

BACKGROUND
for
THE LEGEND OF LADY ILENA &
LADY ILENA: WAY OF THE WARRIOR

The Ilena books are fiction, which means that they are stories made up by a writer. I used bits and pieces of ancient legends, what I could learn about history, and information provided by archeologists to ground them in a real time and place. However, except for Arthur and a few others from the old legends, the characters are imagined.

The stories are realistic fiction, which means that they do not have fantasy in them. Swords and other items may be important and rare, but they do not have magic powers. The dwarf, Spusscio, is a man with the medical condition of dwarfism, which means that he will never reach normal adult size. However, he is wise, strong and a good friend to Ilena and her family, without having any connection to magic.

The books are also listed as historical fiction because they are set in a specific time and place, and the plots are true to what we know of life in that time and place. Many events are based on the old legends, which may themselves have been based on historical happenings. There are very few written records of Britain in 500 AD, but those that we have tell about women warriors and chiefs in the North, battles against invading tribes, and the use of hill forts.

The Ilena books are set in the early sixth century AD (500+ AD), a period called the Early Middle Ages or the Dark Ages. There were no knights, no heavy armor, no jousting, no fancy feasts or stone castles, no chivalry, and no feudal system at that time. The Middle Ages that we study in school and see in movies and TV shows is the High or Late Middle Ages; it begins around 1000 AD. The Dark Ages are from about 500 AD to around 1000 AD.

Look at a map of Britain. Dun Alyn is near Aberdeen on the northeastern coast of Scotland. I've imagined the Vale of Enfert to be somewhere near Fort William in the west of Scotland. Ilena's journey in *The Legend of Lady Ilena* takes her across the Highlands of Scotland from west to east.

In *Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior*, the action moves west from Dun Alyn to the Vale of Enfert in the West, then south along the west edge of Loch Lomond, reaches a climax at Alcluith (Dunbarton on modern maps) and ends at Cameliard (modern Stirling).

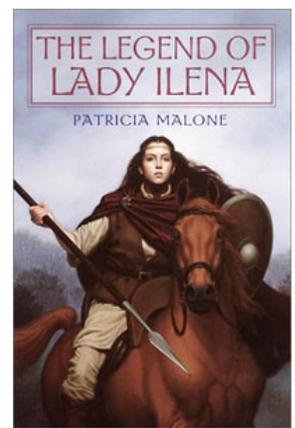
Patricia Malone

Reading and Teaching Guide

Cast of Characters in Legend of Lady Ilena

Ilena..... protagonist
Moren..... father
Grenna mother
Cryner dog
Rol..... Ilena's horse
Fiona..... Ilena's friend
Jon..... Fiona's brother
Aten..... the village healer; Fiona and Jon's mother
Durant..... a follower of Arthur
Resad..... a traveler
Elban doorkeeper for Chief Perr
Perr chief of Dun Dreug, Arthur's ally
Gola warrior at Dun Dreug

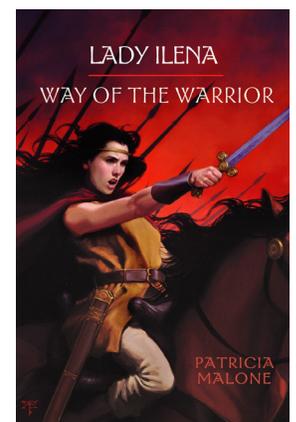
Faren Chief Perr's wife
Belert chief of Dun Alyn
Cara chief of Dun Alyn, wife of Belert
Miquain daughter of Cara and Belert
Cochan Gola's husband, also a warrior
Cormec..... warrior of Dun Alyn
Toole..... warrior of Dun Alyn
Ogern druid at Dun Alyn
Spusscio Belert's friend and supporter
Ryamen..... woman of Dun Alyn
Lenora chief of Glein, Arthur's ally
Doldalf chief of Dun Selig, Arthur's ally
Hoel..... follower of Arthur, Durant's friend
Kigva..... healer at Dun Alyn



The Legend of Lady Ilena
by Patricia Malone
Delacorte, 2002

Additional Characters in Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior

Machonna..... white dog
Gillis druid of Dun Alyn
Faolan..... warrior from Dun Struan
Andrina..... cousin to Faolan & chief of Dun Lachan
Camilla..... chief of Alcluith & sister to Andrina
Eogan young man of Enfert
Vorgel..... high priestess of Britain
Arthur Dragon Chief & war leader of Britain



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Guided Discussion

Before reading the book, Predictions

1. What do you know about the Dark Ages? What time period was this? Where? Why were they called this?
2. Do you believe a woman warrior can defeat grown men warriors? Why or why not?
3. How are family names passed along in our society? How do belongings pass from one generation to another?

After reading the book

1. These books take place at a time when Christianity was replacing the ancient religion and legal system of Britain that had been administered by the Druids. Find out as much as you can about the druidic system. Ilena and Durant seem to respect both systems; why do you think Ogern is threatened by Christianity?
2. Compare the author's description of the battle scenes to what we see in movies today. How does the fighting differ? Ilena's people fight on horseback and in hand-to-hand combat. What type of weapons do they have? What is their protection like? How would using that type of protection change the way modern soldiers fight?
3. What does "oral tradition" mean? In the first book, the Vale of Enfert has a village storyteller. When Ilena is at Dun Dreug, a bard tells the story of Cara and Miquain's battle and death. How do storytellers and bards differ? Do you have a storyteller in your family?
4. What is there in our current world and times that will still be remembered 1,600 years from now? What will have been forgotten? How will people be able to remember what happened in the years 2000 to 2010? Do we have an "oral tradition"?
5. Ilena thinks about honor a great deal. What meanings do we give to the word "honor?" How do we "honor" someone? How does a person maintain their "honor"? Think about someone saying "you're on your honor" when you do this. How about "I'm honored by your words."? Are these different types of honor?

Curriculum Connections

Body Adornment & Decoration

Name some of the ways the people of Ilena's time adorned their bodies and hair. [woad, lime, tattoos, torc]
What did each item signify or mean?

Name some of the ways that people today adorn their bodies. What do these items signify or mean?

Art & Architecture

Describe (or draw) of fortress of the Early Middle Ages.

Storyboards

Drawing a story board for a chapter—or a graphic novel format—is a good way to look closely at literature. If students draw different chapters, they can share their work and thus learn a lot about the structure of a novel. Drawings may be simple or elaborate.

You might have the students create a storyboard in preparation for making a movie of the books. What scenes would they include? What would be left out? Who would they cast in each of the roles and why? What part of the setting would be important to include for movie viewers to understand the times?

Family structure

Make a family tree chart for Ilena's family and your own. Compare how these family structures are the same or how they differ.

Use a Venn diagram to show how your family, friends, and acquaintances intersect with your life. Do the same for Ilena.

Matriarchal versus patriarchal societies. What other cultures in the past or present have a matriarchal ruling system where property and rank are passed from mother to daughter?

Cultures changing

Draw a parallel between the cultural shift (religion, rulers, laws) in these books to a current or recent culture clash in America or another country. How did the parties settle their differences in the past and present?

Delivering the news

Before computers, television, radio, and moveable type, there were bards and storytellers. Assume the role of a storyteller or bard and recount your version of a news item from today.

Retelling the story from another point of view

Have the students pick a chapter that's full of people and action.

Ask them to choose a character who doesn't appear in the book but who might have been nearby or in the room. Have them write or relate the chapter from that character's point of view.

Be sure to have them pick a specific audience to whom they are writing or telling the story. They might have that audience be another village, a king or queen, their sister, a visitor from a foreign country, a television audience, or a YouTube video audience.

What format will their retelling take? An oral story? A poem? A news article? A letter? A journal? A blog?

What part of the chapter will they choose to tell?

An Interview With Patricia Malone

When did you first become interested in the Dark Ages? Why?

I've always liked history and especially history about Britain. I became interested in writing about the Dark Ages when I was researching King Arthur. I love the Arthur stories but have often wondered what really happened.

The best current thinking seems to be that Arthur did exist, or at least that someone organized a resistance to Saxon, Angle, Jute invasions and expansions in the early 500's in Britain. Assuming that a real Arthur existed led to a lot of other questions. I was particularly struck by the fact that Arthur seems to have been elected Duke of War while still in his teens and that his followers were also very young.

Then my questions became: What kind of young person would have had the ability and courage to follow such a leader? Where does the loyalty to chief and people come from? Where does it lead?

When I realized that we have evidence for women as chiefs, teachers, and warriors in ancient Celtic society, I knew I had a story.

What difference do you believe it made to visit the areas you write about in the Ilena books? Was it important to do your research in person?

I would never have written the Ilena books if I had not visited the United Kingdom. For me inspiration is place related. I feel myself rooted in Midwestern farm country in a very literal way. I picture and feel my feet touching the black earth and can smell ripening cornstalks on a hot wind in August, even when I'm in my third floor condo in the city.

When I visited Britain I was surprised to feel something of the same connection to place. That may be because my ancestors came from Scotland and Ireland, but it is also because I've read so much about those places. Climbing to hill forts, tracing old Roman roads, stepping inside reconstructions of ancient buildings, and looking out over historic battlefields have all been inspirational as well as educational. When I sit on an old

earthen defense wall looking across the remains of old huts, I can picture a family and its animals. I can even imagine the fears they might have had of attackers or animal predators.

I spent a day at Dumbarton Rock climbing up and around the twin peaks and staring down at the place where the River Leven and the Clyde (called Clota in the books) meet, and I imagined how a small leather boat might fare in the tidal rush up the Clyde estuary. My daughter drove while I watched the scenery as we took the old military road from the southern end of Loch Lomond (the long lake in *Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior*) toward the tall cliffs of Stirling (Cameliard in the book). When we got onto Stirling Castle, I stood for a long time looking out over the plains below the cliffs and imagining the last scene of *Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior*.

How did your editor check for authenticity of the facts before the book was published?

I don't know whom my editor may have consulted. She asked me several questions, and I sent verification of some of the controversial or unusual facts—like women warriors. I gave her a bibliography of about 20 books and offered to expand it to include another 80 or so that were on my shelves. The head editor who is responsible for content and for tricky bits of grammar had some questions—mostly about spelling of Celtic words—and I gave her my sources for what I'd used. I'm somewhat used to academic papers and feel strongly that I want everything as accurate as possible so I'd done a great deal of research. I think that shows, and people familiar with the Dark Ages recognize it.

The Rebecca Caudill Committee, which chose *The Legend of Lady Ilena* for the 2004 master list that Illinois schools use and vote on during the school year, is known for demanding academic quality in books that use a historical setting. I felt especially honored to pass their test and see *Legend* on the list.

ACTIVITIES
for
THE LEGEND OF LADY ILENA &
LADY ILENA: WAY OF THE WARRIOR

1. Make a timeline of the Early Middle Ages – also called the Dark Ages – from about 400 A.D. to 1066 A.D. Look especially for things that happened in Britain or that affected Britain.
2. After reading or hearing the first two chapters of *The Legend of Lady Ilena*, imagine yourself in *The Vale of Enfert* and living in a home like Ilena's. What might you do during an average day? Draw a scene with people in it and show yourself taking part in the scene. What would you miss most about your present life? What would you like best about living then?
3. After reading or hearing the third chapter of *The Legend of Lady Ilena*, think about the things that Ilena took with her. If you were leaving home for a long time, what would you take with you? Could it all fit in a packet behind the saddle of a horse?
4. Draw a picture of an early British fortress. Look on the CASTLES section of this website as well as other places. Fortresses like that had been built since long before the Romans came in 47 A.D. Notice that buildings inside the fortress or castle are round with plastered walls and thatched roofs.

If you work with a partner, one of you should draw the Dark Ages Castle and the other draw a late Middle Ages castle. Notice the changes and improvements that happened over the years. Today one can see the ruins of the late Middle Age buildings on the fortress sites, but the remains of most of the Dark Age structures are buried beneath those buildings.

5. Draw a battle scene from one of the Ilena books. Draw a battle scene from the late Middle Ages. Notice what has changed. People at the time of Ilena did not have stirrups or heavy metal armor or destriers (large horses that could carry a man in armor.) What difference did each of those make in fighting technique?
6. Women were warriors and chiefs all over Britain before the Romans came. During and after the Roman era, women in the North continued in those roles. In 697 A.D. a monk, Adomnan of Iona, got church and political leaders of Ireland and parts of Scotland to agree to a law that women could not be required to serve in warbands.

What does that say about women being in warbands before 697?

It was probably many years before all chiefs and leaders stopped requiring women to be in warbands. By the late Middle Ages (1000-1450) women did not usually fight with the warbands. What were the advantages to women of such a law? Can you think of any disadvantages?

What young woman in France became a warrior in 1429? How did she die and what were the charges against her?

7. Make a mind map of a scene or a chapter or the whole story from one of the books. Or choose a character as the center of the mind map and show as much as you can about him or her. A mind map is like a web but uses color and pictures. You might draw Ilena in the center – stick figures are fine – and then put important information about her in pictures out on the rest of the paper. Be sure you draw in color as much as possible; color makes your brain work better. Attach the outer drawings to the center with a curvy line with one (or two if necessary) words describing the connection. Be sure the words and lines are in color. If you like this kind of activity as a way of organizing information, ask your teacher or a librarian to find you more information on mind mapping.
8. Plan and perform a reenactment. You might choose to be a character from one of the books, or you could be an observer – a traveling bard or a serving person or even a time traveler. Tell your audience what is happening in a particular part of the book. Try to find a few props or costume pieces. Just a cape or a floppy hat might make you seem more like or traveler; an apron for a server, a cardboard sword for a warrior, or a cardboard copy of a small harp for a bard are just some ideas.
9. Work with others and develop a Reader’s Theater presentation. Choose a section of one of the books with a lot of dialogue. Each of you pick a part to read. Be sure to plan carefully so you can leave out as much description and other non dialogue as possible. If some explanation or descriptive passage is absolutely necessary, one person can be a narrator.

Practice this and feel free to leave out what you want to and use what you like. You must remember not to read the dialogue tags. (the he saids and she saids.) The scenes in Legend of Lady Ilena where Ilena meets Spusscio-page 125 and the scene beginning on p 162 at Dun Dreug would make good Reader’s Theater. The one on p 125 needs three people and the one on p 162 requires several. The scene in Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior beginning on page 130 where Vorgel and Ilena talk is a good two person dialogue. There are many others throughout the two books. Select what you like for the number of people you have. One person can read more than one part but must develop a different “voice” for each character.

10. If you have a group, act out a scene. Pick something with lots of drama or interest. The scene where Ilena enters the banquet hall at Dun Alyn for the first time would work well. page 91 in Legend of Lady Ilena. That has several good parts, a lot of drama, and plenty of group activity for the rest of the class.

Do not memorize any parts or lines. Practice some of the actions in mime(silent action). Several of you – or a whole class – can practice walking like Ilena walked down that aisle and try to imagine her feelings. Everyone can mime Ogern’s body language and actions. When you feels comfortable imagining and miming the actions, choose someone for each speaking part.

The actors should speak from their feelings as the character and not try to memorize a particular line. If you act this out twice, you’ll have different dialogue each time. Actors must listen to other actors and respond to what they say, while trying to keep the general sense of the action.

Another good scene might be when Ilena strolls around the fair-page 125 of Legend of Lady Ilena-and her conversation with Spusscio that follows.

The action in *Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior*-page 158-on the fortress of Alcluith is another dramatic scene that would work well as a presentation.

The important thing about this kind of drama is to enjoy the experience and to understand the story better. It's not meant to be practiced over and over or to be presented to a formal audience. It is fun to work in groups and present your drama, after one or two practices, to the rest of the class.

Simple costumes and props can help you get into the scene. A few pieces of cloth, some old tablecloths, scarves, hats, etc are helpful.

11. In *Lady Ilena: War of the Warrior*, Machonna accompanies her on her travels. Why do you think Spusscio let the dog out of his cage? What does the dog bring to the story that a human companion might not?
12. The oral tradition means stories that are handed down for generations. In Ilena's time it included village storytellers, bards, and Druid's information. How many places can you find in the books where the author has used a story to provide information to the characters and to the reader? List some of them.
13. In *Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior*, what do you think Belert means when he tells Ilena that she has chosen the "Way of the Warrior?" Near the end of the book, Gillis describes the "Way of the Warrior?" List the characteristics that he says a warrior must have.

Do people follow a "Way of the Warrior" today? Can you find the phrase in use today? Where and what does it mean?

14. We know about ancient times like the Dark Ages through written history, the oral tradition, and archeology. We have very little useful written history of the Dark Ages because many people, including the Celts who lived in Britain, did not have a written language. Archeologists have found marvelous artifacts from early Britain, and we can learn much from them. See the link to the British Museum on this website (THINGS) to view pictures of some of these finds. The oral tradition gives us a fascinating look at life in long ago times. See if you can match a folk tale or legend with the real description below:
 - a. In Ilena's time, homes and other buildings were built of wattle (woven wicker or stick walls) covered with daub (mud, clay, grass, and manure). The roofs of these buildings were made of thatch, which is straw bundled together and tied onto the roof. There are many buildings in the North of Britain today that still use thatch roofs.

The Romans brought the practice of bricks and mortar to Britain, and that became the "modern" building process for the Dark Ages.

What folk tale can you think of that tells about those two different building styles?

- b. Archeologists have found remains of thick thorn tree hedges around the outer walls of some of the old fortresses.

What folk tale can you think of that tells about a fortress (castle) surrounded by a thick hedge?

- c. Fortresses during the Dark Ages and earlier were often built with towers inside the walls so that a chief's family could be kept safe. Chiefs in some northern tribes were especially careful to guard their daughters because the oldest daughter would inherit the fortress and land as her dowry when she married. If someone kidnapped the daughter or if she eloped, the father and brothers might find themselves out of their home.

Can you think of a folk tale that uses a tower to keep a young woman away from someone that she might marry?

- d. Wolves were dangerous predators in Britain and the rest of Europe. While the biggest danger was to sheep and cattle, people, especially children, were sometimes targets of hungry wolves.

What stories can you name that warn against wolves?

15. Many experts believe that sometime in the early 500's, chiefs in what is now Scotland and the very north of England elected a young man to organize and lead warriors against Saxons and other Germanic tribes who were invading the South of Britain. Legends grew up about this man, and years later fiction writers wrote fanciful stories based on those legends. The writers set the stories in the late Middle Ages, using court life and chivalry from their own times as a setting.

Who was the young man? What else have you read about him? Hint #1 – in one story, he pulls a sword out of a stone. Hint #2 – he is a king in most of the stories. Hint #3 – More has been written about him than about anyone else in the history of literature, and we are still writing books and making movies about him

Internet Resources

Dark Ages Society

This website deals with a variety of topics of 9th Century life in Britain.
www.darkagesociety.co.uk/

The Time Team

Curriculum resources and interactive features make this a useful website. Focus often takes an archeological approach to uncovering information.
www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam/schools_entry.html

Early Medieval Britain and Ireland

This website focuses on the people and politics of Britain, Ireland and their offshore islands between 350AD and 850AD
<http://www.postroman.info/>

BBC: Birth of a Nation

Lots of information, much in multimedia format.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/darkages/index.shtml>

About the Picts:

<http://members.tripod.com/~Halfmoon/>

Dark Ages Virtual Field Trip

Medieval era information:

www.tramline.com/tours/ss/darkages/_tourlaunch1.htm

A well done website by sixth graders. Links to other websites.