

# **Arthurian Romances Study Guide**

## **Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes**

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# Plot Summary

Arthurian Romances is a collection of five stories written by Chretien de Troyes during the twelfth or thirteenth century concerning the events surrounding the legendary King Arthur and several of his knights. The stories feature many well-known characters as well as many allusions to stories of King Arthur that are not included in this collection. Arthurian Romances compiles many examples of the manners and habits of the time period, along with examples of chivalry and honor.

In "Erec and Enide," during a hunt for the white stag, an unknown knight offends Queen Guinevere, and Erec pursues him, defeats him, and returns to court with Enide, his host's daughter. After their marriage, they return to Erec's home in Carnant where Erec retires from battle in order to spend more time with his beloved wife. Gossip about Erec's lifestyle change bothers Enide, and she offends her husband when she confides this information. They leave Carnant, and Erec forbids Enide to speak to him without his addressing her first. When three knights plot against Erec, Enide warns him, gaining only his anger. After he defeats the knights, they continue on their journey until five knights plot against Erec. Again, Enide warns him and gains his anger, and again, Erec defeats the knights. They meet a count who falls in love with Enide and plots against Erec. Enide warns her husband and they flee; Erec is finally convinced of Enide's love. Next, Erec battles and defeats King Guivret the Short who pledges his friendship and aid to Erec. Erec and Enide incidentally run into King Arthur's camp before Erec rescues Cadoc of Cabruel from several giants. After this battle, Erec faints from his wounds; Enide, thinking Erec dead, attempts to commit suicide but is prevented by Count Oringle who marries Enide against her will. Count Oringle beats Enide for refusing to eat because of her grief, causing Erec to waken and kill Count Oringle. Meanwhile, Guivret searches for Erec and meets him on the road from Count Oringle's home, but not knowing it is his friend, Guivret fights Erec. They are reconciled and approach Brandigan Castle where Guivret cannot dissuade Erec from attempting the Joy of the Court. After Erec completes that adventure, they go to King Arthur's court where they stay until Erec's father dies and King Arthur crowns Erec.

In "Cliges," a Greek youth related to King Arthur, Alexander, insists upon going to England to seek glory. King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Alexander and Soredamours go to Brittany where Alexander and Soredamours hide their love, not revealing it even to one another. They receive news that Count Angres plans to challenge King Arthur for his lands, so they gather an army and return to England. At Winchester, the traitors attack at night, Count Angres retreats because they are losing, and Alexander and some of his troops don enemy apparel and pursue the enemy to the castle. There, they defeat the traitors and King Arthur offers Alexander a reward, but Alexander postpones naming his reward until he can ascertain Soredamours' feelings. In Queen Guinevere's tent, the queen addresses Alexander and Soredamours about their love and offers to arrange their marriage herself. Alexander and Soredamours are married and have a child, Cliges. Alexander's father dies, and due to a rumor of Alexander's death, his younger brother, Alis, assumes the throne. Alexander and Alis agree to a pact that Alis can keep the throne if he agrees never to marry so that Cliges will inherit it. After Alexander and



Soredamours die, Alis decides to marry Fenice who is promised to the Duke of Saxony. The Greeks go to Germany, and Fenice and Cliges fall in love immediately. Fenice laments having to marry Alis, and Thessala gives Alis a potion to make him think he has possessed Fenice's body when he has not. On their return to Greece, the Saxons ambush the Greeks and Germans. During the battle, the Duke of Saxony sends twelve knights to kidnap Fenice, but Cliges rescues his love. After Cliges defeats the Duke of Saxony in single combat, he visits King Arthur in England where he receives much fame when he participates in a tournament. Cliges returns to Greece where he and Fenice confess their love for one another. They determine a plot to be together, and Thessala assists Fenice in faking her death. Cliges takes Fenice to a house with a secret room, but they are discovered in an outside room and Alis is informed. Cliges and Fenice return to King Arthur to gain help, but soon, messengers arrive to report that Alis is dead and Cliges is the new emperor.

In "The Knight of the Cart," Meleagant arrives at Camelot, boasting that he has captives from King Arthur's court and will only release them if a knight accepts his challenge, defending Queen Guinevere. Kay accepts the challenge, and Sir Gawain follows shortly, finding Kay's horse without a rider. Sir Gawain meets Lancelot, and they search for Queen Guinevere. In a town, Lancelot agrees to climb into a cart to learn about the queen, incurring shame and dishonor. At their lodgings, they see Queen Guinevere being escorted as a prisoner and try to follow but cannot catch up. They receive directions from a girl that consists of two ways to reach Meleagant's lands: the Underwater Bridge, which Sir Gawain opts for, and the Sword Bridge, which Lancelot pursues. As he thinks of his love for the queen, Lancelot is attacked and unhorsed, but he defeats the knight and acquires lodgings with a maiden whom he saves from a feigned rape. The maiden accompanies Lancelot on his journey where he protects her from a potential kidnapping by a knight who is in love with her. He goes to a church and lifts a heavy slab in the cemetery, the legend of which proclaims that Lancelot will free the foreign prisoners of the land. As Lancelot lodges at the home of a knight, a proud knight enters, condemns Lancelot for riding in a cart, and challenges him. Lancelot wins, and the knight begs for mercy, but a maiden arrives and asks for the knight's head. Lancelot fights the knight again and winning, awards the knight's head to the maiden. Lancelot crosses Sword Bridge, which angers Meleagant but pleases King Bademagu who is unable to persuade Meleagant to surrender Queen Guinevere. Lancelot and Meleagant battle, Lancelot is winning, and King Bademagu begs Queen Guinevere to save his son; the queen agrees and Lancelot stops fighting immediately, but Meleagant has to be persuaded by the promise of a rematch the next year at King Arthur's court where he can gain greater glory. Queen Guinevere refuses to speak to Lancelot, making him very sad. Lancelot searches for Sir Gawain but is kidnapped. The rumor of Lancelot's death upsets the queen, and she is thrilled when he returns to King Bademagu's castle, admitting the reason of her anger was his dishonor in riding in the cart. They make love, for which Kay is accused, and Lancelot fights Meleagant to avenge Kay and the queen's honor. Once again, King Bademagu begs for his son's life. Lancelot searches for Sir Gawain and is kidnapped again, this time by Meleagant's command, and imprisoned. Upon receiving news that Lancelot is at King Arthur's court, the other returns there also. When Lancelot hears of a tournament to take place at King Arthur's court, he persuades his jailor's wife to allow him to go, promising to return. He



excels at the tournament, submitting to Queen Guinevere's commands to do his best or worst, before returning to his prison. Meleagant moves Lancelot to a tower on an inlet and goes to King Arthur's for his appointed battle with Lancelot. Sir Gawain promises to battle Meleagant if they cannot find Lancelot within a year, and Meleagant returns to his father, boasting of Lancelot's fear of him. King Bademagu's daughter overhears Meleagant, searches for, finds and frees Lancelot who recognizes her as the maiden on whom he bestowed the knight's head. Lancelot returns to King Arthur's court as Sir Gawain prepares to battle Meleagant. Lancelot reassumes his battle and defeats his enemy.

In "The Knight with the Lion," Calogrenant shares his story of shame at the storming spring, and Yvain sneaks off to avenge his cousin before King Arthur can do so. Yvain defeats the defender of the spring and follows the injured knight to town where Yvain is trapped within gates. Lunete finds Yvain and gives him a magic ring to protect him from his pursuers because the defender is dead. During the funeral procession, Yvain notices and falls in love with Laudine. Yvain refuses to sneak away and incur dishonor. Lunete convinces Laudine to marry Yvain before King Arthur and his court arrive. Kay asks for the battle at the storming spring, and Yvain defeats Kay and invites the company back to Laudine's home. Yvain gets Laudine's permission to join Sir Gawain at the tournaments under the condition that he returns in one year or less. Yvain breaks his promise, and a servant arrives to tell him that Laudine retracts her love. Yvain goes crazy and lives in the woods until he is found by some ladies who cure him because they need his help against Count Alier's invasion. Yvain regains his sanity and defeats Count Alier. As he continues his journey, he saves a lion from a dragon, and the lion follows and serves Yvain. Yvain learns that Lunete is a prisoner and promises to save her the next day on which she is scheduled to burn. At his lodgings, he learns of the threats of Harpin of the Mountain against his host's daughter. He undertakes the battle, in part because the host's wife is Sir Gawain's sister, and defeats the giant before returning to save Lunete by defeating three knights. At this point, he names himself the Knight with the Lion. Yvain refuses Laudine's offer to heal in her town until his lady relinquishes her anger towards him. Meanwhile, the daughters of the deceased Lord of Blackthorn dispute over their inheritance. The older obtains Sir Gawain as her champion; the younger searches for and obtains the Knight with the Lion as her champion. On the return to King Arthur's court, they enter the town of Dire Adventure where Yvain and his lion defeat two half-demon rulers. Yvain and Sir Gawain do not recognize each other, and they battle until they realize they are evenly matched, at which point they cease fighting and introduce themselves. They are overjoyed to see each other and declare one another the victor. King Arthur forces the elder sister to give her younger sister a rightful share of the inheritance. When Yvain's lion approaches, all recognize him as the Knight with the Lion about whom they have heard such fame. Yvain and his lion travel to the storming spring while Lunete convinces Laudine that the Knight with the Lion will serve her if she promises to do everything in her power to reconcile him and his lady. Lunete finds Yvain and takes him to Laudine who is upset at the trick but keeps her word and is reconciled to Yvain.

In "The Story of the Grail," Perceval, who has never seen knights, meets five knights and desires to become a knight. His mother tries in vain to dissuade him and faints as



he leaves. Perceval goes to a tent where he kisses a maiden, steals her ring and departs before the return of her lover who vows to behead Perceval. Outside the gates of King Arthur's castle, Perceval beholds and covets the armor of the Red Knight. He asks King Arthur for the armor, and Kay mocks him. A maiden predicts that Perceval will be a great knight causing Kay to slap her in his anger. Perceval kills the Red Knight and promises to avenge the maiden. He meets Gornemant of Gohort who trains him. Perceval then lodges at Blancheflor's castle where he defeats Anguigueron and Clamadeu before leaving to check on his mother. He lodges at the Fisher King's castle but fails to ask about the grail or lance, a circumstance which, his cousin predicts, will cause him many misfortunes. He encounters the maiden from the tent and defeats her lover. King Arthur decides to search for Perceval, and Perceval unwittingly comes near King Arthur's tent. After Sagremor fails and Kay receives a broken arm in the attempt, Sir Gawain approaches Perceval and persuades him to return to camp with him. Their joy of several days is interrupted when a damsel arrives, condemning Perceval for not asking about the lance and grail at the Fisher King's manor. Guinganbresil arrives and accuses Sir Gawain of treason, and Sir Gawain plans to meet him within forty days to defend himself against the accusation. Sir Gawain refrains from entering the battle between Meliant de Liz and Tiebaut of Tintagel until the Maiden with the Small Sleeves asks him to lay claim for her at which he does very well in the battle. Sir Gawain's horse needs to be reshod, and he encounters a young knight who directs him to his sister for lodgings. A knight catches Sir Gawain and the girl kissing, recognizes Sir Gawain and there is much chaos as the peasants try to capture Sir Gawain. The young knight is the king of Escavalon, and after quieting his peasants, he sends Sir Gawain to search for the bleeding lance, delaying the battle for one year. Meanwhile, Perceval meets a group doing penance and is directed to a holy hermit who informs him that he is being punished for the sin of killing his mother with grief which is what caused him to be unable to ask about the lance and grail. Perceval begins his penance. Sir Gawain encounters an injured knight and agrees to come back and tend to his maiden if possible. Next, he meets the Haughty Maiden of Logres who joins him as he takes a healing herb back to the injured knight who recognizes Sir Gawain and steals his horse. The Haughty Maiden of Logres mocks Sir Gawain until a knight attacks Sir Gawain. Having defeated the knight and the maiden having disappeared, Sir Gawain releases him to a boatman who has arrived to demand it. The boatman takes Sir Gawain to a town, Champguin, where Sir Gawain rescues the three queens and many others who live in the castle. Sir Gawain returns across the river to the Haughty Maiden of Logres and defeats her knight. Upon her challenge, Sir Gawain crosses the Perilous Ford where he meets Guiromelant and learns that the queens are King Arthur's mother, Sir Gawain's mother and Sir Gawain's sister. Guiromelant mentions his hatred of Sir Gawain, and learning it is he who is before him, issues a challenge to battle in two days, giving Sir Arthur time to arrive as a witness. Sir Gawain again crosses the Perilous Ford where the Haughty Maiden of Logres apologizes. He takes her to Champguin and sends a squire to summon King Arthur to witness the pending battle with Guiromelant.



# Erec and Enide

## Erec and Enide Summary

On Easter day, King Arthur decides to revive the tradition of hunting the white stag, and the next morning, they make ready for the hunt. Erec joins, unarmed except for his sword, to keep Queen Guinevere company. The queen sends her maiden to find out who a strange knight is, but the knight's dwarf whips the maiden and Erec. Erec decides to follow the knight until he can avenge Queen Guinevere and himself. King Arthur kills the white stag but is indecisive about upon whom to bestow the kiss due to the offense amongst his knights. The queen advises him to wait until Erec returns. Meanwhile, Erec follows the knight to a town, acquires lodgings at a vavasour's home and admires the vavasour's beautiful but poorly attired daughter, Enide. Erec learns that a collection of knights are in town for a festival based on who can bring the most beautiful maiden upon whom to bestow a sparrow-hawk; the unmannerly knight has won the past two years unopposed. Erec borrows armor and Enide, as his maiden. Erec challenges the unmannerly knight, and they fight for a long time before Erec wins and the unmannerly knight begs for mercy. Erec demands that he goes to the queen, apologize and offer his services. Erec wants to marry Enide. Erec and Enide arrive at the castle of Cardigan, and Erec presents Enide to King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, who dresses the maiden in one of her dresses. Queen Guinevere persuades King Arthur to bestow the honor of the white stag upon Enide. Erec marries Enide, and at the large, celebratory tournament, Erec is deemed the best of the knights at the tournament. Erec, Enide and their entourage return to his home in Carnant where Erec stops attending tournaments in order to spend more time with Enide. The gossip about Erec's lifestyle change bothers Enide, and she weeps over it as Erec sleeps one night. He awakens, and when she explains, Erec tells her to prepare to ride. Enide obeys, fearing exile. Erec forbids Enide to talk to him unless he addresses her first. Enide overhears three knights' plot to rob and kill Erec and warns him. Erec chides Enide for speaking to him, kills the three knights, and takes their horses. Enide warns him again when she overhears five knights plotting against Erec. Erec hates her for her words. He defeats the five knights as well. Enide watches as Erec sleeps and regrets offending him.

A squire offers Erec food, and Erec gives the squire a horse as a gift. The squire meets a count who asks about the horse and desires to meet Erec and Enide. The count falls in love with Enide's beauty and propositions her to stay with him, offering to murder Erec, but she postpones his intentions by intoxicating him with her words. Enide wakes Erec before daybreak, and reveals the plot against him. Erec pays the host of the lodgings with the remaining seven horses and they depart, Erec convinced of Enide's loyalty. The count and his knights pursue them; Erec chides Enide for warning him. Erec injures the count; although the knights vow revenge, the count admits his villainy and commands them to return home. Erec battles and defeats King Guivret the Short who pledges friendship to Erec, and they depart as friends. Erec and Enide enter a meadow where King Arthur is camped with his knights. When Kay insolently insists upon introducing the unknown knight to the king and queen, Erec bests Kay, but returns the





horse when he learns it belongs to Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain offers Erec lodgings, but Erec refuses to abandon the road so King Arthur moves his tents onto the road. King Arthur treats Erec's many wounds with an ointment that his sister Morgan made. Erec departs the next morning after feasting and sleeping.

In the forest, Erec rescues Cadoc of Cabruel from two giants. He returns to Enide but collapses over the head of his horse in pain and exhaustion. Enide, believing him dead, attempts to kill herself, but her plan is thwarted by a count and his knights who carry Enide and Erec's body back to their home. Count Oringle marries Enide against her will and beats her for not eating, but her screams waken Erec who kills Count Oringle. They escape, and Erec assures her that he loves her more than ever. Meanwhile, Guivret the Short travels to Count Oringle's lands to retrieve Erec's body and save Enide. Guivret and Erec meet on the road, do not recognize each other, and battle. Guivret knocks Erec to the ground, but Enide reveals his identity to his friend. King Guivret offers to accompany Erec to King Arthur's court. As they approach Brandigan Castle, Guivret mentions the Joy of the Court and tries in vain to dissuade Erec from attempting the deadly venture. King Evrain also leads them to a garden, but Erec must go to the Joy of the Court alone. Erec enters the garden and as he approaches a beautiful maiden, Maboagrain battles him; Erec wins. Maboagrain, King Evrain's nephew, explains that the maiden is his beloved wife who made him swear to stay in the garden until another knight could beat him, as a means to imprison him. Enide tries to comfort the grieving maiden who recognizes Enide as her cousin. After much joy, Erec, Enide and Guivret travel to King Arthur's lands where they remain until King Lac dies. Erec and Enide are crowned.

## Erec and Enide Analysis

Sir Gawain's disapproval of King Arthur's plan to revive the tradition of the white stag on the grounds of causing dissent amongst the knights proves Sir Gawain's wisdom. The knight's dwarf is allowed to whip the knight and Erec, showing the knight's lack of chivalry which is doubled because of his punisher being a dwarf. Queen Guinevere's advice that King Arthur await Erec's return before bestowing the honor of the white stag foreshadows Erec bringing Enide back to court with him which is fulfilled when Erec returns with Enide and the knights agree that she deserves the honor of the white stag. The fact that the unmannerly knight has won the honor of the sparrow-hawk for two years unopposed shows that he inspires fear in the other knights which increases the portrayal of Erec's bravery and valor since he opposes him. Erec defeats the knight but agrees to spare him, demonstrating his mercy. Erec's fascination with the vavasour's daughter foreshadows his marriage to Enide. Erec's refusal to have Enide dressed better until the queen can bestow a fine dress on her shows his love for Queen Guinevere.

When Erec returns to his lands and quits battling for love of Enide, this foreshadows the gossip that occurs as well as Enide's lamentations. Erec's forbidding Enide to talk to him unless he addresses her first conveys his malcontent and also foreshadows her disobedience. Her disobedience occurs when knights conspire against him on two





separate occasions, and when Enide warns Erec, he is displeased, he kills the knights and takes their horses. The count's desire to meet Erec and Enide and his desire to talk to Enide especially foreshadows his intent to betray Erec because of his love for Enide. Enide watches over Erec and warns him about the count, despite Erec's injunctions not to speak to him, showing her overbearing love for her husband. Erec's conviction about Enide's loyalty is retribution for her dutifulness and love. The count's defeat is followed by his retraction of his commands to kill Erec and the admittance of his villainy, an act of reform.

Erec's encounter with Guivret the Short ends with Guivret's declaration of friendship and assistance which foreshadows his later help to Erec when he hears that a knight is dead and goes to rescue the corpse and Enide from Count Oringle. Erec spars and beats Kay which is retribution for Kay's pride which occurs throughout the stories. King Arthur shows his love for Erec in his joy at encountering him at camp. Their encounter also foreshadows Erec spending more time at King Arthur's court. King Arthur uses an ointment to heal Erec made by his sister Morgan, alluding to Morgan le Fay though without alluding to the malevolence of her character. Enide demonstrates her love for Erec by her intention to commit suicide when she thinks her husband is dead. Count Oringle stops her, intending to marry her against her will, a demonstration of his treachery. Erec awakes to Enide's screams as she is beaten and kills the count, retribution for Enide's suffering.

When King Guivret travels to save Enide and Erec's corpse, he encounters and battles Erec on the road; this is ironic since Erec is the person he intends to save. When the group passes Brandigan Castle, Guivret tells Erec of the Joy of the Court but attempts to dissuade him from undertaking the adventure. This is the first of many situations throughout the stories where a friend vainly attempts to dissuade a knight from undertaking dangerous adventures. Maboagrain's lover turns out to be Enide's cousin, an example of irony and a motif of a small world that occurs in this novel. Erec agrees to stay with King Arthur for several years, fulfilling the foreshadowing that occurred when they met on the road as well as demonstrating Erec's friendship for Guivret when he insists his friend stay also. Erec displays generosity by summoning Enide's parents to attend his coronation after his father's death.

In "Erec and Enide," as well in several of the other stories, hunting with hawks is mentioned which was a popular pastime of medieval nobility. The motif of a rash boon is also introduced where a knight agrees to grant a boon before it is formulated; it often goes against their wishes or morals but to retract the boon would be dishonorable. "Erec and Enide" alludes to Perceval, Lancelot and Yvain, later heroes of stories in this collection. There is also an allusion to the tale of Tristan and Isolde in this story. Chretien de Troyes alludes to Thilxant, Ospinel and Fernagu, traditional heroes of Old French epic poetry. There is also the mention of Lavinia of Laurentum, the wife of Aeneas. "Erec and Enide" was likely written at the behest of Henry II in order to legitimize Geoffrey's claim to the throne of Brittany by linking him to King Arthur. "Erec and Enide" closely parallels the Welsh story, "Mabinogian: Gereint Son of Erbin".



# Cliges

## Cliges Summary

Alexander, the eldest son of the Emperor of Greece and Constantinople, will not become a knight in his own land; he wants to go to England. Alexander travels to Winchester and informs King Arthur that he will be knighted by him or no one. King Arthur and Queen Guinevere journey to Brittany, accompanied by Alexander and Soredamours, the queen's maiden and Sir Gawain's sister. Soredamours scorns love, yet she finally admits to herself that she loves Alexander, blaming it on her name which means "gilded over with love." Alexander loves Soredamours also, but both convince themselves that their love is unrequited. King Arthur learns that Count Angres plans to challenge him for his lands so he gathers an army and makes Alexander a knight. King Arthur proceeds to heavily fortified Winchester. Alexander attacks the traitors who flee from them. The hopeless, frightened traitors plot to attack during the night when King Arthur and his knights are defenseless. The sentries wake the knights who battle the traitors. King Arthur's army is winning, and Count Angres and seven of his companions return to the castle. Alexander and thirty companions don enemy apparel and enter the castle. Alexander captures Count Angres, and at Alexander's advice, the remaining traitor knights surrender to King Arthur who slays Count Angres. King Arthur offers the hero anything in the kingdom, save his crown and his queen. Alexander asks for a delay to ascertain Soredamours' feelings. The queen offers to arrange the marriage herself. Alexander and Soredamours wed at Windsor and have a son, Cliges.

Alexander's father dies, but a rumor reaches Greece that Alexander was killed. Alis is crowned. Alexander travels to Greece where Alis refuses to relinquish the crown. Upon asking council, Alis agrees to any pact of peace, provided he keeps the crown. Alexander agrees to let Alis keep the crown and the title of emperor if he never marries so that Cliges will inherit the throne. Alexander grows sick and advises Cliges to seek glory at King Arthur's court. Alexander dies, shortly followed by Soredamours. Alis' advisors convince him to take a wife, and he lusts after the German emperor's daughter, Fenice, who is already promised to the Duke of Saxony. Alis travels to Germany, Fenice is summoned, and she and Cliges fall in love immediately. The Duke of Saxony's nephew reports that there will be no peace for Germany or Greece if they do not surrender Fenice. The boy challenges Cliges, who unseats him twice and the Saxons flee. Fenice mourns her love since she must marry Alis. Her nurse, Thessala, recognizes the signs of love. Fenice admits that she loves Cliges, but she refuses to prostitute her body where she cannot also give her heart. Thessala concocts a potion to convince Alis that he has possessed Fenice. Alis is deceived into thinking he has possessed Fenice. As the Germans escort the Greeks, the Duke of Saxony lies in ambush for them, and when Cliges kills his nephew, the Duke vows Cliges' death. One knight offers to avenge the Duke of Saxony's nephew and challenges Cliges. Cliges defeats him, donning the dead knight's armor and placing the knight's head on a lance to offer to the Duke. The Greeks and Germans pursue him to the Saxons' camps. Both sides are misled by the armor until Cliges shouts encouragements to the Greeks and



Germans. Cliges unseats the Duke of Saxony, gains his horse, but is unable to capture him. The Duke of Saxony sends twelve knights to kidnap Fenice, offering a truce until the next day when he learns of his plot's success. Cliges pursues the fleeing knights who believe him to be the Duke. Learning of Fenice's kidnapping, Cliges kills all except one whom he allows to report to the Duke. Cliges and Fenice return to their camp. The Duke of Saxony, enraged, offers single combat between himself and Cliges, offering to leave Fenice alone if Cliges wins and to continue battle if he defeats Cliges. Alis tries to dissuade Cliges from accepting the challenge, but Cliges is adamant and asks to be knighted. The Duke of Saxony and Cliges meet on the field, and Fenice determines to kill herself if Cliges dies. As Cliges is losing, she cries "God help him!" which gives Cliges new strength, and the Duke of Saxony acknowledges his defeat.

Cliges obtains permission to go to King Arthur and Sir Gawain, telling Fenice that he is "wholly devoted to you." Arriving in England, Cliges learns that King Arthur has organized a tournament, and he attends in black armor the first day. Cliges is considered a fool when he rides out to battle Sagremour the Unruly, but he wins and takes Sagremour captive. Cliges is the victor of the day, unhorsing and capturing every knight whom he battles. He returns to his lodgings in secret and hides his armor. The knights he captured search for him but cannot find him. On the second day of the tournament, Cliges repeats his performance in green armor. The third day, Cliges dons red armor. On the third evening, the other knights realize that the impressive knight wears different armor every day. On the fourth day, Cliges, wearing white armor, battles Sir Gawain for so long that King Arthur forces them to cease and invites Cliges to his castle. After the tournament ends, Cliges explains his lineage to King Arthur and Sir Gawain, who gladly embrace him, and Cliges is highly honored for the time that he remains in England. However, he is eager to see Fenice and returns to Greece. Cliges, still afraid to confess his feelings to Fenice, visits her in her chambers where she asks if he fell in love in England. Cliges confesses his love, causing Fenice to divulge her love as well and confide in Cliges about the potion that tricks Alis into thinking he has possessed her. Fenice suggests that Thessala help her fake her death and Cliges carry her body to a place where only he can see her. Cliges asks his serf, John, to help him build a tomb and coffin that will not suffocate Fenice, promising freedom in repayment. John shows Cliges a house with many secret rooms.

Fenice will only allow Cliges and Alis into her sick chamber and refuses to admit any doctors. Thessala gathers urine from a woman with an incurable disease and presents it to the emperor's doctors who declare the case is hopeless. Thessala gives Fenice a potion that gives her an appearance of death. Alis and the country are in a state of bereavement. Three doctors tell Alis that she is not dead. Alis allows them to attempt to restore her, swearing their deaths if they fail. When Fenice refuses to speak willingly, the doctors beat and torture her. The court ladies see their proceedings through a crack in the door, break the door down, and toss the doctors out of the window. After Fenice is buried, Cliges retrieves Fenice's body while John reseals the tomb. Cliges spends much of his time with Fenice, exercising their mutual desire. Fenice yearns to see sunlight so John builds an outside room with a high wall. During the hunting season, Bertrand climbs the wall to retrieve his sparrow-hawk and finds Fenice and Cliges sleeping naked together. Fenice awakes and fears their dooms; Cliges injures Bertrand who escapes



and reports to Alis. Disbelievingly, they follow Bertrand back to the house, but Cliges, Fenice and Thessala have escaped. Alis questions John who accuses Alis of wronging Cliges by breaking his oath to Alexander. John tells Alis about the potion, and Alis acknowledges the truth but sends troops to find his nephew and wife. In England, Cliges tells King Arthur of Alis breaking his pact with Alexander. They prepare for war until messengers from Greece, including John, report Alis' death from grief at not being able to avenge himself on Cliges and Fenice. Cliges and Fenice return to rule.

## Cliges Analysis

Alexander is claimed, at the beginning of "Cliges," to be related to King Arthur, establishing his importance in the collection of stories. He shows his pride and ambition by insisting that he achieve glory away from home and be knighted by King Arthur or no one. Alexander shows his generosity by spending liberally and giving gifts to everyone, establishing his character. Soredamour's relation to Sir Gawain also establishes her as King Arthur's niece, making the object of Alexander's affection a distant relative as well as someone of noble birth. Alexander and Soredamours both see their love for one another as a malady, a view of love that is very negative. The symbolism of Soredamours' name, "gilded over with love," foreshadows her happiness in love and alludes to the golden color of her hair.

Count Angres' intentions to challenge King Arthur for his lands are a demonstration of treason and treachery that occurs throughout "Cliges." The shirt that is partially stitched with Soredamours' hair foreshadows their later union and is ironic since it was made before Soredamours knew that Alexander would be the recipient. Alexander shows his bravery by his eagerness to begin battle and his mercy by presenting his first four captured soldiers to Queen Guinevere since he knew King Arthur would have them killed. Alexander is rewarded for his service to the king with lands and a larger battalion. King Arthur's promise of a valuable gold cup to the capturer of the city foreshadows Alexander's involvement in Count Angres' defeat. The shirt thread fades while Soredamours' hair remains a brilliant gold, illustrating her beauty and foreshadowing Alexander's future happiness.

The traitors' plot to attack King Arthur's camp at night when his defenses are down further provides evidence of their treachery. King Arthur's army is winning and the count retreats, foreshadowing King Arthur's victory. Alexander and his companions don enemy apparel and follow the count to the city, a motif that occurs again in "Cliges" and in several other stories in this collection. The general love and admiration for Alexander is displayed by the great lamentations that occur at King Arthur's camp when the Greeks find Alexander's armor on a dead man and believe their leader is dead. Soredamours hides her sorrow, demonstrating the immense secrecy of her love for Alexander. Alexander proves his value by defeating Count Angres and foreshadowing is fulfilled when King Arthur presents the gold cup to Alexander. Alexander gives it to Sir Gawain, an act of good intent since Alexander loves Soredamours. Alexander is hesitant to ask for Soredamours without her approbation, showing his true love and consideration of the maiden.



Alexander and Soredamours are finally wed, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing. They have a son, Cliges, which foreshadows his adventures, following in his father's footsteps to some extent. Alexander's father dies and a ship is dispatched for him but sinks and only one man survives. This man informs Alis that his brother is dead in order for Alis to procure the throne, an act of treachery that causes Alexander to sail for Greece to retrieve his rightful position. Alis shows his love for his brother by offering him lands but also shows his greed by his refusal to relinquish the throne. Alexander agrees to allow Alis to keep the throne if he does not marry so that Cliges will inherit it, showing his goodwill, love for his brother and love for his son. Alexander's good sense is recognized as he rules in practice while Alis only rules in name. Alexander's advice to Cliges to seek glory at King Arthur's court foreshadows Cliges' time in England. Soredamours' love for Alexander is demonstrated by her death shortly following her husband's death.

Alis shows his treachery when he decides to break his oath to Alexander and take a wife. He further shows this by insisting upon marrying Fenice who is already promised to the Duke of Saxony. Fenice and Cliges fall in love as soon as they set eyes on each other, foreshadowing their affair. The Duke of Saxony's declaration that there will be no peace for Greece or Germany if they do not relinquish Fenice foreshadows his ambush. Greece and Germany shows their awareness of the Duke of Saxony's intent when the Germans escort the Greeks. Fenice negatively alludes to Tristan and Isolde when she says that she will not give her body where she cannot give her heart. Thessala's concoction of a potion to convince Alis that he has possessed Fenice when he has not is the first in a series of demonstrations of Thessala's magical abilities. Cliges' donning of the Duke of Saxony's defeated knight's apparel parallels his father's victory over Count Angres when he used the same technique. Cliges demonstrates his honor and intelligence when he suspects treachery when the Duke of Saxony ends the battle for the evening. Fenice's love for Cliges is shown when he battles the knights who have kidnapped her; she "feared his death and sought his glory." She also shows her love when she determines to kill herself if Cliges is defeated in single combat by the Duke of Saxony. Alis attempts to dissuade his nephew from entering single combat with the Duke, showing that he does love Cliges.

Cliges adheres to his father's advice to seek glory in King Arthur's lands, fulfilling the foreshadowing caused by that event. His statement to Fenice that he is "wholly devoted to you" foreshadows the revelation of his affection for her. Cliges battles Sir Gawain so long and fiercely that King Arthur calls for an end to the battle, demonstrating Cliges' prowess. His release of all the knights he captured in the tournament shows Cliges' generosity and kindness. He returns to Greece because of his eagerness to see Fenice, demonstrating his love for her. Cliges' and Fenice's confessions of love fulfill the foreshadowing that occurs throughout their acquaintance. Her insistence that they formulate a plot to hide her away foreshadows her residence in John's secret rooms. Fenice also shows her pride and honor by refusing to do anything to incur shame herself or on Cliges' behalf. Thessala's magical ability is used to fake Fenice's death. Cliges' generosity is shown when he agrees to free John and his heirs for John's help in hiding Fenice; since John is Cliges' serf, John is honor-bound to assist him regardless but Cliges offers him a reward for his service. Thessala's cunning is displayed when she gathers urine from a dying woman to present to Alis' doctors. The three doctors who





visit from out of town and insist that they can cure Fenice allude to Solomon from the Old Testament of the Bible. They also show their cruelty by the tortures which they inflict upon Fenice. The women show their love for Fenice when they break the door down and throw the doctors out of the window.

Alis' choice of John to build Fenice's tomb is ironic since Cliges had already commissioned John for the same job. Love and admiration for Fenice is demonstrated by the country people's lamentations when they hear of her death. Cliges is even tricked by Thessala's magic, thinking Fenice dead; this shows Cliges' love for Fenice as well as Thessala's immense talent. Cliges shows his intelligence by keeping a hawk at John's house as an excuse for his frequent visits. Fenice's desire to see sunlight and John's building an outdoor room foreshadows Cliges and Fenice's discovery, which is fulfilled when Bertrand finds them lying naked together. John displays his bravery and loyalty by accusing Alis of doing wrong by Cliges in taking a wife. Alis demonstrates his pride and cruelty in his decision to punish Cliges and Fenice, even after acknowledging that he had not possessed Fenice. King Arthur shows his love for Cliges by offering an army for Cliges to defend his right to Alis' throne. Alis' death from grief at being unable to avenge himself further proves his pride. John's accompanying the messengers to Cliges reporting Alis' death acknowledges the probability of Cliges suspecting treachery if someone loyal were not present.

"Cliges" contains many allusions to Ovid's "Metamorphosis," Tristan and Isolde, Polynices, Eteocles and Medea. It also alludes to Ganelon, the archtypal traitor in Old French literature. This story is the most famous medieval French statement of the Classical theme of *translatio studii*, by which learning passed from Greece to Rome to France. Fenice's name is symbolic because of its similarity to the word phoenix, a mythological bird that regenerated from its own ashes and which serves as a symbol of resurrection. Cliges defeats Lancelot and Perceval, two heroes of additional stories in the collection, in the tournament he attends. The legend of King Solomon's wife's deception was a popular part of the medieval misogynistic arsenal and commonly used to degrade women. There are three negative references to Tristan and Isolde in "Cliges" which leads many critics to conclude that "Cliges" is anti-Tristan. "Cliges" is generally agreed to date from around 1176, and the sources used for "Cliges" are said to be Ovid, Thomas' "Tristan," "Roman d'Eneas" and "Marques de Rome".



# The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)

## The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot) Summary

As King Arthur holds court at Camelot, a knight arrives and declares he has King Arthur's people imprisoned but will only release them if a knight can defend Queen Guinevere against him. Kay decides to leave court. The king and queen asks Kay to stay, but he refuses until they agree to grant him a request: he wishes to answer the knight's challenge. Sir Gawain follows and finds Kay's horse without its rider which he gives to Lancelot. Sir Gawain follows Lancelot to a town where Lancelot asks a dwarf pulling a cart about Queen Guinevere, and the dwarf tells him to get in the cart. Lancelot hesitates but climbs into the cart; Sir Gawain follows on horseback. They enter a city where Lancelot is mocked for riding in a cart. Lancelot and Sir Gawain acquire lodgings. In their room, there are three beds, but one bed is reserved for someone who has earned the privilege. Lancelot insists upon sleeping in the bed, and at midnight, a lance hurtles at him. Lancelot removes the lance and goes back to sleep. The next morning, Sir Gawain prevents Lancelot from throwing himself out of the window when he sees Queen Guinevere captive. Lancelot and Sir Gawain are unable to catch the queen, but they find a girl who tells them that Queen Guinevere has been taken to the land of Meleagant. There are only two ways to get there: the Underwater Bridge or the Sword Bridge. Sir Gawain opts to take the Underwater Bridge so Lancelot agrees to take the Sword Bridge. As he approaches a river, Lancelot is so deep in thought about his love, Queen Guinevere, that he does not hear a knight's challenge. They joust, and Lancelot wins but grants mercy for the sake of the knight's maiden. The girl offers lodgings to Lancelot if he will lay with her; Lancelot agrees reluctantly. After dinner, Lancelot finds the nearly naked girl with a knight on top of her, begging for help. After Lancelot defeats the six guards, the girl dismisses the knights and leads Lancelot, held in duress by his promise, to her bed. The girl sees Lancelot's displeasure and goes to her own room. The next morning, the girl offers to accompany Lancelot. The girl tries to keep Lancelot from seeing a comb with hair in it and laughs when does, confiding that she is sure the comb belongs to Queen Guinevere. Lancelot nearly faints and gives her the comb after carefully removing the hairs without breaking a single strand. A knight who loves the lady threatens to take her, but Lancelot will not allow him. They ride to a meadow where the knight's father has his liegemen prevent his son's fighting.

Lancelot comes to a church, prays and asks a monk to see the cemetery. There are many tombstones with living knights' names on them and one large tomb with a slab which if one man lifts unaided, that man will free all of the foreign prisoners; Lancelot lifts the slab. Lancelot lodges with a vavasour and his family from Lancelot's land who fear he will never leave Meleagant's lands. Lancelot insists upon going the quickest way: Stone Passage. Two of the vavasour's sons accompany Lancelot. At the Stone Passage, Lancelot ignores the guards order not to pass and passes unchallenged. Lancelot and the vavasour's sons encounter a man who offers lodgings. At his manor, a squire calls their host to battle, and Lancelot and the boys join their countrymen in the battle where the other men learn that he lifted the slab. He lodges the next night at a





knight's manor, and as they begin to eat, a proud knight appears and demands to know who intends to cross Sword Bridge. When Lancelot identifies himself, the knight condemns him for riding in a cart and challenges him. Lancelot defeats the proud knight who begs for mercy but refuses Lancelot's condition to ride in a cart. A maiden approaches and asks for the defeated knight's head. Lancelot is torn between generosity to the maiden and mercy for the knight. He decides to battle the knight again; if Lancelot wins, the knight will die. Lancelot wins and presents the head to the maiden who promises him a great reward for his services.

The vavasour's sons try to dissuade Lancelot from crossing the Sword Bridge, but crossing through much pain, he reaches the other side. His crossing is watched by the honorable King Bademagu and his dishonorable son, Meleagant. King Bademagu advises Meleagant to surrender Queen Guinevere and offer hospitality to the better knight. Meleagant insists that he is as good as or better than Lancelot. King Bademagu praises Lancelot for his courage and assures him that Queen Guinevere is safely confined against Meleagant's lusts. Lancelot insists upon battling immediately, despite his wounds, so the king acquires lodgings, physicians, arms and a horse for Lancelot to prepare him for battle. A great crowd assembles for the battle, and King Bademagu tries again unsuccessfully to initiate peace before joining Queen Guinevere in the tower to watch the battle. When Lancelot begins to lose strength in his injured hands, a captive maiden yells for Lancelot to see that the queen is watching him. Lancelot forces Meleagant to fight between him and the tower so that he can see Queen Guinevere. When Lancelot begins to win, King Bademagu begs Queen Guinevere to ask Lancelot not to slay his son. Lancelot stops striking Meleagant at once, but Meleagant continues his assault. King Bademagu's barons restrain Meleagant, by agreeing that, if Meleagant surrenders Queen Guinevere, he can fight Lancelot in a year at King Arthur's court where he will win more renown. King Bademagu escorts Lancelot to Queen Guinevere who refuses to talk to Lancelot and retreats to her room. The king is shocked, and Lancelot is disheartened as he goes to Kay, who is ashamed that he could not defeat Meleagant.

As Lancelot and many other knights search for Sir Gawain, some locals think to please King Bademagu by capturing unarmed Lancelot. Queen Guinevere nearly kills herself in grief at the rumor of Lancelot's death, realizing that there is no reason to live if the one whom she lived for is dead. Her beauty is ruined by her grief, vigils and not eating or drinking for two days. When a rumor reaches Lancelot that Queen Guinevere is dead, he tries to hang himself; he is nearly strangled, but his captors rescue him. King Bademagu hears of Lancelot's approach and tells the queen who is eager for Lancelot's arrival. King Bademagu takes Lancelot to see the queen who explains her displeasure: he first hesitated to enter the cart and then rode in the cart. The queen directs him to her window at night to talk, and they hold hands through the bars across the window. At the queen's bidding, Lancelot bends the bars and goes to her bed where they enjoy their love all night long. Lancelot departs in the morning, fixing the bars. Neither notices the blood on her sheets from Lancelot's wounded fingers. The next morning, Meleagant finds blood on Kay and Queen Guinevere's sheets and bring King Bademagu to witness his accusation against them. Kay challenges Meleagant to avenge himself and Queen Guinevere. Since Kay is badly wounded, the queen secretly sends for Lancelot.



Lancelot is beating Meleagant, and once again, King Bademagu asks Queen Guinevere to have Lancelot spare his son. Once again, Lancelot stops fighting first, while Meleagant stops only with the reminder of his scheduled battle at King Arthur's court. Lancelot and many knights search again for Sir Gawain. A dwarf and a hunter take Lancelot captive by Meleagant's instructions. The other knights find Sir Gawain and relate Lancelot's capture. Sir Gawain, Kay and other knights search for Lancelot until a squire arrives with a letter stating that Lancelot is at King Arthur's court and bidding the others to join him there. King Arthur is glad to receive Queen Guinevere and praises Sir Gawain who attributes the rescue to Lancelot. There is much sorrow as they discover they were deceived into believing Lancelot had returned.

The maidens of King Arthur's court plan a tournament to find husbands, asking Queen Guinevere to preside over the tournament. News reaches Lancelot who convinces the wife of his jailer to allow him to go, promising to return to his prison after the tournament. Lancelot, in disguise, battles fiercely until Queen Guinevere sends a message to the unknown knight to "do your worst" upon which Lancelot flees from blows and avoids battle. The other knights deem him a coward, but Queen Guinevere suspects Lancelot. The next day, the queen sends her maiden to find him and bid him to "do your worst" again. When he accedes, Queen Guinevere is certain it is Lancelot and bids him to "do your best." After the tournament, Lancelot returns to his prison. Meleagant learns that Lancelot is gone but is sure that Lancelot will return. Meleagant builds a tower on the inlet of a lake in which he imprisons Lancelot and goes to King Arthur's court for his appointed battle. Sir Gawain vows to fight for Lancelot within a year if he cannot find him; Meleagant agrees. At home, Meleagant declares that Lancelot fled to avoid fighting him. King Bademagu chides Meleagant's foolish self-flattery and insists the Lancelot must be dead or imprisoned. One of the king's daughters vows to find Lancelot. She searches long and hard before coming to the tower on the inlet where she hears Lancelot's lamentations. She shouts until Lancelot hears her. He recognizes her as the girl that he granted the proud knight's head. Using the rope that Lancelot has to retrieve his food, the girl sends an axe which Lancelot uses to escape. After she nurses him back to health, he returns to King Arthur's lands, vowing vengeance on Meleagant. Meleagant challenges Sir Gawain, but as Sir Gawain suits up, he sees Lancelot. Sir Gawain offers to battle for Lancelot, but Lancelot insists upon taking his vengeance on Meleagant's mischief. Meleagant chides himself for not ensuring Lancelot's captivity. Lancelot defeats Meleagant and there is much joy as Queen Guinevere removes Lancelot's armor and leads him away from the throng.

## **The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot) Analysis**

"The Knight of the Cart" begins in Camelot, the most famous of King Arthur's courts and the land that is most often associated with King Arthur; however, this is the first known record of Camelot being mentioned. The knight who appears at court and issues a challenge foreshadows the challenge being accepted and Queen Guinevere's capture. Kay shows his pride and folly by his insistence upon leaving court unless allowed to accept the challenge, thereby risking the queen. When Sir Gawain finds Kay's horse without its rider, the foreshadowing of Queen Guinevere's capture is fulfilled. Lancelot's



hesitation to climb into the cart, accompanied by his adhering to the dwarf's instructions, are doubly shameful because he first showed fear and then incurred the shame of riding in a cart. Lancelot shows his pride when he insists upon sleeping in the bed that is reserved for someone who has earned the privilege. He shows his love for the queen when he attempts to throw himself from the window upon seeing her captive. When Lancelot and Sir Gawain encounter a girl who agrees to tell them where Queen Guinevere has been taken, Meleagant's name is mentioned for the first time.

When Lancelot is so engrossed with his thoughts of his love for Queen Guinevere that he does not hear the knight's challenge, his love affair with her is indicated and foreshadowed. His lack of enthusiasm for agreeing to sexual relations with the girl who offers him lodgings demonstrates his love for the queen as well. When the girl dismisses her knights after portraying a scene of rape, she effectually admits that it was a game or test for Lancelot, perhaps even a trap. The fact that she feels Lancelot is the only knight she could value shows her general disapprobation of knights at the same time as issuing high praise for Lancelot. The girl offers to accompany Lancelot if he dares to escort her, lending an ominous tone to the time Lancelot will spend with the girl. She shows her maliciousness and disdain for Lancelot and Queen Guinevere when she attempts to prevent him from seeing the comb and then laughs as she tells him that she believes it to be the Queen's comb. Lancelot takes care not to break a single strand of the queen's hair as he disentangles it from the comb, proving his love and reverence for even the hairs no longer on the queen's head. When they encounter the knight who attempts to kidnap the girl, the son shows himself very rash while his father is wise.

Lancelot prays in the church, a demonstration of his Christianity. His ability to lift the slab that is to indicate the knight who will free the foreign prisoners foreshadows his defeat of Meleagant. When the rash son learns of this, he agrees with his father not to pursue Lancelot any longer, basically admitting the other knight's superiority. The vavasour's fear that Lancelot will never leave Meleagant's lands is foreboding but common and an example of someone trying to dissuade the heroes of the stories from pursuing dangerous adventures. Lancelot insists upon going the quickest way regardless of the additional danger because of his eagerness and impatience to rescue Queen Guinevere. When Lancelot and the vavasour's two sons obtain lodgings and join their host to fight, there is a lot of indication of magic and sorcery though the only magic that actually exists is Lancelot's ring that tells him when magic is present. In the battle, Lancelot's prowess is praised, showing him to be a good fighter. As he lodges at a knight's manor, he is accosted by a haughty knight who condemns him for the shame of riding in a cart, a shame that follows Lancelot through his adventures. The knight is defeated and begs for mercy, but a maiden arrives and asks for the knight's head. Lancelot is torn between showing mercy and generosity, indicating the importance of both attributes in a chivalrous knight. When he defeats the knight a second time and presents the head to the maiden, she promises a great reward for his services, foreshadowing her later help to Lancelot in his time of need.

Lancelot's faith in God spurs him on despite repeated attempts at dissuading him from crossing the Sword Bridge. This tests and illustrates his Christianity, as well as the statement that God assists him through the pain caused by the bridge. King Bademagu



and Meleagant watch Lancelot enter their lands and argue over how to treat him; the king is good and honorable while his son is the opposite of all that is good, an ironic contrast considering King Bademagu rules the land but submits to many of his son's evil wishes. Meleagant portrays his pride when he insists that he is as good or a better knight than Lancelot. King Bademagu shows his honor by assisting Lancelot and offering him hospitality. He also assures the stranger that Queen Guinevere has been safely confined from Meleagant's lusts, an indication of the king's honor and his son's dishonor. It is also ironic since Lancelot makes loves to the queen once they are reconciled. Lancelot's eagerness is again displayed as he refuses to wait to heal, insisting upon battling Meleagant immediately.

The maiden who tells Lancelot that Queen Guinevere is watching him battle is very intelligent in her recognition that he is fighting for the queen and not to save the others. He begins fighting behind his back, showing his love and fascination with the queen. When Queen Guinevere and King Bademagu agree to call the battle to an end, Lancelot desists fighting at once, showing his utter submission to the queen's will while Meleagant shows his malice by continuing to strike Lancelot who offers no return blows. The king persuades his son with the bribe of obtaining more honor by fighting at King Arthur's court, simultaneously indicating the importance of King Arthur's court, even in the eyes of another monarch. Queen Guinevere refuses to speak to Lancelot other than to say she feels no gratitude towards him. This is very shocking to everyone who hears this, within and without the story, and very ironic because of Lancelot's great love for the queen.

The locals who capture Lancelot prove themselves dishonorable in their attack, but the situation is also ironic since they think to please King Bademagu who threatens to kill them for the offense. It is also ironic when Lancelot is the one who pleads with King Bademagu to spare the offenders. It is ironic when Queen Guinevere is ready to kill herself after hearing of Lancelot's death, but it also shows that she returns his love, foreshadowing their liaison. Lancelot's suicidal thoughts upon hearing a rumor of the queen's death parallel her reaction to the rumor of Lancelot's death. Queen Guinevere explains her previous displeasure to Lancelot, showing the shame of showing fear and riding in a cart follows him. Queen Guinevere and Lancelot make love all night long showing their love or lust for one another. This is also ironic since King Bademagu protected the queen from her kidnapper's lusts while her savior is free to ravish her. Meleagant finds the blood from Lancelot's hand wounds on the queen's sheets and assumes it is the blood from Kay's wounds. This is ironic since Kay is the one who is charged but he is too weak to avenge his and the queen's honor. It is justly ironic that Lancelot is called to avenge the accusation. In the battle, once more Lancelot defeats Meleagant, and King Bademagu begs Queen Guinevere to have his son's life spared. This battle parallels the previous battle between Lancelot and Meleagant in that Lancelot ceases fighting on the queen's command while Meleagant has to be forced to end the battle.

A dwarf lulls Lancelot to his capture at Meleagant's command. There is a repeated connotation of evil accompanying the appearance of dwarves throughout "Arthurian Romances." The command from Meleagant also shows his nature and treachery



towards Lancelot. Sir Gawain realizes that they have been tricked when they return to King Arthur's court and do not find Lancelot awaiting them. This shows his wisdom while his grief at the circumstances shows his love for Lancelot. The jailer's wife agrees to allow Lancelot to go to the tournament if he promises to give her his love, showing Lancelot's appeal to women. Lancelot shows his love and reverence for Queen Guinevere during the tournament in his absolute obedience to her commands to do his worst or best, regardless of the effect it has on his reputation. He returns to his prison after the tournament, showing his honor and honesty, while Meleagant imprisons him in a tower on an inlet showing his dishonor. Meleagant shows his dishonesty when he returns to his father after visiting King Arthur's lands and claims that Lancelot is afraid of him, knowing that Lancelot is imprisoned. One of the king's daughters vows to find him, foreshadowing Lancelot's release, and the foreshadowing is quickly fulfilled when she finds and releases him. A bit of irony occurs when he recognizes the maiden as the maiden who had promised him great rewards for presenting her with the proud knight's head. Sir Gawain prepares to battle Meleagant, showing his love for Lancelot by his willingness to fight his friend's battle, even when Lancelot returns. Lancelot insists upon taking his revenge on Meleagant and defeats the dishonorable knight, fulfilling the foreshadowing that occurred in their previous two fights that were interrupted only by the queen's intercession. Queen Guinevere shows her love for Lancelot when she removes his armor and leads him away from the throng.

This work is dedicated to "my lady of Champagne" which most likely refers to Marie de Champagne, the daughter of the French King Louis VII by his first wife who was married to Henri J the Liberal of Champagne. She was Chretien de Troyes' patroness, and the beginning of the work states that it was commissioned by her. She even provided the subject the meaning she wished it to impart. He was dissatisfied with the subject and ceased writing it, handing it over to Godefroy de Lagny (of whom nothing else is known) who finished the work from the point of Lancelot's tower imprisonment. The story dates after 1159 as that was the year that Marie married and became the Lady of Champagne. The contradictions and references to "The Knight with the Lion" make it likely that the two stories were composed simultaneously. Critics praise "The Knight of the Cart" for its extensive irony and the humor which undercuts courtly love, bringing the theme in parallel with the other romances in the collection. The most likely sources for this story, besides Marie de Champagne, are a Celtic abduction story, called an aithed, and "Vita sancti Gildae" by Caradoc of Llancarvan. Some other notable features of "The Knight of the Cart" are the presence of the most famous example of a rash boon in Chretien de Troyes' works, with King Arthur agreeing to allow Kay to challenge Meleagant, and the first mention of King Arthur's famous kingdom of Camelot. Meleagant takes Queen Guinevere to his home, Gorre, which is also the name of the Celtic underworld. Logres is mentioned and is the mythical kingdom of King Arthur. The name of a famous Saracen king, Ysore, is alluded to in this story as well. There are allusions to Ovid's "Metamorphosis" and Bucephalos, the horse that Alexander the Great used on most of his campaigns.





# The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)

## The Knight with the Lion (Yvain) Summary

Calogrenant tells Sir Gawain, Yvain, Kay and Queen Guinevere about when he, seeking adventure, finds an ugly peasant who directs him to a cold spring that boils, the water of which will produce a storm when poured on a rock. After the storm, a knight reproaches Calogrenant for not challenging him directly and unhorses Calogrenant, takes his horse and leaves. Calogrenant, bewildered, returns to court and considers himself a fool and a coward. Yvain says he will avenge Calogrenant's shame. King Arthur awakens, hears the story, and decides to go to the spring. Yvain decides to go alone immediately. He travels to the vavasour's house, encounters the peasant, goes to the spring, the storm rages and the knight appears. Yvain strikes a great blow to the defender's helmet, causing him to flee. Yvain follows the knight into town and doors drop, trapping Yvain. A maiden, Lunete, offers to help Yvain escape because Yvain was the only courteous one when she visited King Arthur's court. Lunete gives Yvain a magic ring to prevent him from being seen. Lunete presents Yvain to Laudine, and Yvain explains that he was defending himself in the battle. He tells her he is overpowered by love, swears to defend the spring, and they are married.

King Arthur pours the cup of water on the rock and Kay is granted the battle. Yvain presents Kay's horse to King Arthur and reveals his identity, inviting the company to his house. Sir Gawain and Lunete are soon on friendly terms. King Arthur and his knights prepare to leave, begging Yvain to go with them to attend the tournaments. Laudine grants Yvain permission on condition that he returns in one year or less under penalty of forfeiting her love. The time designated for Yvain's return to Laudine passes quickly. A damsel arrives and accuses Yvain of being a cheat, a seducer and a thief whom Laudine no longer loves and tells him that he is not to come near her again. Yvain, distraught, runs into the woods, living like a madman until a lady recognizes Yvain and uses an ointment from Morgan the wise because she needs his help since Count Alier has invaded her lands. Yvain's sanity returns, and he is taken to a nearby town to heal. Yvain captures Count Alier and presents him to the lady before leaving. Yvain saves a lion from a dragon, and the lion vows to serve and protect his savior. By chance, they arrive at the storming spring. Yvain faints in grief, and the lion, thinking him dead, prepares to kill itself until Yvain revives. Yvain chastises himself for not having the same honor when he displeased Laudine. A prisoner overhears and insists that she is the saddest creature alive; she is to be burnt alive tomorrow for treason. Only Sir Gawain and Yvain love her enough to save her; the prisoner is Lunete. A seneschal used Laudine's anger, when Yvain did not return, to accuse Lunete of treason. Lunete offered Yvain or Sir Gawain to defend her, but she could not find them. Yvain promises to fight for her the next day in disguise. Yvain enters a strongly fortified town, causing joy which subsides into grief because a giant, Harpin of the Mountain, demands the beautiful daughter of a very wealthy man. The giant has killed two of the man's sons and has captured the other four whom he will kill tomorrow unless the man surrenders his daughter. The man could not find Sir Gawain, his wife's brother. Yvain agrees to



undertake the adventure. The next morning, Harpin arrives, beating the man's four remaining sons and sharing his plans to treat the man's daughter as a whore. Yvain and his lion beat the giant. He bids them farewell, telling them to remember him to Sir Gawain as the "Knight with the Lion." Yvain demands Lunete's release and issues a challenge to the three knights. The three knights forbid his lion from assisting him. When he begins to lose, his lion joins in the battle, and they quickly defeat the three knights. Laudine begs the unknown knight and his lion to stay until they are restored to health, but Yvain refuses, stating he will not rest until his lady ceases her anger. Yvain carries the weakened lion on his shield to a porter's manor where he and his lion are healed. Meanwhile, Sir Gawain has been told of the "Knight with the Lion" defending his niece and nephews. Now, the Lord of Blackthorn dies, and his older daughter seizes all of his lands and inheritance. The younger sister intends to contest the matter before King Arthur. The older sister gains Sir Gawain's assistance on condition of secrecy, but the younger sister, given forty days to find a champion, sends a servant to find the renowned "Knight with the Lion" and ask for his assistance. On their journey to court, Yvain, the lion and the servant arrive at the Town of Dire Adventure where a wealthy man offers Yvain lodging. When the knight tries to leave, his host insists Yvain fight the two demons who rule the city. The two demons arrive and demand the lion be locked away. As Yvain is being beaten severely, the lion chews through the door and attacks one of the demons while Yvain beheads the second demon. The "Knight with the Lion" arrives at King Arthur's court, and Yvain and Sir Gawain prepare for battle without recognizing each other, both spurred by the desire to win. The knights, realizing their equality in arms, make peace and ask one another's names. Amidst the joy of their reunion, Sir Gawain and Yvain try to award one another the victory. King Arthur discovers the dilemma and insists that the older sister give her younger sister a rightful share; else, he will declare Yvain the victor. Yvain comforts the spectators when his lion appears, and everyone recognizes Yvain as the "Knight with the Lion." After Yvain is restored to health, he and his lion return to the storming spring. During the storm, Lunete advises Laudine to find someone to defend the spring, and Laudine agrees to follow Lunete's advice to seek the "Knight with the Lion" and promise to do everything in her power to alleviate his lady's displeasure. Lunete finds Yvain and takes him to Laudine, who is upset to discover his identity but refuses to perjure herself.

## The Knight with the Lion (Yvain) Analysis

Calogrenant's declaration that he will tell a tale of his dishonor foreshadows the entirety of Yvain's adventure. Calogrenant rises for the queen, showing his respect, while Kay shows his own character with his venomous excuse that no one else saw her. Calogrenant proves that he is honorable by his lamentations of cowardice in not pursuing the defender of the spring. Yvain's decision to avenge his cousin foreshadows his adventures while King Arthur's decision to go to the spring foreshadows his journey there. Yvain's suspicion that the king will grant the battle to Sir Gawain or Kay foreshadows what occurs at the spring while showing the favoritism that exists at court. Lunete rewards Yvain's civility by protecting him when he is in danger. Magic enters the story with the ring that Lunete gives Yvain. Laudine shows her loyalty through her grief at her husband's death. Yvain demonstrates pride and honor by his desire to bring proof





to King Arthur to quiet Kay's taunts as well as by refusing Lunete's suggestion to sneak away. He also does not mind being locked in the castle because of his love for Laudine, foreshadowing their relationship.

Lunete shows her cunning with her design to convince Laudine to marry Yvain, but Yvain shows his great love by his inability to speak in his beloved's presence. King Arthur and his men arrive at the spring which fulfills the earlier foreshadowing. Kay once more shows his malice and pride by mocking Yvain and requesting the battle against the defender. Yvain shows respect to King Arthur by presenting him with Kay's horse, and King Arthur shows love for Yvain in his joy of Yvain's new station. Sir Gawain and Lunete are soon on friendly terms which seem to indicate some sort of licentiousness. Yvain's disloyalty is foreshadowed when Sir Gawain begs Yvain to attend tournaments with him and Laudine grants it on condition of a promise to return within a year. Laudine gives Yvain a ring as a token of her affection which she withdraws when she withdraws her affection after he fails to fulfill his promise to return. Yvain shows his love by his madness when Laudine withdraws her love from him.

Yvain is recognized by a lady while he is sleeping naked in the woods, indicating his fame. There is also an allusion to Morgan le Fey. Yvain proves his prowess in the battle with Count Alier. When Yvain saves the lion, it foreshadows the new name that he takes. Yvain finds Lunete imprisoned and charged with treason, but before he discovers it is she, her identity is foreshadowed by her declaration that only two knights love her enough to protect her: Yvain and Sir Gawain. Her imprisonment also shows Laudine's anger and resentment over Yvain leaving her. Yvain's first knowledge of Harpin of the Mountain foreshadows his adventure with the giant, made even more likely when he learns that the tormented family is related to Sir Gawain. The wealthy man's condemnation of Kay's pride and foolishness alludes to "The Knight of the Cart," which was written simultaneously. Harpin shows his cruelty by beating the four knights and threatening to treat the maiden as a whore. The lion shows his loyalty by assisting Yvain in the fray, and Yvain first names himself the "Knight with the Lion" and asks to be remembered to Sir Gawain, proving that he seeks fame.

Yvain shows his loyalty to Lunete by fighting the three knights who accused her of treason, and his lion shows loyalty by assisting him. It is ironic that Laudine begs Yvain to stay, yet he refuses until he can be reconciled to his lady. It also foreshadows their reconciliation. Yvain portrays his love for the lion by carrying it on his shield. The discussion of the two daughters of the Lord of Blackthorn and their inheritance dispute foreshadows the battle. The older sister quickly gains Sir Gawain's assistance, and when the younger sister decides to search for the Knight with the Lion, it becomes apparent that the two friends will battle one another. The people of the Town of Dire Adventure warn Yvain that great shame awaits him in town, foreshadowing his adventure with the two demon-spawn brothers. The lion again demonstrates loyalty to Yvain by chewing its way out of a room in order to assist him in the battle against the demonic brothers. Sir Gawain and Yvain battle, fulfilling the foreshadowing that occurred previously. Their equality in arms is a means of praise for Yvain since Sir Gawain's prowess is well-known. King Arthur deals justice to the two sisters when he insists that the older give the younger her rightful share. When the lion approaches and



Yvain reassures everyone, he is recognized as the Knight with the Lion. Lunete's advice to Laudine to pursue the Knight with the Lion under the condition of reconciling him to his lady shows Lunete's cunning. Laudine's agreement shows her innocence while her refusal to perjure herself demonstrates her honor and pride. Laudine and Yvain's reconciliation fulfills the foreshadowing that occurred concerning it.

Yvain is likely based on the historic figure, Owen, son of Urien, who won such glory that he became a figure of Welsh folklore. The name, Lunete, is a pun on the diminutive of the word moon or "lune" in French. "The Knight of the Cart" was composed simultaneously with "The Knight with the Lion" and there are some contradictions between the two. "The Knight with the Lion" is generally considered Chretien de Troyes' most perfectly conceived and constructed romance, raising the question of conflict between love and valor. The source for the story is likely the Welsh "Mabinogian: Owein, or the Lady of the Fountain".



# The Story of the Grail (Perceval)

## The Story of the Grail (Perceval) Summary

Perceval, the son of the widow lady of Waste Forest, encounters knights for the first time and learns about them. Perceval's grief-ridden mother explains that her husband and two older sons were knights and were all killed, but she cannot dissuade Perceval so she sends him to King Arthur, fainting as he rides away. Perceval frightens a damsel when he enters her tent, insists upon kissing her, and steals her ring. After Perceval leaves, the damsel's lover returns and, outraged, insists that she will follow him without changing clothes or her horse until he beheads her assaulter. As Perceval enters King Arthur's castle, he covets the red armor of a haughty knight. King Arthur mourns that the Red Knight has laid claim to his lands and stolen his cup, spilling wine on Queen Guinevere. Kay laughs at Perceval's demands to be knighted and given the red armor, telling him to fight the Red Knight for it. As the boy turns to pursue the Red Knight, a maiden laughs who has not laughed in six years, predicting that Perceval will be the supreme lord of the knights. Enraged, Kay slaps the maiden. Perceval exits and Yonnet follows him. The Red Knight grows irate at the boy's demands and quickly unhorses Perceval who throws a javelin through the Red Knight's eye and brain, killing him. Perceval sends the cup to King Arthur and promises the maiden vengeance for Kay's slap. King Arthur worries about the boy. The fool predicts that Perceval's vengeance will result in Kay's right arm being broken. Perceval encounters Gornemant of Gohort who teaches Perceval how to use weapons and armor and to show mercy in battle. Perceval leaves, eager to check on his mother.

Perceval comes to a castle where he asks a beautiful maiden, Blanche-flor, for lodgings. She agrees, though she says he will be displeased. Blanche-flor is Gornemant of Gohort's niece. Perceval wakes to a tearful Blanche-flor who explains that Anguinaueron has killed most of her knights and stolen their provisions because his king, Clamadeu, lusts after her. She intends to surrender tomorrow but will kill herself rather than allow Clamadeu to possess her body. Perceval tells Blanche-flor that he will fight Anguinaueron if her love is his prize. Perceval defeats Anguinaueron who begs for mercy, and Perceval sends him to King Arthur. The townpeople praise Perceval. Clamadeu waits for the city to starve, but a provision ship is shipwrecked nearby and sells the food to the city. Clamadeu challenges Perceval to single combat, and Perceval defeats Clamadeu, granting him mercy on the release of all prisoners and Clamadeu's going to King Arthur and reminding the laughing maiden of Perceval's promise. Perceval insists upon going to his mother but promises to return. At an uncrossable river, two fishermen direct him to lodgings where the lord of the manor treats Perceval well and gives him a sword. A squire passes, holding a bleeding white lance, followed by a maiden carrying a grail. Perceval plans to ask who drinks from the grail before he leaves. When Perceval awakes, he cannot find anyone so he crosses the drawbridge which is immediately raised. Perceval finds a maiden mourning over her lover's corpse. She tells Perceval that he lodged at the castle of the Fisher King and says he will suffer great misfortunes for not asking about the lance or grail. The maiden identifies herself



as Perceval's first cousin and tells him that his mother has died from grief. Perceval leaves her as she buries her lover. Perceval sees a wretched girl wearing a holey dress who tells him that they have met before, but warns him away before the Haughty Knight of the Heath returns. The Haughty Knight of the Heath appears and tells Perceval that the maiden allowed a young Welshman to kiss her and take her ring. Perceval admits he was the young Welshman, they fight, and Perceval wins, agreeing to grant mercy if the knight consents to have the maiden bathed and healed before offering his service to King Arthur. Perceval reavows his promise to the maiden. King Arthur mourns and pledges to find Perceval, setting up camp in a location near Perceval. As Perceval goes to help an injured goose, it flies away, leaving a few blood drops on the snow which remind Perceval of Blanche-flor's blush. As he contemplates this, he falls asleep and is spotted by the king's knights. Sagremor demands Perceval return to camp with him and wages battle against the stranger when he does not respond. Sagremor's horse returns to camp without its rider so Kay goes to battle Perceval, resulting in having his right arm broken. Sir Gawain condemns their disrespect and offers to approach the stranger. Sir Gawain waits until the stranger's contemplation seems broken before courteously asking him to join him at camp. When Sir Gawain informs Perceval that he broke Kay's arm, Perceval states he has fulfilled his promise. Sir Gawain realizes it is Perceval, they introduce themselves, and Perceval returns with Sir Gawain to camp where King Arthur asks the youth to stay at court. Perceval meets Queen Guinevere and offers his service to the laughing maiden. An ugly damsel approaches and condemns Perceval for not asking about the lance and grail. Perceval determines that he will return to the Fisher King.

Guinganbresil arrives and accuses Sir Gawain of treason, stating that Sir Gawain killed his lord without issuing a challenge. Sir Gawain agrees to defend himself against the charge of treason. On his journey, he learns from a squire that a battle is pending between Tiebaut of Tintagel and Meliant de Liz, who loves Tiebaut of Tintagel's daughter and must challenge her father to earn her love. Tiebaut of Tintagel's councilors suggest that the stranger will surely join their side. Although Sir Gawain does not join the battle, the Maiden of the Small Sleeves incurs her older sister's anger by arguing that Sir Gawain is a more pleasing knight than Meliant de Liz. Sir Gawain meets Sir Garin and explains his reason for not fighting is the fear that an injury will prevent his answering the charge of treason. The elder sister tells her father that Sir Gawain is a horse seller. On his search for Sir Gawain, Tiebaut of Tintagel encounters Sir Garin, who tells him of the fine knight that is lodging at his house. Realizing his mistake, Tiebaut of Tintagel asks to be introduced to Sir Gawain. The Maiden of the Small Sleeves obtains Sir Gawain's promise to join the tournament tomorrow in her name. The next day, the older sister praises Meliant de Liz, but the younger sister mocks her when Sir Gawain unhorses him and sends his horse to the younger sister. The Maiden of the Small Sleeves thanks Sir Gawain, and he offers his service to her. A youthful knight directs Sir Gawain to his sister for lodging, but Sir Gawain luckily passes through the town unrecognized, not knowing that the people of the place hate him. He makes love to the damsel, but they are caught kissing by a knight who chides the damsel for loving the man who killed her father. The damsel arms Sir Gawain who is confident since he is carrying Excalibur. Peasants lay siege to the tower as the damsel yells at the peasants. Sir Gawain defends the door, and the damsel throws chess pieces out of the window.



Guinganbresil forbids the people to destroy the tower, but when they ignore him, he chides the king of Escavalon, the young knight, for accosting a guest thus. The king makes the peasants desist but is confused until a wise vavasour suggests postponing the battle for one year while Sir Gawain searches for the bleeding lance. Sir Gawain agrees when they clarify that he is only required to do everything in his power to find the lance.

Five years pass without Perceval thinking of God until he encounters a penitent party who chide him for wearing armor on Good Friday. They direct him to the holy hermit, and Perceval learns from the hermit that the sin of killing his mother with grief was the reason that he was unable to inquire about the lance or grail at the Fisher King's castle. The hermit further reveals that the Fisher King's father, who drinks from the grail, and the hermit, are Perceval's uncles. Perceval begins his penance by spending two days with his hermit uncle. Sir Gawain sees a maiden lamenting over an injured knight and gently wakes the knight who warns Sir Gawain against the fierce knight in the woods. Continuing his journey, Sir Gawain finds a damsel gazing in a mirror, who agrees to show him many adventures if he will fetch her palfrey and foretells grief for the knight. Sir Gawain returns to the injured knight and applies a healing herb. The healed knight desires confession and asks for the horse of an approaching squire which Sir Gawain obtains. The injured knight steals Sir Gawain's horse because Sir Gawain punished him for taking a damsel by force. The malicious maiden mocks Sir Gawain, following him to see his disgraces. Sir Gawain and the malicious maiden come to a moat surrounding a fine castle, and the nephew of Greoreas charges Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain's nag will not move so Sir Gawain awaits his attacker, unhorses him, and mounts his horse. The malicious maiden disappears, but a boatman demands the horse or the captured knight. Sir Gawain agrees to capture the knight who quickly surrenders and is taken to the boatman. Sir Gawain is told the malicious maiden has had many knights killed. Sir Gawain learns that three queens live in the castle and it is guarded by five hundred enchanted longbows; only a knight who is pure of heart can enter. The host, unable to dissuade Sir Gawain from attempting the castle, finally escorts Sir Gawain. They enter a beautiful hall that contains a beautiful bed, and the host, expecting Sir Gawain's death, leaves. Sir Gawain evades the five hundred arrows and kills an attacking lion. Sir Gawain is made prince and lord of the castle, but his host tells him that he can never leave the castle. The queen cheers him when she asks him about King Arthur, King Lot (Sir Gawain's father), King Urien and Queen Guinevere. The next morning, the queen tries to discourage Sir Gawain from seeking the malicious maiden who employs a fierce knight, but the boatman persuades the queen to allow Sir Gawain to go. Sir Gawain asks to conceal his name for seven days.

Sir Gawain crosses the river, and defeats the malicious maiden's knight. The malicious maiden calls him proud and challenges him to cross the Perilous Ford, like her knight often did. Sir Gawain lands in the water and swims to the other side where he sees Guiromelant hunting. Guiromelant tells Sir Gawain that the malicious maiden was his sweetheart against her will because he killed the man she loved. Eventually, she ran away and befriended the recently defeated knight who never crossed the ford because all who attempt it die. Sir Gawain and Guiromelant swear to answer each other's questions truthfully. Sir Gawain learns that Guiromelant owns the Citadel, Orqueneles,



in the distance, and the malicious maiden is the Haughty Maid of Logres. When Sir Gawain asks about the castle, Guiromelant curses him and absolves the oath, in disbelief that he slept there. When Sir Gawain recounts his adventures, Guiromelant apologizes and tells him that the castle is named Champguin and the queen is King Arthur's mother, the younger queen is King Lot's wife, and the maiden is Sir Gawain's sister and Guiromelant's sweetheart. Guiromelant confesses his desire to kill Sir Gawain because Sir Gawain killed Guiromelant's first cousin. Guiromelant convinces Sir Gawain to take a ring as a token to his sweetheart. Guiromelant desires his name, and learning his identity, Guiromelant wants to battle but offers to wait for two days for King Arthur to witness the battle. Sir Gawain insists upon going back to the Haughty Maiden of Logres, leaping across the ford. The maiden begs for his forgiveness, recounting Guiromelant's tale, admitting her yearning for death, and asking Sir Gawain to punish her. He takes her to Champguin with him instead where there is much joy at his return. Sir Gawain gives his sister the ring. The queens hope Sir Gawain will marry the maiden, unaware of his identity. Sir Gawain sends a summons to King Arthur to witness the battle with Guiromelant. The dispatched squire arrives at King Arthur's court where everyone is sad because they have heard no news from Sir Gawain.

## The Story of the Grail (Perceval) Analysis

Perceval's belief that the approaching knights are demons or angels shows his religion and superstition which are founded on nothing but his mother's instructions. His inquiries to the knights show his lack of knowledge. The ox-drivers' apprehensions of Perceval's mother's sorrow foreshadows the reason that she prevented him from learning of knights, while her fainting at his departure foreshadows her death. After Perceval kisses the maiden in the tent, an indication of his innocence and naiveté, her lover's resolution to behead her assailant foreshadows his encounter with Perceval. Perceval's coveting the Red Knight's armor foreshadows his battle and victory over the Red Knight. Perceval's appearance and behavior before King Arthur at court demonstrates his uncouthness and lack of education. The king's despair over Queen Guinevere's dress being ruined shows the reverence knights should have for ladies. Kay's character is revealed when he mocks Perceval, slaps the laughing maiden and kicks the jester into the fire. The laughing maiden's prediction foreshadows Perceval's prowess while his promise to avenge her of Kay's slap foreshadows his battle with Kay. King Arthur's anger at Kay shows the king's love for Perceval, an unknown youth.

Perceval meets Gornemant of Gohort who becomes his mentor in the ways of knighthood, foreshadowing Perceval's mercy by advising him to be merciful and ending Perceval's show of naiveté by teaching him the proper way of things. Perceval's acquiring lodgings at Blanche-flor's castle foreshadows his adventure there, and her relation to Gornemant of Gohort is ironic. Blanche-flor's determination to kill herself rather than allow Clamadeu to possess her demonstrates her honor, chastity and pride. She uses reverse psychology to ensure that Perceval will battle Anguigueron. Perceval demonstrates mercy when he releases Anguigueron and Clamadeu with instructions to present themselves to King Arthur as prisoners. His battle with Clamadeu parallels his battle with Anguigueron. Lady Luck presents herself in the form of a shipwrecked boat





with provisions outside the city. Perceval insists upon visiting his mother, proving his love for her. At the Fisher King's castle, the grail and the lance are mentioned for the first time which foreshadows Perceval's quest. Perceval learns from his cousin that his mother is dead, fulfilling the foreshadowing of the event that occurred when she fainted at his departure. Next, Perceval meets the maiden with the holey dress and her lover, battles the lover, and fulfills the foreshadowing that occurred in the tent at the start of his adventures. There is much repetition as Perceval's prisoners go to King Arthur's court and remind Kay that Perceval will avenge the laughing maiden of the slap. Kay repeatedly shows his pride during these declarations. Outside of camp, Perceval battles Kay and breaks his arm, fulfilling the foreshadowing that occurred at the jester's prediction.

Sir Gawain's interest in the unknown boy is heightened when they set up camp while searching for him. Sir Gawain shows his courtesy and wisdom when he approaches the unknown knight, gaining a new friend. The damsel who appears and condemns Perceval for not asking the Fisher King about the grail and lance further foreshadows his grail quest. Guingambresil's arrival foreshadows Sir Gawain's adventures. The Maiden of the Small Sleeves' dispute with her sister about Sir Gawain foreshadows his accepting her plea to be her champion in the battle, as it shows his courtesy to ladies and maidens in doing so. The older sister's claim that Sir Gawain is a horse seller disguised as a knight is a means of belittling and mocking the fierce knight. During the peasants' attack, Sir Gawain shows ingenuity by making a chessboard into a shield, and the damsel also shows ingenuity by hurling chess pieces as weapons. It is ironic that the young knight who sends Sir Gawain to his sister turns out to be the king of Escavalon, but the king shows his honor by adhering to his offer of hospitality. The manner in which the topic of searching for the bleeding lance is approached shows the lance to be a magical, powerful item which will prove difficult to uncover. Sir Gawain's preference of death to the dishonor of breaking his word emphasizes his honor and valor.

Perceval's prowess is shown by his sending sixty captured knights to King Arthur in five years. Christianity comes into the story when he finds three knights and ten maidens doing penance and proceeds to the holy hermit's home. Irony takes effect when Perceval learns that the hermit and the Fisher King's father are his uncles, making the Fisher King his cousin. Perceval also learns that it is the Fisher King's father who drinks from the grail. Sir Gawain's generosity and kindness is shown when he asks after the injured knight and agrees to care for his maiden should the injured knight die. The Haughty Maiden of Logres is displayed as proud and malicious as she gazes in her mirror and hopes for Sir Gawain's shame, laughing at all of his misfortunes. The crowd that warns Sir Gawain of shame foreshadows his adventures with the Haughty Maiden of Logres. Sir Gawain again shows generosity and kindness when he returns to the injured knight with a healing herb. The injured knight shows his religion in his desire for confession, but then he contradicts that by stealing Sir Gawain's horse. The boatman advises Sir Gawain to disregard the Haughty Maiden of Logres, providing a general opinion of her evil nature. Sir Gawain's interest in the castle and the boatman's conveyance of information about it foreshadows Sir Gawain's adventures there. The boatman unsuccessfully tries to dissuade Sir Gawain from attempting it, asking a boon





which turns out to be that Sir Gawain will return to his home; this boon is saved from being a rash boon by the exception that Sir Gawain makes before granting it that he not incur dishonor.

Sir Gawain rescues the castle and is made prince and lord, demonstrating his prowess and showing the honor done to him. Sir Gawain's pride is shown by his desire to eat in the hall from whence no other knight has returned. The eldest queen's attempt to dissuade Sir Gawain from returning to the Haughty Maiden of Logres foreshadows the battle that occurs when the maiden's knight assaults and is beaten by Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain accepts the Haughty Maiden of Logres' challenge to cross the Perilous Ford, unaware of her lie that her knight did it often—actually, no knight has ever survived it. Sir Gawain encounters Guiromelant and they pledge to answer each other's questions truthfully, a symbol of friendship. Guiromelant's disbelief that Sir Gawain slept at Champguin shows his distrust of the stranger. It is ironic when the fact of the queens' identities becomes known to Sir Gawain. Guiromelant's dislike for Sir Gawain and desire to murder him foreshadows their pending battle. His willingness to await King Arthur's arrival demonstrates King Arthur's fame. The Haughty Maiden of Logres demonstrates repentance when she begs Sir Gawain to punish her, and Sir Gawain displays his leniency by taking her to Champguin. Sir Gawain shows his honor by giving his sister the ring from Guiromelant, despite their disagreements. The squire who is sent to summon King Arthur foreshadows King Arthur's arrival while the sadness at court at no word from Sir Gawain shows the king's love for his nephew.

"The Story of the Grail" is dedicated to Philip of Flanders, cousin to Marie de Champagne and Chretien de Troyes' patron after Henry the Liberal's death and who Chretien de Troyes praises as being better than Alexander the Great. It contains allusions to the Parable of the Sower and St. Paul, the patron of knights. It also quotes Luke viii, 2 Corinthians, Matthew vi, 1 Corinthians xiii and 1 John iv. There is a pun in the story concerning Perceval's lance and the French verb "lancer," or to throw, which does not translate into English. Chretien de Troyes also alludes to the stereotype of the native Celtic inhabitants of Britain as uncouth, in the form of Perceval as a youth. Ban of Gomeret is mentioned and is also present at the wedding of Erec and Enide in the first story of the collection. Lombards is alluded to as the proverbial allusion to cowardice. "The Story of the Grail" ends mid-sentence, likely interrupted by Chretien de Troyes' death. Since it is dedicated to Philip of Flanders, it must have been written before his death in 1191. "The Story of the Grail" is commonly seen as the most puzzling of the stories, and critics are unsure if it is meant allegorically. The motifs can be traced to both Celtic and Classical sources. There have been many continuations and emulations of this story, including Malory and Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." Of all of Chretien de Troyes' stories, "The Story of the Grail" initiated the greatest interest. The fact that the unfinished "The Story of the Grail" was continued after Chretien de Troyes' death shows the popularity of his writings. "The Story of the Grail" is the most commonly known and reproduced of Chretien de Troyes' works. In these continuations, several things of note occur. The home of the Fisher King is named Grail Castle, perpetuating the legend of the Grail and the Grail quest. Perceval also takes the seat of the Grail Knight at King Arthur's court, indicating that the Grail was known of before Perceval's discovery, a fact which Chretien de Troyes does not allude to. Several new characters are introduced:



Guerrehet, Giglain and Sir Carados. Sir Carados' adventures include a beheading game, paralleling that of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." Merlin is mentioned in the second continuation, though he is not in any of Chretien de Troyes' works. Perceval and Blancheflor marry but pledge eternal chastity, an indication of the emphasis put on sexual chastity during the time period.



# Characters

## Erec

Erec is the hero of the first story in this collection, Erec and Enide. He is the son of Lac and joins King Arthur's hunt for the white stag unarmed in order to keep Queen Guinevere company. As the hunt begins, Queen Guinevere is intrigued by a strange knight and sends her maiden to inquire who he is. When the knight's dwarf whips the maiden and then Erec, Erec is ashamed and vows to follow the knight until he can borrow armor to avenge himself and the Queen. Erec follows the knight to a town where Erec meets a vavasour and his beautiful daughter, from whom he learns of a competition regarding awarding a sparrow-hawk to the most beautiful maiden. The vavasour lends Erec armor and his daughter, Enide. Erec challenges the knight and wins, reminding the knight, Yder, son of Nut, of his former insult to Queen Guinevere and demanding the knight apologize and offer his services to her. Erec travels to King Arthur's land where Queen Guinevere dresses Enide and King Arthur awards Enide a kiss as the honor of the white stag for the most beautiful maiden in the kingdom. Erec weds Enide and participates in many tournaments to show off his prowess before asking permission to return to his own land.

Once home, many mock Erec's unwillingness to enter tournaments because of his desire to be near Enide. Enide mourns the mockery one day as Erec sleeps. He awakes and questions her. He tells her to prepare to ride, and Enide fears exile. Erec and Enide travel through many perils, but Erec forbids Enide to speak to him and chides her every time she warns him of peril. Through their adventures, Count Oringle attempts to kill Erec and possess Enide. Erec becomes friends with Guivret the Short. Erec encounters King Arthur and his knights, and he also fights Kay. Erec rescues Cadoc of Cabruel and Maboagrain from the Joy of the Court at Brandigan Castle. Finally, he returns to King Arthur's lands with Guivret and Enide until his father dies, and King Arthur crowns Erec king of his father's lands.

## Enide

Enide is the daughter of the vavasour who loans Erec armor for the competition to win the sparrow-hawk. She is poorly attired but beautiful. Erec claims Enide is the most beautiful maiden and challenges the knight who insulted Queen Guinevere. After Erec wins the competition, he asks to marry Enide. He refuses a better dress for her from her cousin, stating that Queen Guinevere will give her a better one. Enide and Erec travel to King Arthur's land where Queen Guinevere presents Enide with a beautiful dress, King Arthur awards Enide the honor of the white stag, and Erec marries Enide before returning to Erec's homeland. The gossip about Erec bothers Enide, and Erec catches her weeping over it. She confides the reason for her weeping. Erec takes Enide on a long journey during which he forbids her to talk to him. She is constantly chided for warning



him of pending perils. Eventually, Erec is convinced that Enide loves him deeply, and they live happily ever after.

## King Guivret the Short

King Guivret the Short is the lord of a place that Erec and Enide pass on their wandering journey. He approaches to do battle, and after a long battle, Erec defeats King Guivret. King Guivret pledges aid and friendship to Erec. They bandage each other's wounds and depart as friends. When Guivret hears a rumor of Erec's death, he sets off to retrieve his friend's corpse and save Enide. Guivret encounters Erec on the road but does not recognize him. They fight, and Guivret knocks Erec to the ground. Enide runs to her husband and reveals his identity. The two friends embrace, and Guivret takes Erec to his sister's house to be healed. Guivret intends to escort Erec to King Arthur's lands but is unable to dissuade him from accepting the challenge of the Joy of the Court. When Erec wins, Guivret joins Erec at King Arthur's court until Erec is made King of his father's land.

## Alexander

Alexander is the son of the Emperor of Greece. He will not consider becoming a knight in his own land because he insists upon finding glory and valor away from home. He convinces his father to allow him to go to King Arthur in England, insisting he will be knighted by King Arthur or no one. In King Arthur's land, Alexander gives great gifts, spends liberally, and is well loved by all. He joins King Arthur and Queen Guinevere on their journey to Brittany. He is in love with the queen's maiden, Soredamours, but he convinces himself that she does not care for him. Hiding his love causes it to increase and Alexander groans at night in his loneliness. When news of Count Angres' rebellion reaches Brittany, Alexander begs King Arthur to make him a knight, and King Arthur concedes. Queen Guinevere gives Alexander a shirt that Soredamours made, partially stitched with the maiden's golden hair. Alexander visits the queen every night, and over time, she notices the thread in the shirt fading while Soredamour's hair remains brilliant. Alexander is very pleased when this is revealed to him.

Alexander follows the count and his companions when they retreat to the castle. He and thirty of his men don the enemy's apparel and are admitted into the castle. They reveal themselves and fight the traitors. After a long battle, Alexander captures the count and presents him to the king. King Arthur rewards Alexander with a valuable cup, which Alexander gives to Sir Gawain, and the king offers him anything in the kingdom save his crown and queen. Alexander is afraid to ask for Soredamours since he is unsure if she would be willing to marry him. He asks for a delay in order to ascertain her feelings. Alexander visits Queen Guinevere who has noticed the love between Alexander and Soredamours and questions them about it, offering to arrange the marriage herself. At their agreement, Queen Guinevere marries Alexander to Soredamours. The wedding is celebrated at Windsor that day with Sir Gawain's, Soredamour's brother, approval. Shortly after, Soredamours conceives and bares Cliges.



Alexander's father, the Emperor of Greece, dies and a ship is sent to retrieve Alexander but is shipwrecked. It is reported that Alexander dies in the shipwreck, and Alis, Alexander's younger brother, takes the crown. Alexander eventually hears of his father's death and travels to Greece where he sends Acoriondes, his confidante, to retrieve the crown. Alis refuses to give up the crown, but when he finds that no one will side with him in war against his brother, he offers to agree to any pact of peace that allows him to keep his crown. Alexander agrees to allow Alis to keep the title of emperor if he never marries so that Cliges will become emperor after him. Alis rules in name, but Alexander rules in practice. Alexander grows sick and advises his son to seek glory at King Arthur's court. Alexander dies, shortly followed by Soredamours.

## Soredamours

Soredamours is Queen Guinevere's handmaiden who travels with King Arthur and Queen Guinevere to Brittany. She is Sir Gawain's sister. Soredamours scorns love but has fallen in love with Alexander. She quarrels with herself against loving him and convinces herself that her love is not returned. She is so tormented that she cannot sleep. She finally admits to herself that she is in love with Alexander. Soredamours meditates on the significance of her name which means "gilded over with love." After Alexander defeats the count, he visits Queen Guinevere's tent to ascertain Soredamours' feelings for him. Queen Guinevere has noticed their mutual love and offers to arrange their marriage. Soredamours is given to Alexander with Sir Gawain's approval. She bares Cliges and travels to Greece with Alexander after his father's death. Soon after Alexander dies, Soredamours grieves herself to death.

## Alis

Alis is Alexander's younger brother and the younger son of the Grecian Emperor. When his father dies, he receives a report that his brother has died at sea and assumes the crown. When Alexander returns to Greece, Alis refuses to surrender the crown, but he agrees to never marry so that Alexander's son, Cliges, will assume the crown when Alis dies. After Alexander dies, Alis' advisors convince him to break his oath and take a wife. Alis desires Fenice, the daughter of the German Emperor. When told that she has already been promised to the Duke of Saxony, Alis travels to Germany where he marries Fenice. He is given a potion which makes him think that he has possessed her when he has not in reality. When Fenice fakes illness and death in order to be with Cliges, Alis is saddened at his wife's health problems and death. When he learns of her trickery, he is enraged and searches in vain for Cliges and Fenice to punish them. He dies of grief because he is unable to avenge himself.

## Thessala

Thessala is Fenice's nurse who worries about Fenice's ill-health before marrying Alis. When Fenice denies being sick, Thessala recognizes signs of love and offers to give



Alis a potion that will make him think he has possessed Fenice when he has not. Thessala's potion works, and Alis does not possess Fenice. When Fenice and Cliges reveal their love for one another and decide to elope, Thessala helps Fenice fake her death and then lives with her mistress in a secret house. Cliges and Fenice are discovered together, and Thessala helps them escape.

## Kay

Kay is haughty and arrogant. He is always insulting and provoking in his interactions with the other knights. When the knight Meleagant offers a challenge to King Arthur's court, Kay begs to accept it. He loses and is imprisoned along with Queen Guinevere. When Lancelot arrives to rescue the queen, he leaves blood on her pillow during their night time rendezvous, but Kay is accused of sleeping with Queen Guinevere. When Perceval arrives at court, Kay mocks the boy and slaps the laughing maiden who prophecies of Perceval's greatness. He receives a broken arm when he battles Perceval much later.

## Meleagant

Meleagant is a fully armored knight who arrives at King Arthur's court and says that he has many of King Arthur's knight, ladies and maidens imprisoned but will not release them for any of the king's money or power. He challenges any of the king's knights to defend Queen Guinevere in order to release his prisoners. Meleagant defeats the challenger, Kay, and takes Kay and the queen prisoner. He refuses to surrender Queen Guinevere to Lancelot, battles the greater knight and is defeated. Meleagant finds blood on Queen Guinevere's sheets and accuses her of sleeping with Kay. He battles Lancelot again, who acts as Queen Guinevere's champion in the charges. He is defeated again, and the battle is postponed. Meleagant secretly has Lancelot imprisoned, eventually in a tower on an inlet. He travels to King Arthur's land for battle, but he does not find Lancelot and Sir Gawain offers to stand in for Lancelot one year hence if Lancelot is still missing. Meleagant returns to his father, bragging that Lancelot is afraid of him, but his father does not believe him. He returns to King Arthur's land to battle Sir Gawain but is shocked to find Lancelot escaped from the tower. Lancelot defeats and kills Meleagant.

## Lunete

Lunete is Laudine's maidservant. She rescues Yvain when he defeats the knight at the brook by giving him a magical ring. She convinces Laudine that Yvain is worthier than her former husband, causing Laudine to marry Yvain. Lunete becomes friends with Sir Gawain when he visits. When Yvain does not adhere to his promise to return to his wife within a year, Lunete is charged with treason. Yvain saves her and she is the only one who knows the real identity of the Knight with the Lion. She finally facilitates the reconciliation between Yvain and Laudine with this knowledge.





## Lion

The lion is saved by Yvain from a dragon. He pledges his loyalty to Yvain afterward, following the knight faithfully and defending him against many men and monsters. Due to the lion's loyalty, Yvain becomes known as the Knight with the Lion.

## Red Knight

The Red Knight is haughty and offends King Arthur and Queen Guinevere shortly before Perceval arrives. He spills wine on the queen and steals the king's cup. Perceval covets his red armor and defeats the Red Knight by throwing a javelin through his eye and brain. Perceval returns the cup to the king.

## Gornemant of Gohort

Gornemant of Gohort is a gentleman that Perceval meets early in his journeys. Gornemant agrees to lodge the boy if he follows his advice and Perceval's mother's advice, to seek advice from gentleman. He teaches the boy how to use weapons and armor. Gornemant insists that Perceval change his underclothes and encourages him to show mercy when he defeats other knights. He directs Perceval not to claim his mother's instructions because it makes the boy seem naive.

## Haughty Knight of the Heath

When Perceval first begins his ventures in becoming a knight, he enters a tent, thinking it is a church, and kisses the maiden he finds within and steals her ring. Perceval leaves and her lover, the Haughty Knight of the Heath, arrives. He is furious and insists that she will wear the same clothes until he beheads her assailant. Much time passes before Perceval sees a girl riding a lean palfrey and wearing a holey dress. He does not recognize her, but she knows him and warns him away before the knight returns to kill him. The knight returns and tells the story of the maiden's disgrace, and Perceval admits that he is the one the Haughty Knight of the Heath seeks. They fight, and Perceval wins. He grants mercy under the agreement that the Haughty Knight has the maiden bathed and healed, offers his services to King Arthur and tells the queen and her servants what he made the maiden endure. The Haughty Knight of the Heath agrees and travels to King Arthur's lands.

## Haughty Maiden of Logres

The Haughty Maiden of Logres is encountered by Sir Gawain who finds her gazing in a mirror. She accuses him of intending to carry her off, but she agrees to show him many adventures if he fetches her palfrey. Sir Gawain does so despite warnings of shame. The Haughty Maiden foretells grief for Sir Gawain with anticipation and joy. She forbids



Sir Gawain to touch her and laughs at his grievances. When Sir Gawain chides her maliciousness, she rebukes his chiding. They approach a castle surrounded by a moat, and the Haughty Maiden of Logres boards a boat, encouraging Sir Gawain to join her since a knight is approaching to fight Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain defeats the knight, but the maiden has disappeared. A boatman comes to collect the defeated knight and warns Sir Gawain against the Haughty Maiden of Logres. She reappears shortly afterward and asks him to perform a task for her that the defeated knight often did. Everyone laments as Sir Gawain crosses the perilous ford, from which no man has returned. Sir Gawain gets to the other side and meets Guiromelant who admits that he killed the man the Haughty Maiden of Logres loved and forced her to be his sweetheart before she ran away, making the defeated knight her friend. Sir Gawain returns across the perilous ford to the Haughty Maiden of Logres who approaches and begs forgiveness, recounting her lover's death and stating that she yearns for death. She asks Sir Gawain to punish her, but he refuses and takes her to Champguin.

## Blancheflor

Blancheflor is a beautiful maiden who lives in a castle that Perceval approaches to request lodgings. She grants him the best possible lodgings though she says he will still be disappointed. Blancheflor finds that Perceval has just come from her uncle, Gornemant of Gohort. While Perceval sleeps, Blancheflor sneaks into his room, and he wakes to her tearfully clinging to his neck. She tells him of how her town is plagued by the knight Anguigueron who has stolen their provisions and killed or imprisoned most of her knights because his king, Clamadeu, lusts after Blancheflor. The castle is to be surrendered tomorrow because there are not enough knights left to fight Anguigueron. Blancheflor plans to kill herself before Clamadeu can possess her body. Perceval comforts her and holds her while they sleep. The next day, Perceval says he will fight Anguigueron if he can look forward to the prize of her love. Blancheflor's attempts to dissuade him are an example of reverse psychology since she actually wants him to fight. Perceval wins and Blancheflor becomes his lover. She is unable to prevent him from going to check on his mother, but she is comforted when he promises to return with his mother or alone shortly.

## Fisher King

The Fisher King is a lame man who Perceval encounters fishing on an impassable river. The Fisher King sends Perceval to his home for lodgings. A squire arrives and presents a magnificent sword as a gift to the lord of the manor who is told to give it to one who will use it well. The Fisher King gives the sword to Perceval. In the Fisher King's house, Perceval sees the white lance dripping blood and the grail, but does not ask about either. When Perceval cannot find anyone the next morning, he exits the manor into the woods, searching for servants. He finds a maiden mourning over the corpse of her lost lover. She is Perceval's first cousin, and she tells him that he lodged in the castle of the Fisher King and that it is unfortunate that he did not ask about the lance and the grail. Perceval is destined to suffer great misfortunes because of this. He later learns that if



he had asked, the Fisher King would have been healed and ruled his land. When Perceval meets the holy hermit much later, he learns that the hermit and the Fisher King are Perceval's uncles.

## Laudine

Laudine is the lady of the castle near the spring that produces storms. She grieves greatly when Yvain kills her husband, the knight that guards the spring. Yvain falls in love with Laudine as he looks at her. Her maiden, Lunete, attempts to convince Laudine that the man who defeated her husband is more worthy. Eventually, Lunete succeeds in her attempt and Laudine marries Yvain. When King Arthur and his knights come to her castle, Yvain persuades Laudine to allow him to join them in tournaments and she agrees for one year exactly, giving Yvain a ring as a symbol of her love. Yvain is late, and Laudine sends a servant to retrieve her ring, calling Yvain a cheat, a seducer and a thief who stole Laudine's heart; she no longer loves Yvain. Laudine permits the accusations of treason against Lunete to take place for convincing her to marry Yvain. When the Knight with the Lion protects Lunete from death for her crime, Laudine begs him to stay, but he refuses until his lady ceases her anger towards him. Eventually, he comes to the spring again, and Lunete advises Laudine to find someone to defend the spring. Lunete tells Laudine that she believes the Knight with the Lion would follow Laudine if she promised to alleviate his lady's displeasure to the best of her abilities. Laudine promises to do everything in her power to reconcile the Knight with the Lion to his lady. Lunete brings the Knight with the Lion to Laudine who is displeased when he reveals his identity; it is Yvain! Although Laudine is upset with Lunete's trickery, she refuses to perjure herself and is reconciled to Yvain. They live happily together ever after.

## Fenice

Fenice is the beautiful maiden daughter of the German emperor. Her hand has been promised to the Duke of Saxony, but Alis wants to marry her. The German emperor agrees if Alis can evade the Duke of Saxony. As soon as Fenice sees Cliges, she falls in love with him, and he falls in love with her. She mourns having to marry Alis and conspires with her nurse, Thessala, to give Alis a potion that will make him think he has possessed her body when he has not. She refuses to prostitute her body where she cannot also give her heart. On the return to Greece, the Duke of Saxony's men kidnap Fenice, but Cliges rescues her. She mourns when Cliges travels to King Arthur's land to seek glory but is overjoyed when he returns to Greece. When Fenice questions if he fell in love in England, Cliges admits his love for Fenice and they conspire to hide her away where they can enjoy each other and Alis cannot blame them. Fenice, with Thessala's help, fakes illness and death. Cliges then carries her to a house where his serf, John, has built many secret rooms. She misses the sunlight so John builds an outside room with a high wall. One day, Cliges and Fenice are lying naked in this outside room when a young knight sees them and reports to Alis. Cliges, Fenice and Thessala flee to King Arthur's land where they stay until John and several messengers report that Alis has



died of grief at being unable to find them. Cliges and Fenice return to Greece as emperor and empress. All subsequent emperors of Constantinople fear being tricked by their wives as Fenice tricked Alis.

## Cliges

Cliges is the son of Alexander and Soredamours and the nephew of Alis. Alis, according to a pact made with Alexander, agreed not to marry so that Cliges will inherit the throne. When Alis changes his mind and travels to Germany to marry Fenice, Cliges accompanies him but falls in love with Fenice himself. Cliges kills the Duke of Saxony's nephew when he ambushes the Greeks and Germans. A knight from the Duke of Saxony's camp attacks Cliges, and Cliges defeats him, then dons his armor and leads the Greeks into battle. Cliges sees several of the Duke of Saxony's knights sneaking off and, suspecting their motives, follows them, finding and rescuing Fenice. He accepts a personal challenge from the Duke and defeats him when he is given new strength when Fenice shouts "God help him!" After this battle, Cliges convinces Alis and Fenice to grant him permission to seek glory at King Arthur's court.

When Cliges arrives in England, he hears that King Arthur and his knights have organized a tournament. During the four days of the tournament, Cliges dons different colored armor and defeats many knights. He wears black the first day, green the second day, red the third day and white the fourth day. Each night, the defeated knights are unable to find the knight who beat them. On the third day, the knights realize that it is the same knight in different armor. On the fourth day, he battles with Sir Gawain so long that King Arthur stops the battle and invites Cliges to the castle. At the castle, Cliges' captives greet him, and he releases them all. He explains his lineage to King Arthur and Sir Gawain. He is Sir Gawain's nephew and King Arthur's great-nephew. He is highly honored in England and stays there for some time before returning home to Greece.

There is a huge welcome when Cliges returns. He visits Fenice in her room. She asks him if he fell in love in England, and he admits his feelings for her. Cliges and Fenice conspire to be together without Alis blaming either of them. Fenice suggests faking her death. Cliges hires his serf, John, to build a tomb and help him find a house in which to hide Fenice, promising the man and his heirs' freedom in exchange for his help. When doctors torture Fenice, convinced that she is not truly dead, Cliges fears that he has caused her true death and mourns greatly. He is thrilled when Fenice wakes. He keeps a hawk in the house so that he is able to go there openly, and Cliges spends much of his time there. When John finishes an outside room with a high wall, Fenice and Cliges are spotted sleeping naked together. Cliges is unable to capture the knight who spots them, and Cliges, Fenice and Thessala are forced to flee to King Arthur's lands where he prepares to battle Alis. Luckily, messengers arrive to tell Cliges that Alis has died of grief at being unable to capture Cliges and Fenice. Cliges returns to Greece with Fenice to become emperor.



## Lancelot

Lancelot is the hero of The Knight of the Cart. Sir Gawain encounters him as he begins his search for Kay and Queen Guinevere after Kay accepts Meleagant's challenge. Lancelot enters a town and asks a dwarf about Queen Guinevere. The dwarf tells him to get in the cart and he will learn about the queen in one day. Lancelot hesitates but ultimately rides in the cart while Sir Gawain follows behind on horseback. In their lodgings, a bed is reserved for the one who has earned the privilege. Lancelot insists upon sleeping in the bed, and, at midnight, a lance hurtles at him and grazes his thigh. The next morning, Lancelot sees Queen Guinevere being escorted as a prisoner and attempts to throw himself out of the window but is restrained by Sir Gawain. Lancelot and Sir Gawain arm themselves and seek the queen but cannot find her. They meet a maiden who tells them that Meleagant has taken Queen Guinevere as his prisoner, but the only way to get to his home is by the Sword Bridge or the Underwater Bridge. Lancelot allows Sir Gawain to choose which bridge each will take; Lancelot is to travel by the Sword Bridge. As Lancelot travels, he thinks of his love for Queen Guinevere.

A knight attacks him and Lancelot defeats the knight, but a girl appears begging him to release the captive to her. The maiden offers Lancelot lodgings if he will make love to her. He agrees under duress. That night, the girl yells for help and Lancelot defeats many knights to save her. She dismisses them before he kills them. Due to Lancelot's reluctance, the girl releases him from his promise to sleep with her. She accompanies him on his journey the next day, and tries to prevent him from seeing a comb with hair in it lying on a rock. Lancelot sees the comb, and the maiden laughingly tells him that she is sure it is Queen Guinevere's comb. Lancelot removes the strands of hair from the comb. He protects the maiden from a knight who loves her and tries to capture her. He then goes to a church where he finds tombstones with knights' names on it, including a huge tomb that is too heavy to be lifted by seven men, according to the monk in attendance. Lancelot lifts the slab which designates him as the one who will free all foreign prisoners. Lancelot continues on his journey, meets a vavasour whose sons join Lancelot and they pass through the Stone Passage.

Lancelot and the boys enter a town where a battle is raging and they join on the side of the slaves; Lancelot's prowess is praised. As Lancelot approaches Sword Bridge, a knight forbids him to cross. They battle, and Lancelot wins. The knight begs mercy, but a girl approaches and requests the knight's head. Lancelot is torn between mercy and generosity. He rebattles the knight, wins, and presents the knight's head to the girl. Lancelot crosses the dangerous bridge, receiving much injury, and is seen by Meleagant and his father, King Bademagu. King Bademagu tries to convince his son to surrender Queen Guinevere, and then offers hospitality to Lancelot. Without waiting to heal, Lancelot battles Meleagant, but is losing until a maiden notifies him that Queen Guinevere is watching. King Bademagu asks the queen to stop the fight before his son is killed and she agrees, causing Lancelot to cease fighting. Meleagant has to be forced to stop fighting. When Lancelot approaches Queen Guinevere, she refuses to speak to him, making him very sad.



Lancelot goes to find Sir Gawain and is captured by King Bademagu's subjects. Queen Guinevere is grieved when a rumor circulates of Lancelot's death. When Lancelot is brought to the king, Queen Guinevere is overjoyed and directs him to her window at night to talk. Lancelot, at the queen's request, bends the bars and joins her in love making all night; unfortunately, he leaves blood from his injuries on her bed sheets. In the morning, Meleagant accuses Queen Guinevere of making love to Kay. Kay is unable to avenge the insult because of his injuries, and Queen Guinevere calls Lancelot to be her champion. Once again, King Bademagu and Queen Guinevere ask Lancelot to spare Meleagant. Meleagant agrees only on condition of continuing battle one year hence at King Arthur's court. Lancelot leaves again to search for Sir Gawain and is captured by a dwarf at Meleagant's command. Sir Gawain is retrieved by the rest of Lancelot's party, and they all receive word at King Bademagu's castle that Lancelot has returned to King Arthur's lands. They are all disheartened when they arrive at King Arthur's castle to find they have been deceived.

Meanwhile, Lancelot is imprisoned and hears of a tournament that is to take place in King Arthur's courts. He asks his jailer's wife for permission to go, promising to return. He goes to the tournament and is highly praised for his prowess. Queen Guinevere sends a message to Lancelot telling him to "do your worst." He yields to her commands and is deemed a coward. The message is repeated the next day until, sure it is Lancelot, Queen Guinevere tells him to "do your best." Lancelot leaves quickly after the tournament to avoid recognition and returns to his prison. Meleagant learns of Lancelot's attendance at the tournament and builds a tower on an inlet of a lake as a new prison for Lancelot. Meleagant goes to King Arthur's court to battle Lancelot, but Lancelot is nowhere to be found. Sir Gawain promises to battle Meleagant in Lancelot's stead if he is still not found one year hence. Meleagant returns home and tells his father that Lancelot is scared, but King Bademagu does not believe this. One of King Bademagu's daughters overhears the conversation and is very upset. She sets out to find Lancelot. Eventually, she discovers the knight and frees him. Lancelot journeys to King Arthur's court where Meleagant is surprised to see him. Lancelot kills Meleagant and is lead away amidst great joy, particularly that of Queen Guinevere.

## Yvain

Yvain hears the story of his cousin, Calogrenant's, defeats at the magical spring and decides to avenge him. He secretly steals off, causes the spring to create a storm and battles the knight who appears to defend the spring, causing him to flee to town where he dies. Yvain follows him, and a maiden, Lunete, approaches, giving him a magical ring to hide him because the townspeople yearn for his death. Yvain sees the lady of the castle, Laudine, and falls in love. Lunete convinces Laudine that Yvain is worthier than her former husband, and Laudine marries Yvain. King Arthur arrives at the spring and causes the storms to rage. Kay asks for the battle, and Yvain unhorses Kay. Yvain presents Kay's horse to King Arthur and relates his adventures. King Arthur and his knights join Yvain at Laudine's castle where they have pleasant company. As King Arthur and his retinue prepare to leave, Sir Gawain begs Yvain to join them at the tournaments. Laudine gives Yvain permission, provided he returns in one year exactly





or forfeit her love. She gives him a ring as a symbol of her love. Yvain overstays his time, and a maiden arrives denouncing Yvain and demanding the return of Laudine's ring. Yvain is distraught and runs off into the woods.

Yvain lives like a madman in the woods for quite some time until a lady recognizes him and reports her finding to her mistress. They cure his madness with an ointment from Morgan the wise because they need his help to defeat Count Aliers who has invaded their lands. Yvain awakens after being doused in the ointment and is nursed back to health by the maidens. When Count Aliers arrives to pillage the town, Yvain defeats him, but then asks to leave which saddens the lady. As Yvain exits the town, he encounters a dragon holding and burning a lion. Yvain saves the lion, and the lion follows Yvain in submission. Yvain greatly values his new friend. As Yvain chastises himself aloud for not committing suicide because of his lady's displeasure, he is contradicted by a lady who is imprisoned. After discussion, he learns that it is Lunete, who is to be killed for treason against Laudine for convincing her to marry Yvain. Yvain promises to save Lunete and searches for lodgings. He finds lodgings at the home of a rich man, the husband of Sir Gawain's sister, who is plagued by a giant, Harpin of the Mountain, who desires the man's daughter and has killed two of the man's sons. Yvain agrees to help the man if Harpin arrives in time for him to save Lunete as well.

Harpin is late and Yvain prepares to leave. Finally, Harpin arrives, Yvain and the lion kill the giant, and Yvain leaves his name as the Knight with the Lion to be reported to Sir Gawain. Yvain hurries to save Lunete. He demands her release and three knights challenge him, forbidding the lion to assist Yvain. The lion becomes enraged when he sees Yvain being beaten and helps Yvain defeat the three knights. Laudine asks the name of the knight which is given as the Knight with the Lion. Yvain refuses Laudine's request to stay in town, stating that he cannot do so until his lady ceases her anger towards him. Only Lunete knows the Knight with the Lion's true identity. Meanwhile, two sisters debate the inheritance left to them by their father; the older refuses to give the younger any part of it. The older sister gains Sir Gawain as her champion, and the younger searches for the Knight with the Lion. Yvain agrees to be the younger sister's champion, but on the journey to King Arthur's court, he arrives at the town of Dire Adventure which is ruled by two demons. Yvain and the lion battle and defeat the two demons.

Yvain continues towards King Arthur's court where he, as the champion of the younger sister, unwittingly battles Sir Gawain, the champion of the older sister. King Arthur has been unable to reconcile the sisters. The battle lasts all day and into evening before the two knights realize their equality in arms and make peace. When they introduce themselves, both are happy to recognize their companion but grieved that they have battled each other. They argue over who will declare himself the victor, each insisting upon giving the other the honor, until King Arthur joins them and decides the matter. He tells the elder sister that she will give her younger sister her rightful share of the inheritance or King Arthur will declare Yvain the victor. The elder sister agrees. Yvain and Sir Gawain properly greet each other amidst general joy at Yvain's return. The lion's approach inspires fear in the crowd but causes Sir Gawain to recognize Yvain as the Knight with the Lion. After healing, Yvain and the lion travel to the spring where they



cause a storm. Lunete advises Laudine to find a defender for the spring, recommending the Knight with the Lion. Lunete insists that he will agree if Laudine promises to do everything in her power to reconcile him with his lady. Laudine agrees, and Lunete brings Yvain to the castle. Laudine is irritated when Yvain reveals his identity, but she refuses to perjure herself. Laudine and Yvain are reconciled and live happily together henceforth.

## Perceval

Perceval is the son of the widow lady of Waste Forest. As he practices with his javelins one day, he hears five armed knights approaching. He has never seen a knight before and decides that he will go to King Arthur's court, from whence they came, to be knighted. His mother is distraught when he tells her of his intentions. She cannot dissuade him so she advises him to protect females and to take the advice of wise gentleman. As Perceval leaves, his mother faints. Perceval encounters a tent and enters, thinking it is a church. He frightens the sleeping damsel and insists upon kissing her and stealing her ring. Her lover returns and is furious; he believes that she was ravished and tells her that she will not change her clothes until he beheads her assaulter.

Perceval is directed to King Arthur by a knight in red armor. King Arthur is grieved because the knight stole his cup and spilled wine on Queen Guinevere. Kay tells Perceval to pursue the Red Knight if he covets his armor. As Perceval turns to leave, he greets a maiden who has not laughed in six years. She laughs and predicts that Perceval will be the supreme lord of the knights. Kay is enraged and slaps the maiden. Perceval leaves and commands the Red Knight to surrender his armor. The Red Knight is infuriated and charges the boy. Perceval kills the knight by throwing a javelin through his eye and brain. Yonet had followed Perceval so he helps the boy take the armor, and then Yonet goes to King Arthur to return his cup, relate the Red Knight's defeat and convey Perceval's message that he will avenge the maiden for the slap Kay gave her. King Arthur is furious at Kay for running the boy off and worries that he will never see Perceval again.

On his journey, Perceval meets a gentleman, Gornemant of Gohort, who teaches the boy how to use weapons and encourages him to show mercy when he defeats another knight. Perceval leaves to find his mother. He crosses the bridge to a castle and asks a beautiful maiden, Blancheflor, for lodgings. That night, he awakes to Blancheflor clinging to his neck and relating her misfortunes: a knight, Anguigueron, has killed or imprisoned most of her knights because his king Clamadeu lusts after Blancheflor. Tomorrow, she will surrender the castle, but she plans to kill herself first because she refuses to allow Clamadeu to possess her body. Perceval comforts Blancheflor and holds her as she sleeps. The next day, he declares that he will battle Anguigueron if she promises her love as the prize. Perceval defeats Anguigueron and sends him as a captive to King Arthur. Clamadeu arrives, distraught at Anguigueron's defeat, and battles Perceval. He too is defeated and sent as a prisoner to King Arthur. Perceval insists upon leaving to search for his mother but promises Blancheflor that he will return.



Perceval reaches an impassable river and is sent to the lodgings of a fisherman he encounters. At the fisherman's manor, he receives a rare sword as a gift. He is curious about a white lance that drips blood and a grail that is taken past him into another room, but he does not ask about them. The next morning, he searches for someone to ask but cannot find anyone. When he crosses the drawbridge, it is raised and he is locked out. He encounters a maiden mourning over the corpse of her knightly lover and tells her where he lodged the previous evening. She foretells great grief because of his failure to ask about the lance and grail at the Fisher King's castle. The maiden is Perceval's first cousin and tells him that his mother is dead from grief. Perceval leaves his cousin to bury her knight and almost immediately encounters a nearly naked girl on a lean palfrey. She recognizes him and warns him away. The Haughty Knight of the Heath appears and relates her disgrace: allowing a young Welshman to kiss her and steal her ring. Perceval admits that he is the young Welshman and battles the knight. Perceval defeats the Haughty Knight of the Heath and demands that he has the maiden bathed and healed before going to King Arthur's court where the knight must tell the ladies there of the disgrace he has forced upon the girl.

King Arthur decides to search for Perceval and sets up camp. His men see the boy but do not recognize him. Sagremour the Unruly and Kay are both defeated in battle when they attempt to force him to go to the king. Sir Gawain finally approaches and requests his company. They introduce themselves, and Sir Gawain realizes this is the boy they have been searching for. There is great joy in the camp until the third day when an ugly damsel arrives and condemns Perceval for not asking about the lance and grail, the inquiry of which would have healed the Fisher King's injuries. Perceval determines to find the Fisher King and ask about the mysterious objects. Perceval does not think about God for five years until he sees three knights and ten ladies doing penance on Good Friday. They direct him to a holy hermit who chides Perceval for killing his mother with grief. The hermit, as well as the Fisher King, is Perceval's uncle. Perceval is sentenced to the penance of going to church everyday before going anywhere else and begins his penance by spending two days with his hermit uncle.

## Sir Gawain

Sir Gawain is the nephew of King Arthur and appears in most of the romances included in this book. In "Cliges," he thinks he may beat the unknown knight at swordplay and battles Cliges, his nephew, so long that King Arthur stops them. In "The Knight of the Cart," he follows Kay and Queen Guinevere and attempts to rescue the queen from Meleagant. He journeys with Lancelot during this quest until they separate and Sir Gawain takes the Underwater Bridge. He realizes Meleagant's trickery when Lancelot has not returned to King Arthur's court as they were told. Sir Gawain offers to fight Meleagant in Lancelot's stead when Lancelot cannot be found and is thrilled when his companion returns. In "The Knight with the Lion," he befriends Lunete and begs Yvain to join King Arthur's knights in frequenting the tournaments. His adventure with Lancelot occurs during Yvain's wanderings which is why Yvain rescues his niece and nephews from Harpin of the Mountain. Sir Gawain agrees to be the champion of the older sister in an inheritance dispute and unwittingly battles Yvain. Once their identities are revealed,



Sir Gawain insists that Yvain is the victor as Yvain insists that Sir Gawain is the victor. When the lion approaches, Sir Gawain recognizes Yvain as the Knight with the Lion and thanks him for saving his niece and nephews.

The majority of Sir Gawain's actions occur in "The Story of the Grail." Sir Gawain approaches Perceval gently and convinces him to meet King Arthur. When the two introduce themselves, Sir Gawain recognizes Perceval as the man they have been searching for, and the two become friends. When a maiden tells King Arthur's knights of the many adventures, Sir Gawain offers to save a damsel besieged on a peak below Montesclere, but then Guinganbresil arrives and accuses Sir Gawain of treason. Sir Gawain follows Guinganbresil to the king of Escavalon to accept the challenge. On the way, he learns of a battle between Meliant de Liz and Tiebaut of Tintagel but does not enter in order to preserve himself to defend himself against the charge of treason. He changes his mind when the Maiden of the Small Sleeves, the younger sister of Meliant de Liz's lover, begs him to be her champion in the tournament. Sir Gawain wins great honor and pledges himself to the girl.

When Sir Gawain leaves that land, he hunts wild game and realizes that his horse needs to be reshod. He encounters a procession and a young knight sends him to his sister for lodging. Sir Gawain and the damsel fall in love and are caught kissing by a vavasour who chides the girl for loving her father's murderer. Sir Gawain and the damsel attempt to defend themselves against the peasants' invasion. Guinganbresil arrives and brings the king, who is the young knight that offered Sir Gawain lodging. The people desist and disperse. Since the king offered Gawain lodging, he cannot harm him and is advised to send Sir Gawain in search of the bleeding lance, to return in a year for the battle. Sir Gawain agrees after it has been clarified that he is expected to do his best to find the lance but will not be perjured or dishonored if he fails. Sir Gawain leaves and comes upon a shield hanging from an oak tree with a maiden lamenting over an injured knight beneath. He gently wakes the knight who warns him against battling the fierce knight in the woods. Sir Gawain continues after promising to return and care for the maiden if possible. He encounters a damsel gazing at herself in a mirror. She accuses Sir Gawain of dishonorable intentions but agrees to show him many adventures if he fetches her palfrey. Against the townspeople's warning, Sir Gawain retrieves the palfrey and sets off with the Haughty Maid of Logres who foretells grief for Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain finds a healing herb, returns to the injured knight and treats him. The injured knight desires confession, but while Sir Gawain is acquiring a horse for the knight, the knight recognizes Sir Gawain as someone he hates and steals Sir Gawain's horse as the Haughty Maid of Logres mocks Sir Gawain.

Sir Gawain and the maiden come to a river surrounding a fortress, and she boards a boat, encouraging Sir Gawain to join her to evade an approaching knight. Sir Gawain defeats the knight and takes his horse. A boatman arrives and demands the horse; Sir Gawain offers the captured knight instead. Sir Gawain asks about the Haughty Maid of Logres who has disappeared and is told that she is evil. He asks about the castle and is told that three queens live there, guarded by five hundred longbows and crossbows and only a knight who is pure of heart can enter. Sir Gawain decides to attempt the adventure despite the boatman's protests. Sir Gawain enters the castle, evades the



arrows, kills the lion and is greeted by a maiden who brings him a costly robe since he has been made the lord of the castle. He desires to hunt but is forbidden because legend says that the knight who saves them must never leave the manor. The eldest queen hears of Sir Gawain's discomfort and converses with him about King Arthur, King Lot, King Urien and Queen Guinevere, cheering him considerably. The boatman convinces the queen to allow Sir Gawain to find the Haughty Maid of Logres, and Sir Gawain begs her not to ask his name for seven days.

Sir Gawain encounters the maiden with a knight whom he battles and defeats. The maiden challenges him to cross the perilous ford which she says her knight did often for her. Sir Gawain lands in the water but swims to the other side where he finds a lone knight hunting. They greet one another and the knight, Guiromelant, tells Sir Gawain that the Haughty Maid of Logres was his sweetheart under duress. Guiromelant had killed the knight she loved and forced her to be his sweetheart until she ran away and befriended the knight that Sir Gawain recently captured. They swear to answer each other's questions truthfully. Sir Gawain learns that the oldest queen is King Arthur's mother, the middle-aged queen King Lot's wife and Sir Gawain's mother, and the youngest queen is Sir Gawain's sister and Guiromelant's sweetheart. He also learns the name of their castle is Champguin. Guiromelant hates Sir Gawain and threatens to kill him if he ever meets him. He boasts that his sweetheart prefers him to her brother and asks Sir Gawain to take a ring to her as a token of his love. Guiromelant asks the name of his new friend and is enraged when he learns it is Sir Gawain. He has left his armor at home but offers to postpone the battle for two days so that King Arthur can come and be a witness. Sir Gawain jumps over the perilous ford and returns to the Haughty Maid of Logres. She relates the same tale of her lover that Guiromelant told, apologizes and begs Sir Gawain to punish her, but he takes her to Champguin. Sir Gawain gives the ring to his sister and tells her of Guiromelant's boast but she denies indifference to her brother. The queens do not recognize Sir Gawain, and the two older queens hope for Sir Gawain to marry the maiden. Sir Gawain dispatches a squire to bring King Arthur to witness the battles between Guiromelant and Sir Gawain. The squire arrives at King Arthur's court where everyone laments that they have heard nothing of Sir Gawain.

## King Arthur

Although it would appear that King Arthur would have a key role in a novel entitled Arthurian Romances, such is not the case. He appears in every story but in a minor role. In "Erec and Enide," he decides to revive the tradition of hunting the white stag and bestows the traditional kiss upon Enide when she returns with Erec. He also crowns Erec when Erec's father dies. In "Cliges," he travels to Brittany, accompanied by Alexander, Queen Guinevere and Soredamours. He knights Alexander when news of Count Angres' rebellion reaches him. King Arthur and his troops battle the count, but it is Alexander who defeats Count Angres. For this, King Arthur gives him a cup and offers him anything in his kingdom except the crown or Queen Guinevere. He is happy when Cliges arrives in England and sad to see him go. When Alis pursues Cliges and Fenice, he offers his aid. In the "Knight of the Cart," King Arthur agrees to allow Kay to defend





Queen Guinevere against Meleagant. He is overjoyed when the queen is returned and happy when Lancelot returns as well.

In the "Knight with the Lion," King Arthur hears of the stormy spring and decides to visit it. When he and his legions arrive, he chides Kay for slandering Yvain, but he allows Kay to battle the defending knight. When King Arthur learns the knight is Yvain, they feast at Laudine's castle. Two sisters dispute over their father's inheritance, and the older sister acquires Sir Gawain as her champion in the matter. King Arthur allows the younger sister time to find a knight to battle on her behalf. He insists the older sister give the younger time to find a knight and attempts reconciling the two. After it is revealed that the younger sister's champion is Yvain, King Arthur insists that the older sister give the younger sister her fair share. In "The Story of the Grail," King Arthur is impressed when Perceval defeats the Red Knight and rebukes Kay for instigating the boy's removal. He worries that he will never see the boy again. After many defeated knights arrive at King Arthur's court relating their defeat by Perceval, King Arthur searches for the boy. He finds Perceval and rebukes Kay's insults. King Arthur is pleased with Perceval and asks the boy to remain at court. The end of the tale breaks off as a messenger from Sir Gawain arrives at court to request King Arthur's attendance at a battle between Sir Gawain and Guiromelant.

## Queen Guinevere

Queen Guinevere has little action in these stories but is mentioned often. In "Erec and Enide," she is riding behind the hunt for the white stag with Erec and her maiden when she sees a knight and desires to know who he is. The knight's dwarf whips the queen's maiden and Erec, causing Erec to pursue the knight to avenge himself and Queen Guinevere. In "Cliges," Queen Guinevere travels to Brittany with King Arthur, Alexander and Soredamours. She notices their flushes on the journey but blames it on the heat. She gives Alexander a shirt stitched in part with Soredamours' hair and later tells Alexander the story as the thread fades and the hair remains brilliant. After Alexander defeats Count Angres, Queen Guinevere addresses him and Soredamours about their love and offers to facilitate their marriage.

In the "Knight of the Cart," Queen Guinevere is kidnapped by Meleagant when Kay is unable to defend her. Lancelot and Sir Gawain follow to rescue her and Lancelot eventually defeats Meleagant. Queen Guinevere refuses to talk to Lancelot because of the dishonor of riding in a cart. When Lancelot searches for Sir Gawain and a rumor reaches the queen that he is dead, she laments her anger. Lancelot returns and Queen Guinevere is much kinder to him; they make love all night long. The next day, Meleagant accuses Queen Guinevere of making love to Kay and she calls Lancelot as her champion. When Lancelot appears at the tournament, she recognizes him by his absolute adherence to her instructions. She expresses great joy when Lancelot finally escapes Meleagant's prison and returns to King Arthur's lands. In the "Knight with the Lion," she overhears Calogrenant's story about the stormy spring and relates the tale to King Arthur.





# Objects/Places

## White Stag

Hunting the white stag is a tradition that King Arthur decides to revive in "Erec and Enide" against Sir Gawain's advice. The tradition states that the killer of the white stag must bestow a kiss on the most beautiful maiden at court. King Arthur kills the white stag and bestows the kiss on Enide.

## Joy of the Court

The Joy of the Court is an adventure that Erec undertakes. Maboagrain is imprisoned within the garden at Brandigan Castle because of his promise to his beloved to stay there until a knight arrives who beats him. This is her method of keeping him from attending tournaments. In order to release Maboagrain, Erec must blow a horn announcing Maboagrain's defeat.

## Brandigan Castle

Brandigan Castle is the town where the Joy of the Court occurs. King Guivret the Short mentions the adventure to Erec as they pass.

## Greece

Greece is Alexander's homeland where he eventually returns to rule in practice while his brother, Alis, rules in name. It is also where Cliges assumes the throne. Much of "Cliges" takes place in Greece.

## England

England is the locale of most of these stories. King Arthur rules England.

## Southampton

Alexander lands in Southampton when he arrives in England.

## Winchester

Winchester is one of King Arthur's castles. When he lands in England, Alexander travels to Winchester where King Arthur is currently holding court. This is also where Count



Angres situates himself when he attempts to usurp King Arthur's lands since it is strongly fortified.

## London

London is one of King Arthur's homes. It is the city from which Count Angres announces his intent to usurp King Arthur's lands. When King Arthur gathers an army in Brittany and returns to England, the count takes London's provisions and flees to Winchester, leaving the London citizens impoverished.

## Brittany

King Arthur also rules over Brittany. King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Alexander and Soredamours are visiting in Brittany when they receive news of Count Angres' intentions to take over King Arthur's lands.

## Alexander's shirt

Queen Guinevere gives Alexander a shirt when he is knighted. The shirt is stitched partially with Soredamours' golden hair because the maiden wants to know if anyone can tell the difference between her hair and the thread. The thread fades but her hair remains brilliant. Alexander is pleased when he learns of this secret.

## Windsor

Windsor is King Arthur's castle where the marriage ceremony between Alexander and Soredamours takes place.

## Potion for Alis

Thessala gives Alis a potion to make him think that he has possessed Fenice while he is dreaming because Fenice loves Cliges and refuses to prostitute her body where she cannot give her heart. The potion works and Alis believes he has possessed Fenice's body though he admits to John his realization that he has not when Cliges and Fenice's affair is discovered.

## Germany

Fenice is from Germany; her father is the German emperor. Alis and the Greeks travel to Germany to escort Fenice back to Greece.



## Cliges' armor changes

When Cliges travels to England to achieve glory in King Arthur's court, he attends a tournament where he shows off his prowess; however, he changes his armor daily so that none of the conquered knights can find him in the evening. He wears black the first day, green the second day, red the third day and white the fourth day. On the third evening, the knights realize that it is the same knight. After Cliges battles Sir Gawain and goes to see King Arthur at court, the conquered knights present themselves to Cliges, but he releases them all.

## John's house

John is Cliges' serf whom Cliges solicits to assist in hiding Fenice. John directs him to a house that he has built wherein is contained many secret rooms that no one except John knows about. Cliges agrees that this is a good hiding place for Fenice, and she lives there for over a year. John also builds an outdoor room for Fenice, and it is in this room that Cliges and Fenice are discovered.

## Fenice's illness

Fenice fakes an illness in order to escape Alis and be with Cliges. Thessala assists by procuring the urine from a woman who is mortally ill. Thessala then provides a potion that makes it appear as though Fenice were dead.

## Underwater Bridge

The Underwater Bridge is one of two passages to Meleagant's and King Bademagu's lands. Sir Gawain opts to use this route.

## Sword Bridge

The Sword Bridge is one of two passages to Meleagant and King Bademagu's lands. Since Sir Gawain chooses to take the Underwater Bridge, Lancelot travels by this route.

## Cemetery

On his way to rescue Queen Guinevere, Lancelot comes to a church where he prays and asks the monk what is behind the wall. The monk takes Lancelot to see the cemetery where there are tombstone with many living knights' names on them. There is a huge tomb with a slab that is too heavy to be lifted by seven men, but Lancelot lifts it and asks the meaning. The monk tells him that the man who lifts the slab will free all the foreign prisoners.



## Stone Passage

Lancelot must pass through the Stone Passage on his way to King Bademagu's lands. The guards at the passage forbid him to pass, but when he does not heed their warning, they do not try to harm him, and Lancelot passes unchallenged.

## Meleagant's accusations

After Lancelot defeats Meleagant and claims the queen, Lancelot and Queen Guinevere enjoy each other's love during the night; however, Lancelot injures his hands bending the bars to enter her room and leaves blood on her sheets. When Meleagant sees the blood the next morning, he accuses Kay of sleeping with the queen since Kay is also injured. Kay is too weak to avenge the insult so Queen Guinevere sends for Lancelot to avenge her.

## Inlet Tower

Meleagant imprisons Lancelot in a tower on an inlet to prevent him from meeting Meleagant at King Arthur's court for their appointed battle. Meleagant's sister, a maiden whom Lancelot had previously given the head of a knight she hated, rescues Lancelot from the tower.

## Carlisle

Carlisle is the location of King Arthur's court in Wales where Yvain and the other knights are at the beginning of "The Knight with the Lion." This is where Yvain first hears of the magical spring that causes storms, and determines to avenge his cousin, Calogrenant.

## Lunete's ring

Lunete gives Yvain a ring when she finds him to prevent the townspeople from seeing him, since they want to avenge the death of the guardian of the spring. She does this for Yvain because she once attended King Arthur's court and Yvain was the only knight who was courteous to her.

## Yvain's oath

Yvain desires to attend tournaments with Sir Gawain and the other knights. Before Laudine will agree, she makes him promise that he will return in one year or less. Yvain does not keep his promise, forfeiting Laudine's love.



## Dire Adventure

Dire Adventure is a town that is ruled by two demons who imprison maidens from the Isle of Maidens. Yvain and his lion defeat the demons and free the people of the town from their hellish oppressors.

## Waste Forest

Waste Forest is where Perceval grows up with his mother who is the Widow of Waste Forest.

## Red Armor

Perceval travels to King Arthur's court to demand that the king knight him. He covets the armor of the Red Knight that he sees outside the king's gates. Perceval addresses the king, requesting the red armor and Kay mocks the boy, telling him to retrieve it himself. Perceval accepts the challenge, pierces the Red Knight through the eye and brain with a lance, and dons the red armor.

## Bleeding Lance

Perceval sees a white lance dripping blood when he stays at the Fisher King's house, but he fails to ask the secret of the lance. Later, he learns that it is the lance that pierced Christ's side.

## Grail

Perceval sees the grail at the Fisher King's house, but he fails to ask about the mystery of who drinks from the grail. He is later told that his tongue was held by his sin in causing his mother to grieve to death. His hermit uncle tells him that the Fisher King's father is the one who drinks from the grail. Since the Fisher King is Perceval's uncle, the one who drinks from the grail is Perceval's grandfather.

## Champguin

Champguin is a castle that is protected from entrance by any knight, except one who is pure of heart. Sir Gawain is able to enter the castle after dodging five hundred arrows from longbows and crossbows and defeating a lion. Legend says that the savior knight cannot leave, but Sir Gawain convinces the queen to allow him to leave to attend to the Haughty Maid of Logres. Champguin is the home of three queens: King Arthur's mother, Sir Gawain's mother and Sir Gawain's sister.

## Camelot

Camelot is the location of King Arthur's court where "The Knight of the Cart" begins. This is one of the first mentions of Camelot, which becomes the most recognized of King Arthur's seats of control.





# Themes

## Protection of Maidens and Ladies

The protection of maidens is an important theme in "Arthurian Romances" as it was an important part of the knight's code of chivalry and honor. Since medieval times saw women as innocent and weak, it was the duty of any honorable man, especially a knight, to preserve that innocence and provide them with protection. Each story in this collection demonstrates this theme at least once.

In "Erec and Enide," the reason Erec sets off after the rude knight during the hunt for the white stag is because the knight disrespects Queen Guinevere and her maiden. Later, during his travels with Enide, he saves Cadoc of Cabruel because of the maiden's tears. When he undergoes the Joy of the Court, he approaches the grieving maiden in the garden to comfort her. In "Cliges," Cliges rescues Fenice from the Duke of Saxony when she is kidnapped. In "The Knight of the Cart," Lancelot and Sir Gawain travel to Gorre to rescue Queen Guinevere. Throughout his adventures, Lancelot assists several girls that he encounters; he rescues his hostess from the rape of a knight and later protects her from the knight who loves her and wants to kidnap her. Lancelot shows his reverence for Queen Guinevere by agreeing to all of her requests, ceasing battle with Meleagant as well as obeying her commands at the tournament to "do your worst" or "do your best." In "The Knight with the Lion," there is a reversal of the role when Lunete saves Yvain, but it is her means of recompense for his kindness to her when she was at King Arthur's court. Yvain marries Laudine and promises to protect her storming spring. He saves Sir Gawain's niece from Harpin of the Mountain and releases the captive maidens from the Isle of the Maidens when he defeats the demon brothers. Yvain and Sir Gawain both defend the daughters of the Lord of Blackthorn in their combat to decide their inheritance.

In "The Story of the Grail," Perceval's mother advises him to help maidens and ladies whenever possible. King Arthur's lamentations concerning the Red Knight stealing his cup are more concerned with the disrespect of the wine spilling on Queen Guinevere's dress than with his stolen cup. Perceval swears to avenge the laughing maiden after Kay slaps her for predicting Perceval's greatness. Perceval saves Blancheflor from Anguigueron and Clamadeu, and when he meets his first cousin, he offers her the protection of his escort. He also encounters the maiden in the holey dress whose misfortunes are the result of his earlier actions, and he defeats her knight and causes him to make recompense to her. Sir Gawain agrees to enter the tournament between Meliant de Liz and Tiebaut of Tintagel when the Maiden with the Small Sleeves asks him to be her champion despite his former resolution to avoid the danger of injury. His horse is stolen by a knight who hates Sir Gawain for punishing him for taking a maiden by force. Despite her haughtiness, Sir Gawain protects the Haughty Maiden of Logres, refusing to punish her for her malice and even taking her to Champguin with him after she admits her faults. Sir Gawain also saves the ladies and maidens of Champguin by his ability to enter the enchanted castle.



## Pride

Confidence is a great thing for a knight to possess; pride is a fault that generally does not go without punishment, at least in Chretien de Troyes' "Arthurian Romances." Each of the five stories has several instances of pride that results in sorrow for the proud. In "Erec and Enide," Yder, the knight Erec pursues for offending the queen, shows immense pride by allowing his dwarf to whip Queen Guinevere's maiden and Erec. This pride leads Erec to follow him, causing his defeat and the deflation of his pride. Erec's pride when Enide mentions the gossip concerning his retirement from battles and tournaments spurs him to take a journey with her that causes him much physical pain and her much emotional pain. He also shows pride by his refusal to allow her to talk, even to warn him of pending danger, because he feels that she should trust that he is a good enough knight to overcome any danger. When Erec, without being recognized, refuses to return with Kay to King Arthur's camp to meet the king and queen, Kay challenges Erec, showing his pride, and is defeated.

In "Cliges," Alexander refuses to be knighted at home in Greece because of the ability to gain greater renown away from home. Alis shows pride in his refusal to relinquish the title of emperor to his elder brother, the rightful emperor. Cliges shows pride in his armor changes because once he has defeated a knight, they will not challenge him a second time, but without knowing who he is, they may challenge him several times. Alis dies of injured pride, in his grief at being unable to avenge himself against Cliges and Fenice. In "The Knight of the Cart," Kay demonstrates pride in his request to accept Meleagant's challenge. Lancelot shows pride when he attempts to lift the slab on the tomb that he has already been told is too heavy for seven men; however, this pride is well-founded since he actually lifts the tomb. Lancelot also shows pride when he refuses to allow time for his body to heal from the injuries sustained at the Sword Bridge before battling Meleagant. At the time same, Meleagant is proud enough to declare that he is an equal or better knight than Lancelot. Queen Guinevere shows pride when she is angry with Lancelot for riding in a cart despite his doing so to rescue her. Lancelot's desire to leave his prison to participate in a tournament shows his pride and desire for fame. Meleagant shows false pride in his boast that Lancelot is scared of him since he has imprisoned the better knight.

In "The Knight with the Lion," Calogrenants shows his pride by his shame at his defeat, while Yvain shows pride in his promise to avenge his cousin. When Yvain desires to leave Laudine for tournaments and glory, he again shows pride in his fame and prowess without regard for his love, leading to the loss of his love. The Lord of Blackthorn's oldest daughter demonstrates malicious pride in her refusal to grant her younger sister a rightful share of their inheritance. In "The Story of the Grail," Perceval demands that King Arthur make him a knight, displaying the pride of assuming that he is worthy of the title. He then fights the Red Knight for his armor, showing his pride in his belief that he could defeat the renowned knight. Kay's pride is displayed in his mockery of Perceval, his striking the laughing maiden and his repeated anger at Perceval's threats to avenge the maiden; the result of this is Perceval defeating Kay at battle and breaking his right



arm. Sir Gawain travels far to answer the charge of treason due to his pride in his reputation and his desire not to allow such a charge to sully it.

## Mistaken Identities

Many times throughout "Arthurian Romances," identities are mistaken, causing turmoil and chaos. In "Erec and Enide," Kay does not recognize Erec and attacks him. Later, after pledging friendship and aid, Guivret the Short does the same. In "Cliges," Alexander disguises himself as the enemy in order to penetrate Winchester and defeat Count Angres; in a parallel situation, his son, Cliges, disguises himself as an enemy knight in order to penetrate the Duke of Saxony's camp and lead his side to the battle. In "The Knight of the Cart," Meleagant accuses Kay and Queen Guinevere of carnal acts, but it was actually Lancelot and Queen Guinevere who participated in those actions. Also, Lancelot goes to the tournament and hides his identity so no one knows who he is. In "The Knight with the Lion," Yvain battles Kay at the storming spring without Kay knowing that Yvain is the new defender of the spring. Sir Gawain and Yvain both agree to champion the daughters of the Lord of Blackthorn, resulting in the two friends battling one another for a long time until they realize their equality, cease fighting and introduce themselves. Lunete manages to trick Laudine into promising to reconcile the Knight with the Lion to his lady without knowing that the knight is Yvain and she is the lady.

In "The Story of the Grail," the maiden in the tent believes that Perceval intends to assault her but it is not so; he is just terribly naive. Sagremour and Kay both battle Perceval since they do not recognize him, though they are searching for him. Perceval and Sir Gawain become acquainted without knowing the other's name. The knight who sent Sir Gawain to his sister, offering hospitality and protection, turns out to be the king of Escavalon who hates Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain and the king of Escavalon's sister fall in love before learning that they are enemies. Perceval journeys to see a holy hermit that he has heard praised, only to learn it is his uncle. Sir Gawain's horse is stolen by an injured knight he tries to help when the knight recognizes Sir Gawain as someone who once punished him for a heinous crime. Sir Gawain rescues the ladies of Champguin before learning they are his family; his mother and grandmother also hope for his marriage to his sister, not knowing that their savior is Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain and Guiromelant swear to answer each other's questions and have a nice conversation until Guiromelant asks Sir Gawain's name and reveals that he wants to kill him; then, they plan to battle in two days with King Arthur as a witness.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in "Arthurian Romances" is third person. This point of view is omniscient and reliable, as the narrator can report not only the actions but the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters in the collection. This point of view allows the reader to anticipate much of the action that occurs because of having access to the emotions, thoughts and beliefs of the characters. The narrator's input also often alludes to the tone of pending events. By stating, for example, that Sir Gawain did not realize his danger allows the reader to infer that an adventure is approaching. This point of view provides the reader with more information than the individual characters have.

The story contains much exposition describing the landscape, the armor, the persons and people's reactions while providing comparatively little dialogue. There are many instances of dialogue that appear that are not formulated as such; the gist of the conversation is provided by the narrator without giving the actual words of the characters. This is useful since little of the novel occurs in the same place as the characters are constantly moving about the country. This amount of exposition allows the reader to visualize the differences between certain lands which contribute to the tone and the adventures that occur in different locales.

## Setting

The setting of this novel varies from story to story, and from page to page. It is set in the middle ages during the time of the legendary King Arthur. The majority of the action takes place in England, usually at King Arthur's court, in the woods or at a tournament. There is much travel and many new places that each knight encounters. They lodge in different castles and manors and encounter different obstacles including natural objects such as streams, fords and mountains, and man-made obstacles such as prisons, towers and weaponry.

"Erec and Enide" has action that occurs at King Arthur's court, in Enide's hometown, Erec's land of Carnant and then about the countryside as he tests her loyalty, until they return to King Arthur's court. "Cliges" begins in Greece where the young Alexander begs to travel to England. He goes to England, Brittany, and then returns to England where he stays until his father dies and he returns to Greece. After Alexander's death, his son, Cliges, leaves Greece to accompany his uncle to Germany; from there, he travels to England to see King Arthur and Sir Gawain before returning to Greece. He makes a quick visit to England when Alis pursues him and Fenice, but quickly he is summoned back to Greece to rule after his uncle's death. "The Knight of the Cart" begins at Camelot, journeys to Gorre and then alternates between the two lands until finally ending at Camelot.



"The Knight with the Lion" begins at King Arthur's court, goes to the storming spring and Laudine's nearby town, follows Yvain to the tournaments, and then continues to the woods in his madness. It then follows him back to the spring where he finds Lunete imprisoned, to the town that Harpin of the Mountain molests, and then to Laudine's town to rescue Lunete. Yvain then makes his way to a porter's manor to heal from his wounds before battling two demons in the town of Dire Adventure. He returns to King Arthur's court for a battle before journeying to the stormy spring where Lunete finds him and initiates a reconciliation with Laudine in her town. "The Story of the Grail" opens in the Waste Forest, travels to King Arthur's court and then around the countryside as Perceval seeks fame. Eventually, Perceval reunites with King Arthur at camp, from whence he journeys until he comes to his hermit uncle's abode. Meanwhile, Sir Gawain travels to Escavalon and from then to the Haughty Maiden of Logres' castle and Champguin. The end of the collection ends at King Arthur's camp, mid-sentence, as a squire sent by Sir Gawain arrives to summon the king and his knights to attend a battle at Champguin.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is generally easy to read and understand. It has been translated from medieval French which eases the understanding as well. Nonetheless, there are some unfamiliar words that present themselves. Most of the words that are unfamiliar are so because of period differences. The majority of modern society is not familiar with many words relating to armor or livestock, but these words are common in the book since the time period relished these activities.

Much of the novel is concerned with describing the armor that individual knights wear and the locations to which they travel. Their chivalrous actions are described. The language that the narrator uses often sets the tone of the passage, allowing the reader to suspect good or harm approaching. Also, the language that individual characters use denotes their valor and honor. Overall, the language is easy to understand and contributes greatly to the effect of the novel on the reader; however, it would be much more difficult to read in its original language. Unfortunately, translations lose some of the devices of the original, so it would probably be much more enjoyable in the original.

## Structure

This novel is comprised of five stories; the first four stories are about between eighty and eighty-five pages long while the last story, which is incomplete, is one hundred and fifteen pages long. Each story is named after the person that the majority of the tale is concerned with, the exception being "The Story of the Grail" which is nonetheless subtitled "Perceval." The stories are quite long and full of many adventures and fights which tend to be somewhat repetitive but generally amusing anyway. Chretien de Troyes begins each story with an invocation to God or a dedication to some renown person, such as Marie de Champagne in "The Knight of the Cart" and Count Philip of Flanders in "The Story of the Grail." The stories are not necessarily chronological as



some of the events appear to occur simultaneously, such as in the case of "The Knight of the Cart" and "The Knight with the Lion." In these two stories, there are contradictions and direct references to the events of the other that make it likely that these two stories were composed simultaneously.

The plot of each story is fairly simple with few, if any, subplots. Once again, the exception to this is "The Story of the Grail" which has two plots, one following Perceval, another following Sir Gawain. Some characters reappear in each tale, such as King Arthur, Queen Guinevere and Sir Gawain, to lesser or greater degrees. The stories also often refer to the heroes of the other stories in a vague manner, such as the mention of Lancelot in "The Knight with the Lion: Yvain." Each story tends to follow the adventures and misfortunes of one or two main characters. In "Erec and Enide," it follows the title characters; in "Cliges," it follows Alexander and Cliges. "The Knight of the Cart" follows Lancelot chiefly, but also Queen Guinevere and, to a lesser extent, Sir Gawain. "The Knight with the Lion" portrays Yvain's adventures while "The Story of the Grail" begins with Perceval's adventures but then alternates between those and Sir Gawain's adventures.

The pace of the novel is generally rather quick with much action packed into each story. There is a lot of description, but it is done in such a way as to avoid boredom. The dialogue is often entertaining and quick-witted. The novel is easy to read and amusing, when one considers the popularity of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The story does not contain much past action, mainly relating the present action that occurs. It is a thoroughly enjoyable novel.





## Quotes

"The peasant in his proverb says that one might find oneself holding in contempt something that is worth much more than one believes; therefore a man does well to make good use of his learning according to whatever understanding he has, for he who neglects his learning may easily keep silent something that would later give much pleasure." Erec and Enide, p. 37.

"Wretch, unhappy me! Why did I come here from my land? The earth should truly swallow me up, since the very best of knights—the boldest and the bravest, the most loyal, the most courteous that was ever count or king—has completely abandoned all chivalry because of me. Now have I truly shamed him; I should not have wished it for anything!" Enide, Erec and Enide, p. 68.

"Woe to you, who decided to disobey my orders and do what I forbade you to! And yet I knew very well that you had little esteem for me. Your kindness has been wasted, for I am in no way grateful to you; in fact, you may be certain that I hate you for it. I have told you this already and I tell you again. I shall forgive you this time, but take care next time and do not even look in my direction, for it would be a very foolish act: I do not like your words." Erec, Erec and Enide, p. 74.

"My sweet love, I have tested you in every way. Don't be dismayed any more, for now I love you more than ever I did, and I am once more certain and convinced that you love me completely. Now I want to be henceforth just as I was before, entirely at your command; and if your words offended me, I fully pardon and forgive you for both the deed and the word." Erec, Erec and Enide, p. 97.

"The book containing the true story is very old, therefore it is all the more worthy of belief. Through the books we have, we learn of the deeds of ancient peoples and of bygone days. Our books have taught us that chivalry and learning first flourished in Greece; then to Rome came chivalry and the sum of knowledge, which now has come to France. May God grant that they be maintained here and may He be pleased enough with this land that the glory now in France may never leave. God merely lent it to the others: no one speaks any more of the Greeks or Romans; their fame has grown silent and their glowing ember has gone out." Chretien de Troyes, Cliges, p. 123.

"Many high-born men through indolence have forfeited the great fame they might have



had, had they set off through the world. Idleness and glory do not go well together, it seems to me; a noble man who sits and waits gains nothing. Valor burdens a coward, while cowardice weighs down the brave; thus they are contrary and opposed. He who spends all his time amassing wealth is a slave to it." Alexander, Cliges, p. 125.

"[Soredamours] had never heard tell of any man, however handsome or brave or mighty or noble, whom she would deign to love. Yet in spite of this the maiden was so comely and attractive that she should have learned Love's lessons, had she been pleased to hear them. But she refused to pay them any mind. Now Love would cause her suffering and try to take revenge for the haughtiness and scorn she had always shown towards him. Love aimed well when he shot his arrow into her heart. Frequently she grew pale and often broke into a sweat; in spite of herself, she had to love. Only with great difficulty could she avoid looking at Alexander; but she had to be constantly on her guard against her brother, my lord Gawain. She paid dearly for her great haughtiness and scorn. Love has heated her a bath that greatly burns and scalds her. One moment she likes it, and the next it hurts; one moment she wants it, and the next she refuses." Cliges, p. 128.

"Alexander, when it hurts and destroys its follower, Love is worse than Hatred. Lovers do not realize what they are doing when they conceal their feelings from one another. It is not easy to love, and if you do not boldly build a strong foundation, you cannot hope to build successfully upon it. They say that the most difficult part is crossing the threshold. I wish to teach you about love, for I am quite aware that love is driving you crazy. This is why I have decided to instruct you, so be careful to hide nothing from me, since it is evident on both your faces that your two hearts have joined as one. Hide nothing from me! You are both behaving very foolishly in not revealing your thoughts, for by concealing them you will each be the death of the other, and murderers of Love. Now I urge you not to seek to dominate one another, nor merely to satisfy your desires, but rather join together honorably in marriage. In this way, it seems to me, your love will long endure. I declare and assure you that, if you are willing, I shall arrange the marriage." Queen Guinevere, Cliges, p. 150.

"I shall not argue on behalf of those who claim two hearts may be united in a single body, for it is not true or plausible that two hearts can be in one body; and even if they could join there, it could never seem true. But if it pleases you to listen, I can explain to you how two hearts can be as one without ever coming together. They are only one in so far as each one's desire flows into the other; they each desire the same thing and, in as much as they have this common desire, there are those who say that each of them has both hearts. But one heart is not in two places. Their desire can easily be shared, but each still has their own heart, just as many different men can sing a song or melody in unison. By this analogy I have proven to you that one person does not have two



hearts simply by knowing another's desire, nor because the one knows what the other likes or dislikes. A body cannot have more than one heart, any more so than voices that join together seem to be but one yet cannot come from the same person." Cliges, p. 157.

"I shall tell you: I will not run off with you like that, for then everyone would speak of us after we had left as they do of Isolde the Blonde and Tristan, and men and women everywhere would condemn our passion. No one would ever believe what really happened, nor should they. Who would believe that while still a maid I stole away and escaped from your uncle? I would be considered shameless and loose, and you would be taken for a fool. It is best to keep and observe the advice of Saint Paul: if you cannot remain pure, Saint Paul teaches you to conduct yourself with discretion, so that no one can criticize, blame, or reproach you. It is best to silence an evil tongue, and, if you've no objection, I believe I know a way to do so." Fenice, Cliges, p. 188.

"Ah, Death, how cruel you are to spare and relieve the base and lowly! You let them survive and live on. Were you mad or drunk, Death, to kill my sweetheart but not me? I cannot believe what I see; my sweetheart dead and me alive. Ah, my sweet love, why does your lover live on when he can see you dead? People would be right to claim, since you died serving me, that it was I who murdered and killed you. Sweetheart, then I am the death that murdered you—is this not wrong?—for I have taken my life from you and kept yours with me. Did your health and life not belong to me, sweet friend? And was mine not yours? For I loved no other except you, and the two of us were as one. Now I have done what I must, for I keep your soul in my body, though mine has gone from yours; but the two of them, wherever they are, should keep one another company, and nothing should hold them apart." Cliges, Cliges, p. 199.

"Gawain saw that the ground had been much trampled by many horses and strewn with many fragments of shields and lances. There were clear signs that a pitched battle had been waged there between many knights; Gawain was bitterly disappointed not to have been present." The Knight of the Cart, p. 211.

"No, it is right he should, for won't the news of his disgrace in the cart be known to all? He certainly should want to be killed, for he's better off dead than living. Henceforth his life is shamed, scorned, and wretched." Girl, The Knight of the Cart, p. 214.

"Now the victorious knight hesitated and reflected upon his decision: should he give the head to this girl who asked him to cut it off, or should he be touched by compassion for the defeated knight? He wishes to content them both: Generosity and Compassion demand that he satisfy them both, for he is both generous and merciful. Yet if the girl carries off the head, Compassion will have been vanquished and put to death, and if she must leave without it, Generosity will have been routed. Compassion and Generosity hold him doubly imprisoned, with each in turn spurring him on and causing him anguish. One wants him to give the head to the girl who asked for it; the other urges pity and kindness. But since the knight has begged for mercy, should he not have it?"



Indeed he must, for no matter how much our knight hates another, he has never refused one application for mercy—though only one—when a knight has been defeated and forced to plead with him for his life. So he will not refuse mercy to this knight who now begs and implores him, since this is his practice. Yet will she who desires the head not have it? She will, if he can arrange it." *The Knight of the Cart*, p. 242.

"You are a fool to be concerned. By the faith I owe Saint Peter, I'll not listen to your advice in this affair. Indeed, I'd deserve to be torn apart by horses if I did as you suggest. If he is seeking his honor, so do I seek mine; if he is seeking his renown, so do I seek mine; if he is eager for battle, I am a hundred times more so!" *Meleagant, The Knight of the Cart*, p. 250.

"It is the truth that a good heart is humble, but the fool and the braggart will never be rid of their folly." *King Bademagu, The Knight of the Cart*, p. 285.

"Some told of past adventures, others spoke of love: of the anguish and sorrows, but also of the great blessings often enjoyed by the disciples of its order, which in those days was sweet and flourishing. But today very few serve love: nearly everyone has abandoned it; and love is greatly abased, because those who loved in bygone days were known to be courtly and valiant and generous and honorable. Now love is reduced to empty pleasantries, since those who know nothing about it claim that they love, but they lie, and those who boast of loving and have no right to do so make a lie and a mockery of it." *Chretien de Troyes, The Knight with the Lion*, p. 295.

"But New Love has sweetened him with her sugar and honeycomb, and has made a foray into his lands where she has captured her prey: Yvain's enemy has led away his heart, and he loves the creature who most hates him. The lady, although she does not know it, has fully avenged the death of her husband: she has taken greater vengeance than she could ever have thought possible had Love herself not avenged her by striking Yvain such a gentle blow through the eyes into the heart. The effects of this blow are more enduring than those from lance or sword: a sword blow is healed and cured as soon as a doctor sees to it; but the wound of Love grows worse when it is nearest to its doctor." *The Knight with the Lion*, p. 311.

"Lady Love has removed herself from all those diverse places where her concerns were scattered: she wants no host of lodging except him, and indeed she behaves nobly by withdrawing from base places in order to give herself entirely to him. I don't believe that even a small hint of love remained elsewhere: she had ransacked all those lowly lodgings. It's a great shame that Love behaves like that and acts so badly by accepting lodging in the lowliest place she can find just as willingly as she would in the best. Now, however, she is housed well; here she will be held in honor and here it is good for her to stay. This is the way Love should behave, being such a noble thing; it's a wonder she dared shame herself by descending to such base places. She behaves like someone who pours out her balm on the ashes and dust, who hates honor and loves baseness, who mingles soot with honey, and mixes sugar with gall. But this time Love has not



done so: she has taken lodging in freehold land, for which no one can reproach her." *The Knight with the Lion*, p. 312.

"Those who were to fight did not recognize each other at all, though they had always loved one another. And did they not love one another now? Yes, I answer you, and no. And I'll prove that each reply is correct. My lord Gawain truly loves Yvain and calls him his companion; and Yvain loves him, wherever he might be. Even here, if he recognized him, he would rejoice at once to see him and would give his head for Gawain, and Gawain his for Yvain, before he would let any harm befall him. Is this not true and total love? Indeed, yes! And the hatred, it is not fully in evidence? Yes, for it is certainly clear that each would like to cut off the other's head, or at least shame him enough to destroy his reputation. By my word, it is truly a miracle that love and mortal hatred can be found so close together! Heavens! How can two such contrary things dwell together in the same lodging? It doesn't seem to me that they could live together, for one could not stay a single evening in the same place as the other without there being a quarrel and fuss, as soon as one knew the other was there. Yet in a single building there are difference sections, for there are public rooms and private chambers; this must surely be the case here. Perhaps Love is locked within some secret inner nook, and Hatred is on the balcony above the street, because she wants the folk to notice her. Now Hatred is in the saddle, for she spurs and charges and tramples over Love as hard as she can, while Love does not stir." *The Knight with the Lion*, p. 370.

"So help me God Almighty, you've caught me neatly in your trap! In spite of myself you will make me love a man who doesn't love or respect me. What a fine thing you've done! What a great way to serve me! I'd rather have put up with the storms and high winds all my life; and if it were not such an ugly and wicked thing to break one's oath, this knight would find no peace with me no matter what his efforts. Every day of my life I would have harbored, as fire smolders under the ashes, a pain it is no longer fitting to mention, since I must be reconciled to him." *Laudine, The Knight with the Lion*, p. 379.

"He who sows sparingly, reaps sparingly, but he who wishes to reap plentifully casts his seed on ground that will bear him fruit a hundredfold; for good seed withers and dies in worthless soil. Chretien sows and casts the seed of a romance that he is beginning, and sows it in such a good place that it cannot fail to be bountiful, since he does it for the most worthy man in all the empire of Rome: that is, Count Philip of Flanders, who surpasses Alexander, whom they say was so great." *Chretien de Troyes, The Story of the Grail*, p. 381.

"As the boy turned to leave, he saw a maiden, fair and noble, whom he greeted. She returned his greeting with a laugh, and as she laughed she said to him: 'Young man, if you live long enough, I think and believe in my heart that in this whole world there will never be, nor will anyone ever acknowledge, a better knight than yourself. This I think and feel and believe.' The maiden had not laughed in six full years or more, yet she said this so loudly that everyone heard her." *The Story of the Grail*, p. 394.

"[Blancheflor] pretended to discourage him by her words, though in fact she wished him to fight; but it often happens that one hides one's true desires when one sees someone



who is keen to enact them, in order to increase his desire to fulfill them. And thus she acted cleverly, by discouraging him from doing the very thing that she had planted in his heart to do." *The Story of the Grail*, p. 407.

"Your name is changed, fair friend! Perceval the wretched! Ah, unlucky Perceval, how unfortunate you were when you failed to ask this, because you would have brought great succor to the good king who is maimed: he would have totally regained the use of his limbs and ruled his lands, and much good would have come of it! But understand this now: much suffering will befall you and others. And understand, too, that it came upon you because you sinned against your mother, who has died of grief on your account... Your failure to have asked what is done with the grail and where it is carried is just as painful to me as your mother's death or the death of this knight whom I loved and held dear, who called me his dearest friend and loved me like a good and faithful knight." Perceval's first cousin, *The Story of the Grail*, p. 425.

"Woman, shame on you! May God destroy and damn you, for you are letting yourself be caressed, hugged, and kissed by the man whom you should most hate in all the world! Foolish, unfortunate woman: you are behaving in accord with your nature! You should be pulling out his heart with your hands rather than your lips. If your kisses have touched his heart, you've lifted his heart from his breast, but you'd have done much better to have ripped it out with your hands: that's what you should have done, if a woman could do anything right! A woman's not a woman if she hates evil and loves the good; they're wrong to call her a woman, for she's unworthy of the name woman if she loves only the good. But I can see you're a true woman, because this man seated beside you killed your father, yet you're kissing him! As long as a woman can have her pleasure, she doesn't care about anything else." vavasour, *The Story of the Grail*, p. 453.

"Indeed I'd rather let myself languish in prison for seven years, or even die, than swear this oath to you or give you my word upon it. I'm not so afraid of dying that I'd not prefer to suffer and die an honorable death than live in shame, having broken my word." Sir Gawain, *The Story of the Grail*, p. 457.





## Topics for Discussion

Define a "rash boon" and provide two examples.

Compare and contrast Yvain's love and Sir Lancelot's love.

Explain the importance of concealing or revealing a name for knights.

Compare and contrast the idea of honor in this collection and the ideal of honor in modern society.

Many of the characters in this collection are in more than one story, but differ between stories. Provide a detailed example of this.

Compare and contrast Sir Gawain and Kay the seneschal.

Which quest is your favorite and why?

Explain the dishonor of a knight riding on a palfrey.

Provide examples of Yvain's naivety in the beginning of "The Knight with the Lion" and explain how he later justifies his earlier follies.

Explain why Perceval was foolish at the Fisher King's manor. What did he do that was foolish? Why did he do it? What does he later learn about it?