

2010 Phoenix Award Winner

The Shining Company

by **Rosemary Sutcliff**

(Farrar/Straus/Giroux and Bodley Head, 1990)



Around 600 AD three hundred picked Celtic warriors spent a year training and feasting at Edinburgh along with their three hundred shield bearers. This was the “shining company” that set out to repel a much superior force of invading Saxons. Except for one, all of the company died in battle. From this heroic disaster came “The Great Song” or “Y Gododdin,” a famous medieval poem by the Welsh bard Aneirin in which the deeds of every single one of the three hundred are set forth. Rosemary Sutcliff’s *Shining Company* retells the events—increasingly ominous and irrevocable—in the voice of Prosper, a young shield bearer, whose life begins in a narrow Welsh valley and ends, through the dislocations of a tragic war, in Constantinople. One of the last of Rosemary Sutcliff’s more than fifty historical novels, *The Shining Company* evinces her characteristic awareness of the fragility of human culture.