



# The Mistletoe and the Sword: A Story of Roman Britain

*Anya Seton*

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## **The Mistletoe and the Sword: A Story of Roman Britain** Anya Seton

From a fascinating corner of history, comes a thrilling story of England in the time of the Romans. Quintus Tullius, a young standard bearer for the Ninth Roman legion, vows to properly bury his grandfather who had been killed by the Druids. In the strange foreign country of the Britons, Quintus meets lovely Regan, the mysterious foster daughter of the Warrior Queen of the Iceanians. Once, he saves her, and then in a daring scene, she rescues him. They are at once bound into history in a time of magic and mystery.

## **The Mistletoe and the Sword: A Story of Roman Britain Details**

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Author : Anya Seton

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## From Reader Review The Mistletoe and the Sword: A Story of Roman Britain for online ebook

### Sarah says

100 years after Julius Cesar's failed attempt at conquering Britain, Rome is ready to once again bring the "savage" nation to heel. This short story follows our hero Quintus. Quintus is a young man, fresh from the streets of Rome itself. A good person who always tries to do the right thing, his goal is not to conquer, but to lay to rest the bones of his ancestor who died in the first invasion. Fate has other plans, though, and he is there during the scourge of Boudica and the violation of daughters that sets in motion Boudica's determined campaign to rid Britain of Rome forever. After much horror and destruction, Quintus is sent to summon the Second Legion to help put a stop Bodica's ethnic cleanse, with non other then Boudica's foster daughter herself, Regan, who prefers a less violent and severe method of dealing with Rome. Especially one kind, handsome Roman, while Quintus will be tested and face the toughest challenges of his young life...

Well researched and written, I very much enjoyed this book! I wish Regan had had a slightly more prominent part, but overall, this book is very much a keeper.

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### Morgan Dhu says

Anya Seton's historical novels were best-sellers in their time, narratives featuring, for the most part, resilient and determined women, their stories told in elegant prose, their lives and times well researched. Two of her books, *Katherine* (about Katherine de Roet, mistress and third wife of John of Gaunt, ancestress to the Tudor line) and *Green Darkness* (a complex tale of forbidden love and reincarnation set in two times) are among my favourites.

*The Mistletoe and the Sword* is one of Seton's lesser-known, and lesser-regarded novels. Intended for a young adult audience, it is a shorter and simpler tale than most of her books. Set in Roman Britain during the time of the Iceni Rebellion, the protagonist is a young Roman soldier who falls in love with a British girl who is of the family of the Arch-Druid of Britain - assuming there ever really was such a thing. (Seton's research is solid on the Roman aspects of her subject, but she wrote during that period of time when the state of research into Celtic society tended toward romanticism.)

A light and pleasant tale, with a nice balance of action and romance, reminding us of a time when both young men and young women might be expected to read and enjoy the same books.

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### Lisa says

?Anya Seton was a successful, bestselling historical fiction novelist in the 1950s, known best for her works *Katherine* and *The Winthrop Woman*. But she also wrote a slimmer, young-adult novel named *The Mistletoe and Sword*. At 250 pages, this book was the perfect size to devour in a day. Here's what it's about.

#### What it's about

Set in A.D. 60-61, *The Mistletoe and Sword* is about a Roman centurion named Quintus who is sent to Celtic Britain to ensure the peace and compliance of the native population. He's also motivated by the desire to discover the place where his great-grandfather was murdered a century earlier, by a Celtic tribe, at the mysterious Stonehenge. But before he can get to the site, the Ninth Legion and the rest of the Roman army have to subdue the mighty rebellion organized by Queen Boudica of the Celtic Iceni tribe. Quintus also meets a Celtic woman named Regan, and the two fall in love (because of course!).

#### Why you should read it

Any Seton was known for being a meticulous researcher and for painstakingly making sure her stories were accurate. So despite the fact that "accurate" may have changed definition necessarily in the intervening 50+ years, I know that the story, even if it's technically fiction, is as historically accurate as it is possible to be (at the time). That's a huge plus for me.

While this isn't her most sophisticated work (I read *Green Darkness* and liked it much better), this is a quick, easy read that features a whole lot of mysticism, atmosphere, and history in a compact little package. If you've never heard of Anya Seton, this may be the title you can start with!

The romance is fun, although the dialogue is dated (a lot of cliched phrases and situations, for example) and the characters are less complex than they can be. Read it for the history and action, and less for the romance.

#### Favorite character

Regan, the Celtic woman who helps Quintus and falls in love with him. Even though she's, again, not very complex, she's also an independent-minded, capable woman with intelligence and fierce loyalty to her people and her customs. I wanted to know more about her.

#### Favorite quote

Quintus did not hear the ghostly shrieks, but as he forced himself to shut his eyes and relax his body as Roman soldiers were taught, he heard something else--something from the dark woods across the Colne; the sharp yelping of foxes, and more distant answers. And he thought that there was little chance of surprising the British forces, for there were unseen eyes watching every Roman move.

#### Recommended for

Anyone who loves history or a simple romance, and anyone with a lazy Saturday to spend being introduced to a talented author.

### **Shannon says**

I don't know what it is about Anya Seton that I love so much. She does have a few books that I could live without, but this one is one of her better ones, if quite short. There's something to be said about a decently sized historical fiction book that can be as atmospheric as tomes three times its size.

The story of Quintus and Regan captured me right away and I found myself thinking of these characters even when I wasn't reading. Queen Boudicca was fabulous, as she should be, though she's not a major character.

Highly recommended for all fans of Roman HF and fans of The Eagle and the Raven.

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### **Francoise says**

I learned a lot, actually. I really didn't know anything about the history of Britain and the influence of the Roman Empire at this time. Also, I was intrigued about the story of Boadicea (Boudicca) and had to look up more info. The characters are well developed and what better way to learn history than in a well written book that is securely based on good research? At the end, the reader realizes that all history is a result of two civilizations coming into contact and then blending to form something new and different. Hard to put down.

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### **Virna says**

The characters and story line was entertaining and I enjoy read this.

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### **Missy Cunningham says**

Opposite view of my favorite book, The Ravens of Avalon. Good quiz read. Definitely a Roman take but gentle with the Druid side. Good companion book for Ravens.

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### **Jennifer says**

This is a fast-paced little novel, which I thoroughly enjoyed. The descriptions of the British countryside in AD 60, as well as the depictions of the various British tribes, were excellent. Ms Seton is a master at creating context, and even in this shorter novel she effortlessly transports the reader back to a long ago era where a divided people are called to unite against the invading Romans by the Warrior-Queen Boadicea.

The male protagonist of the story, Quintus, is a very loyal soldier of Rome, and yet is portrayed as a very compassionate person. He truly believes that the rule of Rome is superior, and brings many benefits to a people and their land. This was a very interesting concept to read about, as the reader cannot help but feel both sympathy for the conquered people and yet understanding that the Romans feel as though they are 'civilising' the nations that they conquer.

The love shared between Regan, a native Briton, and Quintus, was a lovely romantic tale that was a nice

contrast to the various battle scenes depicted in the novel. The idea that Regan and Quintus, and others like them, will form a united race of two peoples is a nice thought. Unfortunately to conquer has been a way of the world for thousands of years, however the knowledge that very few of us would be here if not for such conquering is food for thought. As a British-born person this novel struck home as I realised that the country I was born in would not be the same if not for the Romans, and part of my ancestry may very well be from the united race of Britons and Romans.

This was a wonderful novel and it was so easy to pick up and get lost in; I definitely recommend it.

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### **Cass says**

Anya Seton was one of my favorite authors when I was in high school and college. She wrote historical fiction and this was where I learned a lot about English history. Her novels were very well researched. So I decided to revisit this author and found this book in my local library. Had I read it back in the day, I probably would not have continued to read Seton's books. This was like reading a history book of events that took place when the Romans occupied Briton in the time of Julius Caesar and after. Not much of a story line- rather boring.

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### **Lynette Lark says**

Another Anya Seton book (and I love this author now that I've discovered her). This is circa 80 AD when Britain was a young country and part of the Roman Empire. Druids were a part of this landscape and Stonehenge was already a very ancient artifact. It's a story about people exploiting people, unnecessary wars because of slights and misunderstandings, and love. Thank God for love.

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### **Emily says**

I have read a few of Anya Seton's books over the years and I've found them to be thoroughly escapist and always satisfying. I'd liken them to a big summer blockbuster, but not the kind where you role your eyes or walk out of the theater. Think Harry Potter, not Transformers 2. So if you feel like getting carried away to a land of defiant ladies, reckless soldiers, and in this case, druids....Anya Seton is for you. I'm not quite ready to return to reality; I think I'll go check out another one.

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### **Phoebe says**

Young Roman soldier Quintus Tullius finds his lifetime dream fulfilled: to travel to Britain as part of the army and try to find the body of his long-dead great grandfather (killed by Druids). What he finds instead turns out to be something he did not know he needed. Set in AD 60-61 in Roman Britain, Seton, using period accounts and contemporary studies, recounts the exact historical events surrounding the uprising of the British tribes against the Roman army, led by fearsome Queen Boadicea. The book starts out a bit slowly but picks up momentum, and Seton does an excellent job of fleshing out history and making it immediate. She does not bother with much description, and her language is accessible. If you read Asterix comics, you will find the time period to be familiar(with much less humor, of course). Upper teen/adult.

## Robert Day says

When I was a teenager my uncle had girlfriends and one of them had the cutest curly hair and the smiliest face and I thought of her in.. well, I guess you could guess how teenagers think of cute aunties; but then he had another girlfriend and when she visited and left again, she left behind a book called Green Darkness and I read it and it was good and then I turned to SciFi and Thriller and Horror and Comedy and finally, in my mumfly mumph year, time swing around and another book of the same ilk falls into my lap and, haunted as I was by the mixed up memories of cute aunties and book leavings, I read it and lo, it turns out that this fanciful tale of Romans and Warrior Queens was nothing like the other one, but it's still a good yarn and it passes away a little of this time I have here on this earth and all is well. Smile.

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## Hannah says

While not my favorite of Seton's work, this was still very enjoyable. At times, it got a little boring. I do wish it had been longer so that we could have spent more time with some of the British characters, such as Regan. Otherwise, it was fun and pleasant to read.

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## Cheryl says

This is really a tale of Roman/Celtic assimilation. A Roman soldier is mesmerized by Regan, a 16 year old granddaughter of a highly ranked Druid priest. The Romans are pitted against Queen Boadicea, who is also Regan's foster mother, and has risen in revolt against the Romans and their injustices rallying most of the tribes of Briton to follow her in hopes of eradicating Roman occupation. Lots of predictable intrigue, battle strategies, and betrayals lead to the inevitable crushing of the ill-prepared and ill-equipped Britons by the Roman legions. The Celts see the "handwriting on the wall" and retreat to Ireland leaving Romans and civilization in charge. All of this occurs in the time of Emperor Nero, and we know he is the sel-indulgent glutton responsible for the fall of Rome. So, the two lovebirds are quite lucky to be in Briton symbolically and literally uniting the two cultures. This is a quick "bubblegum-for-the-eyes" read. A solid 3.

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