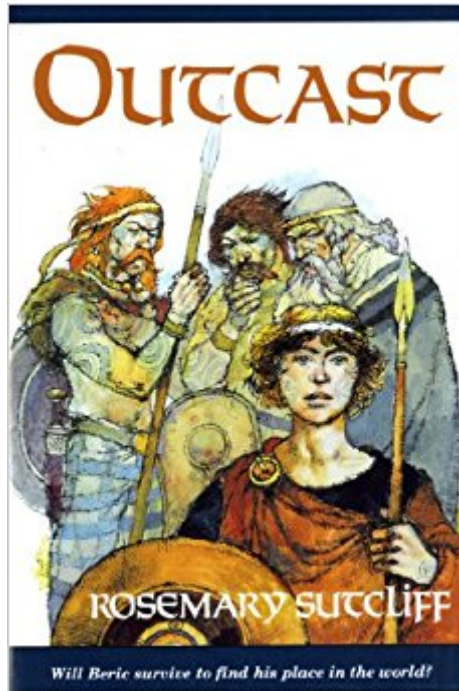




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# Outcast



## Synopsis

From author Rosemary Sutcliff, author of the classic tale *The Eagle of the Ninth*, comes *Outcast*, the tale of an orphan boy in the ancient world. When a Roman ship is wrecked off the coast of Britain, an infant, Beric, is the only survivor, saved by members of a British tribe. They name him Beric and bring him up among them, until the time comes when they can ignore his ancestry no longer. Then Beric is cast out from the only home he has ever known and forced to find his one place in a treacherous world. With illustrations by Richard Kennedy, *Outcast* is sure to delight middle grade lovers of historical adventure. "Rosemary Sutcliff's superb historical imagination never fails." -- The New York Herald Tribune

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Roman boy is brought up by a British tribe and forced to make his way in a hostile climate in this epic yarn set in Roman Britain. Ages 10-up. Copyright 1995 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

• How Beric survived...is not only incredible but gripping, convincing fiction. • The Horn Book

ROSEMARY SUTCLIFFE, a British author who died only in 1992, created many memorable books, ostensibly in the "young adult" category. However, her prose is so sophisticated, that it defies the "young adult" category, and has always been, to the librarians of my acquaintance, anyway, the "young adults" author with the most complex sentence-structure, and the most "adult, grown-up"

story-lines. (Here on , this book, 'THE OUTCAST' is listed as for people aged "10 and up!") "THE OUTCAST" is the mesmerizing, totally involving story of Beric, who, as an infant, was the only survivor of a Roman shipwreck. He is adopted into a primitive British tribe, despite the warnings of some of the members of that tribe that adopting an "outsider" will do the tribe no good. Beric, happy and secure in his place in the tribe, reaches his teen-age years -- but bad things begin to befall the tribe, and Beric -- whose origins have never been forgotten -- is blamed for these occurrences. His friends turn against him, and he is....cast out. Astonished, hurt, and alone, Beric starts out. He winds up -- as might be expected of a penniless wanderer in Roman times -- as a house-slave. Things get worse, however, and he is soon made a galley-slave. The conditions of degradation of galley slaves were never more completely and horrifically described -- except, perhaps, in the original "Ben-Hur", with which the sadly lesser-known Ms. Sutcliff's descriptions, are on a total par. Missing from "Ben Hur", however, is any semblance of the description of Beric's oar-mate in "THE OUTCAST". It is a sensitive description of a sensitive, and doomed young artist, and the story of how this young artist was sent to the galleys is a story-within-a-story, which could have been the basis for another novel, all by itself. Beric's story -- and that of his oar-mate -- are tales that never leave one's consciousness, (or at least, they have not left mine), once one reads them. An epic drama, so very, very well told. I loved this story as a young girl, and still love it today. It is to Ms. Sutcliff's credit that, as a young girl, I naturally preferred my historical novels to have a heroine as the main character. But "THE OUTCAST" is irresistible in its telling and in its story. It is the ONLY book that, as a budding-feminist-without-knowing-it, I still immensely enjoyed -- even though the main protagonist was a teen-age boy, and not a teen-age girl! The ONLY reason this book may be categorized as a "young adult" novel is that the protagonist IS a teen-ager. But it is an involving, satisfying read for ALL ages, and both genders -- from precocious pre-teen, to those of the age of centenarian plus! This is a book with strong and sometimes painful scenes -- but it is still one of the most satisfying books I have ever read. A classic of the highest order, for all time, and one that should be far better known. As with most of the historical novels I have read, I imagine that "THE OUTCAST" would make one heck of an outstanding motion picture!

The novel Outcast was written by Rosemary Sutcliff. It is the story of a Roman infant who was adopted by a Celtic family after his family died in a ship wreck. He is never fully accepted by the tribe and, as a young man, is driven out of the village as bad luck. He winds up kidnapped and sold into slavery. He is finally made a galley slave living under wretched conditions. He is whipped virtually to death, thrown overboard for dead, washes up on the British coast and is taken in by a

Roman engineer. The novel is very well written. For the most part, the novel is well researched. The first half or more is basically an action story and the last one third is sort of a coming of age story of the boy-now-man dealing with life as it is rather than as it should be. Rosemary Sutcliff is an excellent writer. I am always taken by her phraseology, and her detailed and colorful descriptions of the world around her characters. One small historical inaccuracy—Romans generally didn't use chained slaves to row their military galleys in this time period (probably sometime in late antiquity between 50-400 CE). Chained slaves weren't used to any great extent in the west until late in the Middle Ages. Romans used a special class of sailor or marine who, if needed, could drop his oar, pick up a spear or pike and fight the enemy. The novel is probably most appropriate to young adults, although seniors will also enjoy it. The description of treatment of galley slaves can be brutal—but probably not too graphic for a young adult. The first half or more of the story moved right along. There was no bloody violence. I was disappointed by the last one quarter of the book. In my opinion the author could easily have shortened the text in which the hero has a catharsis. But I'm a guy and prefer action over emotion. I give the novel a rating of three for two reasons. First, Romans didn't use galley slaves in the way they are portrayed in this novel. Most readers will be more familiar with Ben Hur and will overlook that small inaccuracy. My major problem was with the slowness of the last part of the novel. I had a hard time getting through that portion of the novel.

Saved from drowning as an infant, Beric, a Roman, is raised by Celts. Eventually the tribe decides to force him out. He ends up a slave in Rome. He escapes only to be sent to the galleys. Eventually finding his way back to Britain, he must find his own place among his people—| whoever they might really be. Much of Outcast was good. It dragged on occasion, however. I recommend it for those interested in the time period.

This was one of my all time favorite books when I was around twelve years old, and now rereading it as an adult I still love it. It tells the story of Beric, Roman by birth, but orphaned as a baby and adopted into a British tribe. He fights valiantly for acceptance but through no fault of his own becomes an outcast. Then his own people, the Romans, enslave him. Even when he is sent to the galleys, he retains his courage and human decency. Rosemary Sutcliff writes beautifully, and her compassion and understanding for her young hero makes this a deeply moving book. It's not a childish story. There is real suffering and real loss here. It is impossible not to empathize with Beric. We root for him to survive and triumph against all odds. The story is well plotted and absorbing. In

my opinion OUTCAST is the best of the many outstanding novels by this very fine writer of historical fiction. It is simply great.

I first read this story as a child and have been moved to return to it and other Rosemary Sutcliffe books many times in the ensuing years. Like all Sutcliffe books, historical fact and fiction are blended in a most believable way to produce a story which draws you in and, without much effort, you find yourself imagining that you are the key figure in the story. The appeal of this story is not just for young people but for all people of all ages who like a good adventure story with pathos and an interesting plot.

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