Knights of the Alliance Study Guide

Knights of the Alliance by Stefanie Chu

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Plot Summary

Knights of the Alliance is book one of a Young Adult Fantasy trilogy series. It follows the travails of three unlikely collaborators: **Fangbane**, a mind reader; **Mirari**, a former noble posing as a merchant; and **Gaven**, a headstrong warrior. Hostility brews in the shadows of a land where ancient conflict exists between the three empires of Althaea, Minetta, and Valenia. Fangbane strongly believes that all it will take to end centuries of passive disdain is to establish a nonpartisan selection of fighters whose mission is to enforce a unified peace. His efforts lead to the recruitment of seven fighters known as **the Knights.**

When Mirari's foster brother goes missing, presumed dead, she becomes consumed by the need for revenge. But her attention shifts upon hearing that her childhood friend, Gaven, is leading a rebellion known as the Althaean Siege. She flies to the battlefield where she meets Fangbane, a mind reader who hides his maimed face behind an enigmatic mask. With Fangbane's help, Mirari defeats Gaven, unleashing a mysterious flame ability. It captures Fangbane's interest, but Mirari rejects his proposal to join Knights.

Gaven claims to have been possessed and recalls nothing of the rebellion he led. As the consequences of death row loom, Mirari desperately makes a deal with Fangbane: a plea for Gaven's life in exchange for joining the coalition of Knights. Gaven's life is spared under the condition that he assists Fangbane in recruiting and training his team of Knights, one of those Knights being Mirari.

But Mirari and Gaven's childhood camaraderie has long been replaced by new adult versions of themselves. Gaven, posing as a fake Althaean leader, and Mirari, an imposter under a false name. Gone are the people they once knew, their childhood friendship now replaced by a heated rivalry. They remain wary and distrustful of each other; she despises Gaven's arrogance, and he is irritated by Mirari's petty disobedience as she struggles to find her place among her new associates.

Gaven is left devastated and angry that he is incarcerated for a crime he cannot remember. He launches a search for the reason behind his memory loss, discovering an underground umbrella organization known as **the Blessed**. They are vigilantes with ideals similar to Fangbane – a new world, purged of its current leaders and unjust social system – but they adopt violent and bloody methods that Fangbane and the Knights cannot condone.

An alluring monk named **Laikos** is suspected as one of the leaders of the Blessed. He claims to be a messenger of the gods, and the gods desire anarchy. In the name of fate, Laikos poisons powerful officials, weakening armies and providing opportunities for the commoners to rise against the system. At first, he easily evades capture, utilizing a psychic ability far more powerful than that of Fangbane's, turning one's mind against their own will.

Seeing the devastating aftermath of Laikos' mind-bending power, Gaven and Mirari suspect him not only as the source of Gaven's possession but as the murderer of Mirari's brother. In pursuit of Laikos and the Blessed, Gaven and Mirari put aside their differences, becoming utterly loyal and inseparable partners. It is up to them and the rest of the Knights to prevent Laikos from making his twisted ideology a reality.

The trio become unstoppable as they find strength in their unity, finally defeating Laikos through sheer willpower, becoming the skilled alliance Fangbane always envisaged. The populace, seeing the success of Fangbane's Knights, shifts their allegiance, spurring a group of young pioneers to aspire to catalyze Fangbane's mission. From thereon, Gaven uses his high power to advocate for collaboration beyond his region's borders, and Mirari can finally step out of her shadow, put aside revenge and accept her brother's death. As long as she is with Gaven and the brotherhood – in the loyalty and kinship she has craved since childhood – she will do anything for the *Knights of the Alliance*.

Book two, *Birth of Resilience*, brings to light the events leading up to the Althaean Siege; including Mirari's noble past, the events detailing her brother's mysterious disappearance, and Gaven's rise to power.

Prologue

Summary

Gaven Zanette, also known as the Valiant Tiger, is surrounded by a unified force of soldiers from different empires and regions. Fangbane, an experienced strategist who wears a mask concealing his face, observes the battle and realizes that the warrior has gone insane. A young woman named Mirari Zanette, seemingly fragile but possessing a mysterious fire power, steps forward to face Gaven. The intense duel captivates everyone, and Mirari emerges victorious.

Analysis

The novels opens in Fangbane's first-person view, highlighting not only his ability to hear the thoughts of those around him but also their distress over the chaotic and unusual scene unfolding before them. This chapter introduces the world where humans wield unique abilities, but the two protagonists, Gaven and Mirari, possess something even greater that blocks Fangbane's own ability.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapters 1 - 6

Summary

Mirari wakes, disoriented, remembering nothing of the battle that happened moments ago. She observes the aftermath of the battle and focuses on Gaven, who has been framed and arrested for leading the rebellion known as the Althaean Siege. She tries to reconnect with her childhood friend, but Gaven doesn't recognize her and dismisses the Minettan peasant he assumed her to be. Taken aback by his arrogance, she decides not to reveal her true identity as Roselyn Hale. Meanwhile, Fangbane offers to help Mirari control her mysterious fire ability, something she has feared since childhood. Mirari becomes skeptical of trusting Fangbane when she realizes he is a mind reader.

Mirari returns home to the small town of Solarin without her brother Salathiel, who went missing prior to the Althaean Siege. She physically confronts two arrogant nobles harassing an old lady, defending the her despite being born in a rival empire. Later, Mirari finds a large man waiting for her. Neo Xanth, a skilled fighter from the Althaean Siege, informs her about Lord Fangbane's project called the Knights and its aims to unite fighters from Althaea, Minetta, and Valenia to respond to crises. She also learns of Gaven's upcoming trial, where he faces a likely death sentence for treason during the siege.

Region Leader Gaven stands before six councilors at the Hearth. He claims to have no memory of the battle or the lives he took. Some advocate for his execution, while others question his control over his actions. Mirari reaches out to Fangbane, proposing that she will join the Knights in exchange for Gaven's life. Fangbane agrees and requests that the Council allow Gaven to live under his supervision and assist in assembling the Knights. The Council agrees, and Mirari and Gaven arrange to reside at Fangbane's Knight's Estate.

Fangbane and his wife, Starlight, meet with Gaven and Suzan, a member of the Council, to discuss the plans for the Knights project. Gaven expresses skepticism about the feasibility and necessity of the project, especially after Fangbane reveals that he has already recruited Region Leader Shiba Zabato and his partner, Neo. A few days later, Mirari encounters a lost Althaean soldier named Haynes in the streets of Solarin. She offers her assistance, despite wary gazes from the locals, and later accompanies him to a tavern filled with Althaean soldiers. Gaven, their leader, unexpectedly arrives at the tavern and recognizes Mirari. Tensions rise between them as Gaven tries to protect her from his drunk, rowdy men, but she resists his attempts and asserts her independence.

Days later, Mirari arrives at Fangbane's estate and joins the other Knights for dinner. Looking down at her status, Mirari was met with unwelcoming glares from Shiba and Gaven. Gaven questions Mirari's abilities, and they agree to have an evaluation right away. They engage in a sparring session in the courtyard, where Mirari's fighting style surprises Gaven. However, she reveals her fear of hurting him due to a past incident

involving fire. Gaven criticizes her reckless approach but agrees to train her if she proves herself. They decide to start training the next day.

Analysis

Prejudice is a central theme in the narrative, showcasing the harsh realities of a world divided by empires and deep-rooted biases. Prejudice is evident in the treatment of Mirari. As an Althaean leader, Gaven instantly dismisses her because she appears to be a Minettan peasant. Mirari's decision to conceal her true identity as Roselyn Hale highlights the discrimination she faces based on her birthplace and social standing. Furthermore, Mirari's physical confrontation with arrogant nobles who insult an old lady demonstrates her willingness to challenge injustice and defend those who are mistreated, regardless of their background. This incident serves as a powerful example of standing up against prejudice and defending the honor and dignity of others.

Gaven faces injustice when he is framed for leading the Althaean Siege. Regardless of the facts, the Council’s verdicts were influenced on a personal level. For example, the two Councilors of Minetta, Dareh and Novinha, desired to see the Althaean leader executed. Meanwhile, Councilor Suzan, who had personally trained Gaven and raised him to be her successor, pleads for his innocence. This portrayal of a biased judicial system reflects the unequal treatment of individuals based on their perceived allegiance and status. The novel showcases a world shaped by division and bias, inviting readers to reflect on the consequences of such prejudices and the potential for change and unity in the face of adversity.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapters 7 - 11

Summary

During Mirari's training, Gaven criticizes her fighting style but acknowledges the benefits of her unpredictability. He tries to inquire more about her background, but Mirari deflects his questions. Additionally, Mirari is regularly subjected to abuse from Shiba, who belittles her lack of fighting skills. Meanwhile, Fangbane struggles to find more fighters willing to join the Knights. In an attempt to build a positive reputation, he sends Shiba, Neo, and Mirari on their first mission to deal with bandits in Evaleen, a northern region of Althaea. The Knights successfully capture the bandits and return the stolen topaz. However, Mirari grows angry, realizing that her role is not about performing good deeds but merely impressing and winning favor from nobles.

Another fight occurs between Shiba and Mirari, but is interrupted by a young celta princess named Hime Alta. Shiba recognizes her as the sister of his late betrothed, Mecate Alta. Hime expresses her desire to join the Knights. Dorain Kampht, a skilled aegis and the son of Councilor Dareh, appears and duels Hime for the position. Although Hime loses, Fangbane decides to recruit both of them into the Knights. With the addition of Hime and Dorain, the team of Knights grows closer. However, Mirari distances herself from the group, longing for her previous life and still mourning her missing brother. Starlight, the medic who regularly examines the Knights, expresses concern to Fangbane about Mirari's deteriorating state and Gaven's frequent panic attacks. Starlight and Fangbane discuss the unresolved memories of Mirari and Gaven and consider the possibility of them helping each other.

Analysis

The theme of prejudice continues with Shiba's initial attitude towards Gaven, given their positions as region leaders of rival empires. However, this prejudice fades when Shiba falls in love with Mecate, an Althaean princess. His feelings for her break down the barriers of prejudice, leading him to develop a soft spot for Hime, Mecate's sister.

Similarly, prejudice is evident in Dorain, who immediately undermines Hime and underestimates Gaven's power solely because they are Althaean. However, he is taken aback by Hime's kind nature and Gaven's willingness to train him, despite Dareh’s previous desire to execute Gaven. Dorain’s prejudice stems from Dareh, who likely instilled biased views in his son. Dorain's preconceived notions hinder his ability to recognize the true worth and capabilities of Hime and Gaven, thus highlighting the destructive nature of prejudice. Over time, Dorain develops a fondness for Hime and sees Gaven as more of a father figure than Dareh ever was to him.

The novel emphasizes the profound impact of grief on individuals' lives and explores the complexities of human emotions in the face of trauma and loss. Grief is a prevalent

theme throughout these chapters, particularly in Mirari, who secretly grapples with anger and confusion over her missing brother. Her grief manifests as disassociation from others and a sense of feeling out of place among a team of skilled fighters. Additionally, Gaven's post-traumatic stress disorder serves as a testament to the emotional complexities faced by individuals who have experienced war-related trauma. Gaven is burdened by guilt over the lives he took during the Althaean Siege and frustrated by his inability to recall those events. However, unlike Mirari, Gaven conceals his emotions, refusing to show weakness, and his mental state remains unknown to anyone except Fangbane and Starlight. His struggles underscore the enduring effects of trauma and the challenges of navigating everyday life while grappling with emotional wounds.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapters 12 - 18

Summary

In part two of the novel, Gaven debriefs with his second-in-command, Erel Estel, about the state of his empire in his absence. He also asks her about some of the cases Fangbane had assigned to him, including one involving an organization called the Blessed. Erel warns Gaven about the dangers of getting involved with the secret organization and explains that they are a society that fantasizes about a different world structure, similar to the Knights. Despite his discovery, Gaven keeps this information to himself and rallies the Knights to handle a protest in Oban.

Assigned to protect the Bishop from Altha Hills against a crowd of angry protestors in Oban, the Knights meet Laikos, the Bishop's first acolyte, as well as Region Leader Hilda and Commander Heisa of Oban. They successfully escort the Bishop and apprehend the assassins but are shocked when Heisa turns against them. She later claims not to have control over her actions, similar to how Gaven lost control during the Althaean Siege. The assassins mysteriously killed themselves before they could be interrogated.

As Gaven continues training Mirari, he notices her distracted state of mind. He orders her to take a break from training and missions to study the Paragon's Conduct. Meanwhile, Dorain learns that Hime was forced to return to Altha Hills due to her father’s disapproval of her joining the Knights. Gaven, as a fellow Althaean, tries to defuse the situation with Hime’s father, the High Priest, but the High Priest undermines Gaven and guilts him over the Althaean Siege and Mecate's death. Shiba, more reserved than ever, refrains from arguing with the High Priest and instead collaborates with Gaven to expose the Bishop over stolen gems he had found. Outraged by the Bishop’s lies, the High Priest arrests him and understands why Hime is determined to seek justice as Mecate did. He grants her permission to join the Knights.

Meanwhile, Fangbane receives a letter from the Council expressing their disapproval of the Knights' vigilante actions and requesting their disbandment. Gaven questions Fangbane about his connection to the Blessed and the true nature of the Knights. Fangbane denies any association between the Knights and the Blessed, emphasizing that their purpose is to stop such evil. He also reveals that he only defended Gaven during his trial because Mirari struck a deal with him, and he needs Mirari, believing that she possesses a unique power that could be crucial in the fight against the Blessed.

Analysis

Hime and Dorain share a deep understanding of the challenges posed by toxic family ties. Dorain sympathizes with Hime's difficult family situation and encourages her to confront her father, drawing from his own experiences. However, Hime grapples with the

repercussions of defying her position and duty as a princess. She carries the weight of Mecate's death and feels torn between her longing for independence and her sense of responsibility. Despite their different circumstances, both characters share a common desire to break free from the constraints imposed by their family ties and forge their own identities.

Another noteworthy development is the personality switch between Gaven and Shiba. Shiba, previously characterized by violence and arrogance, now employs reason and compassion when dealing with the High Priest. On the other hand, Gaven seeks to challenge the High Priest in a duel, driven by a desire to assert his dominance and defend his honor. This role reversal serves to highlight the growth of their characters and the evolution of their relationship. Both characters carry the guilt of failing to prevent Mecate's death; however, instead of assigning blame, they set aside their grievances and collaborate in the present, driven by their commitment to do better for Mecate's sister, Hime. This partnership exemplifies their growth as characters, as they put away their rivalry and prioritize improving their present selves rather than dwelling on the past.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapters 19 - 21

Summary

Part three opens with Sokal, a young trainee in a military camp, struggling with his physical limitations and mind-reading ability. He finds a girl named Fareeha stealing herbs, who encourages him to use his gift to help others, but Sokal hesitates due to his duty to his father. Aulus, an empath, attacks Sokal, claiming that his power is dangerous and he is fated to die. Falsely accused of Aulus' death, Sokal cuts off his ears as punishment and flees with Fareeha. They rename themselves Fangbane and Starlight.

In the present, Gaven and Fangbane discuss their plans to keep the Knights despite the Council's disapproval. Gaven accompanies Mirari to retrieve lumapetals in a dangerous cave filled with griffins. During the journey, Gaven tests Mirari on the Paragon's Conduct and guides her towards a path of self-improvement. Impressed, he invites her to become his partner, a special bond that connects two fighters and merges their strengths.

Analysis

Sokal's journey showcases his growth and acceptance of his abilities. Initially, Sokal is a struggling trainee, haunted by his past mistakes and uncertain about his place in the world. However, through his interactions with Fareeha and the support she provides, he begins to embrace his powers and the potential to help others.

During Gaven and Mirari’s journey, they reveal vulnerabilities and regrets, reflecting on their personal transformations and current struggles. Mirari faces multiple challenges throughout the story, including grief over her missing brother, struggles to match the physical prowess of her fellow knights, and the pressure to prove herself within their ranks. Gaven helps her understand that strength extends beyond physical capabilities by recognizing the power of willpower and determination. He explains that these qualities, initially overshadowed by her doubts, are her greatest assets, making her essential to the Knights.

At the beginning of the novel, Gaven dismisses Mirari due to her perceived lack of physical strength. However, his perspective gradually shifts as he witnesses her inner strength during their training and mentorship. Gaven has long objected to the idea of having a partner, but choosing Mirari as his partner signifies a significant milestone in Gaven's character development and represents a special connection beyond friendship. His choice showcases his growth in trusting others, overcoming past traumas, and embracing vulnerability within his relationship with Mirari.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapter 22 - 27

Summary

Mirari joins Shiba and Neo in providing supplies to a starving community. She intervenes in a dispute between Shiba and two travelers, one of whom is her cousin, Lucan Hale. Lucan does not seem to recognize Mirari, and she continues to hide her identity from him. Back at the estate, Lucan expresses interest in joining the Knights, and Fangbane asks Lucan to duel Mirari to evaluate his skills. The fight takes an unexpected turn when Lucan accidentally delivers a devastating blow to Mirari, leaving her unconscious and in critical condition.

Mirari wakes up two days later, unable to recall most of her memory. At the same time, Starlight is in labor and delivers baby Sarkan. Unable to find a cure for Mirari's memory loss, Lucan seeks out Kylah Kein, a powerful alchemist who also treats Lucan's rare condition. Kylah experiments on Mirari, and Mirari's memory is gradually restored. Later, Lucan confronts Mirari about her true identity, and they share a happy reunion. Mirari tells Lucan everything that happened, including her relationship with Gaven. Lucan urges her to tell Gaven the truth.

Part three concludes with Neo delivering supplies to Kylah as a reward for helping Mirari. Although initially guarded, Kylah is surprised when Neo reveals that he knows she is the Witch of Aten, a spellcaster wanted for poisoning the Tribe of Paragons and igniting a war in Valenia. Instead of turning her in, Neo offers his protection. He helps fix her dilapidated home, and their interaction ends with a hint of mutual attraction.

Analysis

Kylah and Neo exemplify a unique perspective on forgiveness and understanding, setting them apart from Gaven and Shiba, who also hail from rival territories. Looking past preconceived judgments, Kylah and Neo do not hold any grudges against each other and approach one another with open minds. Their ability to transcend the stereotypes and prejudices imposed by their origins reflects their appreciation for individuality.

Kylah carries a burden of guilt for her involvement in a past tragedy, leading her to choose a life of self-imposed exile. Similar to Sokal, Fangbane's former self, Kylah sees her existence as a curse, convinced that anyone who gets close to her will suffer. Consequently, she is hesitant to accept Neo's assistance. Neo, on the other hand, embodies compassion and empathy, encouraging Kylah to release her past. Neo's character acts as a catalyst for Kylah's potential redemption and transformation, challenging the notion of being solely defined by past actions and opening the door to growth and change.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapters 28 - 31

Summary

The Knights' reputation spreads across the empires, inciting a desire for change and leading to debates within the Council regarding their fate. Susan visits the Knights, informing them that Gaven's probation has ended. Fangbane is aware that it is a ploy to dissolve the Knights, but despite his suspicions, Gaven returns to Althaea Main immediately. Upon arriving, Erel warns him that empaths were searching for him, people with the ability to read one's emotions as well as the ability to project their emotions onto others. The men deliver a letter demanding excessive resources, but the letter was signed with a seal representing the religion of Moranity that was identical to the Bishop's letter. Gaven believes that the men may be from the Blessed. Erel describes one of the men, which Gaven identifies as Laikos. Erel knows Laikos as the Mora who assassinated her people, the Belligmn Tribe. Urgently, Gaven rushes back to inform the Knights of his discovery.

Susan pays another surprise visit to Fangbane's manor, revealing that several regional leaders have fallen ill due to an unidentified poison. The severity of the situation becomes clear, and Gaven arrives to share his encounter with a suspicious letter from Laikos. Shiba discloses that he received the same letter, and when Hime suspects that the high-class poison was transcribed from Mora scripture, they believe the culprit is an aster spellcaster.

The Knights search for Kylah, the spellcaster they suspect of poisoning the region. Despite Gaven's distrust of Kylah, Neo and Fangbane believe in Kylah's innocence and continue the search. Guided by Dorian's kestrel, they discover Kylah held hostage in a hidden cave. As they free her, they are confronted by Laikos, who confesses to being the true culprit behind the poisoning. Laikos demands the recipe for a deadlier poison from Kylah, and under duress and to spare the lives of the Knights, she provides it. Laikos uses his mind-controlling abilities to immobilize the Knights and escapes.

Back at the Knights' Estate, Gaven shares confidential information about the Blessed. He connects Laikos to the manipulation he experienced during the Althaean Siege and unveils the extent of Laikos' empathic powers and the imminent danger they face. While some Knights remain skeptical of Kylah, she defends herself, claiming she had no choice, and she too wants to stop Laikos before he eliminates regional leaders and the Council in his vision of a new society. Fangbane, Starlight, Gaven, Mirari, and Lucan remain at the estate to track down Laikos, while the rest of the Knights head to Solarin, Mirari's trading town, in search of herbs to craft more antidotes.

Analysis

The Council's control over the Knights, and Gaven as a regional leader, highlights the pervasive nature of manipulation within the power structure. This theme of power and manipulation underscores the complexity of human relationships and raises ethical questions about its use.

Despite having the chance to return to his normal life, Gaven chooses to fight alongside the Knights, despite his initial reluctance. This act of sacrifice demonstrates his willingness to set aside personal desires and dedicate himself to a greater cause. Unlike the Council, he recognizes the value of their mission and the positive impact they can make on the world.

The Knights face their most formidable enemy, Laikos, a powerful adversary whose actions threaten peace and harmony. Despite seemingly insurmountable odds, the Knights remain steadfast in their determination to stop him at any cost. The theme of good versus evil reflects the timeless struggle between opposing forces, where the forces of good must confront and ultimately triumph over the darkness that seeks to engulf the world.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Chapters 32 - 35

Summary

Shiba, Neo, Dorain, and Hime accompany Kylah to Solarin, gathering the necessary ingredients to mass-produce the antidote to Laikos' poison. Mirari stays behind at the estate to assist Gaven and Lucan in tracking Laikos. During a meal in the dining hall, Gaven and Lucan are poisoned. Starlight quickly administers Kylah's antidote, and Mirari escorts her and baby Sarkan to safety. Meanwhile, Fangbane searches for the intruder and finds himself confronted by several masked men.

Outside, Mirari and Starlight encounter Laikos, who attempts to persuade Mirari to join the Blessed. Initially entranced by his words, Mirari quickly regains her senses and fights Laikos. Lucan, Gaven, and Fangbane rush to their aid, but Laikos manages to escape.

The Knights regroup at the Hearth, where they suspect Laikos will launch his next attack. Their worst fears are confirmed when they discover lifeless guards and a swarm of masked individuals. Engaged in fierce combat, the Knights clash with the masked foes and eventually locate the Councilors in the Grand Hall, where Laikos has already spread his poison. In a climactic battle, the Knights vanquish Laikos. The antidotes are administered, and with their lives saved, the Council recognizes the true worth of the Knights. They grant the Knights permission to continue their operations. With their hearts filled with satisfaction and fulfillment, the Knights embrace the path that lies ahead.

Analysis

The eternal struggle between good and evil is particularly pronounced in this section. The characters race against the clock to stop Laikos, who represents the embodiment of evil as the leader of the Blessed, from poisoning world leaders. The Knights adapt and work quickly in this high-pressure situation, showing their ability to work together despite coming from rival backgrounds. Their collective bravery and selflessness are evident in their united efforts to defend one another and combat the forces of evil. Their unwavering dedication to their cause and their willingness to risk their lives exemplify their heroic nature. Ultimately, good triumphs over evil, and the Council finally recognizes that the Knights are a necessity for peace.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Epilogue

Summary

Mirari sheaths her father's sword, stepping outside in resolute and embracing a fresh start. As the bloodshed is being cleaned up, she recognizes that her mission is to safeguard the innocent and avert any more needless suffering caused by the Blessed. Shiba provokes another altercation, but Mirari emerges victorious. He claims to be distracted by a glow in her eyes, which she dismisses. Yet, deep down, Mirari fears that her dormant power is resurfacing, and she has yet to control it.

Analysis

Mirroring the prologue, the novel concludes in another first-person perspective, this time through Mirari’s eyes. She has grown mentally and physically, as shown when she confronts and successfully wins against her bully, Shiba. She also comes to accept Salathiel’s death, marking the end of her grieving. The color in her eyes shifting color indicates that her flame ability could resurface at any moment. Many questions remain by the end of the novel, to be answered in the next installment, including the source to her mysterious ability.

Discussion Question 1

Discussion Question 2

Discussion Question 3

Vocabulary

Characters

Mirari Zanette

Mirari is a resilient young woman who possesses a mysterious fire ability. She acts unconventionally and has an unwavering desire to protect others in the pursuit of justice. She fights with a sword and has limited use of wind kore. Before joining the Knights, Mirari was a merchant and a noble girl on the run. Though she lacks connections and military training, her willpower makes her invaluable to the Knights.

Gaven Zanette

Gaven, also known as the Valiant Tiger, is the regional leader of Althaea Main and a skilled paragon warrior. He is arguably the strongest fighter among all three empires, excelling with his fighting prowess and earth abilities. He is a multi-dimensional character, initially portrayed as a headstrong and ambitious fighter driven by loyalty and honor, then gradually revealed to be complex as he struggles with guilt and betrayal from past events, all of which he keeps to himself.

Fangbane

Fangbane, formerly known as Sokal, is an enigmatic character whose age and appearance are a mystery to those around him. He dons a mask, concealing both his identity and his mutilations. He possesses the extraordinary power of mind reading, a gift he often sees as a burden due to the troubles it has brought upon him.

Shiba Zabato

Shiba, the Shadow Soldier, is the regional leader of Avon and a formidable umbra. His specialization lies in harnessing the power of shadows. He serves as a compelling mirror image of his rival, Gaven, as they both possess a competitive nature and share similar duties in their respective empires. After the loss of his betrothed, Mecate, Shiba succumbed to aggression, pushing away those closest to him. However, beneath this exterior, Shiba harbors an unwavering dedication to his fellow knights. He channels his aggression to empower his allies and equip them for the harsh realities of both war and life.

Neo Xanth

Neo, also known as the Silver Fist, is Shiba's partner and the strongest known brawler in the Alliance. His parents migrated from Valenia when a war brewed between the Tribe of Paragons and the Tribe of Celtas. Neo willingly devotes himself to the service of the

Zabato family. He is a gentle and jolly giant, serving as the only person capable of tempering Shiba's aggression. Though he may not be the sharpest tool in the shed, his purity is what allows him to get along with anyone.

Dorain Kampht

Dorain, one of the youngest Knights and a top student from his academy, possesses exceptional skills with the bow. Accompanying him is his faithful kestrel named Kea. Despite his immaturity and rebellious nature, Dorain's youthful passion and willingness to take risks are unwavering. He refuses to succumb to the expectations and limitations imposed by his father, Councilor Dareh. He embodies a profound longing for personal freedom and independence, striving to establish his own unique identity beyond the confines of his family's reputation.

Hime Alta

Hime, the youngest member of the Knights and a princess of Altha Hills, possesses a shy and gentle nature, as well as exceptional healing abilities. She strongly believes in creating peace through words, which arguably makes her the most mature among the Knights. Hime carries the weight of Mecate's loss and the immense responsibilities that come with being next in line for the throne. Despite these burdens, Hime aspires to follow in her sister's footsteps as an ambassador of peace. Recognizing the limitations imposed by her confined kingdom, Hime embarks on a journey far from home, driven by a strong desire to evoke change by joining the Knights.

Lucan Hale

Lucan is described as a tall, humble businessman with a photographic memory. Though he controls most of the power and resources in the Alliance, Lucan is soft-spoken and has great respect for authority. His unusual paleness comes from a rare condition that makes his skin sensitive to sunlight, and he manages this symptom through medications prescribed by Kylah. His natural talents make him not only the most suitable heir to the Hale's innovation business but also an ideal fighter for the Knights.

Kylah Kein

Kylah is a talented alchemist known as the Witch of Aten. She bears a crest on her hand that marks her as an aster spellcaster, an elite type of celta. Though she inherently possesses rare fire kore, she can wield multiple elements and draws most of her power through a gem bracelet believed to carry the power of Aten, the God of Elements. Kylah inadvertently aided the Tribe of Celtas in poisoning the Tribe of Paragons, igniting a war. This guilt weighs heavily on her, and she lives in constant danger, fearing for her life.

Starlight

Starlight, formerly known as Fareeha, is portrayed as a protective and loving mother, willing to do whatever it takes to keep others safe. She is a talented healer who shines with confidence and encouraged Fangbane to join her in her quest to make a difference in a world plagued by injustice.

Laikos

Laikos is a charismatic antagonist and an empath who possesses a seductive calmness that can easily sway others to his cause. His appearance is distinguished by his long hair, alluring complexion, and flowing robes. Despite facing opposition, Laikos believes he is a messenger of the Gods, who sent him to create a better world where hierarchy doesn't exist.

Symbols and Symbolism

Partnership

Partnership takes the form of a magical element in this novel and is a significant symbol throughout the trilogy. The partnership bond, sealed by the Paragon's Conduct, enables two fighters to become one. The bond not only merges physical strength but also encompasses an intimate connection, allowing partners to physically sense their counterpart's extreme emotions. While most partnerships are forged for strength, the strongest bonds transcend each other's weaknesses. This is evident in Shiba and Neo's partnership, whose contrasting personalities form a harmonious collaboration. Gaven has long objected to the idea of having a partner, but choosing Mirari signifies a level of unquestionable trust and a special connection beyond friendship. His choice showcases his growth in trusting others and embracing vulnerability within his relationship with Mirari.

The Knights

The Knights symbolize unity, honor, and the fight against evil. They represent a group of skilled individuals from rival empires who have united to protect the realm and its people from threats like the Blessed. The theme of honor is intertwined with chivalry, as the Knights embody these ideals in their pursuit of justice, protection of the weak, and dedication to a noble cause. Their presence serves as a beacon of hope, showing that dedicated individuals can make a difference, even in the face of overwhelming odds. Together, they form a radiant light that upholds justice and combats darkness.

Stars

Stars are a recurring theme in *Knights of the Alliance*. They are often associated with guidance, hope, and aspirations, representing a goal or ideal that characters strive for throughout the story. One notable example of this symbolism can be observed in Starlight and Fangbane's story. When they embark on their journey to pursue justice, they choose their new names by looking up at the stars. This act symbolizes their desire to align themselves with something greater than themselves, to seek a higher purpose, and make a positive impact on the world. Laikos, on the other hand, frequently gazes at the stars and believes himself to be a messenger of the Gods. His conviction in his divine purpose fuels his actions and goals. By looking at the stars, Laikos finds solace, strength, and reassurance that he is on the right path to create a better society. The stars symbolize his unwavering faith and serve as a constant reminder of his mission to bring about change by eliminating prominent leaders.

Mirari's Sword

Mirari's sword, once belonging to her father, carries both sentimental and metaphorical weight in her journey. Despite abandoning her family name, she carries and cherishes the sword, representing her connection to her roots and the values instilled by her family. Through the sword, Mirari maintains a sense of identity, carrying her family's spirit as she embarks on a new path as a Knight under a new identity. Moreover, as the weakest Knight, she struggles to prove herself worthy of being a part of the Knights. Mirari grows throughout the narrative, and with it, her perceived worthiness to wield such a fine sword.

Sokal's Ears

By mutilating himself in such a drastic manner, Sokal symbolically punishes himself, not only for failing to prevent Aulus' death but also for his perceived shortcomings as a potential warrior and for shame to his family name. His ears serve as symbols of the voices around him and others' perceptions, overpowering his own voice, as well as the pain and challenges associated with his unique ability, which has strained his relationship with his father and those around him. Sokal's ears represent an identity he wishes to shed as he grapples with inner demons and strives for redemption. This act of self-mutilation can be viewed as a sacrifice and a path to renewal.

Settings

The Alliance

Thousands of years ago, the land was under one political system. Over the centuries, as towns and cities grew, society was plagued with poverty, conflict, and competition for resources. Fighting classes began to develop, groups of skilled men and women who studied combat honorably defended their homelands. Fighters who made peace with neighboring towns formed larger regions and appointed their strongest members as Region Leaders. These region leaders formed armies to defend and govern the towns in their area.

However, these militarized states only led to larger conflicts between neighboring regions. Rather than developing trade and prosperity, this constant state of feudal warring brought only poverty and death. Some region leaders were desperate to find ways to help the impoverished, while others ruthlessly sought the power to rule and fought to claim more territory.

In a desperate effort to end the constant bloodshed, a great truce was called. A ruling Council was created to make unified decisions and hold authority over all region leaders. The land was then divided into three empires: Althaea, Minetta, and Valenia, marking the birth of the Alliance.

Althaea

Althaeans uphold the belief that only the strongest fighters are fit to rule a region. As a result, region leaders often change hands, if not for glory, then for the scarce resources across its dry lands. Althaea’s economic prosperity comes from minerals and the inventions crafted from hastals, and often comes at the cost of the common people. They are called “flatties," describing them as two flat sides of a coin that mocks their mischievous, two-faced nature. Althaea’s regions include Altha Hills, Evaleen, Axillaire, Nanaka, Ophallen, and the capital region of Althaea Main.

Minetta

The freshest and most abundant resources are produced in Minetta. Anyone seeking to raise a happy, stable family will settle among one of the many forests and harbor towns in the region, often taking up jobs as farmers or merchants. Their culture includes using feathers to garnish their fashion trends, earning them the slur “featherpits." Minetta’s regions include Saon, Oban, and the capital region of Avon.

Valenia

The people of Valenia have long-established peace with each other, eliminating the need for regions and instead operate as small tribal communities. While Althaeans and Minettans continue to fight over resources, Valenians have remained laissez-faire, focusing their efforts on harmonizing with mother nature. Money is rarely used as tribes openly share and work together. They live laid-back lives and sit on unimaginable wealth, earning the slur “swines." The four main tribes are the four fighting classes: Aegis, Umbra, Celta, and Paragon.

Fighter Class

Fighters are trained in one of four styles: Aegis, Umbra, Celta, and Paragon. Aegis are bow users who are in touch with nature and often have an animal companion. Umbras are mixed-weapon fighters who excel at self-defense techniques. Celtas are comprised of healers and spellcasters who are masters of kore. Paragons are brawlers and warriors who use swords, spears, and other close-combat weaponry.

Religion

It is a common belief that all life departs to either the spiritual world of Nagama or Inferna. If the Gods do not deem the soul worthy to join them in Nagama, they are sent to one of the seven flaming gates of Inferna. Orists believe in one deity: Oris, the God of Judgment. He is primarily worshiped by Althaeans and celtas. Quintists, common among Minettans, worship only the five main Gods and Goddesses. Plethorists acknowledge the existence of hundreds of Gods and Goddesses, but a tribe in Valenia will often choose to praise one or two deities.

Technology

The story incorporates various elements of technology throughout its narrative, creating a unique blend of futuristic advancements and medieval-inspired settings. Inventions are made through raw crystals containing energy known as hāstals. Hāstals are enhanced with elemental energy, known as kore, to create new technology. Some notable inventions made by the Hale family include a communication stone known as the comstōne and glowing pebbles that replace candlelight, known as lumastōnes. Some weapons incorporate futuristic elements when the wielder fuses their weapon with their kore.

Themes and Motifs

Coming Of Age

Mirari and Gaven's paths diverge as they face the complexities of adulthood, revealing the challenges of growing up. The narrative emphasizes the loss of innocence as Mirari and Gaven become fundamentally different individuals, to the extent that they no longer recognize each other when they reunite in adulthood. This coming-of-age exploration showcases the profound influence of personal growth on relationships and reminds us of the inevitable changes that accompany the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Identity

Throughout the story, several characters undergo journeys of self-discovery, learning more about themselves and their true potential. Shiba and Neo, for instance, find a way to honor the memory of their deceased comrade, Mecate, by embracing her passion for peace and carrying on her legacy through joining the Knights. Hime, Dorain, and Lucan undergo transformations as they break free from the expectations and identities imposed upon them by their family names. They carve out their own paths, defining themselves on their own terms and discovering their unique strengths and abilities. Kylah, initially reluctant to engage with the world, eventually recognizes the potential she holds to make a difference.

Additionally, Fangbane (Sokal), Starlight (Fareeha), and Mirari (Roselyn) live under false names. Their chosen names symbolize their journey of self-discovery and leaving behind their old selves. "Fangbane" comes from an old fable of a boy who bravely takes the venom of a serpent to save his village. It reflects Sokal's determination and commitment to protect others. "Starlight" represents Fareeha's resilience, her ability to shine amidst adversity, and her role as a guiding light for Sokal. "Mirari" is named after the Goddess of Miracles, as she is not only a survivor of many adversities but also a beacon of hope to those who cross her path. This is especially true for Gaven, who had lost most faith in humanity and finds comfort in the truth in Mirari.

Gaven also lives under a false identity; however, he did not choose a new name. It speaks to his deep-rooted belief that he is still the same person, regardless of his past or the hardships he has endured. He sees his transformation as growth rather than a complete change of identity, emphasizing his strong connection to his Althaean self. This theme of identity will be further explored in the second book, delving into Gaven's struggle to reconcile his past and present selves.

Grief

Grief is explored through Mirari, who is deeply affected by the disappearance and presumed death of her brother, Salathiel. Her relationships suffer as she struggles to

cope on her own, and her ability to improve physically is hindered by her emotional state. The story highlights the delicate balance between seeking closure and finding inner peace in the face of profound loss. By the end of the novel, Mirari realizes that her grief and desire for vengeance have consumed her for too long. With support, guidance, and empathy from the new friendships she has forged, she learns to honor her brother's memory not through relentless pursuit for answers but by finding peace within herself.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a central theme in the novel, exemplified through nearly every character in the story. For example, Mirari faces discrimination based on her social standing and birthplace, while Gaven experiences biased judgment in the judicial system. The narrative paints a stark picture of a world torn apart by three warring empires, marked by deep-seated animosity and fueled by derogatory slurs like "flatty" and "featherpit." However, the Knights strive to dismantle prejudice, rallying together to demonstrate the power of unity and the potential for collective achievement that far surpasses the limitations of a divided society.

Power and Corruption

The novel explores the corrupting influence of power, particularly in the realm of political intrigue. Various factions, including the Council, regional leaders, and the Blessed, pursue power at the expense of ethics. The authority of the Council is marred by personal interests and hidden agendas, underscoring the susceptibility of those in positions of authority to corruption. Additionally, internal power conflicts within these factions illustrate the perils of uncontrolled power, such as the Blessed, leading to manipulation and moral compromises.

Styles

Point of View

Knights of the Alliance is written in the third-person omniscient perspective, a style that is particularly well-suited for a multi-protagonist narrative. The Prologue and Epilogue are written in the first-person perspective. This writing approach immerses readers in the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of various characters, offering a comprehensive understanding of the story's events and its diverse cast. It allows the author to effortlessly transition between different perspectives, unveiling the motivations, conflicts, and internal struggles of each character.

Language and Meaning

What sets this novel apart is its unique blend of modern and medieval language, which strikes a balance between simplicity and sophistication. The world merges contemporary expressions and references with elements reminiscent of the medieval era and is crafted to be easily accessible and enjoyable for both young adult and new adult audiences. A world map and glossary are provided for the terminologies and religions of the world.

Structure

Overall, the novel follows a chronological structure. *Knights of the Alliance* has fast-paced action sequences that propel the narrative forward with mystery and suspense. It also weaves together the complexities of its characters into one central plot. Each character possesses their own unique set of motivations, desires, and conflicts that come together in one central plot. This interplay between characters adds depth and richness to the novel, making it more than just a series of events but a layered exploration of human nature.

Quotes

Fear must be induced among others, or disorder is certain to follow.
-- Dareh (chapter 3)

Importance: Dareh speaks from a common perspective among the Council and regional leaders, establishing the political conflict in the novel. Many leaders choose to rule under fear, but other leaders, such as Gaven, choose to rule with compassion. Gaven sets a fine example for the Knights and others who also seek change.

When you disagree, where do you draw the line in an area that is so gray?
-- Fangbane (chapter 4)

Importance: Gaven claims that Fangbane wants to fix a problem that doesn't exist, and establishing the Knights to become a mediator among the three empires will cause more harm than good. However, Fangbane argues that in their current system, the regions and empires are hardly working together at all, as they do not consider the welfare of the other. While there may be peace, it is lurking a gray area.

There was a sense of duty to protect her, for whatever reason. Perhaps out of his own guilt for failing to protect his loved ones when he was younger. She resembled innocence, a time when life was simple...
-- Gaven (chapter 6)

Importance: Gaven has a hidden and complex past. On the surface, he is harsh on Mirari and mocks her lack of fighting skills. His actions show that he does not want to associate with her, but he has an inner desire to protect her. This quote shows that there are layers to his personality and that he not only carries a good heart but also some form of inner guilt that drives it. The source of this guilt remains a mystery to the reader until Book 2.

Fear is often the stepchild of ambition. The time you spend here may help drive that ambition. I sense that something very powerful motivates someone like Gaven to push himself to the limit. That might just be you.
-- Fangbane (chapter 7)

Importance: Gaven and Mirari had remained hostile and secretive toward each other since they reunited at the beginning of the novel. However, as a mind reader, Fangbane can sense that they are both striving to protect each other in different ways. In this quote, Mirari is afraid of hurting Gaven with her unusual fire ability. Fangbane is hinting that Gaven also carries a similar fear, but instead of letting it hold him back, he lets fear drive his ambition.

It's not exactly Justice. But look at it this way. There are four fewer bandits on the road.
-- Neo (chapter 8)

Importance: Shiba, Neo, and Mirari successfully capture bandits and return the stolen gems to the region leader. However, Mirari is heartbroken when she realizes that those stolen gems will not be returned to the merchants. For Shiba and Neo, justice was served when the bandits were caught, and the rest lies in Region Leader Landon's hands. Mirari has a different definition of justice, and to her, the situation is not resolved until the merchant's goods are returned.

As a region leader, you don't want to tell another one how to do their job, especially if you're from a different empire. But that doesn't mean we have to sweep the issue under the rug.
-- Gaven (chapter 8)

Importance: Gaven explains that even the most powerful region leaders like Shiba and himself would not challenge other region leaders unless they want to provoke a war. Unlike Shiba, Gaven agrees with Mirari that true justice is not achieved until the whole problem has been resolved.

If there's one thing that differentiates paragons from everyone else, it's honor. Your greatest strength comes from your will. But to get there, you have to have trust. Trust in yourself and trust in each other. Whether or not you like your team, you have to trust them.
-- Gaven (chapter 8)

Importance: This quote shows that while Gaven may not like everyone he works with, he respects and trusts them unconditionally. He teaches these virtues to Mirari, hoping that it will not only make her a stronger fighter but also a better member of the team.

It's disappointing for anyone to believe that they can decide what's best for someone else.
-- Mecate (chapter 9)

Importance: Mecate is a princess from Althaea, Minetta's rival empire. To most Minettans, she is considered an enemy; however, she does not let those dissuade her love for her new home in Minetta. She considers herself one of them over her empire of birth. Though Mecate is not the first advocate for equality, she is undeniably a pioneer for the same justice that the Knights seek many years later.

Any intervention into our current system is good. Even thousand-year-old traditions need to adapt to modern times.
-- Laikos (chapter 14)

Importance: Laikos is referring to the establishment of the Council and its region leaders that have kept peace across the Alliance for generations. He shows his support for the Knights, hinting that he himself is against the traditional methods of the people he represents.

He could not be both Althaean and Minettan—the current system forced him to pick a side. And so, as much as she missed their childhood relationship, she had to let him be the Althaean he believed he was.
-- Mirari (chapter 15)

Importance: Gaven was born in Minetta but chose to live in Althaea, an act that was considered illegal at the time. In a society that discourages this, Mirari acknowledges that Gaven had to pick a side and thus chose to abandon his Minettan side, which shared a past with Mirari. Mirari wants to see Gaven succeed and live his dream; hence, she accepts that the past they had together should remain buried.

Courage, Justice, and Loyalty. They are more than words. To attain the three virtues, you need to go forward and never look back.
-- Gaven (chapter 21)

Importance: While Mirari was physically ready to become a Knight, Gaven argues that she was not yet fully a warrior. Gaven teaches Mirari the three virtues from the Paragon's Conduct, hoping that it will help her overcome the grief and doubt that hold her back from reaching her full potential.

All that mercy will be the death of you one day." "Perhaps. But it's the way Minettans live, and it's the honorable way, wouldn't you agree?
-- Gaven & Mirari (chapter 21)

Importance: Mirari would rather die being merciful than being dishonorable. Mirari knows that Gaven is born Minettan and is teasing him about a virtue that she knows he admires despite the act he puts up about having a dislike for Minettans.

She was stuck in the fantasy of their childhood selves, hoping that when they reunited everything would be exactly as it was a decade ago. She had come to terms that it was selfish of her to want to bring back both their former selves, which they had tried so hard to leave behind.
-- Mirari (chapter 21)

Importance: Mirari still looks at Gaven as if he were her childhood friend. However, Gaven had long abandoned this part of his identity in order to pursue his dream of becoming a region leader. She realizes that she cannot ask him to acknowledge her, as it would jeopardize his position. She accepts that the past they had together should remain buried.

You have reminded me that sheer willpower is all it takes to defy any level of physical strength. Lend me your willpower, and I'll lend you my strength.
-- Gaven (chapter 21)

Importance: Partners are typically chosen to make each other physically stronger. However, Gaven chose Mirari for her courage and willpower, which he deems more valuable than physical strength. The partner bind is recited by the lines: By my blade, I

hereby request your alliance to become my eyes and ears in the time of uncertainty! and By my blood, I swear to be your sword and shield in the battles to come!

Within each empire, there are region leaders who look at their neighbors and desire whatever they see.
-- Suzan (chapter 28)

Importance: Suzan explains that all council members and region leaders want to take power from each other. The Knights' ideals of equality pose a threat to their selfish desires and greed. This quote shows that while Suzan believes that peace and equality are necessary, it is an even greater threat to those who do not want to seek change or lose their upper hand.

We all have our destinies, written in the heavens for all to see. All those with the vision to see it, that is. But only a tiny fraction have this rare ability, this divine sight. You are one of those, child. One who is Blessed. It is people like us who shall rule these lands.
-- Laikos (chapter 33)

Importance: Laikos believes that fate is in the hands of the Gods and that a selected few are destined to carry out their wishes. He persuades Mirari to believe that she was destined to work with the Blessed, a destiny that she refuses to believe until Book 2 and doesn't fully realize its meaning until Book 3.

He began to wonder if he had truly lost his touch as a fortune teller, or if fate was now volatile, a force that could twist and challenge his predictions.
-- Fangbane (chapter 35)

Importance: Throughout the novel, it is not clear if Fangbane has predicted and/or manipulated most situations in his favor. The establishment of the Knights was a much harder endeavour than he had predicted, making him believe that the road ahead will be full of even greater challenges.