Romans 8:31, 35–39; Hebrews 13:5–6; and 1 John 4:15–18. How are we to handle fear? How can these verses help you in the future?

12. In Chapter XVIII, Guern helps Marcus and Esca by travelling with them and guiding them through the bog to help them past the Epidaii hunting them. Why do you think Guern is willing to travel with them under such dangerous circumstances now?

After they cross the bog, and as Guern gets ready to leave them, he asks to see the Eagle once again. When he sees it, he reaches out for it, then drops his hands and just looks at it. Sutcliff writes, “The betraying gesture tore harshly at

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something deep in Marcus's chest, and suddenly he could have howled like a dog." What did Guern's gesture mean? Why did it so deeply and harshly affect Marcus?

Optional Activities:

1. At the end of Chapter XVI, Esca asks Marcus why he carries the Eagle back at all. Marcus answers, "For an idea." As a class, discuss what Marcus might be talking about here. What idea does he mean? What is motivating him?
2. Listen to the song "Ghost Riders in the Sky." Write a short paper, or discuss as a group, how this song and legend might be compared to The Wild Hunt, and discuss how old stories can be adapted to new times. You may wish to try your hand at rewriting the legend into a story, poem, or song to fit modern times or paint or draw a scene of The Wild Hunt or "Ghost Riders in the Sky."

Answer Key

Note: Most of the questions in Progeny Press study guides deal with students' understanding and interpretation of issues in the novel; therefore, most answers will be individual to the student. Progeny Press answer keys are designed to be as inclusive as possible for the teacher and/or parent, giving enough background and information to judge whether the student has grasped the essence of the issue and the question. We try to point out some directions students' answers might take, which directions might be best, and some errors that may appear. Students are not expected to answer as completely as the answers provided in the Answer Key.

Chapters I–III

Vocabulary:

1. b; 2. c; 3. a; 4. scarp: c, basilica: c; 5. b; 6. a; 7. b; 8. a; 9. c; 10. b; 11. c; 12. a; 13. a; 14. gilded: b, mizzle: c

Questions:

1. Marcus and his aunt's husband greatly hate each other. He applies for a Centurion's commission and enters the Roman legions.
2. He must follow the Centurion's torch from guard-post to guard-post, from barrack block to horse-lines, in particular, seeing that all is well with the frontier of the Empire.
3. He seems to be implying that he is only imagining things.
4. They keep a great charcoal brazier glowing and throw fresh grass and fern onto it to create a black column of smoke. The other garrison in response lights a smoke signal showing the call for help is received and help is on its way.
5. Marcus leads a rescue party to give a returning patrol a chance to get back into the garrison.
6. Answers will vary but may mention some of the following: Marcus feels tensions are stirring under the surface and does not trust the veiled attitude of the villagers; a druid is rumored to have been seen again; one of the watch hears movement and wakes Marcus; Marcus has all his men turn out to their action stations even though it might seem foolish in the night; the drizzle lifts and they are able to light a smoke signal to the nearest garrison asking for help; his patrol returns and they fight and manage to get almost back to the gates when the chariots arrive. Marcus throws himself onto the first chariot to crash it in front of the those following to stop their charge.

Thinking About the Story:

7. Answers should include two of the following: He tells Marcus that by the time he's been here a year, he will have toadstools sprouting out of his ears, and he is off to rub away the blue mould. He also says they lived for two months on top of Vesuvius, a volcano, but it never erupted.
8. The author is foreshadowing that the people are preparing for a fight. Sutcliff uses phrases like "put in fighting trim" and "a feather showing the way the wind blew." Answers will vary but should mention some of the following: The people's attitude seems veiled, Cradoc's war spear has been refurbished, there are rumors of the druid being seen, cattle break out at night, a new moon might be the perfect time to wage a holy war.
9. Vesuvius is an active volcano near Naples, in southern Italy, 4,190 feet (1,277 m) high. A violent eruption in 79 A.D. buried the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Since the book is set in 134 A.D., the eruption of the volcano is still recent history to Marcus. Tarturus is a deep pit or abyss of torment and suffering that in classic mythology was believed to lie below Hades in the underworld.
10. b. keen edge of blade is compared to his enjoyment; c. black jewels are compared to Cradoc's horses; d. a shooting comet and a falcon stooping are compared to "he and his team" of horses; e. jewels of his heart are compared to his team of four horses; f. a film, a veil, is compared to the peace on the surface

Dig Deeper:

11. Answers may vary. The British tribes become more agitated when harvests are poor because they are worried or fearful of drought and hardships. As harvests are poor, they have less to eat and they begin to fear starvation. They fear for their comfort, their survival, and their future. This makes them more likely to react with anger and more likely to strike out at the Romans, who are an irritant. Personal answers will vary. We often get angry or more easily irritated when we are afraid. Sometimes the fears may even be relatively minor, such as a test or whether someone likes us, but the fear itself makes us more likely to get angry, like a hurt or fearful animal that snaps at anything or anyone that comes near.