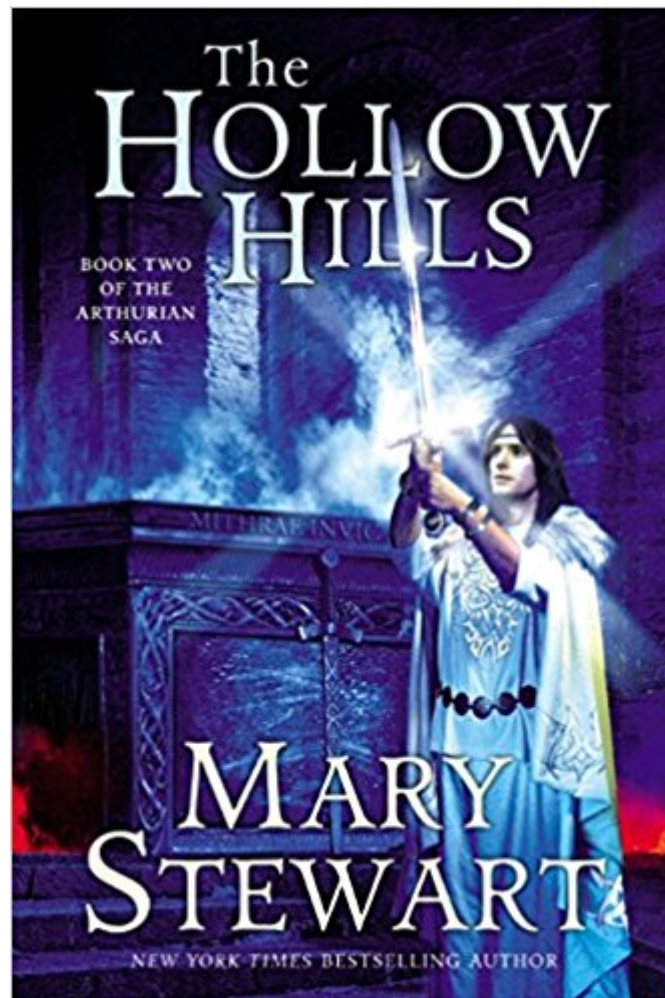




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The Hollow Hills (The Arthurian Saga, Book 2)



Synopsis

Keeping watch over the young Arthur Pendragon, the prince and prophet Merlin Ambrosius is haunted by dreams of the magical sword Caliburn, which has been hidden for centuries. When Uther Pendragon is killed in battle, the time of destiny is at hand, and Arthur must claim the fabled sword to become the true High King of Britain.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mart Stewart is one of the most widely read fiction writers of our time. The author of twenty novels, a volume of poetry, and three books for young readers, she is admired for both her contemporary stories of romantic suspense and her historical novels. Born in England, she has lived for many years in Scotland.

I have set myself the goal of reading Mary Stewart's Arthurian Saga series this summer. This is the second book in that series. Once again we see events through the eyes of Merlin the Enchanter, as he narrates the story for us. We begin with Merlin traveling through the Mediterranean area after having safely delivered the baby Arthur into the keeping of those who will protect and raise him over the next several years. When Arthur is six years old, Merlin feels the call to return to England and to take up his own task of teaching and protecting the child. He finds Arthur strong and healthy and growing into the kind of human being that he had hoped to see; the kind of man who can be a

brave, just, and benevolent king. The story of Arthur is so well-known, so ingrained in our cultural consciousness, that it seems pointless to spend space here on exposition. Stewart has taken those well-known facts, both historical and legendary, and has woven them into a tale of prophecy, magic, and valor. It's also a tale of jealousy, spite, hatred, and death. These latter characteristics are often traceable to the female characters in the story, who seldom come off as having a positive impact on events. Indeed, even the mention of one of the female characters often seems to portend shadows and disaster in the visions that Merlin has of the future. In relating the saga of Arthur and Merlin, Stewart does manage to reveal to us the diversity of people who made up the population of Britain in the days of - what was it? - the fifth century C.E.? If Arthur ever existed, and Stewart argues that there must at least have been a prototype, then that is probably the time period in which he lived. Of course, Arthur and his story have strong Welsh roots, but there were many other cultures that contributed to the lore. From the "Old Ones," the people of the forest, to the Picts, the Saxons, the descendants of Roman soldiers, and others, this was a very diverse group of people. Moreover, they worshiped many different gods and Merlin pays proper homage to them all. It was particularly interesting to me to see the way that the author integrated all of them into the story. Stewart tells the story in a relatively straightforward way, without trying to manufacture suspense. After all, we know what's going to happen before it happens, so why should she bother to try to fool us? Throughout the body of the work, the author gives ample foreshadowings of the conflicts and betrayals that are to come. Although Merlin is able to see into the future, there are things which he simply cannot change. Stewart was a very good writer and her creation of the settings of the story and the atmosphere were particular strong points both in *The Hollow Hills* and, previously, in *The Crystal Cave*. I would expect that to continue throughout the series. Near the end of *The Hollow Hills* comes the death of Uther Pendragon and the anointing of Arthur as the High King. Now, on to the glory days of the establishment of Camelot and to everything that came after.

This is the **ULTIMATE** Merlin/King Arthur series. I have TRIED to read other Merlin/King Arthur books/series and they just were lame and went over what every person (even those, which I am one of, not into the genre) is familiar with the legends. Mary Stewart took the original writings and legends and placed them into history seamlessly! She made them **REAL** historical figures. People who DID live. The writing is impeccable. The stories flow and you can't wait to read the next one! You are immersed into that historical world. It is vivid, alive, and swirling around you. Mary Stewart is one of the five greatest story tellers of the 20th century. She enthralls you, carries you breathlessly into her world and then slips you back into reality longing to go back again and again. I have read

this series at least three times and I LOVE it more and more each time. This is a story/series you can read to/with your children. One to pass down as a family favorite! I can't wait until the urge to return to Mary Stewart's world filled with Merlin, King Arthur, and the rest of the those that populate the legends hits me and I can once again be surrounded by them!

Wasn't quite what I remembered, but I remember reading all of this series, except for *The Wicked Day* (the last one). Even when I don't like what she's writing, Mary Stewart is a master story teller. She really brought the Arthur legend to life and made it very readable.

Stewart is an engaging writer who does her historiography better than many other Arthurian adaptors. For those who really like those who reconstruct a realistic historical setting, this series is great. The psychological complexity of her central hero -- Merlin -- is disappointingly limited in my opinion. Although virtually all of his magic is scientifically accounted for and thus Merlin seems a little more human than otherwise, he's kind of a condescending jerk who breezes through all problems because of his intellectual superiority. In this regard, Stewart's impressive retelling is at its LEAST plausible... imho.

If this second book in Mary Stewart's Merlin trilogy isn't a page-turner, I don't know what is. I mean this in a very good sense. Yes, the suspense is an important factor, but it is the, well, ensorcelling, character of Merlin that keeps the reader glued to the pages. Even when the world's eyes are on the young King Arthur towards the end, the reader's mind and heart are still with this version of Merlin that Stewart has conjured up - so to speak; For she has imbued this Merlin with an inner life as well as her own poetic sensibilities. Readers of medieval romances will be attracted to the work, of course, but so will lovers of the poetic and those concerned with the inner life. I shall let Merlin's spell fall on the reader here in his own words: "It is one thing to have the gift of seeing the spirits and hearing the gods move about us as we come and go; but it is a gift of darkness as well as light.... One cannot be visited by the future without being haunted by the past; one cannot taste comfort and glory without the bitter sting and fury of one's past deeds." Further, "To remember love after long sleep; to turn again to poetry after a year in the market place, or to youth after drowsy and stiffening age; to remember what once you thought life could hold, after telling over with and calculating fingers what it has offered; this is music, made after long silence." I'm too spellbound myself to give this book less than five swirling stars.

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