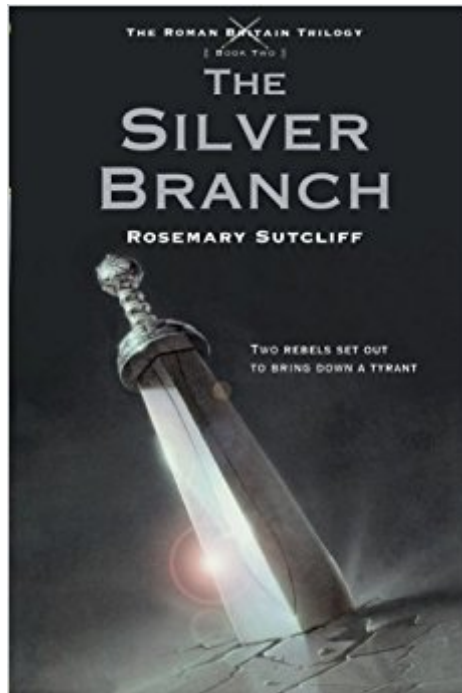




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The Silver Branch (The Roman Britain Trilogy)



Synopsis

Violence and unrest are sweeping through Roman Britain. Justin and Flavius find themselves caught up in the middle of it all when they discover a plot to overthrow the Emperor. In fear for their lives, they gather together a tattered band of men and lead them into the thick of battle, to defend the honor of Rome. But will they be in time to save the Emperor . . .

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

• Rosemary Sutcliff's superb historical imagination never fails. • The New York Herald Tribune
• Enthusiastically recommended. • The Horn Book
• She writes as though Roman Britain were as real and as close to her as the England of today. • The Chicago Tribune

Rosemary Sutcliff (1920-1992) wrote dozens of books for young readers, including her award-winning Roman Britain trilogy, *The Eagle of the Ninth*, *The Silver Branch*, and *The Lantern Bearers*, which won the Carnegie Medal. *The Eagle of the Ninth* is now a major motion picture, *The Eagle*, directed by Kevin MacDonal and starring Channing Tatum. Born in Surrey, Sutcliff spent her childhood in Malta and on various other naval bases where her father was stationed. At a young age, she contracted Still's Disease, which confined her to a wheelchair for most of her life. Shortly before her death, she was named Commander of the British Empire (CBE) one of Britain's most prestigious honors. She died in West Sussex, England, in 1992.

Marcus Aquila's son, Flavius, along with his cousin Justin are young members of the legion. They cross the wrong person and must flee. When they chance upon the eagle hidden by Marcus years before, they know they must rally the right people to save Roman Britain. If I wasn't pre-reading this series for my son to read next year in school, I would not have read *The Silver Branch* after reading the first book in the series. This would have been a mistake. *The Silver Branch* was so much better and more enjoyable. I recommend this book to anyone interested in history (it's not totally necessary to read the first book first).

Like the first book in Rosemary Sutcliff's series on Roman Britain, *The Silver Branch* is a finely-written story that gives a vivid and detailed look at life in Roman Britain. Although part of a series, the books are only loosely connected (one of the main characters in *The Silver Branch* is the grandson of the main character of *The Eagle of the Ninth*) and it is not necessary to read the first book in order to enjoy the second. Sutcliff's books were originally intended for young adults, and there is plenty of evidence of that: the shortness (less than 200 pages) of the book; the straightforwardness of the plot; the lack of complexity in the characters or their relationships with each other; the main theme of friendship and comradeship. However, Sutcliff's style should appeal to adults, as well, particularly those with an interest in this timeframe; her writing exhibits sophistication and skill. The book tells the story of an actual series of events that took place in the waning years of Roman rule in Britain, and of two young men who get caught up in the political treachery that took place. Sutcliff's description of the countryside, the lifestyle of the people, and the military battles are detailed and vivid. Indeed, the only "flaw" I found in the entire book -- and a weak one at that -- was that I found it highly unlikely that, when the local head of an espionage and smuggling operation on the southern coast of Britain is killed, the mantle of his leadership falls on the two very young and relatively inexperienced main characters, and all the other operatives -- who are much older and experienced -- automatically look to them for leadership. However, I accepted that this book was written for young readers, and so enjoyed the story for the adventurous tale it was intended to be. I highly recommend Rosemary Sutcliff's books and look forward to reading more of them.

THE SILVER BRANCH is set about 200 years after *THE EAGLE*. Marcus Flavius Aquila's namesake grandson (called Flavius rather than Marcus) and his cousin Justin come across something that points to treason in the Emperor's general staff. Young and naive, they immediately find a way of informing the emperor. In what follows the cousins find themselves caught up in the

messy politics of divided loyalties as the people who live in Britain put up a fierce resistance against the Saxon invaders. If one could fault Rosemary Sutcliff's writing craft, it would be to say that her characters are not very emotional, and that large things happen via small reactions. Which, of course, is very British. Or at least the way the British were famously so in the 19th and 20th centuries. But were the Romans like that? Or the Painted People? I somehow doubt it. While there is no doubt that some people are unemotional, I would say that the relative majority express their emotions quite vividly. And this is something that Ms. Sutcliff just fails to capture. In *THE SILVER BRANCH*, which centers around the friendship of two young men, the emotions are muted as before. But in this context that seems to work. I think it worked less well between Marcus and his fiancée Cottia in *THE EAGLE* and between Aquila and his wife Ness in *THE LANTERN BEARERS*. I thought those scenes between a man and a woman whose lives are so closely bound together should have and could have been a whole lot more passionate. Especially as the women were both strong-willed and opinionated. Four stars.

The situations are so finely crafted, researched with such detail that you are there at that time in Britain at the end of the Roman occupation. The culture and every day life leap off the pages and draw you in to the personal lives and experiences of those who lived during exciting, challenging times. I also strongly recommend Sutcliff's "The Lantern Bearers" that also covers more on many of the same characters and times.

I found this book to be fantastic. I love the time and setting, but it was much more than that. The characters are all so real and alive, the historical events are so accurately portrayed, and, most of all, the writing is excellent. Rosemary Sutcliff has fast become one of my very favorite authors, and I would definitely recommend this book to almost anyone, especially if you have any interest in the Roman Empire or Britian/early British history. (I only might not recommend this to some kids, because the writing isn't always so easy, and they might get bogged down or confused)

Love Rosemary Sutcliff for boys and has tons of her to read.

Rosemary Sutcliff is new author to me! Wasn't sure if I would like her writing! That said, I thoroughly enjoyed the story she told! It was written for young people....but so well done that even an oldie like me enjoyed it! Even better...the story took place near where I lived as a child! So it spurred me on to further internet investigation of that tiny bit of land!!!

My daughter loves the movie "The Eagle" with Channing Tatum and Jamie Bell. She is reading the trilogy and has enjoyed this book tremendously.

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