

Why Merlin?

**Blog for Penguin Young Readers Group
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Often, I'm asked why I chose to write about

Merlin—especially before he became the greatest wizard of all times, when he was just a troubled boy growing into his amazing powers, with no idea of his glorious future as the fabled mage of Camelot. Sure, he's a remarkable character, full of surprises, someone who is destined to live backward in time, change himself (or his future student, Arthur) into whatever creature he chooses. And sure, he's someone whose wisdom ultimately sprouts as much from his flaws, his dark side, as from his virtues and his dreams.

But when I started writing about him—18 years and 12 books ago, books that have now been translated into 15 languages—I knew that there was something more going on.

And I'm even more certain now. **What was that mysterious, compelling quality about this young man?** What made me want to put everything else aside to listen to his secret story and be his scribe?

It all started with a dream. Back in 1993, I dreamed of a boy, half-drowned and barely alive, who washed ashore on a strange rocky coastline. He was weak, nauseous, and terribly confused. Not to mention utterly lost and alone. But he was also something else: the boy who would someday be called Merlin, the original wizard who has inspired stories worldwide for over 1500 years.

Now, with the publication of the handsome new edition of the Merlin Saga—12 books which start with that lone, half-drowned boy and follow him through his many magical adventures in Fincayra and Avalon—I've come to know him very well. He's now a friend, a true confidant, and also a tough taskmaster.

And the twelfth and final volume, ***Merlin: The Book of Magic***, gives me a special sense of completion. This illustrated treasury is really the culmination of all Merlin's tales. Complete with maps and beautiful paintings, it reveals the secret backstories of nearly 150 amazing, bizarre, terrifying, and wondrous characters in the Merlin Saga. In its pages, you can learn surprising things like the terrible secret of the Haunted Marsh. The only fear of Avalon's greatest warrior. The amazing habits of nine

kinds of faeries. The origins of all the magical treasures. And the truth about Merlin's lost wings.

All these things—and more—pack this new book. And guess what? All these secrets come from my original, hand-scribbled notes that I kept during those 18 years. I hope you'll have just as much fun with this book as I have ... and find just as many surprises!

So why did I choose to write about Merlin? More than anything else, it's his love of Nature. As he learns the language of trees and rivers, flies as a hawk, hears the rumbling voices of ancient stones, and runs gracefully with the deer—he discovers that Nature is his best friend. His true healer. His ultimate source of magic and inspiration.

And here's the best part: After all these adventures, all these books—and now a movie in the works—the magic of Merlin is stronger than ever!

Can you feel the magic?