

# THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

T. H. WHITE

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

## SYNOPSIS

Away from court life in London, young Arthur, nicknamed Wart, grows up at the Castle of the Forest Sauvage, oblivious to his royal connections as the illegitimate offspring of Uther Pendragon, King of England, and Igraine, wife of the Earl of Cornwall. He enjoys the companionship of Kay, his stepbrother, but suffers occasional bouts of depression that he is not Sir Ector's real son. In both training and recreation, the boy displays pluck and quick-wittedness.

The pupil of Merlyn, a wise and caring necromancer who is gifted with, but confused by, knowledge of the future, Wart assumes the shapes of various animals, including a fish in the moat and a bird among falcon-trainer Hob's collection of feathered predators, and examines the issues of human life from other creatures' perspectives. In a major encounter with Morgan Le Fay, an evil sorceress, Wart assists Robin Wood in freeing Friar Tuck from an ignoble captivity.

Yet, Wart returns to his secondary role in Ector's household, where he observes the deference and adulation showered on Kay, soon to become Sir Kay. When Uther dies, leaving behind an unusual challenge to his would-be successors, no one, least of all the boy himself, expects great things of Arthur. Yet fate is on his side. As squire to Sir Kay, he dutifully returns to fetch a forgotten weapon, pulls a sword from an anvil and stone, and establishes his right to rule over England. In frustration at the reversal of his family's usual roles, the boy weeps.

From the beginning Arthur must strengthen his hold on the reins of power by asserting his leadership and control. He amazes his enemies with forthright warfare that breaks all the rules. He repeatedly locks horns with the semi-civilized Orkney faction—Gawaine, Agravaire, Gaheris, and Gareth—a perpetual thorn in the flesh. Their malcontent is fostered by the spells and incantations of their mother, Morgause, who seduces young Arthur and produces an illegitimate son, Mordred. Little suspecting that she is Arthur's half-sister, Morgause sows the seeds of sedition and rebellion that lead to Arthur's downfall.

Arthur's early triumphs earn him a band of faithful knights, whom he organizes into the Knights of the Round Table, an ingenious solution to the problem of jealousy and infighting in Camelot. As Arthur sends out representatives from his court to do battle against danger, intrigue, and injustice, he wins a convert from France, Lancelot Dulac, who worships Arthur as both friend and military ideal.

Lancelot proves himself worthy in repeated challenges and succeeds Gawaine as captain of the knights. With a strong contender like Lancelot at his side, Arthur is free to attend the theoretical matters, such as the establishment of courts of justice in which matters are decided by juries rather than the more primitive methods of ordeal or combat.

True to Merlyn's predictions, Arthur marries Guenever, who falls in love with Lancelot. Although devoted to her idealistic husband and his plans to overcome "might with right," she pursues a dangerous path of betrayal as the King's wife and simultaneous mistress to the King's chief warrior and best friend. Word spreads. Everyone knows about Guenever's indiscretion. Arthur, true to his wife and his friend and idealistic to a fault, rises above petty gossip, denying the truth that he has known all along.

The arrival at court of two younger warriors reverses the precarious balance of their *menage à trois*. The first, Galahad, whom Lancelot fathered after being tricked and seduced by the beautiful Elaine, establishes his reputation as mystic seeker of the Holy Grail, the second goal of Arthur's knights, after all threats have been removed from Camelot and its environs. The second, Mordred, Galahad's foil, feeds his vengeful grudge against "Uncle," who set him adrift in a boatload of baby boys in hopes of ridding himself of the illegitimate son whom Merlyn warned would one day destroy Arthur's power. In contrast to Camelot's first generation of warriors, Galahad and Mordred lean far to the right and left of the newly-inaugurated chivalric code.

Lancelot returns from two years' search for the Holy Grail, broken in spirit by physical wounds and a loss of self-respect when Galahad repeatedly bests him. Trapped in the Queen's apartments by Mordred's men, Lancelot falls prey to Mordred's schemes. In a late-night struggle at Guenever's door and a subsequent rescue at the stake where Guenever is about to be burned, Lancelot decimates the strength of Arthur's band, killing, among others, Lancelot's faithful supporter, Gareth.

By separating the King from his second-in-command and by labeling the Queen as an adulteress, Mordred skillfully garners power, ousts Arthur, and proclaims himself King. The Queen, to save herself from a forced marriage with Mordred, barricades herself in the Tower of London. Eventually, both she and her lover retreat to holy orders to live out their lives. The forces of evil close around Camelot. Arthur prepares to meet his doom—a living death at Avilon, from which he will someday return, the Once and Future King.

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### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Although he was born in Bombay in 1906, Terence Hanbury White, generally known as T. H. White, immersed himself in the history and folklore of England. After completing his studies at Cheltenham College and Cambridge University, he taught English at Stowe School from 1930-36. From that point on he wrote fulltime, having begun his writing career in 1927 with *Beloved Helen*, a volume of poems. Much of his adult life was spent in seclusion—from 1939-45 in Ireland, and from 1945-60 on the Channel Island of Alderney.

The bulk of his works falls into two major categories—novels and social history. Prominent among them are *Dead Mr. Nixon* (1930), *Darkness at Pemberley* (1932), *Earth Stopped* (1935), *Gone to Ground* (1937), *England Have My Bones* (his first real critical success) (1937), *Burke's Steerage* (1939), *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946), *The Elephant and the Kangaroo* (1947), *The Age of Scandal* (1950), *The Goshawk*, a study of falconry (1952), and *The Scandalmonger* (1952). A gentle man, he was known for his love of hunting and fishing and for his collection of exotic pets. He died at Piraeus, Greece, in 1964.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

*The Once and Future King*, a multivolume chronicle of Arthur, illegitimate son of Uther Pendragon and legendary king of England, was published over a period of twenty years. Beginning with *The Sword in the Stone*, an account of Arthur's childhood at the court of Ector (1939), White continued the tale with *The Witch in the Wood*, later titled *The Queen of Air and Darkness* (1940); *The Ill-Made Knight*, Lancelot's story (1941); *The Candle in the Wind*, the dissolution of Arthur's dream kingdom (1958); *The Once and Future King*, a collection of the first four books under one title (1958); and *The Book of Merlyn*, a posthumously-published volume about the enchanter who prepared Arthur for the task of ruling (1977).

Relying on Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (1469) as his chief source, White highlighted his own version with urbane, witty comments about the dual nature of his characters, who possess the normal human mix of good and evil. The tetralogy, rich history, language, and customs of Medieval England, served as the basis for Lerner and Loewe's musical *Camelot* (1960) and for the 1967 film version by the same title, starring Richard Harris and Vanessa Redgrave. In addition, Walt Disney Studios produced a successful cartoon version of *The Sword and the Stone* (1963).

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the themes of idealism and disillusionment as they apply to Arthur
2. To note the trials of illegitimate children in their dealings with their families and in their struggle for acceptance

3. To examine the qualities expected of a knight and to relate them to the greater good of society
4. To explain the concept of chivalry as it applies to justice
5. To compare the ills of the medieval period to current social problems
6. To list and explain archaic terms that apply to armor, heraldry, and the medieval milieu
7. To recognize the stresses felt by a ruler
8. To analyze the three Greek concepts of love—*phillios*, *eros*, and *agape*—as they apply to the novel
9. To discuss the effect of "the sins of the fathers" upon future generations
10. To determine the importance of the Church in medieval affairs
11. To analyze how White combines fantasy, legend, history, and social commentary in one book

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate Merlyn's part in Arthur's education and eventual success
2. To characterize Arthur's method of dealing with an insuperable dilemma
3. To analyze the destructive forces that deplete the Orkney faction from within
4. To explain the meaning of the title
5. To enumerate and discuss contemporary analogies in White's narrative
6. To note the evolution of civilizing forces in England, such as chivalry, order, and trial by jury
7. To describe the heroic qualities of legendary English figures, such as Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, Arthur, Merlyn, Lancelot, and Galahad
8. To discuss Guenever's dilemma as Arthur's wife and Lancelot's lover
9. To explain how the church settles the *menage á trois*
10. To describe the styles of magic used by Merlyn, Morgause, and Morgan le Fay
11. To explain how Mordred garners power and uses it for his own purpose

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this book. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

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1. looked rather like Lord Baden-Powell, (p. 145)  
*(Merlyn in running shorts resembles General Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell [1847-1941], the founder of the Boy Scouts and co-founder of Girl Guides.)*
2. Lot of Orkney, (p. 221)  
*(The king of a group of islands north of Scotland whose sons, Agravaine, Gawaine, Gareth, and Gaheris, form the Orkney faction, which, along with Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son, becomes a major bone of contention throughout Arthur's reign.)*
3. the Holy Grail, (p. 383)  
*(The goal of Arthur's knights during the latter half of his reign, the cup of the eucharist or platter of the Paschal lamb, used by Jesus at the Last Supper, and by Joseph of Arimathea to collect drops of Jesus' blood at the crucifixion, is thought to have magic powers to heal, regenerate, or bestow grace. It symbolizes perfect union with God.  
Origins of the grail legend date back to myths of Demeter, Attis, and Adonis, although one theory of its birth suggests that it was an honest mistranslation of the Celtic term cors beneiz as "blessed body." Modern versions, such as those composed by T.H. White, C.S. Lewis, T.S. Eliot, and Charles Williams, stress the quest as the achievement of self-realization through insight into human suffering.)*
4. order of chivalry, (p. 248)  
*(A system of values and ideals governing the conduct of medieval knights, chivalry originated in feudalism. As nobles devoted themselves to the constant struggle for land, autonomy, and plunder, the stability of the chivalric code assured society of some control over potential anarchy. With the addition of education and polish, the major virtues of a knight—courage, courtesy, and generosity—formed the basis of the Renaissance concept of the gentleman.)*
5. a face like Quasimodo's, (p. 368)  
*(White compares Lancelot's grotesque appearance to that of a deformed bellringer, the hero of Victor Hugo's Hunchback of Notre Dame [1831].)*
6. They call it *droit de seigneur* in French. (p. 439)  
*("The right of the Lord," arrogantly claimed by feudal nobles, allots choice fruits of harvest to the ruling aristocracy, including the first night with their serf's brides. This base insult to the humanity of lower classmen produced extremes of ill will, leading to treachery and bloodshed as a means of retaliation.)*
7. "Pourquoi nous laisser faire dommage? Nous sommes hommes comme ils sont." (p. 531)  
*("Why do we allow injustice to happen? We are human as they are." This verse depicts the misery suffered by lower class people in England at the time of Arthur's accession to the throne.)*
8. For that time it was Lancelot's fate and Guenever's to take the tonsure and the veil, (p. 639)  
*(The celibate life in monasteries and convents is symbolized by the headdress of nuns and priests—Lancelot shaves his head and Guenever covers hers with a veil.)*
9. Passive resistance, (p. 448)  
*(Arthur describes a system of nonviolent dissent through public demonstration of disapproval. This method of noncompliance gained strength through the writings and practice of Henry David Thoreau, who spent the night in jail rather than support the United States' war against Mexico, and Mahatma Gandhi, who organized lower caste Indians to lie on railroad tracks and roadways as a protest against class injustice.)*
10. The Leader sat complacently, (p. 127)  
*(Wart sees the queen of the communist ant nest sitting smugly amid her workers, like a tyrant whose subjects rush to fulfill every whim.)*

## COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. What does Arthur learn about Galahad's behavior during the quest for the Holy Grail?  
*(After Lancelot knights Galahad, the boy sets out with the entire Round Table, the flower of chivalric England, to find the Holy Grail—a quest plotted by Arthur to end the petty squabbling in Camelot bred by boredom and jealousy. Gawaine, returning to court after eighteen months, is the first to report on the young knight. He lambastes Galahad, calling him a "conceited, kindless carl" and blames his behavior on his childhood: "'Bred in a nunnery,' he went on furiously, 'amidst a paircel of auld hens! . . . the holy milksop with his hairt of a cold puttock . . .'"*  
*Gawaine seems most outraged at Galahad's austerity—his refusal of meat, strong drink, and sexual experience. After Galahad joins the opposition, wounds Gawaine, and kills his horse, Gawaine departs in disgust. Arthur offers small defense of Galahad's overly fastidious style, noting "After all, Galahad is only a child! He has growing pains, perhaps. I don't think we ought to judge him unkindly for little faults of social intercourse." But Aglovale, the third knight to return from the quest,*

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supports Gawaine's views, noting Galahad's condescension and *prima donna* airs.

When Lancelot returns after two years' absence, he agrees with earlier complaints against Galahad, concluding that "everybody dislikes him . . . They complain about his being inhuman." Lancelot softens the accusations somewhat by explaining that "he was far away in his spirit, living on desert islands, in silence, with eternity." Whereas other knights return in despair, as a result of Galahad's idealism and purity, a white knight chooses him and eleven others to enter the chapel of the Grail.)

2. What is Guenever's initial reaction to Lancelot?

(After Lancelot leaves the castle at Benwick to join Arthur's court at Camelot, he is knighted the first day and introduced to Guenever that same evening. The Queen smiles and laughs at the new knight, who is eager to hear all about the Round Table. She ushers him to his room, glad for an "old friend to help" her husband subdue the Orkney faction.

Guenever, at the request of the King, comes to like Lancelot for himself, despite his hideous, broken face. Although Lancelot, jealous of Guenever's place in the King's affections, ignores her and refers to her as "that woman," he discovers that Jenny is a "real person. She was not a minx, not deceitful, not designing and heartless. She was pretty Jenny, who could think and feel." From that point on, their mutual affection develops into love.)

3. How does Arthur surprise the coalition of eleven kings at Sherwood Forest?

(Arthur violates the accepted style of battle by attacking at night, "the blood pounding in the veins of his neck, and Excalibur dancing in his hand." The enemy, awakened from sleep and astounded at his masterful start, fight hand to hand and, after donning their hardware, unite into an armored regiment. While Merlyn leads the footmen in a battle against the infantry, the King himself precedes the cavalry, routing the opposition and pursuing the fray past the point of chivalry. The enemy is outraged at the "positive manslaughter."

Gallop through an inadequate screen of Gaelic foot soldiers, Arthur perseveres in his pursuit of the nobles. He defeats them through the novelty of his approach—the nobles find themselves the "objects of ferocity in spite of their rank." Their morale broken, they give ground. Their coalition splits into separate positions. Arthur, who heretofore appeared outnumbered, takes this opportunity of introducing ten thousand French allies. By sunset Arthur determines that the "insurgents were demoralized." In a repeat performance the next day, Arthur uses his newly-invented tactics to quell the Gaelic faction.)

4. How does Arthur happen to pull the sword from the

stone and anvil?

(Sir Kay attends the New Year's Day tournament in London in order to compete for the throne of England. When he realizes that he has left his sword behind, he sends Wart, his squire, to the inn, offering him a shilling if he brings the sword in time. Wart promises to succeed and, mounted on "his stupid little ambling palfrey," pushes his way through the mobbed streets.

Muttering his discontent at the humiliations suffered by a squire, he arrives at the inn, which is closed, and vows that Kay shall have a sword "if I have to break into the Tower of London." He considers stealing one, taking one by force, or finding a swordsmith shop. Down the street he passes a churchyard where a fine new sword sticks up through an anvil on a heavy stone. Thinking the sword is part of a war memorial, he doubts that anybody would begrudge the weapon.

His initial contact with its handle produces a peculiar feeling and a clarity of vision. His sense impressions sharpen as music pours from the church. Using both hands, he tries a second time to withdraw the sword. Uttering a plea to Merlyn for help, he tries a third time. Power flows into his biceps, back, and forearms. The words of the owl urge him to steady perseverance, and the sword slides out "as gently as from a scabbard.")

5. How does Wart pass his ordeal in the mews?

(As part of his education, Merlyn changes Wart into a merlin and puts him in the mews for a night. He is warned to speak only when spoken to, since he is a junior officer, and to stay away from Cully. The colonel, a peregrine falcon, questions the new officer about his duties: what is a Beast of the Foot, what are his most important members, what is the first law of the foot, and how he should kill a bird bigger than himself.

Wart answers the questions and the officers then decide on his ordeal. He is placed next to Colonel Cully, the goshawk, who is insane and quite capable of harming or even killing Wart. The other birds ring their bells three times. On each ring the deranged Cully moves closer to Wart, who tries to talk the goshawk out of attacking him. On the third ring Wart tries to flee but Cully manages to grab his thumb. The officers are pleased with Wart's conduct during the ordeal and sing the Triumph Song in his honor.)

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. What does Gawaine's story to his little brothers indicate about future troubles in King Arthur's court?

(Gawaine, Morgause's eldest son, entertains his three brothers, aged ten to fourteen, with a story about their grandmother, Igraine, Countess of Cornwall. He paints an heroic picture of her struggle

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against King Uther Pendragon's illicit wooing. His description of Granny—"chaste and beautiful"—contrasts with the villain, the "bloody King of England." Added details of her hasty flight to escape dishonor lead to a disagreement among Gaheris, Agravaine, and Gareth, who quibble over the state the horses were in when their grandparents reached Cornwall.

The continued escalation and enhancement of details, including the number of men killed during the siege, the character and art of the nigromancer, and the treachery of the "blackhearted, southron, faithless King of the Dragon," climaxes in the positive, reassuring aspects of their mother's favorite story—the birth of three daughters, Elaine, Morgan, and Morgause herself. Obviously, Gawaine is repeating a tale that justifies Morgause's longstanding grudge against Arthur, whom she fails to recognize as her half-brother, but seduces in an effort to corrupt the offspring of the hated Uther Pendragon.)

7. What does Arthur's adventure in Queen Morgan le Fay's castle suggest about his future greatness?

(Kay and Wart follow Merlyn's directions and locate a morning's adventure. Although the details of the assault on the fairies' castle are fantasy, they reveal qualities in Wart which will evolve into strengths in his adult character. He obediently takes orders from Marian, finding her an "accomplished soldier" and a "kind of golden vixen," the type of woman he intends to marry someday. Meticulously following instructions, he and Kay avoid the temptations of chocolates, champagne, sandwiches, "oysters, truffles, olives, croûtes, slices of lemon, soufflés, and so on," clutch their iron blades to ward off enchantment, and successfully rout the Queen.

In their moment of triumph, they remain true to their mission and locate the missing Wat, Cavall, the Dog Boy, and Friar Tuck, all of whom are imprisoned in terra cotta on the mantelpiece. The boys rejoice in their victory and hold Robin Wood to his promise—to include them in the battle against the wyverns and griffins. In contrast to Kay's rather ordinary trophy—the head of a griffin, Wart requests Wat, whom he intends to take to Merlyn for restoration of the demented man's wits.

Through this adventure Wart reveals his future greatness—the urge to noble undertakings, skill as a negotiator, self-control, concentration, endurance, compassion for less fortunate beings, and sincere pleasure in his triumphs. These qualities, plus his evaluation of the strengths requisite for a worthy mate, predict a favorable future for Merlyn's pupil.)

8. How does White contrast Elaine and Guenever, both rivals for Lancelot's love, at their first meeting?

(White demonstrates the fragility of Guenever's

confidence and control in his account of her meeting with Elaine. When Elaine brings her infant son from the castle of Corbin, she relies on her only weapon against the Queen—the "fat baby which she was carrying to its father." In contrast to Guenever's sophistication, beauty, and power, Elaine has only "her own immaturity and humble love." White credits Elaine with no malice or connivance, but he stresses Guenever's prescience—her awareness "of dooms and sorrows outside her lover's purview." Although Elaine has no plan to destroy Lancelot, Guenever knows otherwise.

Blessed with "courage, generosity, and honesty," Guenever encourages Lancelot to marry Elaine and rectify their illicit relationship. She welcomes Elaine to Camelot but quickly finds herself outflanked when Elaine insists that Guenever see the baby. From that point on, "her sweetness and reason were gone. She was cold and proud, and spoke as if she were addressing a meeting."

After Elaine tricks Lancelot into a late night visit, Guenever loses control. Like a fishwife, the Queen, shrieking and yanking at Lancelot's mantle, loses her regal stature. Elaine, before she can be ejected from court, scores another point through the exercise of both reason and control. She counters Guenever's invective by pointing out the difference in their positions: "You are a Queen, with honour and happiness and a home. I had no home, and no husband, and my honour was gone too. Why would you not let me have him?" Crushed with defeat at the hands of a lesser woman, Guenever weeps, "slowly, deeply, primitively.")

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. What does White's view of the Arthurian legends contain that more heroic versions lack?

(By dwelling on the human aspects of the King, White lowers Arthur a notch from founding father and champion of justice to disillusioned idealist. From his early days as Ector's foster son and Merlyn's star pupil, Arthur displays strength of character, but he never exceeds the bounds of normal human reactions. He is brave and humble, kind and worthy, but at the same time he glories in warfare, fails to take action against the Queen's lover, and capitulates to Mordred's twisted whims.

Guenever, in like manner, achieves a kind of greatness in her spunk and grace. She is a functioning queen, supportive of her husband and fearless in the face of sure capture by Sir Meliagrance. Yet, her sordid couplings with Lancelot in the room adjacent to the King's chamber lead the reader to question her sense of propriety and taste, both necessary adjuncts to royal demeanor. Guenever is enamored of her dangerous liaison, more for its risks than its passion.

The most pathetic of the human characters, Lancelot struggles with a peculiar mix of hero worship, conceit, dedication, treachery, strength, and debauchery. His resounding defeat during the Holy Grail mission leaves no doubt that he is human; the success of his cast-off son compounds Lancelot's humiliation. At the end of an era of warrior knights, Lancelot finds his ilk replaced by a different breed of idealist—the spiritual, self-denying practitioners of faith. In order to examine the human ramifications of a legend, White trims down to size these three characters who have dominated English literature since the Middle Ages.)

10. Defend or refute Arthur's success.

(No great historic figure ever begins or ends a movement or idea. All legends have been begun on the shaky foundations of an earlier, less eminent period, such as Martin Luther's challenge to the Catholic hierarchy, King John's capitulation to the nobles, and Thomas Jefferson's vision of a democratic state. In similar fashion, periods of greatness have never achieved their nirvana; there is always work to be done, corrections to be made, new types of challenges to be faced.

Heroes, like all human beings, arrive in the midst of things. The truly great make things better. They also make faulty choices and commit petty and sometimes gargantuan wrongs in the execution of their memorable deeds. Arthur is not any different. He was born in harsh times; he made the world safer, fairer, more rewarding for all levels of society. He dedicated himself to a utopian concept—and he lost.

To his credit, Arthur transcends the good works of ordinary men by maintaining his vision. Even at the moment of doom, when time has run out and Mordred's forces close around him, he feels "refreshed, clear-headed, almost ready to begin again." Arthur realizes his fault—he judged the task by too small a standard. In his second try, the new Round Table would have "no corners, just as the world had none—a table without boundaries between the nations who would sit to feast there."

Although he realizes that his energies are spent, that this attempt must end, he views his adversary as a small impediment, "less than a drop, although it was a sparkling one, in the great blue motion of the sunlit sea." Resigning himself to his fate, the "Majesty of England drew himself up to meet the future with a peaceful heart."

**Question 11 Creative Level**

11. Compare Arthur's realm with other great kingdoms, such as Alexander's conquests, Charlemagne's empire, the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon's empire, or Hitler's Reich. Note the dreams and plans which have spurred other conquerors to great feats of expansion and

change. Include the weaknesses and faults which have led to their downfall.

**STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

1. Write an illustrated report on heraldry. Explain basic terms, such as dexter and sinister; fess point and centre chief; flank and base; or, argent, azure, vert, gules, sable, and purple; bar and chevron; dormant, rampant, couchant, sejant, gardant, statant, and passant. Create a coat of arms for yourself or for a current hero or heroine. Choose symbols that will represent positive characteristics, such as bravery or truth.
2. Read another work based on the Arthurian legends, for example Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* or Mary Stewart's trilogy, *The Crystal Cave*, *The Hollow Hills*, and *The Last Enchantment*. Discuss differences in the facts of the story, such as Guenever's guilt or innocence, Mordred's relationship with Arthur, Merlyn's magical powers, and Lancelot's loyalty to the King.
3. Sketch costumes for the more colorful characters, such as Uncle Dap, Elaine, King Arthur, Guenever, Galahad, Mordred, Uther Pendragon, and King Pellinore. Include pennants and dress armor for horses.
4. Research the biography of Sir Winston Churchill. Why did English citizens believe that he was the "once and future king" returned to help England in her darkest hour? Quote lines from his greatest speeches to justify your answer.
5. Compose a ballad of Galahad's adventures as he searches for the Holy Grail. End each verse with a refrain which characterizes Galahad's virtues.
6. Organize a game of charades in which team members act out various characters, places, and events from the medieval period.
7. List the daily activities which a child like Arthur should accomplish as he prepares himself for an important role in history. Include time for fun, creativity, and choice during the more rigid academic and physical training.
8. Make an oral report on the importance of the Church to the evolution of civilized society. Note significant dates, such as the first Christian missionaries in England and Ireland, the establishment of the first monastery, Henry VIII's clash with papal authority, translations of the Bible into English, and the martyrdom of Thomas á Becket and Joan of Arc.
9. Write a paragraph in which you explain the titles of the four volumes: *The Sword in the Stone*, *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, *The Ill-Made Knight*, and *The Candle in the Wind*.
10. Contrast Arthur to other heroes who have fought evil or corruption, such as Robin Hood, St. George, Ivanhoe,

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Hercules, Jason, Odysseus, Moses, El Cid, Roland,  
Beowulf, Siddhartha, Confucius, and Mohammed.

## **TEACHING NOTES**

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### VOCABULARY TEST

Fill in the blanks of the following quotations with words from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The knights were to band themselves into a single \_\_\_\_\_ to resist the charges, and any man who ran away thereafter was to be shot at once for cowardice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "Sir," said Sir Ector, "I will ask no more of you but that you will make my son, your foster-brother, Sir Kay, \_\_\_\_\_ of all your lands?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Lancelot dropped his sword at a moment of opportunity and caught Turquine by the snout of his \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Each of them wore a silk jupon blazoned with the \_\_\_\_\_ and the three thistles, distinguished in the case of the younger brothers with various labels of cadency, so that they looked like a hand of playing cards spread out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "What is going to happen when I am locked up in this wretched \_\_\_\_\_ of mine, I should like to know?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Arthur called off the hunt, judged accurately that the \_\_\_\_\_ were demoralized, and allowed his men to sleep in comfort on their arms, with few but careful sentries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Uncle Dap, armed \_\_\_\_\_, would sit on a stool—and Lancelot, with the morne-headed spear, would charge and charge against him, learning the best lodges on armour for a point.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The shield, whose cover the horse's hoof had torn, bore, *or, a dragon* \_\_\_\_\_ *gules*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The Pentecost next after Lancelot's first quest was almost a \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "You have lost nearly two \_\_\_\_\_ in weight."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. King Pelles had gone to the library to work out some \_\_\_\_\_, and his guest was left gloomily in the hall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. It had been arranged that Lancelot was to live \_\_\_\_\_—because, if it were allowed to get about that he was still living and lodged at Bliant Castle, there would only be a hue-and-cry for him from the court.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. He saw her as the passionate spirit of innocent youth, now \_\_\_\_\_ by the trick which is played on youth—the trick of treachery in the body, which turns flesh into green bones.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. She was beautiful, sanguine, hot-tempered, demanding, impulsive, \_\_\_\_\_, charming—she had all the proper qualities for a man-eater.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. For her there were no recognized \_\_\_\_\_ except what is comparable to the ladies' bridge party of today.

- |                |               |                     |
|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| A. acquisitive | F. fiasco     | K. prognostications |
| B. beleaguered | G. helm       | L. rampant          |
| C. cap-à-pie   | H. incognito  | M. seneschal        |
| D. chevron     | I. insurgents | N. stone            |
| E. diversions  | J. phalanx    | O. tumulus          |



## THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Match the names of characters from the novel with their actions. Some names will be used more than once and some will not be used at all.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Arthur's first captain of the knights
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Merlyn's pet and messenger
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Kay's father and Arthur's guardian
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. sets Mordred adrift in a boat full of babies
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. fights with Lancelot against his own brothers
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. second-rate knight who kidnaps Guenever
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. chooses to be changed into a merlin
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. searches seventeen years for the Questing Beast
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. boils a live cat down to the bones
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. is rescued before being burned at the stake
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. seduces Lancelot but fails to keep him
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. nuncio and emissary of the Pope
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. kills the boar with his sword
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. a fat baby who lives with his mother in the castle of Corbin
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. knows that Nimue will one day enchant him

- |                        |            |               |                  |                    |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| A. Archimedes          | D. Elaine  | G. Gawaine    | J. Merlyn        | M. Sir Ector       |
| B. Arthur              | E. Galahad | H. Guenever   | K. Morgan Le Fay | N. Sir Meliagrance |
| C. Bishop of Rochester | F. Gareth  | I. Robin Wood | L. Morgause      | O. Sir Pellinore   |

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark each statement either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. King Pellinore urges Arthur to try pulling the sword from the stone and anvil.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Refusing to attack before midday, Arthur clings to ancient battle tactics.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. After her suicide, Elaine's body lies on a barge for public viewing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Mordred is impressed that Arthur pleads with Lancelot not to kill Arthur's son.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. After proclaiming himself King of England, Mordred plans to marry Guenever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Merlyn urges Arthur to strengthen the English throne against a possible takeover by Irish factions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Uncle Dap inquires about the balance and sharpness of Joyeux.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Arthur agrees to leave on a hunting trip, and Mordred's men trap Lancelot in Guenever's room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Agravaire tries to warn Lancelot of Mordred's trap.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In his escape from Sir Meliagrance's castle, Lancelot accidentally kills Gareth and Gaheris.



## THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

Match the name of the speaker with each of the following quotations. Some answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Have a good time for the last night. Give love to Badger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. My Lancelot must stay in the castle, and there will be a happy ending.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. He is going to be the best knight I have. I never saw such a fall as he gave me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Is the finest knight in Europe to throw away everything I have taught him for the sake of a lady's beautiful eyes?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. And what is going to happen when there is nobody to tell you? Are you never going to think for yourself?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. You want to put an end to the Strong Arm, by having a band of knights who believe in justice rather than strength. Yes, I would like to be one of those very much.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I know the sorrows before you, and the joys, and how there will never again be anybody who dares to call you by the friendly name of Wart.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Oh, dear, oh, dear, I wish I had never seen that filthy sword at all.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I was never your father nor of your blood, but I wote well ye are of a higher blood than I wend ye were.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Kay, . . . thou wast ever a proud and ill-tongued speaker, and a misfortunate one. Thy sorrow will come from thine own mouth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I will start at Sandwich in my shirt, and walk barefoot to Carlisle, and I will endow a chantry for him every ten miles in between.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. My father committed incest with my mother.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Please don't go to the Queen tonight.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. God be with my ring . . . as I am with it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Try to be a little forgiving, my son, now that we are in this trouble. Remember that I am your father. I shall have no family left, except for you.

- |             |                    |
|-------------|--------------------|
| A. Arthur   | F. Mordred         |
| B. Gareth   | G. Sir Ector       |
| C. Guenever | H. Sir Kay         |
| D. Lancelot | I. Uncle Dap       |
| E. Merlyn   | J. Uther Pendragon |

## THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

### Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the correct answer to complete each of the following statements. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. In order to enchant the young King, Queen Morgause employs (a) the bones of a boiled cat (b) a talking owl (c) a strip of human skin (d) Morgan le Fay's book of magic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Guenever joyfully seizes on Lancelot's suggestion to (a) hide from Mordred's men (b) remove bars from the window and escape Arthur's sentries (c) arrange a tournament against the Orkney faction (d) apply to the Pope.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Wart complains to Merlyn that (a) Kay is never changed into an animal (b) Archimedes expects Wart to swallow a dead merlin (c) Hob blames Wart for losing Cully (d) Sir Ector is too hard on Wart and Kay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Sir Kay promises his squire a shilling to (a) spend the night in the Forest Sauvage (b) locate the Questing Beast (c) ride back to the inn and fetch his sword (d) accompany him to Galapas's hall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Arthur regrets that (a) Gareth is knighted on his first day at court (b) his family has always hurt the Cornwall family (c) Gawaine is killed on a crusade to the Holy Land (d) Guenever chooses to go to the stake rather than become a nun.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. King Pelles introduces Lancelot Dulac to (a) Arthur's illegitimate son (b) his daughter, Elaine (c) the King's seneschal, Sir Bedevere (d) St. Toirdealblach.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Arthur considers Sir Bruce Sans Pitié (a) a marauder (b) a likely candidate for the Round Table (c) the best person to deliver a message to the Pope (d) a worthy adversary for Lancelot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Upon his arrival at court, Gareth earns the nickname (a) Chevalier Mal Fet (b) the Black Knight (c) "the Magnificent" (d) Beaumains.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Arthur replaces trial by ordeal with (a) purgation (b) trial by jury (c) trial by combat (d) the chivalric code.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Lancelot kills all thirteen knights outside Guenever's door except (a) Mordred (b) Agravaire (c) Meliagrance (d) Gareth.

### Part III: Matching (20 points)

Match the following place names with events connected with them. Some answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| _____ 1. Lancelot and Guenever's refuge                          |                          |
| _____ 2. haunted home of King Pelles                             |                          |
| _____ 3. Arthur studies hawking, tilting, and archery            | A. almeries at Salisbury |
| _____ 4. Wart first meets Merlyn                                 | B. castle of Corbin      |
| _____ 5. Robin Wood lies with his head in Marian's lap           | C. Castle Tintagil       |
| _____ 6. Arthur plans to record information about the Holy Grail | D. Dunlothian            |
| _____ 7. Guenever hides from Mordred                             | E. Ector's castle        |
| _____ 8. Merlyn's eventual resting place                         | F. Joyous Gard           |
| _____ 9. Uther's home  | G. under a lime tree     |
| _____ 10. The Earl of Cornwall hides Igraine from Uther.         | H. stone cottage         |
|  | I. Tower of London       |
|  | J. tumulus               |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Contrast Lancelot's love for Arthur with Lancelot's love for Guenever.

2. Explain how Mordred gains control of Arthur's kingdom.

## THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

### VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. I  | 11. K |
| 2. M | 7. C  | 12. H |
| 3. G | 8. L  | 13. B |
| 4. D | 9. F  | 14. A |
| 5. O | 10. N | 15. E |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. N  | 11. D |
| 2. A | 7. B  | 12. C |
| 3. M | 8. O  | 13. I |
| 4. B | 9. L  | 14. E |
| 5. F | 10. H | 15. J |

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. F  |
| 5. T | 10. F |

#### Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Camelot         | 6. Sir Kay              |
| 2. Round Table     | 7. Cully, Hob's goshawk |
| 3. Uther Pendragon | 8. New Year's Day       |
| 4. Lancelot        | 9. Merlyn               |
| 5. Wart            | 10. Lancelot            |

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. D  | 11. D |
| 2. C | 7. E  | 12. F |
| 3. A | 8. A  | 13. B |
| 4. I | 9. G  | 14. C |
| 5. E | 10. E | 15. A |

#### Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. B  |
| 2. D | 7. A  |
| 3. A | 8. D  |
| 4. C | 9. B  |
| 5. B | 10. A |

#### Part III: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. A  |
| 2. B | 7. I  |
| 3. E | 8. J  |
| 4. H | 9. I  |
| 5. G | 10. C |

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

**THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING**

**TEACHING NOTES**



**PERMA-BOUND • VANDALIA ROAD • JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS 62650**  
**PHONE 800-637-6581**