

Avalon High Study Guide

Avalon High by Meg Cabot

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Plot Summary

Elaine "Ellie" Harrison and her family have moved to Annapolis, Maryland, while her parents are on sabbatical. Ellie's parents are professors of Medieval history; they plan to do research in Annapolis on their separate interest, the Lady of Shalott and a sword which resembles the Arthurian Excalibur. Ellie is a 16-year-old junior in high school who is not thrilled about moving, but is used to dealing with her parents' eccentricities. Like when they named her Elaine, after Alfred Lord Tennyson's ill fated character the Lady of Shalott. Elaine of Astolat, in the poem, killed herself when Sir Lancelot chose to love Queen Guinevere over her. Ellie sees the poetic Elaine as a weak woman and is not thrilled to be named after her.

Ellie makes a few friends at school and finds herself pulled into the intriguing world of A. William "Will" Wagner, whom some believe is the reincarnation of King Arthur. Ellie and Will find themselves inexplicably drawn to each other. Both as friends and as maybe more. However, Will already has a girlfriend, the lovely and popular Jennifer — who just so happens to be cheating on him with his best friend, Lance. As Will and Ellie grow closer, Ellie begins to see things in their relationship she hadn't before. Will is almost convinced they knew each other in another life. As he tries to make sense of the changes taking place in his life, he believes more and more that he and Ellie have met before.

As Ellie enters Will's world, she becomes aware of things in his life that are eerily similar to the life of King Arthur: a cheating partner, a loyal but confused best friend, a deadly half-brother and dysfunctional parents. Ellie, with the help of her father's old sword and her World Literature teacher Ms. Morton, finds herself standing by Will's side as he faces down almost certain death at the hands of his brother and the forces of evil. A secret society has Will and Ellie convinced, almost, that Will is the second coming of Arthur and that he has been born to save the world from evil. Ellie and Will aren't sure about this, but they are willing to wait and see what happens.

The book ends with Will living at Ellie's house after his father has kicked him out. Ellie's parents are convinced Will is Arthur and now know that Ellie isn't a reincarnation of Elaine of Astolat, but of the Lady of the Lake, Arthur's magical protector. The end of the book is a set up for another volume in the series.



Chapters 1 - 6.

Chapters 1 - 6. Summary

In Chapter 1, Ellie Harrison and her parents are living in Annapolis, MD for a year while her parents are on sabbatical. Her father is writing a book about a plain sword kept at the history museum in Washington DC. Ellie is thinking about her life in Maryland so far. She enjoys reading, cleaning the pool and drifting in the pool of their rental house all day. She misses her best friend, Nancy, and has been pretty bored since her brother, Geoff, left for college. Ellie is named after the Lady of Shalot from literature, and she doesn't think it is cool. Ellie is going running with her father in a wooded area because her mother wants her father to get some exercise. She also wants Ellie to get out of the pool once in a while. Ellie's mother, also a professor, promises to get off her back about the pool if she goes running with her dad. The trail Ellie is running on becomes dense with trees and she feels like she has been transported to another time, then she sees "him."

In Chapter 2, Ellie runs by a ravine and sees a man standing at the bottom. She keeps running and wonders how he was able to get to the bottom of the ravine without a machete - maybe a trail? Ellie makes another pass around the trail and the man is no longer at the bottom of the ravine. He is on the trail with another boy and a girl; they are all Ellie's age. The boy and girl are blonde and the guy has dark hair. He smiles at Ellie and she smiles back, which is totally out of character for her. Ellie sees them again when they are getting into their cars. The guy isn't smiling anymore and neither are the blonds, they look like they are arguing. The blonde guy drives away in his car. The dark haired boy and blonde girl drive away together.

In Chapter 3, Ellie's first day of school isn't so bad. She seems to make some friends and everyone at school is nice. The school itself is wonderful. About half-way through the day she sees "him", the guy from the trail. He recognizes her and smiles, then his girlfriend - the blonde from the park - pulls him away down the hall. As Ellie sits in literature class she pulls out the student directory and looks up the two guys and the girl. The boy's name is A. William "Will" Wagner, he is a senior. His girlfriend is Jennifer Gold and the other boy is Lance Reynolds, both also seniors. Ellie goes home and floats in the pool. When she opens her eyes to push her raft off of the side of the pool she sees Will standing over her.

In Chapter 4, Ellie's mom decides to play matchmaker and invites Will to stay for a swim and for Thai food for dinner. While Ellie and Will float in the pool, she asks him about Jennifer. Will tells her that he doesn't want to talk about Jennifer. He also seems burdened by something and tells Ellie that things have been strange for him lately. She asks him what he was doing in the ravine and he tells her it is just a place he ends up sometime. Will tells Ellie that he looked her up in the student directory because he feels like they met somewhere before. He is also clearly interested in her. Will is a polite houseguest and enjoys conversation with Ellie and her family. He is even interested



when Ellie's mother begins to quote *The Lady of Shalott* by Alfred Lord Tennyson. Will is a military brat who has always moved from place to place, his father works at the Naval Academy now.

In Chapter 5, Ellie takes the bus to school and sits with Liz, a girl she met the day before. Liz is also a junior and also runs track, Ellie can see they are going to be friends. Ellie doesn't tell Liz that Will came over the night before because she has a feeling Liz might be a gossip. When Ellie closes her locker door at school she is surprised to see Jennifer standing on the other side of the locker. Jennifer knows Will was at Ellie's house, but instead of being upset she asks Ellie if Will mentioned anything about her or Lance. When Ellie says "no," Jennifer walks away. During Mr. Morton's literature class, Ellie is assigned to report on the poem *Beowulf* and she is assigned Lance Reynolds, Will's friend, as a partner. It is clear that Lance is not comfortable with this and that he knows Will was at Ellie's house. Ellie tells him that she hates *Beowulf* and the nerdy kid in front of her trades poems with Lance so that she and Lance are doing *The Lady of Shalott* instead. Lance lets Ellie know that doing the poem is not her choice, it is his. So Ellie lets him know that she will be doing the report and he will be presenting it to the class, by her choice. Lance is uncomfortable, but agrees. After class some of Lance's football friends harass the nerdy boys and Will steps in to save the day. Ellie goes home and realizes she is falling in love with Will, so she decides to go for a run to get her mind off of him. While she is running, she sees Will in the ravine and goes to talk to him.

In Chapter 6, Ellie heads down to the bottom of the ravine to see Will. He is listening to music, so he doesn't notice her until she is sitting on the rock next to him. Will has been watching the water and listening to medieval love songs. Ellie is shocked when she sees this and then embarrassed that he saw her reaction. Will tells her that he never used to listen to troubadour music, but for some reason he loves it now. He encourages her to listen to the silence around them and Ellie notices how secluded they are. Like they are in a different world. Ellie can tell something is wrong with Will and she asks him if there is something upsetting him. He says no, but goes on to tell her that his dad is pressuring him to attend the Naval Academy for college. Will tells her that he will get in, but that he doesn't want to be in the military and that his father is having a hard time accepting his decision. Ellie thinks about her own parents, and how they want her and her brother to be professors, but they never get upset when she tells them she doesn't want their life. Will remarks about how much he envies the easy way Ellie and her parents tease each other. On the way to Will's car he asks Ellie if she will come to a party at his house after the football game this coming weekend. She says yes, even though she doesn't really want to see Will and Jennifer together. They walk across the street and buy some lemon aid from some little kids. Will teases the kids and gives them \$5 for two Dixie cups of the drink. He also buys a rose from them. Will gives Ellie the rose before he drops her off at home.

Chapters 1 - 6. Analysis

Chapter 1 does an excellent set up of the book. It sets the date, setting, and gives insight about Ellie's personality, family, goals, motivations and conflict. She doesn't like



being moved for a year just for sabbatical. She is intelligent and her upbringing has been unusual. She is also bored and she just wants school to start.

In Chapter 2, Ellie loves to run and thinks that she should probably report the man at the bottom of the ravine to security. He could be dangerous. She surprises herself when she smiles at the guy because she isn't usually a "smile at strangers" person. Ellie is intrigued by the guy and wants to run again the next day just incase she can see him again. She also notes that she thought the two blonds were a couple, not the dark haired guy and the blond girl.

In Chapter 3, Ellie isn't looking forward to being the new kid at school as a junior. She knows how awkward it can be, due to the sabbatical in Germany, and so has her parents take her to school and pick her up. She is relieved that no one bothers her with orientation on her first day and is happy that some "geeky girls" allow her to sit with them at lunch. She doesn't want to stand out, but she also doesn't want to be labeled as a loner or a nerd.

In Chapter 4, Will is having some sort of problem which was implied when Ellie asked him a question and "a shadow passed over his face." Ellie is having her own issues; mainly she is insecure about everything. She feels she is too tall, not the kind of girl boys like, she is boring, etc. She can't figure out what Will might possibly want from her, but she also can't shake the feeling that their new friendship is both comfortable and familiar. She is thrilled that he calls her "Elle." This chapter introduces some of the conflicts that may possibly stand in the way of Will and Ellie in future chapters.

In Chapter 5, Ellie really isn't sure what to make of Will. Other people seem to be drawn to him and she really can't believe that he is drawn to her. After he saves the nerdy boys from being harassed, she is impressed by him even more. She really wants to stay away from Will, she doesn't see herself as a boyfriend stealer, but she just can't. So when she sees him in the ravine she tells herself she is going to see if he is ok, but knows she really just wants to talk to him.

In Chapter 6, Ellie feels a very strong attraction to Will and is almost certain that he feels it too. However, she second guesses herself because she doesn't see why he would be attracted to her when he can have Jennifer. Ellie agrees to go to the football game and the party, but has no idea what she will wear because she has never been to either. For a moment, when Will gives her the rose, she sees something serious in his eyes, but it vanishes. All she can think about is Will for a long time after he drops her off.



Chapters 7 - 13.

Chapters 7 - 13. Summary

In Chapter 7, Ellie is becoming interested in Arthurian legend, much to her chagrin, after reading up on Camelot for her World Literature paper. She is beginning to understand why her parents find the material so interesting. King Arthur was married to Guinevere, but Guinevere was in love with Lancelot even though he was dating the Lady of Shalott, Ellie's namesake. Arthur was killed by his maybe brother, maybe son who eventually married Guinevere himself. To top it all off, a society called the Order of the Bear believes that Arthur will come back to life some day to save the world from another Dark Ages. Ellie makes the track team after school and is sitting talking to Liz, also on the team, when she learns some interesting gossip about Will. His father is rumored to have killed his best friend so he could marry the man's wife. Admiral Wagner had his friend assigned to a dangerous war zone, some say on purpose. Will has a step-brother, Marco Campbell, who was kicked out of school the year before for trying to kill a teacher. However, Marco claims the teacher was trying to kill him. Ellie can't believe what Liz is saying and accuses her, and another team mate named Stacy, of making the stories up. The girls swear they are telling the truth. They also tell Ellie that she is part of the In Crowd if she has been invited to Will's pool party and that they think she should try to date Lance.

In Chapter 8, Ellie arrives home from track try-outs to find an email from Will, screen name Cavalier. He wants to know if she made the team. She emails back, screen name Tiggertoo, that she made the team. He emails again that she will help the team win. Ellie wants to believe his words are because he likes her, but she convinces herself that his words are out of friendship. Like when he waves to her in the parking lot, says "hi" in the halls and winks at her during a pep assembly. That evening Ellie pays attention to how she dresses and tries to look glamorous for the game and the party afterward. When she gets in the car, Liz and Stacy agree she looks great. They go to the game and the girls tease her about Lance, until they notice she likes Will. Will is hurt on the field when Lance is not there to block a hit; Lance is too busy talking to Jennifer on the sidelines. Lance takes the field again and hits the guy who hit Will so hard the kid is taken off the field on a stretcher. Ellie goes to get hot dogs for herself and her friends when she is confronted by a very angry Mr. Morton, whom all the kids love and who has a reputation for being a great guy. Mr. Morton yells at Ellie because she didn't do the report on Beowulf she was supposed to do. He is also angry because she obviously wrote the report on her own and didn't partner with Lance like Mr. Morton assigned. He orders her to meet him Monday morning with Lance. Ellie cannot understand why such a nice teacher would rip her apart at a football game.

In Chapter 9, Ellie talks Liz and Stacy into going to Will's pool party with her after the game. They are amazed when Will makes a beeline to Ellie and thanks her for coming to the party. He suggests they change into swimsuits, but the three girls decide to stand by the food and watch things instead. Ellie has a chance to meet Will's father and step-



mother, both of whom seem really nice and not at all like the gossip about them implies. She also sees Marco at the party. He is well-liked and seems to get along well with Will. Ellie also has a chance to observe how Jennifer and Will interact; she leaves the party glad that they seem happy with each other. As the girls are leaving, Ellie remembers she needs to tell Lance about their meeting with Mr. Morton. She finds Lance upstairs - making out in a bedroom with Jennifer. They don't notice Ellie so she closes the door, only to find Will making his way toward the bedroom.

In Chapter 10, Will sees Ellie standing in the hallway and asks her if she has seen Jennifer. Before Ellie can decide what to say, Will asks her if she is feeling ok. He thinks she might be sick and pulls her up the stairs to the widow's walk on the roof. The two talk about the ocean view and Ellie tries to decide if she should tell Will about Jennifer and Lance or protect him from the information. Ellie asks him about his family, how do they all get along? Will tells her things are good for them and that his mother died when he was born. Then he tells her that he feels like he knew Ellie before in another life. That the pull from the other life is what makes the connection between them so strong. Ellie isn't sure what to say about this. She feels a connection between them, but she isn't sure it is from a past life. Ellie jokes about him having a brain tumor and Will laughs at his thoughts. He is about to kiss her when something happens . . .

Chapter 11:

Before Will can kiss Ellie they are interrupted by Cavalier and Marco who needs to find Jennifer and have her move her car. Will seems confused at first, but then his mind clears. He tells Ellie that he will walk her out so she can leave with her friends. As they are going down the hall, Marco tells Will he thinks he saw Jennifer entering the bedroom. Will is about to open the door, but Ellie stops him and pretends that she heard Jennifer's voice calling Will from downstairs. Will starts to leave, but stops when Marco invites Ellie to go sailing with them the following day. Will thinks the invitation is great, agrees and then goes to find Jennifer. Ellie is left alone with Marco who reveals that he knows Jennifer is in the room with Lance. He also tells her that she can't protect Will from the truth. Ellie is creeped out by Marco. She doesn't like the way he looks at her or the tone in his voice. When he grabs her arm and pushes her she is certain that he wanted Will to find out about his girlfriend and best friend. Marco knocks on the door and calls for Jennifer. When she comes out of the room Ellie tells her to move her car; Jennifer reveals that her car isn't parked where Marco says it is. It is at that moment Ellie is sure Marco is not a good person. Marco tells her that she isn't supposed to like Will. He says that Morton, the teacher, told him she is supposed to like Lance. He also refers to her as Elaine of Astolot, which Ellie thinks is weird coming from a tattooed teenager.

In Chapter 12, Ellie is really bothered by what happened at the party. She is uncomfortable knowing about Jennifer and Lance and she is very uncomfortable with Marco. On the way home she asks Liz and Stacy which teacher Marco fought with at school. Liz says she thinks it was Mr. Morton, but she doesn't know why they argued. Just that Marco is weird. Ellie agrees completely. Ellie arrives home, showers and changes for bed. As she is lying in bed, she can't help thinking about Will and the



strange events at the party. She even starts to think that there are a lot of strange coincidences that link her, and the others, to Arthurian legend. Marco could be Mordred, Arthur's half-brother (or son) who brings down the kingdom. The name Jennifer comes from the name Guinevere. She laughs to herself that Lance could be Lancelot and Will could be Arthur, but then she dismisses the ideas as silly. She is only thinking this way because of the strange things Marco said to her. Ellie meets up with Will, Marco, Lance and Jennifer the next day in Annapolis to go sailing. Her parents talk with Will about boat safety and then leave Ellie with him. Before they can push off in their small boat, Will has a confrontation with a snobby old man who says some offensive things to some poorer sailors in the marina.

Chapters 7 - 13. Analysis

In Chapter 7, Ellie is a little hurt to hear about Will's life. She wants to believe that he confided in her in the ravine, but now realizes there is more to Will than meets the eye. She is also embarrassed by the fact that Liz and Stacy would think that she is part of the In Crowd. This chapter introduces Arthurian legend to the reader and creates some interesting parallels between the legend and Will's family life. It also foreshadows some plot points when discussing the Order of the Bear.

In Chapter 8, Ellie notices some interesting byplay between Jennifer and Lance that has only been hinted at so far. Lance and Jennifer obviously have something going on between them that has yet to be uncovered. However, if the Arthurian legend in the previous chapter is any indication, then the odds are that Jennifer and Lance are meeting secretly behind Will's back. Even though Ellie would like Liz and Stacy to think she is interested in Lance, so they don't feel sorry for her, she is having a hard time hiding her infatuation with Will.

In Chapter 9, Ellie confronts her fears by going to the party and seeing Will. Not only does she confront fears about social situations with popular people, but she also needs to make sure that Will and Jennifer are a true couple. She would like to believe that he would leave Jennifer for her, but after the party she recognizes that they are a couple. She is disappointed, but likes Will's friendship.

In Chapter 10, the reader is now beginning to understand some of what has been causing Will trouble lately. He feels that he has met Ellie before, perhaps in a different life. He tells Ellie that Lance and Jennifer think he is nuts, but he believes what he is telling Ellie. He believes there is a strong connection between them. It is possible the main characters are all reincarnated from the Arthurian legend; however, no one but Will seems to be aware of the strange circumstances at this point.

In Chapter 11, Marco is revealed to be the antagonist. His actions are described as creepy and his expression as wolfish. He reveals that he does not care for Will as much as Will cares for him. Marco also reveals that Mr. Morton is somehow involved in the strange relationships that are forming. It is unclear if Marco has become aware of their possible past lives, but it seems that he may be aware of them. Jennifer is also revealed

to be both uncaring and cold. Will's dog, Cavalier, seems to be very protective of Ellie and dislikes Marco.

In Chapter 12, Ellie has started to make connections between the legends and her current life. She doesn't believe there is really a connection, but she seems to be opening to the idea.



Chapters 14 - 18.

Chapters 14 - 18. Summary

In Chapter 13, Ellie loves being on the water. The crew sails the dinghy to Will's boat, the *Pride Winn*, and they launch into the bay. Ellie hopes that she can have a private conversation with Lance about Mr. Morton and Jennifer, but realizes that she won't get the chance. She talks a little with Marco, who tells her that he was poor before his mother married Will's father. He seems to really resent Will, but it is unclear why. Will doesn't seem to notice his half-brother's resentment. Ellie tells Lance that Mr. Morton wants to see them about their paper the next day, then the subject is turned when Marco spots the group of poor kids on their battered boat. Marco takes the wheel of the sailboat and heads straight for the smaller boat. The driver of the small boat must make a sharp turn to avoid being hit. When he turns, a kid without a life jacket falls off the boat and goes under the water. Will dives in to rescue him.

In Chapter 14, Will saves the boy from the water and returns to their sailboat. Ellie is surprised, and pleased, that Jennifer is really worried about Will. Ellie now understands that Jennifer is in love with Lance, but will always love Will too. Will is angry with Marco for the stunt he pulled, but Marco is also angry. He tells Will that he did it because he couldn't stand the tension on the boat any longer. Then he looks to Jennifer and Lance. Jennifer freezes, terrified of what Marco might say next. Marco goes on to taunt Lance about being Will's lapdog and for taking orders from Will. He tells him it is no wonder Lance is getting tired of it. Everyone knows where Marco's words are heading; everyone but Will. Will seems to be completely clueless to what Marco is insinuating. Finally, Lance can't take Marco's digs any longer. He throws himself at Marco, only to be held back by Will. Jennifer tells Will that Marco is a liar and tells Marco that he has no friends. Marco tells her that he is better off than Will, who has friends like Jennifer and Lance. Then Marco lashes out at Ellie asking her if she is protecting Will or if she is protecting Lance. As this goes on, Will seems to begin to understand what is happening. He lets go of Lance when Marco tells him to ask Lance and Jennifer where they were at the party the night before. Marco gleefully tells Will that Lance and Jennifer are in love and have been seeing each other for months.

In Chapter 15, Will is completely blindsided by what Marco tells him. He staggers backward and sits down on the boat. Lance attacks Marco and punches him in the face. Jennifer begins to cry and tells him that Marco is lying. She asks Lance to back her up, but he can't. He looks Will in the eye and tells him that what Marco said is true. He and Jennifer tried to fight their attraction, but couldn't. Will says nothing. Jennifer and Ellie suggest they go home and Will agrees. No one speaks on the way back except for Marco who has a bloody lip. He tells Ellie she blew her chance with Lancelot. They reach the shore and Will leaves with Marco. Ellie leaves Jennifer and Lance by the water and returns home. She doesn't talk to her parents about sailing and they seem to understand that something wasn't right. Ellie gets into the pool but decides to go to the



ravine and find Will. She is upset that he looked so heartbroken. However, when she opens her eyes to get out of the pool she finds Will standing on the rock next to her.

In Chapter 16, Ellie is surprised to find Will by the pool, but in another way she isn't surprised at all. Will asks her if she knew about Jennifer and Lance. Ellie tells him that she did, she feels like everyone is lying to him and decides she will tell him the truth. Even if he hates her for it. Will seems to be unemotional about the entire situation. When he takes off his sunglasses he surprises Ellie by telling her he already knew. He was shocked and surprised, but he felt like it was something he knew already and he was kind of relieved to hear it come out in the open. Ellie is surprised that he isn't angry at her or anyone else. Then he surprises her even more when he asks her to dinner. They enjoy dinner and dessert together and laugh the entire time. Ellie is in love with Will, but she feels that his friendship is enough to keep her happy. He tells her that he could never really talk to Jennifer like he could talk to her. Will stays at Ellie's house to do homework and they bond. He is amazed at her easy relationship with her parents and wishes his father would take the time to know him. Ellie tells him his father is probably pushing him into a Naval career because he feels it is the best thing for Will. Will expresses, very eloquently, that he doesn't want to go into the military because he believes in peace and negotiation. Ellie suggests Will talk to his step-mom and ask her to try and convince his father to ease up on talk of Will joining the military. Will is surprised he never thought of it before and holds Ellie's hand for a little while. The touch sends a jolt of electricity through Ellie.

In Chapter 17, Ellie shows up early for her Monday appointment with Mr. Morton. Mr. Morton arrives shortly thereafter, but Lance never shows up. Mr. Morton is clearly annoyed with Lance. Ellie tells Mr. Morton not to be too hard on Lance. She tells him about Lance and Jennifer and that Will knows and is ok with it. Will told her the evening before that he can't be too mad at them if all he feels is relief that he and Jennifer broke up. Mr. Morton is stricken by Ellie's news. In fact, he looks like the news might give him a heart attack. He begins to mumble about being too late and that everything is terrible now. Ellie thinks he is talking about the football team and tries to reassure Mr. Morton that it will not affect the season. Mr. Morton yells at Ellie, telling her that it isn't about football. That this is about the world being throw into the Dark Ages and needing a savior. Now they will have to wait for another savior to be born and raised to fight against the forces of evil. Ellie thinks about all she remembers about Arthurian legend and asks Mr. Morton if this has to do with the Lily Maid of Astolot. Morton is surprised by the question, but tells Ellie she is better off not knowing what is happening. That her role was over before she had the chance to make a difference. She offers to get the nurse for him, but he tells her to go to class.

In Chapter 18, Ellie can't shake the feeling that Mr. Morton is connected to the Order of the Bear. The things he was saying about the second coming of Arthur were just too strange. She goes to lunch and calls her mother. Her mother explains that the Order is real and is an exclusive club made of intellectuals. She also tells Ellie that there is proof Arthur was real, as were Guinevere, Lancelot and Mordred. She tells Ellie that Arthur was born after his mother, a married woman, had an affair with his father. Arthur's father killed the husband, married Arthur's mother and raised Arthur as his son. The story is



too similar to the rumors going around about Will's father and step-mother. She looks up Will's family in the phonebook and finds out that the "A" in Will's name stands for Arthur. Her mother also tells her that Arthur's dog was named Cavell and his ship the Prydwyn. Both names that popped into Will's head as Cavalier (the dog) and the Pride Winn (his sailboat). Ellie hangs up on her mother and runs to the bathroom where she begins to question her sanity. Could it be true that they are all reincarnated from Arthurian legend? She goes to confront Mr. Morton and finds that he has left for the day. Instead of returning to class she runs from the school to find him.

Chapters 14 - 18. Analysis

In Chapter 13, again Marco shows his spiteful nature. He begins to make fun of the kids in the other boat and then intentionally causes them distress while they are out on the water. It is unclear if he does this knowing Will will intervene, but knowing Will's character, Marco probably knows Will will do something about the situation. Marco seems to know why Mr. Morton wants to see Ellie and Lance about their project, but he doesn't elaborate.

The Chapter 14 unfolds almost exactly as Ellie had feared when she arrived at the boat earlier in the day. She knew that Marco would try to create disruption, she just didn't know exactly how he was going to do it. Jennifer is in love with Will, which explains why she doesn't break up with him for Lance. Lance is a loyal, for the most part, friend who doesn't want to hurt Will and looks to Will for guidance and leadership. It is obvious the two of them know their relationship is wrong, and they don't try to flaunt it in Will's face. They both seem to truly care about Will's feelings and don't want him hurt.

In Chapter 15, everyone is devastated by the time they reach the shore. Jennifer and Lance are heartbroken that they have betrayed someone they both love. Ellie is heartbroken to watch the entire scene and wishes she hadn't had to witness it. Will hasn't spoken, but he seems to be devastated. The only person happy is Marco. Marco seems to be pleased that he caused the truth to come out. However, it isn't clear what his motive is. Was it to protect Will or was it to cause trouble for Will? Did he do it to hurt Will or just to be a jerk?

As Chapter 16 closes the reader is left with some foreboding about what is to come. Ellie states that she and Will are about to embark on a relationship of sorts, but it isn't the beginning of one. She says that it is the middle of a relationship that has been going on for a long time; that it is ugly and will snowball out of control.

In Chapter 17, part of Ellie is sure that Mr. Morton has lost his mind and is having a breakdown. The other part of her isn't so sure. She understands the similarities to Arthur that have been going on, but she doesn't want to believe these things are real. The things Mr. Morton is saying remind her of the Order of the Bear she read about. The people who believe Arthur will rise again and save the world from evil. She is also on alert after Mr. Morton says he should have taken care of Marco when he had the

chance. It seems, in Mr. Morton's mind, that the relationship between Jennifer and Lance has been revealed too soon and it is Marco who is at fault.

In Chapter 18, Ellie has had her great epiphany. This chapter turns the story so that Ellie is not merely a passive character, but an active participant in the plot. She now knows that there is something magical going on at Avalon High and that she is destined to play a part in it.



Chapters 19 - 24.

Chapters 19 - 24. Summary

In Chapter 19, Ellie arrives at Mr. Morton's apartment only to be greeted by the teacher holding a frying pan for his own protection. He tries to get Ellie to leave, but she forces her way into the apartment and sits on the couch. Mr. Morton tells her he is packing and will be leaving quickly on a flight to Tahiti. He also tells her she may want to get out of town for a while. Ellie tells him that she thinks he is delusional and needs professional help. He tells her that the Order of the Bear is not delusional and that the Order has searched for Arthur in each generation since the original Arthur died. Mr. Morton claims that he was here to watch Will and felt that Will was finally the one, but that was ruined now. He thinks that Will will be vulnerable to evil now that he knows about Jennifer and Lance. Mr. Morton blames this on Marco, who is Mordred and is eternally evil. Mr. Morton blames Mordred for the evil dictators throughout history. Ellie is intrigued, but she isn't ready to believe Mr. Morton just yet. She asks why he doesn't stay and protect Will and is told that it is too late now. Will is going to die.

In Chapter 20, Ellie is furious with Mr. Morton for leaving Will to face Marco. She doesn't believe his silliness about the forces of Light and Dark and about Darkness killing Arthur in every incarnation, but she does believe that Mr. Morton is in the Order. Mr. Morton tells Ellie that he tried to get Marco to see the Light and turn away from the Dark, that is when Marco tried to kill him. He also tells Ellie that she can't do anything to save Will now because the two of them didn't know each other in the past. The Lady of Shalott was in love with Lance and killed herself over him, not over Arthur. She tells him that if he is in the Order, and it is his job to protect Arthur, then how can he just accept defeat and leave town. How can the Order just give up so easily? She tells Mr. Morton that she isn't going to give up on Will and just let someone kill him, and then she leaves the apartment.

In Chapter 21, Ellie returns to school and spends the rest of the period in the bathroom avoiding hall monitors. She is thinking about her visit to Mr. Morton when she hears someone crying in one of the stalls. It is Jennifer. Jennifer is devastated because she feels that everyone is angry over what she and Lance did to Will. Ellie tells her that isn't true and that Will isn't even mad. That makes Jennifer cry even more. Will has already told her and Lance that he is happy for them and Jennifer knows he means it. She says a part of her will always love Will, he is so kind, but that he had changed lately. Talking more about politics and wanting to quit the football team. She likes being with Lance because he is simpler than Will has become. Jennifer tells Ellie that she knows Ellie is in love with Will and she encourages Ellie to date him. Jennifer has noticed that Will likes Ellie too and she feels her own social life would be easier if Will and Ellie began dating. Ellie watches Jennifer reapply her make-up and thinks about how beautiful Jennifer is. Ellie finds it very hard to dislike Jennifer. They two leave the bathroom and Ellie thinks she hears Mr. Morton's voice.



In Chapter 22, Mr. Morton has arrived back at the school and is making his way to the counselor's office. Ellie catches up to him and asks him what he is doing there. He tells her it is none of her business, but he wouldn't even be doing it if she hadn't guilted him earlier. Mr. Morton is with Will's step-mother and is showing her into an office where he tells her they will wait for Will. When Will shows up, Mr. Morton shuts the office door but leaves the blinds open so Ellie can see what is going on in the office. Ellie can't hear what is being said, but it is obvious that the news is distressing to Mrs. Wagner and to Will. Ellie assumes that Mr. Morton is telling them he believes Will is Arthur. Marco arrives and is in freak-out mode. The secretary tells him he is not allowed on school property, but he doesn't listen. He is going to enter the conference room but is stopped by Ellie who tells him the meeting is none of her business. Marco shoves her aside and enters the room. The secretary calls the police. They can hear Marco scream that something Mr. Morton is saying isn't true, but that is all they hear until the police arrive and open the conference room door. The door opens just in time to hear Marco scream at his mother to tell Will it isn't true, that she is not Will's mother. Mrs. Wagner tells Marco that it is true, she is Will's mother. Marco realizes the police are there for him. He breaks a window and jumps out.

In Chapter 23, after Marco jumped out the school window, Will jumped out after him trying to catch up. Mrs. Wagner became so upset that Mr. Morton offered to take her home. That left Ellie and the secretary behind to tell the police what was happening. After her interview, the police took Ellie home. When she arrives at home she realizes she is alone, her parents have gone into DC for dinner. She also realizes a bad storm is brewing. Ellie enters the house to find the lights flickering. She finds candles and a flashlight then sits to eat. The whole time she can't stop thinking about Will and how he is feeling. She tries to call him, but the connection won't go through. A huge flash of lightening lights up the yard and then the power goes out in the house. Ellie is a little scared by this, but she knows she is fine. The phone rings and it is her mother. Her mother tells her they will be home soon, but Ellie tells her that the Beltway has been shut down due to fallen electrical wires. Her parents won't be home any time soon. The phone rings again and it is Mrs. Wagner. She is looking for Will and is worried he may be in danger from Marco. She tells Ellie that Arthur's gun chest has been opened and there is a pistol missing. Before Ellie can respond, the phone line goes dead.

In Chapter 24, Ellie doesn't spare a moment to think about what Mrs. Wagner was going to say next. She knows that if Will can't be found with his friends then he must be at the ravine. She has no way of getting to the ravine, so she decides to run. It is only two miles to the park and she runs that or more on most days. The rain hasn't begun yet, but the skies look like they will open up at any time. Ellie puts on her father's rain jacket and then searches for some sort of weapon incase Marco is at the park with the gun. She runs to her father's office and picks up the sword. In her mind she thinks that the forces of Darkness must be angry about the sword because when she steps out the door the sky turns red with lightening and the rain begins. She runs down the highway, but decides to run in a different direction after almost being hit by an SUV. The near collision reminds her of something Mr. Morton said, that the forces of Darkness will try to stop you no matter what you do. Ellie makes it to the park and the rain stops. She goes



to the ravine and sees Will laying down on his usual rock. All she can think is that he looks dead.

Chapters 19 - 24. Analysis

In Chapter 19, Ellie thinks Mr. Morton is crazy, but she also wants for Mr. Morton to prove to her that he is not. She doesn't want to fall for some of the things he is saying, but she can't help but notice he seems completely sane - except for the stories he is telling her. She is reminded of her father and his love for his subject matter.

In Chapter 20, Ellie refuses to allow anything bad happen to Will and is enraged that Mr. Morton, a sworn Arthur protector, is so willing to just give up and allow Will to be killed. Mr. Morton is so locked into his thinking that he refuses to see there may be other ways out of the situation, and that the Dark side has not won yet.

In Chapter 21, when Ellie returns to school she is on a mission to find Will. She knows he will probably think she is crazy, but she feels he deserves to know what is going on. She finds Jennifer in the bathroom and begins to compare herself to the pretty, popular girl. Ellie can't see why Will would like her more than Jennifer. She also realizes that Jennifer is a good, if not shallow, person who truly loved Will and truly loves Lance.

In Chapter 22, the reader now understands why Marco hates Will and how closely Will's birth story is linked to the story of Arthur's birth. Marco's motivation for wanting to kill Will has now been completely revealed. It is not clear why Mr. Morton chose to tell this bit of information to Will instead of telling him the Arthur story. Everyone is shocked by the information. Especially Will, who has always been told his mother died at his birth. If Morton was hoping to help the situation somehow he clearly went about it the wrong way. Perhaps he hopes that sharing this news will cause Will to be on alert around Marco.

In Chapter 23, the action of the story is beginning to ramp up leading the reader toward the plot climax. The terrible storm, power outage and missing gun all contribute to an urgent setting and mood for the next part of the story. Once it is revealed that Will and Marco can't be found, and that there is a gun involved, tension begins to run high.

In Chapter 24, it is either the forces of Darkness or the weather, but something wants to stop Ellie from finding Will. By the time she arrives at the park with the sword, she is soaked to the bone and tired from running. She hears a dog barking and sees Will in the distance. Ellie is scared for Will's life and is not thinking too much about her own. She is also still resisting the idea that there are forces of Darkness, while at the same time believing that Marco is a danger to Will's life as Mr. Morton said.



Chapters 25 - 29.

Chapters 25 - 29. Summary

In Chapter 25, Ellie reaches Will at the bottom of the ravine and finds him lying with his eyes closed. She is close to panicking now as she tries to climb up next to him on the rock. Will opens his eyes and takes off his headphones; he is happy to see Ellie and tells her he knew she would come. He helps her onto the rock and asks her why she is so wet. It hasn't been raining in the ravine. Ellie breaks down when she realizes Will is alive and he pulls her to him and kisses her for a long time. She is thrilled that they are kissing and Will asks her why they haven't done that before. Will tells Ellie he tried to call her, but couldn't get through. He also tells her that he didn't come by because he wasn't sure she would want to see him after what happened in the counselor's office. Ellie tells him she isn't bothered by what she learned in the office, but she came to find him because his mother called. Will said he is not ready to speak to his parents yet. Ellie tells him she called about Marco, and Will asks what Marco did now. He hasn't seen Marco since they left the school. Did Marco wreck the car? Drink from the liquor cabinet. Ellie tells him then that Marco stole a gun and might be trying to kill him.

In Chapter 26, Will refuses to believe that Marco would want to hurt him. He believes that Marco would steal a gun, but not that he would do it to kill him. Ellie attempts to tell Will about the Arthur reincarnation, but Will doesn't give her the opportunity. He begins pacing and tells her that what their parents did is not his fault or Marco's. That Marco would never hurt him. Ellie tells Will that the darkness might drive Marco to hurt him and this finally gains Will's attention. He thinks about this and about something she said once about the Order. To Ellie's surprise he takes her words seriously and wants to know more. Ellie tells him that it is a long story and she will tell him in the car. It is then that Marco shows up and points a gun at Will's chest. Marco tells Will that he has always resented being compared to him and that he feels worse now knowing they are related. He wants revenge on Will's father and feels that killing Will will be great revenge. Will is commanding and authoritative as he tries to convince Marco that there is no reason to be violent. While the boys are talking, Ellie slides off the rock and retrieves the sword. When Marco notices she is gone he tells her to come back or he will kill Will. Ellie climbs back on the rock and throws Will the sword.

In Chapter 27, as Will catches the sword, Marco's gun goes off. However, the bullet misses Will as he has stooped to pick up the sword. Will looks at Ellie like she is crazy for giving it to him. As Will holds the sword the rain clears and the sun comes out. Ellie thinks he looks taller and more confident holding the sword. Marco is in shock and tells Ellie that she is not the Lady of Shalott. Ellie isn't sure what he means, but she is sure that what he said is true. Marco tells her that she can't be the one who gives Will the sword. Marco drops to one knee in front of Will. Will commands Marco to put down the gun. As he sets the gun down, Lance attacks Marco out of nowhere and demands Marco lose the gun. Then he realizes Marco already has. Jennifer comes along after



Lance and comments about how Will and Ellie are a great couple when she sees them hugging on the rock. Mr. Morton begins to walk down the hillside with the police.

In Chapter 28, Ellie is sitting at home in comfy jammies talking to her parents and Mr. Morton about what has happened. Ellie's parents arrived home to get a message from her that she was at the police station. When she left Will was still giving his report to the police. Marco called their parents and Mr. Wagner came to pick the boys up. Mr. Morton arrived at Ellie's home shortly after she returned with her parents. He tells her parents that he is in the Order of the Bear and they are enthralled. They firmly believe that Will is Arthur. Mr. Morton tells Ellie that he was able to find her by following the lightning, which is a tool of the darkness. He also tells her that he was mistaken in calling her the Lady of Shalott. When she gave Will the sword it became apparent to him, and to the darkness, that she is really the Lady of the Lake. A character that history is not certain about. The Lady was either a magician or a high priestess of sorts. She was the person who gave Arthur his sword, Excalibur, and is the only person who could keep the friendship between Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot alive. Ellie isn't sure how to take this, but she can tell that her parents and Mr. Morton believe every word. Ellie's father tells Morton that the sword isn't old enough to be Excalibur, and Morton tells her father that it was Ellie who made the sword important not the sword itself. Morton tells them he is not going to leave town and that more of the Order are coming. He also tells them that he revealed all of this information to Will, who seemed surprised. Mr. Morton tells Ellie and her parents that Marco will be ok now that the darkness has been defeated, but that their entire family will have to begin healing from the lies Will's mother and father have told all these years. Someone knocks on the door and Ellie finds that it is Will and Cavalier.

In Chapter 29, Will finally told his father that he didn't intend to go to college at the Naval Academy. Will's father was so enraged that he kicked Will out of the house. Will asks Ellie if her parents would let him stay for a few days until he could find an apartment. Ellie's parents say yes, that he can stay in Geoff's old room as long as he would like. Mr. Morton seems thrilled that Will is at the house and calls him "highness." Ellie thinks this is so funny that Will has to pull her out of the room so she doesn't insult Mr. Morton. Ellie shows Will to his new room and they begin kissing, cementing that they are a couple. Ellie is excited that she will get to see Will before bed and when she wakes up in the morning. Neither is sure what to think about Mr. Morton or the Order, but they agree it is great that the Order wants to pay for Will to go to college. Will is on the road to believing what Mr. Morton has told him. He even equates Morton's name and role with Merlin, which shocks Ellie. As the book ends Ellie tells Will that Arthur and the Lady of the Lake don't end up together. Will tells her they do in his story. What she doesn't tell him is that the Lady of the Lake eventually brings Arthur home to Avalon, after his death.

Chapters 25 - 29. Analysis

In Chapter 25, the book's pacing has really picked up speed. The chapters are becoming shorter and the action in the chapters is becoming faster. So are the



revelations about the plot and characters. Ellie and Will's relationship subplot takes a turn in this chapter as they kiss and are now romantically linked.

In Chapter 26, Marco's motivations are finally revealed. They do not have to do with the darkness, or with the Arthur legend. They have to do with a boy who feels inadequate next to his perfect brother. He is also motivated by the death of his father, which he blames on Will's father. Both of these motivations are rooted in this life, not one lived before.

In Chapter 27, the sword has given Will a confidence he didn't have before. Maybe it is the sword or maybe it was just the lighting, Ellie isn't sure. Marco's shock that Ellie gave the sword to Will may imply that she is not Elaine of Astolat, but perhaps is someone else. Jennifer and Lance coming to Will's rescue also ties up a subplot. Despite all that has happened, the three will remain friends. This is the climax of the plot.

In Chapter 28, Ellie still thinks that Mr. Morton is slightly cracked and she can't believe that her educated parents are falling for what he is saying. She has a hard time believing that she could be someone as special as the Lady of the Lake. Mr. Morton's explanations seem to wrap the plot up nicely. There will be a small amount of jail time for Marco and then he will be redeemable. Will will grow and need to be guided by the Order and his friendship with Lance and Jennifer will go on as before. This is the falling action and resolution after the climax. It is fairly short and sweet, but ties up the plot and subplots nicely.

The last chapter, Chapter 29, offers resolution in Will's relationships. Will has stood up to his father, becoming his own man. He has also determined to be in a relationship with Ellie. The two are starting a relationship together and seem to also be starting a journey of self-discovery together.



Characters

Elaine

Elaine Harrison is a sixteen-year-old junior who has moved to Annapolis, Maryland, for a year while her professor parents are on sabbatical. Elaine describes herself as tall and plain with dark hair, she doesn't believe she is anything remarkable. Ellie likes to run and has so far spent their summer in Annapolis floating in the pool of their rental house. Ellie's parents are quite eccentric and have named her after the ill fated heroine in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, the Lady of Shalott. It is a poem about the unrequited love, and eventual suicide, of Elaine of Astolat. A lady who tragically loved Sir Lancelot of King Arthur's court. Elaine is a bright girl who makes friends easily. She runs track and has embarked on an unusual friendship with Will Wagner, the school's senior football star. Elaine is a brave, down-to-earth girl who slowly begins to understand that she may be caught up in the world of Arthurian legend. As the book closes it is revealed that Ellie's role in Will's life is not that of Elaine of Astolat, but that of the magical and powerful Lady of the Lake.

A. William

Will Wagner is the star of the high school football team and an all around great guy. He is level headed, bright, and sticks up for those people who can't defend themselves. He is also going through a rough time in his life. As a senior in high school, it is time for him to pick a college to attend the next year. His father, an Admiral, wants Will to attend the Naval Academy in Annapolis, however, will does not believe in war and does not want to join the Navy. Will has been dating Jennifer for quite a while, but is willing to end his relationship with her in order to pursue a relationship with Ellie.

Will has been plagued recently by strange feelings that he cannot explain. He has begun to uncover feeling of a possible past life; a past life where he was the legendary King Arthur. Will isn't aware of his connection to Arthur, however, others are. The forces of light and dark have come to battle for Will's life. As the book comes to a close, Will's bravery has allowed him to defeat the darkness, however, his future is still uncertain.

Lance Reynolds.

Lance Reynolds is Will's loyal best friend. Lance is a handsome senior who is also a popular member of the football team. Lance is torn between his friendship and loyalty to Will and his love for Will's girlfriend, Jennifer. Lance and Jennifer have been carrying on a relationship behind Will's back for quite a while. The guilt does not sit well with Lance. Lance is worried about the changes in Will's moods and behaviors, but he is unaware they stem from a past life in King Arthur's court. Lance is the reincarnation of Sir Lancelot, Arthur's best friend and betrayer.



Jennifer Gold.

Jennifer Gold is a beautiful, popular - if not shallow - senior at Avalon High. She is also Will's girlfriend and Lance's secret girlfriend. Jennifer loves both Will and Lance, but she is uncomfortable with the changes she has seen in Will lately. Jennifer is more concerned with image and popularity than she is with her relationship. Jennifer likes Ellie well enough and is relieved that Ellie and Will are beginning to like each other. If Will likes Ellie, then Jennifer will be free to date Lance without people being upset with her. Jennifer is the reincarnation of Arthur's unfaithful wife, Guinevere.

Marco Campbell.

Marco Campbell is Will's step-brother and the reincarnation of Mordred, the man who helped to destroy Arthur. Marco is a troubled young man whose father was killed in combat. A death some blame on Will's father, who married Marco's mother almost right after his father's death. Marco has been taken over by the darkness and sees it as his mission to destroy Will. Marco is cruel and cold, but seems to change after Will defeats the darkness.

Mr. Morton.

Mr. Morton is a World Literature teacher at Avalon High. He is a member of the Order of the Bear, a secret organization tasked with guarding those thought to be the incarnation of Arthur. Mr. Morton has been working undercover at the school to see if Will is the second coming of Arthur. He almost fails in his duty to protect Will until Ellie convinces him to work harder to save Will from Marco.

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison are Ellie's parents. They are easy going, loving parents who tend to become caught up in their work. They are history lovers and especially love Arthurian legend. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison are in Annapolis to work and study while on a one-year sabbatical from their university.

Admiral and Mrs. Wagner.

Admiral and Mrs. Wagner are Will's parents. Mrs. Wagner is Will's step-mother and Marco's mother. Her husband, the Admiral's best friend, was killed in combat a few years earlier. Gossip blames the Admiral for his death. Admiral Wagner is a hard man who expects more from his son, Will, than Will wants to give. At the end of the book it is revealed that Mrs. Wagner is not Will's step-mother. She is his birth mother.



Stacy and Cathy.

Stacy and Cathy are the two friends Ellie has made since starting school. Both girls are on the track team with Ellie and are in awe that Ellie knows Will. Stacy likes to gossip and is able to tell Ellie numerous background details about Will, Marco, Jennifer, and Lance.

The Order of the Bear.

The Order of the Bear is a secret society that is waiting for the second coming of King Arthur. The Society believes that Arthur is reborn each generation, but only one of these Arthurs will be able to save the world from the powers of darkness. Mr. Morton is a member of this secret order.



Objects/Places

The Lady of Shalott, Alfred Lord Tennyson.

The Lady of Shalott is a poem written by Alfred Lord Tennyson. It is a poem about the ill-fated love of Elaine of Astolat, who loved Sir Lancelot of King Arthur's court. The poem is a famous one and is the background for Ellie's character and certain plot points in Avalon High.

Elaine's Pool.

Ellie spends most of her summer in Annapolis floating in the pool of their rental house. The pool offers Ellie a place to escape and gives her peace. At the end of the book it is revealed that Ellie is not Elaine of Astolat, as suspected, but is the Lady of the Lake. This revelation gives Ellie's pool and love of water even more importance as the Lady of the Lake is connected with water in Arthurian legend.

Avalon High School.

Avalon High School is located in Annapolis, Maryland. It is named for Avalon, the magical place where the Lady of the Lake lived. Avalon High School is the new school Ellie is enrolled in where she will spend her junior year in high school while her parents do research.

Annapolis, Maryland.

Annapolis, Maryland, is a Naval city located on the ocean outside of Washington DC. It is where Ellie's parents have chosen to live while her father is doing research at the Smithsonian.

Arthurian Legend.

Throughout the book, both characters and the plot are based on Arthurian legend. King Arthur was, perhaps, a ruler during the Medieval period of English history. Arthur was a powerful ruler who tried to maintain peace during a difficult time. He had a trusted group of men called the Knights of the Roundtable. Arthur's most trusted friend was Sir Lancelot, who just happened to be having an affair with Arthur's wife, Guinevere. Arthur's court is known in literature for courtly love and chivalry. His story has taken on mythic proportions and is enhanced by the magical characters of Merlin and the Lady of the Lake. Arthur was murdered by his brother, or step-son, Mordred, who took over the kingdom.



The Ravine.

The Ravine is a peaceful place just off the running trail at the local park. Will seems to end up at the bottom of the ravine when he needs time to rest and think. He is in the ravine with Lance and Jennifer when Ellie sees him for the first time. The ravine is an isolated place where time seems to stand still, it is where Will can connect with his past and think about his future.

Will's Pool Party.

Will is the most popular boy at Avalon High. Every year he throws a huge pool party and this year Ellie, Stacy and Cathy have been invited. Ellie is uncomfortable at the party, as she is not used to being around popular kids and is generally not very social. Character and plot conflicts are introduced at the pool party: Marco is set up as an antagonist, Will confesses he believes he knows Ellie from a past life, and it is revealed that Lance and Jennifer are cheating on Will together.

The Pride Winn.

The Pride Winn is Will's sailboat. The boat is important for two reasons: it is the place where Marco reveals Lance and Jennifer's betrayal to Will, and it is named for Arthur's boat the Prydwyn. Will isn't aware he named his boat after Arthur's, but it becomes evidence to convince Ellie that Will just may be Arthur.

Cavalier.

Cavalier is Will's much loved dog. Cavalier is very protective and show his dislike for Marco the night of the pool party. His name "just came" to Will and is reminiscent of Arthur's hunting dog, Cavall.

Excalibur.

Excalibur is the mythical sword of King Arthur. At the climax of the book it is thought that the sword Ellie's father has been studying is Excalibur, which explains why it helps Will defeat Marco. However, it is confirmed that the sword is not Excalibur and that the power that truly saved Will was Ellie.



Themes

Loyalty.

Loyalty is a major theme in Avalon High. Webster's defines loyalty as: "a feeling of devotion, duty, or attachment to somebody or something." The definition perfectly fits the theme in the book. Many of the characters show loyalty in its many different forms.

Will feels attachment to his duty. He is the personification of the devotion to duty that typifies Arthurian literature. Will is a man who believes honor is important, he believes it is important to stand up for others and feels a responsibility toward maintaining peace and showing leadership. These are loyalties to duty and humanity. Will's actions also display the Arthurian ideal of chivalry, acts of honor, self-sacrifice, duty and loyalty against all odds. Will is loyal to his brother, his father, his team mates and his school mates. He also shows a great deal of loyalty, and maturity, toward Lance and Jennifer by telling them he forgives their betrayal so they won't worry about him.

Ellie's parents show loyalty to their academic studies. The pair went so far as to name their only child after Mrs. Harrison's favorite literary figure. Their passion and loyalty to their work has allowed Ellie a better understanding of her shared destiny with Will.

Lance may not seem loyal, he did steal his best friend's girlfriend, but his betrayal doesn't stop Lance from having Will's back any time he is needed. Lance feels terrible when his flirting on the sidelines causes Will to be hurt of the football field, he is ashamed of his behavior with Jennifer, but doesn't hesitate to tell his friend the truth when asked. Lance also rushes in at the end of the book to save Will from Marco — at considerable risk to his own life. Lance is loyal to Will, even if his betrayal seems at odds with that loyalty.

Mr. Morton is loyal to a duty. He is loyal to the Order of the Bear. Although it seems he will quit his post after failing to protect Will, Mr. Morton continues to try and help Will achieve his destiny. This is not because he is loyal to Will, but because he is loyal to the ideals held sacred by the Order of the Bear.

Good versus Evil.

Central to Avalon High and Arthurian legend, is the fight between Good and Evil. In order for Good to triumph over Evil, Will must come into his own as the reincarnated Arthur (Good). He does this, with Ellie's help, when he defeats Marco (Evil) at the ravine. Loyalty, duty and chivalry can all be seen as different aspects of the fight between Good and Evil. While the fight between Will and Marco is a literal struggle between the two forces; the other traits represent moral struggles between Good and Evil. They are the choices made between doing right and doing wrong.



Marco has been taken over by the Darkness. But he was an easy target. Set aside that his role as Will's brother predisposes him to be the bad guy, and look at the jealousy, feelings of inferiority and fears that paint Marco as an antagonist. Marco and Will are fighting for Light and Dark in a literal sense, but they are also fighting over morality, loyalty and duty. Marco behaves as a person who does not value these behaviors; Will behaves as a person who values these behaviors.

Ellie and Jennifer are not fighting in the novel, at least not physically. However, they are compared to each other by their behavior and looks. Ellie represents the moral Good and Jennifer the moral Evil. Jennifer is not a horrible, or cruel person, but she is self-centered and shallow. Ellie's character is concerned, caring and introspective. Jennifer is tall, blond, popular and without much conscience. Ellie is the opposite in every way. Jennifer's character is not punished for her behaviors, but Ellie's character is rewarded for hers. Their struggle and comparison is not the literal Good and Evil that is seen in Will and Marco's relationship, but it typifies the moral Good and Evil implied through out the book.

Betrayal.

Betrayal is another theme seen throughout Avalon High. Betrayals seem to be some of the greatest motivators of the characters in the book. At each betrayal point, the characters involved have are presented with a choice. Their choice is how to react to the blow dealt to them. This goes back to the Good and Evil theme discussed earlier. Reactions to betrayal can take the form of Good or Evil thoughts, actions or reactions. Betrayal drives much of the plot and many of the characters.

Ellie has strong feelings about her namesake. Elaine of Astolat is betrayed by Lancelot and kills herself in reaction. Ellie doesn't identify with Astolat and muses that she is a stronger woman than the one in the poem. This comparison implies that Ellie would not let a betrayal take her under.

Will is betrayed by his brother, his best friend, his girlfriend, his mother and his father. By the end of the book, a weaker character may have thrown in the towel (look at Marco). However, Will is determined to forgive those who betray him and to use their betrayals as opportunities for growth. He forgives his brother and tries to understand his hatred, he forgives his girlfriend and best friend so they don't torture themselves, he is working on understanding what his mother has done and he will eventually forgive his father for kicking him out of the house.

Lance is a betrayer, but not in the same Evil way as Marco. Marco's betrayals of Will are meant to hurt Will, something Marco takes enjoyment from. Lance's betrayal, though avoidable, is not something he is proud of. Lance doesn't have the strength of character that Will does, if he did he would not have betrayed his best friend. Lance isn't proud of his behavior, but he is honest about it. That honesty shows that there is hope for Lance's character. It also allows Will to react to Lance's behavior in a more positive way.

Jennifer's betrayal of Will is part of the Arthur story, so it needed to happen. However, it is a convenient plot device for Avalon High because it allows Will and Ellie to be together without being painted with the same brush as Lance and Jennifer. Jennifer's betrayal allows Will and Ellie to start their relationship in an honest way.

Style

Point of View

Avalon High is told from the point of view of Elaine Harrison, a mature 16-year-old high school junior. Elaine is introspective and thoughtful, she is also well educated and bright. Elaine uses her inner voice to explain many of the themes and scenes in the book. She is good at understanding the motives of others and picking up clues as to what is going on in the plot. Elaine is a great narrator for the story, as she assists the reader in making connections, which might be lost if they are unfamiliar with the Arthurian legend the book is based on. Most of the other characters in the story reveal their thoughts with frank dialogue and explanatory actions. The character of Stacy is used to fill in the events at Avalon High which took place before Ellie came into the picture. The character of Will is also an enlightening character who tends to speak his feelings out loud for Elaine to help interpret and understand.

Setting

Avalon High takes place in the modern United States on the East Coast. The city of Annapolis, Maryland, is a good choice for the story as it allows the characters access to the ocean, the Smithsonian and the Naval Academy, all of which help set the scenes in the book and provide resources to the characters which might not be available at other settings. Only a small portion of the book actually takes place in the high school itself. As the characters are teenagers, much of the action in the plot takes place around their community. The Ravine, Will's house, Ellie's pool and the school are all common places for the characters to meet and interact.

Language and Meaning

All of the characters in Avalon High use language appropriate for their ages and occupations. The language chosen by the author helps to paint each character as an individual and helps to build suspense in the plot. Characters who are already aware of the Arthurian connection tend to use terms, patterns of speech and vocabulary which reveal their understanding of the reincarnation plot. Others who are not aware of the central plot do not.

All Avalon High, students use language that would be heard in any American high school. Will tends to use language which sounds slightly antiquated, however, this language tracks his changes throughout the book. The more he becomes like Arthur, the more sophisticated his language becomes. Elaine's exposure to Medieval lore, through her parents, enables her to pick up on language cues which pop up throughout the book. For example: at the pool party Marco's talk of Elaine of Astolat raises a red flag for Ellie. However, his reference would not be noticed by other characters who may overhear.

Structure

The book is written in 29 chapters of varying length. The longer chapters are at the beginning of the book when the characters, setting and plot are being introduced. They shorten in the second half of the book as the pacing and plot pick up. The first two-thirds of the book are spent on building characters, plot and background. The last third of the book consists of climax, resolution, and set up for the next installment in the series.

Each chapter opens with a stanza from Tennyson's, *Lady of Shalott*. The stanza is generally descriptive of what will happen in the chapter it precedes.

Quotes

"It's not exactly cool to be named after someone who killed herself over a guy" (Chapter 1, p. 7).

"I mean, she's one of those Oh, I'm so little and helpless, please rescue me, you big strong man types of girls" (Chapter 3, p. 34).

"It was like we were in a different world, a sun-dappled oasis away from it all" (Chapter 6, p. 64).

"What had Lance been doing, chatting up Jennifer Gold while Will was getting the snot knocked out of him?" (Chapter 8, p. 100).

"'Do you ever think' - his blue eyes were very bright in the moonlight - 'that this isn't the first time you've been alive?'" (Chapter 10, p.117).

"'Yeah, well, then I'm a lot better off than old Will here, aren't I?' Marco's smile was snide. 'I mean, with friends like you guys, who needs'" (Chapter 14, p. 156).

"Since when did a high school teacher care so much about whether or not a high school's It Couple had broken up?" (Chapter 17, p. 179).

"Your part in this was over before it could even begin this time" (Chapter 18, p. 186).

"He was breathing hard, his car keys dangling from one hand, as he stared at his mother and stepbrother, his dark eyes filled with something I didn't like" (Chapter 22, p. 227).

"You're not his mother. Tell him! Tell him it's a lie!" (Chapter 22, p. 230).

"His gun case was broken into, you see. Arthur's gun case. And one of his pistols is missing" (Chapter 23, p. 241).

"But surely, if he were dead, the dark side would hard at keeping me from getting here" (Chapter 24, p. 250).

"He looked almost...well, kinglike" (Chapter 26, p. 264).

"'You're not the Lady of Shalott,' he breathed" (Chapter 27, p. 269).



Topics for Discussion

William is the hero of Avalon High. Not only because he is a main character, but also because he is a good guy who shows strong moral qualities. In Arthurian times these qualities would have been called "chivalry."

- 1) What chivalric qualities does Will display?
- 2) What leadership qualities does he have?
- 3) Why does Marco call him the White Knight? Is this a compliment or an insult? Why?

Provide examples to support each of your assertions.

Many of the subplots in Avalon High parallel the subplots in the story of King Arthur. List the parallels between Avalon High and Arthur using the information Ellie uncovers about Arthur's life.

Does the author create these parallels on purpose? Why do you think the way you do?

Forget for a moment that Marco has been affected by the Darkness which is trying to hurt Will. Considering the life Marco has led, why might Marco both love and hate Will?

Provide examples and explain their importance.

Will is given some pretty shocking news when he meets with his step-mother and Mr. Morton in the guidance office.

- 1) What does Will find out?
- 2) How does he feel about the news?
- 3) Why does he worry about Marco after Marco hears the news?
- 4) What do Will's reactions tell the reader about his character?

Is Lance a good friend or a bad friend to Will? Give 3 examples to support your claim and explain why you feel the way you do.

What is the Order of the Bear? Is Mr. Morton a loyal member of the Order? Why or why not?

Explain what happened in the legend of King Arthur according to Ellie's research. Are you convinced Will is the second coming of Arthur? Why or why not? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

Compare and contrast what you know about Ellie with what you know about Elaine of Astolat.

Do Will and Ellie believe that Will is King Arthur? Why or why not? How do you know?