**Mr. Valentine’s 12th Grade English – Study Guide – First Week of Cuchulain of Muirthemne**

1. How does Setanta gain the name Cuchulain?

2. What is a geas / geasa / geis, and what is the nature of the one placed on Cuchulain?

3. What curse does the druid Cathbad speak of, and how does Cuchulain get it?

4. How do the people stop young Cuchulain when he comes back in his chariot filled with battle rage?

5. What are some of Cuchulain’s powers / abilities / talents as an epic hero?

6. When Cuchulain goes to the court of Emer to win her hand, what does her father say to trick him?

7. How does Cuchulain cross the bridge to reach Scathach?

8. What does Scathach teach Cuchulain?

9. With whom does Cuchulain have a son while he’s training with Scathach?

10. What happens when Cuchulain meets his son later in life, and why does this happen?

**Pronunciation Guide**

Cuchulain (aka Cuchulainn, Cu Chulainn) – Pronounced either **Coo – Cullen**.

Muirthemne – Pronounced **Myur-thum-na**.

Scathach – Pronounced **Ska-hawk.**

Emain Macha – Pronounced either **Eh-mon Maka**

Cruachan – Pronounced either **Croo-uh-kan**

Maeve (aka Medb) – Pronounced **May-v**

Connacht – Pronounced Cah-nut or **Cah-not**.

Conchubar – **Conn-ka-bar**, conn-cha-var, or con-a-choor

Lugh – Pronounced **Loo**

Morrigan / Morrigu – Pronounced either **Morr-ih-gun** or MOR-ree-gun.

Cuailgne – **Cooley**

Aoife – **Ee-fa**

Conlaoch / Connla – **Conn-lock**

Geasa – **Gay-ess**

Setanta – **Say-tonn-tuh**

**Setting and Important Characters**

Setting: Ireland (Mainly Connacht and Ulster) and the Isle of Sky (Scotland) around the 1st Century BC.

Cuchulain (formerly Setanta) – Epic Hero / Folk Hero of Ireland, son of Lugh (god of light) and Deichtine (aka Dechtire) (sister of King Conchobar). He later marries a lady named Emer, daughter of a nobleman. Cuchulain’s famous spear-weapon is called the Gae Bulg (spear of mortal pain / spear of death). He is 17 years old at the time of the Battle of Cuailnge (Cattle Raid of Cooley).

 Conchubar – (aka Conor) King of Ulster (capital Emain Macha) and uncle of Cuchulain. His top knights are called the “Red Branch Knights” or “Knights of the Red Branch.”

 Maeve and Ailell – Queen and King of Connacht (capital Cruachan). She’s really in charge in this relationship / kingdom, more so than Ailill. She really wants Ulster’s cattle, especially a massive brown bull. She also has a daughter, Findabair, whom she tries to use to bribe warriors into fighting Cuchulain.

 Scathach – (means “the shadowy one”) Warrior woman, instructs warriors in the way of the spear. Lives on a mountain, on an island far to the north (Modern-day Isle of Skye, Scotland). Cuchulain must train with her to impress Emer’s father if he wants to marry her. Scathach also has a daughter, Uathach. We also meet Scathach’s rival / enemy / sister, a warrior lady named Aoife.

 Uathach – Scathach’s daughter.

 Aoife / Aife (Ee-fah) – Scathach’s rival / enemy (in some stories, also Scathach’s sister).

 Conlaoch – (or Connla) Cuchulain’s son by Aife.

 Fergus – One of Cuchulain’s many foster fathers / teachers and formerly of the kingdom of Ulster; later, he has a falling out with King Conchobar and leaves to serve at Maeve’s court instead. There, he tries to warn her not to go against Cuchulain, telling her the many stories of his feats of strength.