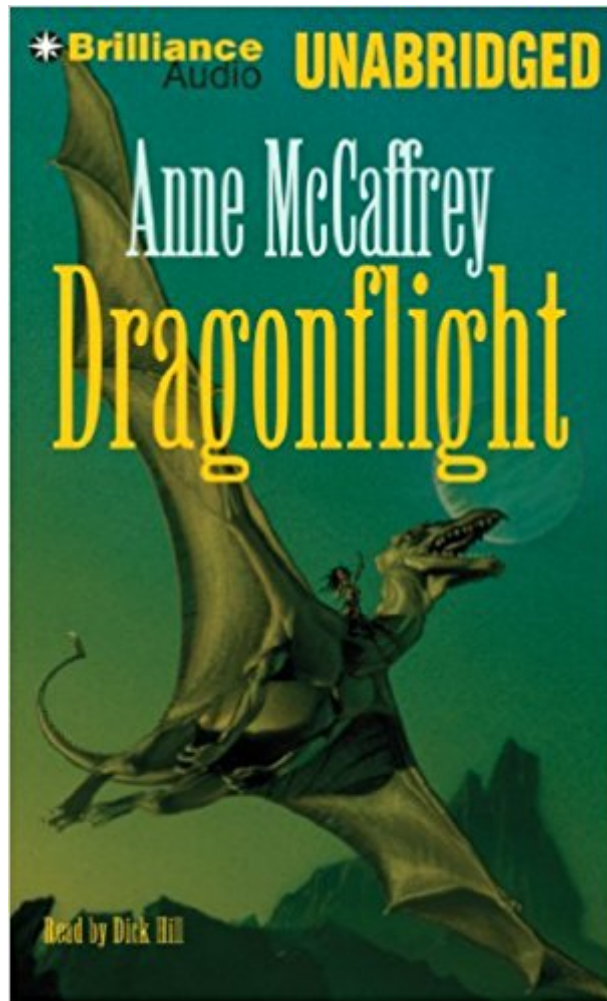


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# Dragonflight (Dragonriders Of Pern Series)



## Synopsis

On the beautiful planet Pern, colonized for centuries, Land Holders and Craftsmen have traditionally tithed food and supplies to the dragonweys to which they are bound. In times past, the mighty telepathic dragons and their riders were the only protection from the dreaded, life-threatening Thread. But it has been over 400 years since the last Threadfall, and some people have come to doubt that the menace will ever strike again. But F'lar, rider of Pern's greatest bronze dragon, has no such illusions. The Red Star is near; Thread will fall soon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Let me get the criticism out of the way first. Over the years, the unending franchise of Pern books has diluted the original magic of this book. After the first two series (this first trilogy, the Masterharper trilogy) and arguably Moreta's story (worth a comfortable 4 stars), McCaffery started trying to fit Pern into a scientific jigsaw puzzle so that it would "make sense." In my view, that was a major mistake, because the glory of this first book, and what made it a true classic, is the degree to which the reader contributes to the world the author created. Enough of that. This is the classic, and it has earned its reputation. I read this book in the late 70s. I have probably read it a dozen times since then because it is so gosh-darn easy to fall into Dragonflight... and not want to drag myself out again. I know intellectually that Pern is a made-up universe, but emotionally it's another story. In my heart, I believe it exists. That's how absolutely "real" her world is. The background appeals to our analytical sense of "what if this happened...": forgotten colonists on a generally well-endowed

planet, with this one teeny problem: a neighboring planet throws destructive spores at Pern every 200 years, and the residents create genetic telepathic "dragons" which can counter the threat. But the science is left behind, because the story starts thousands of years later, when all the backstory has turned to myth (and not well remembered myth, at that). But lots of people can create a good world. McCaffrey created marvelous characters to fill it. Like anybody stuck in a "save the world" situation, they try to act heroic, but they fumble because they're just people. And like the best writers, she makes them come alive with the tiny details.

For me, the thing that makes a book a classic is whether or not it comes to mind occasionally in the year after I have read it. If I don't then find myself comparing it to recently read plotlines or movies from the same genre, it would not be worth a five star rating. In this case, I have (drumroll please) over 10 years' worth of ponderings and influence to demonstrate that *Dragonflight* -- and the entire trilogy -- is an unparalleled classic. Thumbnail sketch of the plot: a futuristic world barely settled by mankind, which was then cut off from all contact and aid from the motherworld (Earth). Genetic engineering of native life forms to create "Dragons" which form psychic links to individual humans (dragonriders) for life, to aid in fighting a recurring biological threat. Centuries pass between attacks, causing subsequent generations to forget the dragons' purpose, take the dragonriders for granted and weaken their defenses gradually. Now there are signs that the attacks will begin again soon, and the people are caught unprepared. The stage is set for Lessa, a young insignificant, to rise to the top of the dragonrider hierarchy along with F'lar, a seasoned rider, as his mate. I was tempted to dock a star from the rating based on some formulaic elements: the young, fiery, independent-spirited heroine challenging the restrictive views of her medieval society, the super-Alpha male hero who tries to dominate her but comes to appreciate her in the end...if you've read one, you will recognize the Lessa and F'lar characters, as well as some others as such Romance novel archetypes. Despite this, McCaffrey draws them well and uses her characters perfectly to play up the tension and confusion that Pern is going through. HOWEVER.

*Dragonflight* (1968) is the first novel in the *Dragonriders of Pern* trilogy. The settlers on Pern discovered the hard way that their planet is periodically swept by giant virus-like organisms that fall from the sky and eat away living things like an acid. Since these threads are susceptible to fire, the settlers have developed an organic weapon to defend against the infestations: fire-breathing dragons. However, these threads have not appeared for several centuries and mankind is beginning to lose the hard-earned knowledge and customs that form the core of their defense, to the point of

letting the dragons and riders of the weyrs dwindle to a fraction of the necessary muster. Now only Benden Weyr is occupied. In this novel, Lessa had been the lawful heir of Ruatha Hold, but Lord Fax has conquered this hold and four others and now Lessa is posing as a kitchen drudge. Flightleader F'lar of Benden Weyr has come to the High Reaches searching for candidates to impress a Queen in the next hatching. After visiting Lord Fax's Hold, Crom, and the various guild halls, the dragonriders travel to the other five held by the High Reaches, finally coming to Ruatha. Fax's Lady, Gemma, is about ready to birth another child and, when he becomes disgusted with the vile experience provided to him by the hold and with a little nudging by Lessa, Fax renounces his claim to Ruatha in the favor of Gemma's child, if it is male and lives. Lady Gemma dies in childbirth, but the boy child lives. Moreover, Fax attacks Lessa and F'lar comes to her rescue, killing Fax in a fair duel. Lessa then abdicates her claim to Ruatha and flies with F'lar to Benden Weyr for the hatching. Eventually thread begins to fall and the Lord Holders learn first-hand why they must pay duty to the dragonriders.

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