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# The Lion Hunter (Mark Of Solomon)



## Synopsis

It is the sixth century in Aksum, Africa. Young Telemakos—King Arthur's half-Ethiopian grandson—is still recovering from his ordeal as a government spy in the far desert, trying to learn who was breaking the Emperor's plague quarantine. Before he is fully himself again, tragedy and menace strike, and he finds himself sent, with his baby sister, Athena, to live with Abreha, the ruler of Himyar—a longtime enemy of the Aksumites, now perhaps a friend. His aunt Goewin, Arthur's daughter, warns him that Abreha is a man to be wary of, someone to watch carefully. Telemakos promises he will be mindful—but he does not realize that Goewin's warnings are not enough to protect him. *The Sunbird* (‘Intense, absorbing, and luminously written,’ Kirkus Reviews, starred review) was the first book about Telemakos. *The Lion Hunter* continues his story, to be quickly followed by *The Empty Kingdom*—a two-book sequence called *The Mark of Solomon*.

## Book Information

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Series: Mark of Solomon (Book 1)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 7 Up—  
•This lyrical and complex tale of adventure and betrayal set in sixth-century Africa continues the story of 12-year-old Telemakos, who is recovering from the mental and physical abuse he suffered as a government spy in *The Sunbird* (Viking, 2004). His troubles are nowhere near done—he's attacked by one of the emperor's pet lions and loses

an arm. His cover may have been blown as well. He and his baby sister are sent to live with Abreha, ruler of Himyar—once the enemy of the Aksumites, now possibly an ally, but definitely not to be completely trusted, as the young prince soon learns. Much of this story is based on events in *The Sunbird* and earlier stories in the saga, and names, places, and relationships are sometimes difficult to understand. That said, the writing is powerful and the characters are strong and memorable. Telemakos is a fascinating character: intelligent, loving, deeply scarred, and yet almost extraordinarily brave. There's a fairly graphic description of a crucifixion midway through. This is a challenging story complete with a cliff-hanger ending. Readers who make the effort (and start with the earlier book) will be richly rewarded.

—Mara Alpert, Los Angeles Public Library Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

This first title in a proposed series, *the Mark of Solomon*, draws on Wein's Arthurian-Aksamite cycle, which concluded with *The Sunbird* (2004). In the kingdom of Aksum (ancient Ethiopia), young Telemakos is severely wounded while playing with the emperor's pet lions, just as his mother gives birth to a girl, Athena. In the grief that follows, Telemakos' parents neglect the infant, and it's Telemakos who comforts Athena as his body heals. After threats against his aristocratic family escalate, Telemakos is sent to a neighboring kingdom for safekeeping, and his parents, understanding their children's unbreakable bond, send Athena, too. Telemakos feels blissfully accepted in his new community, but he gradually realizes that this sense of belonging is shockingly unfounded. Readers, even those familiar with the Arthurian-Aksamite cycle, may struggle to connect the large cast and the complex political intrigues, revealed in oblique references. The richly imagined details create a fascinating ancient world, though, and readers will respond to sharp-minded Telemakos as he searches for love, loyalty, and truth in a treacherous world of false appearances. A substantial author's note concludes.

Engberg, Gillian

OMG I am glad I have the next book sitting here. I understand this was written as one book or some such thing - this is *The Mark of Solomon* - book one. I will pick up book two when I finish this report. This book actually follows the first three books; *The Winter Prince*, *A Coalition of Lions*, and *The Sunbird*. The first book is very very loosely based on the Arthurian legend but we are way past that in this book - other than this one continues with the story of Medraut's (Mordred of Arthur legend) half Ethiopian son, Telemakos. I seldom read books about twelve year old boys, but this author has drawn me into a world I am unable and unwilling to give up. It's difficult to explain exactly why that is. In this book Telemakos, who is still recovering from his injuries from his ordeal as a

government spy in the desert and the subsequent mauling by a lion, is sent with his young sister to live with Abreha. Abreha is the ruler of Himyar and a long time enemy of Telemakos people, but now considered a friend. Telemakos finds himself an honored guest and revels in the freedoms at this amazing palace and the friends he acquires. But he is troubled by no contact from his aunt Goewin who warned him of dangers in this place. They had agreed on a code of sorts but there have been no letters received. I do not want to tell the story here, but everything comes crashing down on Telemakos in one day and evening, and he comes close to losing his life as a spy and a traitor. It is very tense writing as I have learned this author is very capable of dishing out. When I came to the last page and it said: To be continued in THE EMPTY KINGDOM....I took a fast look at the shelf by my chair to be sure The Empty Kingdom was sitting there - sure enough it is!! I really liked some of what the author wrote at the end of the book so will share it here."There is an Ethiopian proverb that goes, 'To lie about a far country is easy.' The world of Telemakos's adolescence is a world that exists mostly in my head, though parts of it bear passing resemblances to ancient places in the world we know. My maps are imperfect. Too often, when I can't find an accurate record of something, I make it up." "I do my best to make these details accurate to the time and place I am writing about, but I cannot guarantee that accuracy. Is Le Morte D'Arthur an accurate portrayal of King Arthur's court? It postdates the historical Arthur by a thousand years. I do not like to draw attention to my own inaccuracies, but I know they exist. This is a work of fiction. Enjoy these lies about a far country, and if you can, forgive them." I forgive. It's a great story she tells.

Excellent!!

Unlike the first three books in this series, this is not really a stand-alone novel; be prepared to read The Empty Kingdom for the complete story of Telemakos's sojourn in Himyar (modern Yemen). This book is slow to really get started. The first (and rather depressing) half basically sets up a new phase of Telemakos's life. The real story (which spans two books) doesn't begin until Telemakos and his baby sister are sent to Himyar to protect them from the unknown conspirators (from the failed attempt to subvert the plague quarantine) who weren't caught. But Himyar turns out to be a more dangerous place than anyone suspected. I guess my biggest problem with this story (in both its parts) is that the adults really should have suspected danger in Himyar--not necessarily the chief danger that the children encounter, but the other dangers that loom over them. Telemakos is old enough to have been given a more thorough briefing about his family's connection with Himyar than he got. Still, Wein is a compelling storyteller. This book gets 3.75 stars from me.

First of all, I don't usually like middle readers, but I do love young adult, and this book pushed all my happy YA buttons. Actually, it felt a little more like Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea trilogy, back before the term "young adult" was bandied about (and I don't compare authors to Le Guin lightly). The characters were fascinating, the world-building was unbelievably vivid, and I was very engrossed from the beginning. I'm a bit shocked to see that it doesn't have hundreds of glowing reviews and that the Lion Hunters series is out of print --- this book feels like it should be a classic.

The second book in the historical fantasy series is called *The Empty Kingdom*. Wein's other books, *The Sunbird*, *The Winter Palace* and *A Coalition of Lions* all feature the same characters from ancient Arthurian Britain and Ethiopia (Aksum) and Yemen (Himyar). This is the first in a series about twelve-year-old Telemakos, a noble of ancient Ethiopia. His father is Medraut, a physician and wise man. Telemakos has recovered from his recent exploit (*The Sunbird*), and is overjoyed to hear of the birth of his sister. His father comes to tell him while Telemakos is playing with the pet lions of Emperor Gebre Meskal, and when he runs to his father the lions sense "prey" and attack him. It is a terrible mistake, and it leaves him changed for life. His injury and recuperation are so horrible that his parents despair of losing him, and they neglect the new baby--but Telemakos becomes close to little Athena, as he names her. They become inseparable. But dark times lay ahead--his aunt Goewin, the ambassador from Britain, and advisor to the Emperor, has been receiving death threats, as has the whole household. His parents discuss sending him away, and his life changes completely. The settings, characters, and adventure are all dazzling. This is a series to pursue. Note: Publisher said for middle reader, age 10 & up, however some of the violence would lead me to recommend this to an older child. Armchair Interviews says: Read her other book, *A Coalition of Lions*--a young adult read.

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