

Arthurian Legends Study Guide



For a video overview on King Arthur, go to <http://www.unitedstreaming.com/index.cfm> and type in **King Arthur** under the advance search.

Themes to look for:

- bravery**
- loyalty**
- virtue**
- chivalry and the heroic tradition**
- courtly love**
- Christian precepts**

Legends: tend to deal with people who have preformed superhuman deeds. Sometimes a legendary character is based on a real, but exaggerated person.

Myths: traditional stories of immortal beings that can help sanction customs and institutions, both religious and secular.

Elements of Chivalry:

- A knight must vow to remain faithful to God
- A knight must be loyal to his king
- A knight must be loyal to his lady love
- A knight must use his strength and skills to aid ladies in distress
- A knight must defend and protect the weak and underprivileged
- A knight must champion right against evil, injustice, and cruelty
- A knight must be generous to all, courageous in the face of the enemy, and prepared to die for his country

Principles of Knighthood:

- Courtesy
- Loyalty
- Prowess--skill at arms
- Honor
- Courage
- Devout Christian--adheres to all rules of the Christian faith
- Endurance--physical strength

Heroes

A knight's heroism takes a special form:

- a true knight is chivalrous
- fights to overcome evil
- honors promises
- loyally serves the king and his lady
- performs tasks with bravado and ease

Heroic Tradition

- wins glory in physical tests or competition
- nobility of character
- justice
- adventure
- loyalty to vows and ruler

Courtly Love: unattainable love that can never be requited. A knight must suffer greatly for the love of a lady he cannot win.

Epic Poetry:

- long narrative poetry that celebrates the life of a hero who embodies the values of a particular society
- relates larger than life events, generally these of a hero or heroine
- composed in a dignified and sometimes lofty language that achieves a solemn (serious) effect
- hero or heroine undergoes a series of adventures which relate to the history of a group
- setting is vast in scope--it usually covers more than one nation
- action depicts deeds of valor or superhuman courage and strength

Characters:

King Pellinore: the king who breaks the news of the death of Arthur's father and predecessor, King Uther the Conqueror.

Sir Ector: Father of Sir Kay and guardian of Arthur, the future King of England

Sir Kay: a young man who wants to go to London to try to remove the sword from the stone; Arthur's step-brother

Wart: squire to Sir Kay, but really Arthur, the future King of England

King Arthur: the son of King Uther. Arthur is the King of England by birth and by his act of removing the sword from the stone.

King Uther: Arthur's father who unifies England, but loses control after he uses Merlin's magic to seduce Igraine, the wife of the Duke of Tintigail

Igraine: Duke of Tintigail wife, the mother of King Arthur

Merlin: a wizard and chief counselor to King Arthur

Guenevere: Arthur's wife

King Leodegrance: Guenevere's father and keeper of the Round Table, which he gives to Arthur as a wedding present

Sir Launcelot du Lake: Arthur's best knight; has an adulterous affair with Guenevere and which sets off the beginning of the end for Camelot

Queen Morgan le Fay: King Arthur's half-sister and an enchantress

Sir Tarquine: an enemy of the knights of the Round Table who is defeated by Launcelot

Excalibur: The sword of kings made by the Lady of the Lake; a goddess who existed at the beginning of time

The Holy Grail: the cup used by Christ at the last supper; suppose to have regenerative powers.

Sir Brandel, Sir Marhaus, Sir Galind, Sir Brian de Lisinois, Sir Sliduke, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Mordred, Sir Gawain, Sir Galahad, Sir Percival: knights of the Round Table