

# **The Once and Future King Book Notes**

**The Once and Future King by T. H. White**

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## Author/Context

*The Once and Future King* is T.H. White's most famous book. He was made very wealthy by its popularity, though, being a bachelor without expensive taste, he could hardly find a way to spend his money. Its plot is based on *Le Morte D'Arthur* (The Death of Arthur) by Sir Thomas Malory. This formidable history of King Arthur, written in the fifteenth century, is the basis for most popular Arthurian myth today. White was fascinated by the mixture of vigor, tragedy, wildlife, religion and character analysis found in Malory. He wanted to write a modern version of the book which would address the Round Table in terms of the current social climate. He wrote *The Once and Future King* shortly after the end of WWII, and he was often deeply pessimistic about the nature of humankind. He wanted his book to explain why Malory called his book *The Death of Arthur*. He wanted to represent Arthur as a role model, as relevant in the twentieth century as when Malory wrote. He was very concerned about the social aspect of politics--were people generally evil or generally good? What was humankind capable of? He wrote many other books, most of them relating to outdoor life in England. His first book, a collection of poems called *Loved Helen*, was published when he was 23. While it was clearly derivative of other English poets, such as Housman, it revealed a sense of artistry that, combined with his sense of philosophy and adventure, made *The Once and Future King* so popular. *England Have My Bones* is his collection of diaries. He also wrote *The Godstone and the Blackymor* and *The Goshawk*, both of which reflect his fascination with falconry and wild forest animals. He was an avid medieval scholar, as is evident at times in *The Once and Future King*. He translated *The Book of Beasts*, a picture book illustrating mythical animals, from Latin.

White himself is considerably more complex than his literary biography seems to suggest. He was born in Bombay in 1906 to mismatched parents. Garrick White was a alcoholic, temperamental police officer who does not seem to figure much in his son's later life. Constance White, on the other hand, inspired thoughtful loathing in her son for his entire life. Possessive, vain and self-absorbed, she stifled him until, he said, he could no longer stand women. She insisted that he love her most, in every way, and he despised her for it. His parents fought constantly and soon divorced. Their only son, Terence, was a good student from the beginning, so that a teacher even told his mother that she must make sure he continued his education. After leaving Cambridge, he taught at a prep school and wrote novels for profit under the name James Aston. He claimed to be desperate to succeed at everything; he had always been bright, so he became obsessed with learning to use his hands. He hunted, fished, and began to keep dogs to accompany him. (Though he had several lifelong friends, he never maintained a romantic relationship.) His dogs were his best friends; he treated them like wives. Brownie, his first Setter, spent her life with him, and when she died he was overcome with grief. He was given another Setter, Killie, by a friend, and treated her well, but his mourning for Brownie was intense and unabated. He had a temper and was at times difficult to get along with, but he could also be very kind. The conflicts in his own life, he admitted, made it easier for him to write such contradictory characters as Lancelot, Guenever, and Arthur himself. Late in life he began to bring blind people in search of



companionship to his sprawling rural home, and became very good friends with some of them. Because he contributed so much to the happiness of others (through writing and companionship) but found little happiness for himself, his tombstone reads, "T.H. White, 1906-64: Who, from a troubled heart delighted others loving and praising this life."

### **Bibliography**

Warner, Sylvia Townsend. *T.H. White*. Viking Press, NY, 1967.

White, T.H. *England Have My Bones*. Collins, London, 1936.

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## Plot Summary

Young "Wart" is the adopted son of a minor nobleman when he meets Merlyn, a kindly magician, who takes him on many adventures, turning him into several different animals and teaching him skills, both mental and physical. Wart is very happy and learns to treat people with respect and kindness. Soon after, Wart pulls a magical sword from a stone, which proves him to be the rightful king of England (his real father was the recently dead King.) Merlyn, who knew this from the start, advises Wart-now called Arthur-on how to be a good king. What Arthur really wants to do is end chaos that passes for law in his country. He wants his men-the knights of the round table-to help defenseless people and prevent the rich and strong from simply dominating everyone. Many young knights love the idea and admire Arthur. Lancelot, who becomes the best knight in the world, and Arthur's best friend, still wrestles with self-doubt. Soon after he comes to court, he falls in love with Arthur's wife, Guenever. Arthur knows they are having an affair subconsciously, but he wants to pretend it isn't happening, so the three are able to live in relative harmony for many years.

Arthur builds the Round Table into a predictable form of justice. Other prominent knights include the brothers of the Orkney clan, sons of the witch Morgause, Arthur's half-sister. Their names are Gawaine, Gaheris, Agravaine, Gareth and Mordred. These men are close-knit and hot-tempered. They love Arthur but come from a family that has always hated England, and the youngest, Mordred, is in a dangerous position. He is actually the son of Arthur and Morgause (she seduced her half-brother when he was young and vulnerable.) Since he is younger and has a different father from his brothers, Mordred feels out of place and hated by everyone around him, and he is angry and looking for revenge. Since Guenever has never had children, Mordred is Arthur's only offspring and therefore could become king if he can upset the court. He sees his chance with Guenever and Lancelot.

Mordred knows that because Arthur is just, he will not be able to avoid punishing an illegal act (adultery and treason), even if it involves his best friends. Though both Lancelot and Guenever love Arthur, they themselves are so in love that they cannot stay apart. Lancelot is tormented by guilt, always trying to do the right thing, believing that he must punish himself, but never finding the strength to end the affair. Finally, Mordred forces Arthur to recognize their affair, and once it is recognized, Arthur has no choice but to prosecute his wife and his best friend. The court begins to crumble as everyone is forced to take sides. Arthur's peaceful vision is undermined by Mordred's schemes. Lancelot kills Gareth, Gaheris and Agravaine, only because he has to, but Mordred convinces Gawaine it is because Lancelot has always hated their family. Gawaine swears he will never forgive Lancelot and makes sure Arthur will not either. Arthur leaves the castle, forced to fight Lancelot in France, and Mordred convinces the public he is dead, forcing Guenever to accept his marriage proposal.

At this point Arthur is very old, but he still remembers his original vision of brotherhood, for a time realized with the Round Table. Listening to the sounds of warfare outside, he brings in a young boy and tells him his story, so that it will not be forgotten. Arthur



recognizes that he must die and is at peace with this, knowing that his ideas for law and justice will return. The story pulls backward, explaining that each person's fate is one drop in the ocean of life. Lancelot and Guenever become a priest and nun, and Mordred is killed. But the vision lives on: Arthur is the "once and future king."



## Major Characters

**Arthur:** Arthur, the king of England, grew up the adopted son of a minor nobleman. No one knew he was the rightful king until he met Merlyn, (a magician who became his advisor and friend), and pulled a famous sword from a stone. He was always a kind and just person, and when he grew up married the beautiful Guenever. His central difficulty comes up when his wife falls in love with his best friend, Lancelot. He must figure out how to be just without punishing them-something he wants to avoid because he loves them both. He remains kind, thoughtful and humble, despite being very powerful. He created his 'Round Table' of knights in order to have a just, organized legal system.

**Merlyn:** Like Uncle Dap for Lancelot, Merlyn is Arthur's advisor, mentor and friend, both hot-headed and loving toward the boy and later, King. He takes Arthur on many adventures, helping him realize how special he is, but never forgets to teach the boy kindness and thoughtfulness as well. He tries to help Arthur whenever he can, warning him of Lancelot's affair with Guenever, but never really plays the role of 'wise old man'- he gets himself tangled up in with a beautiful and deceitful woman, Nimue, and is often absent-minded.

**Gawaine:** Gawaine, though hot-headed, is perhaps the most mature of all his brothers. He remains loyal to Arthur in his mind, to the end, but his passionate loyalty is to his family, and he often creates more trouble by avenging them. He desperately wants everyone to follow a chivalric code, to the point that, when he fights Lancelot and Lancelot beats but spares him, Gawaine begs him to kill him, because he believes the fight should be to the death.

**Guenever:** Arthur's wife. Guenever loves her husband, but his best friend Lancelot is really the love of her life. Nevertheless, she does not leave Arthur, and cares for him deeply. It is her inability to forget Lancelot for the good of the kingdom that gives Arthur's enemies an angle: eventually, they demand that he prosecute her and Lancelot for treason. She is a warm-hearted, strong, independent and very beautiful woman. She thus feels at ease in the presence of Arthur's sometimes-wild knights.

**Mordred:** The son of Arthur and his half-sister, Morgause (who tricked Arthur into sleeping with her.) Mordred is much younger than the half-brothers he grows up with. He is also ugly, and his mother alternately is nice to him so that he'll do what she wants, and then ignores him. He always feels out of place and unwanted, and this makes him angry. He hates himself, so he takes it out on everyone else, especially his father. He particularly hates Arthur because he is jealous of him (Arthur is a good man who is well-loved) and because Arthur refuses to reject him: this makes Mordred even angrier. He decides to punish the King by forcing him to acknowledge that Guenever and Lancelot are having an affair. It is essentially his jealousy that brings down Camelot.

**Lancelot:** Arthur's best friend and best knight, and Queen Guenever's lover. Though he is extremely pious and well-loved and skilled at his work, he feels a vague self-hatred which is never explained. This is made worse when he falls hopelessly in love with



Guenever, since he loves and admires Arthur so much. He hates what he is doing but cannot stop. Like Arthur, he feels a strong sense of propriety and justice and duty, even when others do not give him the same treatment.

### Minor Characters

**Kay:** Kay is Arthur's brother, the son of Sir Ector, who adopted Arthur as a baby. Kay is a bit older and enjoys bullying Arthur, calling him 'Wart.' He is the first in a long series of people in Arthur's life who attack him because he is good or special and they are jealous.

**Sir Ector:** A kindly man who cares for Arthur as if he were his own son, Sir Ector teaches Arthur to treat people well. He takes Arthur into his home as a baby when Merlyn, disguised, brings him there, even though he has no idea Arthur will grow up to be the King of England.

**Archimedes:** Though gruff, Archimedes, Merlyn's companion owl, truly cares about Arthur and contributes to his education by teaching him about birds.

**Lyo-Lyok:** A friendly, noble goose, she teaches Arthur that not everyone views life as a quest for power. She is shocked at the idea of war, and Arthur, a young boy interested in becoming a knight, begins to reconsider.

**Agravaine:** The cruel, bullying member of the Orkney family. He has no real ambition, but merely enjoys hurting people. He is in love with his mother, and kills her out of jealousy. He becomes an alcoholic and dies while trying a surprise attack on Lancelot.

**Gareth:** The kindest, most sensitive member of the Orkneys. He has a strong sense of right and wrong and always seems like the baby of the family, which is why everyone at court is fond of him.

**Gaheris:** A quiet, subservient child, Gaheris grows up into someone without much will of his own: he is basically good, but depends often on others for his opinions.

**Morgause:** Perhaps the major source of tragedy in the book, Morgause uses everyone she can to further her own schemes. She encourages her children to depend on her, then abandons them. She seduces Arthur, and routinely cheats on her husband. She is beautiful, and uses that beauty to get her way.

**Uncle Dap:** Dap, Lancelot's uncle, has an old-fashioned, blustery manner that opposes Lancelot's solemn sadness almost perfectly. Dap has fits of rage and frustration over his nephew and student: he works himself up yelling bizarre curses like 'By God's teeth!' But he is never angry for long, and he clearly loves Lancelot. He also shares a love of traditional chivalry with his nephew: a master swordsmith, he creates Lancelot's famous sword, Joyeux. When he realizes Lancelot is falling in love with Guenever, he is more concerned about what this might do to Lancelot's jousting career than about its effect on, for example, his friendship with Arthur.



**Elaine:** Elaine's love for Lancelot contrasts with that of Guenever. Elaine is younger, and loves him the way one might love a movie star: her love comes from awe, not from understanding. She uses underhanded tricks to get what she wants, and when Lancelot leaves her, her character is too weak to recover. She grows fat and pathetic, and eventually kills herself.

**Galahad:** The son of Lancelot and Elaine, and a perfect, pious, holy knight. Lancelot is jealous of him because he is the world's best knight--a title Lancelot himself used to hold--and because he can achieve the Holy Grail, which Lancelot is too impure to do.

**Meliagrance:** Though not very important in his own right, Meliagrance sets the stage for attacks on the Queen. He is the reason Mordred realizes he can attack Arthur through Lancelot and Guenever.

**Tom:** The young knight who will tell Arthur's story, Tom Malory is a fictional version of the real Sir Thomas Malory, who wrote *Le Morte D'Arthur*, on which much of *The Once and Future King* is based.



## Objects/Places

**The Castle of the Forest Sauvage:** The estate of Sir Ector, Arthur's adopted father. Arthur is raised here and taught by his kind guardians to love, trust and respect everyone. It is here that he speaks to animals, gaining a perspective on the world that not many people have.

**Sword in the Stone:** One of the central objects in the story, the sword proves Arthur's real identity and sets his destiny in motion. The young 'Wart' goes from being a bullied orphan to being an admired king, the moment he pulls the magic sword from its stone—something no one else can do. Immediately, his brother and father fall to their knees in amazement. Merlyn, his magician-friend, begins to tell him about his future, and suddenly Arthur transforms from a goofy, curious boy to an uncertain but maturing king..

**The Unicorn:** The Orkney clan's adventure with the unicorn is very revealing in terms of the personalities of each boy. They decide to capture a unicorn and bring it to their mother, Morgause. Gawaine is gruff but kindly, Gareth and Gaheris are innocent and sensitive, and Agravaire is bluntly cruel. As the boys grow up, they remain true to these personality traits. Their good and bad qualities are deep-seated, evident from a very young age.

**The Round Table:** Arthur's greatest accomplishment as king. It represents justice and reason. When the knights are seated in a circle, they are equals, and focus their energy on doing good rather than competing for power.

**The Family Tree:** Arthur's family tree is at the center of the tragedy of his life. When he unknowingly sleeps with his half-sister, and she gives birth to his son Mordred, the undeniable fact of that mistake can never be erased. He even tries to murder all the babies who were born around Mordred's projected birth day, but Mordred survives. Everything Arthur does to avoid the destiny of his family tree brings him closer to it.

**Holy Grail:** Arthur uses the Grail to help his knights focus on something good, rather than fighting amongst themselves. Lancelot becomes obsessed with being pious enough to have it, making Guenever jealous, but fails.



## Quotes

Quote 1: "He...was a born follower. He was a hero worshipper." Book 1, Chapter 1, pg. 4

Quote 2: "[Y]ou could not use magic in the Great Arts" Book 1, Chapter 4, pg. 32

Quote 3: "There is nothing except the power which you pretend to seek" Book 1, Chapter 5, pg. 47

Quote 4: "'What is the matter now?' he enquired nastily. His inspection had shown him that his pupil was trying not to cry, and if he spoke in a kind voice he would break down and do it." Book 1, Chapter 7, pg. 56

Quote 5: "You think education is something to be done when all else fails?" Book 1, Chapter 8, pg. 69

Quote 6: "Say not therefore to the Lord: What doest thou? But say in thy heart: Must not the Lord of all the earth do right?" Book 1, Chapter 9, pg. 85

Quote 7: "EVERYTHING NOT FORBIDDEN IS COMPULSORY." Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 121

Quote 8: "he was a dumbwaiter from which dumb-diners fed. Even his stomach was not his own." Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 126

Quote 9: "Because you're a baby." Book 1, Chapter 18, pg. 172

Quote 10: "The best thing for being sad is to learn something." Book 1, Chapter 21, pg. 186

Quote 11: "I can bear a good deal of learning if it is about natural history." Book 1, Chapter 21, pg. 192

Quote 12: "Which did you like best, the ants or the wild geese?" Book 1, Chapter 21, pg. 196

Quote 13: "Whoso pulleth Out This Sword of This Stone and Anvil, is Rightwise King Born of All England." Book 1, Chapter 22, pg. 201

Quote 14: "There is something in this place" Book 1, Chapter 23, pg. 207

Quote 15: "we of Cornwall and Orkney must be against the Kings of England ever more" Book 2, Chapter 1, pg. 223



Quote 16: "So far as he was concerned, as yet, there might never have been such a thing as a single particle of sorrow on the gay, sweet surface of the dew-glittering world." Book 2, Chapter 2, pg. 230

Quote 17: "Unless you can make the world wag better than it does at present, King, your reign will be an endless series of petty battles..." Book 2, Chapter 4, pg. 241

Quote 18: "Why can't you harness Might so that it works for Right?" Book 2, Chapter 6, pg. 254

Quote 19: "We could hit Meg too." Book 2, Chapter 7, pg. 265

Quote 20: "The Once and Future King" Book 2, Chapter 10, pg. 295

Quote 21: "They were to press the war home to its real lords-until they themselves were ready to refrain from warfare, being confronted with its reality." Book 2, Chapter 12, pg. 308

Quote 22: "But it seems, in tragedy, that innocence is not enough." Book 2, Chapter 14, pg. 323

Quote 23: "She was pretty Jenny, who could think and feel." Book 3, Chapter 4, pg. 348

Quote 24: "Now, in their love, which was stronger, there were the seeds of hatred and fear and confusion growing at the same time..." Book 3, Chapter 15, pg. 403

Quote 25: "If people reach perfection they vanish, you know." Book 3, Chapter 27, pg. 458

Quote 26: "Guenever's central tragedy was that she was childless." Book 3, Chapter 34, pg. 498

Quote 27: "Traitor Knight, Sir Lancelot, now thou art taken." Book 4, Chapter 7, pg. 601

Quote 28: "I expect she ate Mordred like a spider." Book 4, Chapter 11, pg. 644

Quote 29: "My father committed incest with my mother. Don't you think it would be a pattern, Jenny, if I were to answer it by marrying my father's wife?" Book 4, Chapter 11, pg. 652

Quote 30: "Now that the guns have come, the Table is over. We must hurry home." Book 4, Chapter 12, pg. 658

Quote 31: "The old King felt refreshed, clear-headed, almost ready to being again." Book 4, Chapter 14, pg. 676





# Topic Tracking: Duty

## Book 1, Chapter 13

Duty 1: The ants feel blind duty, and that is all they feel. They cannot differentiate between right and wrong, and they love their leader uncritically. They do not even appreciate the ancient origins of their religion or their orders: their only satisfaction is in completing their jobs.

## Book 1, Chapter 16

Duty 2: King Pellinore feels no personal anger toward the Questin' Beast. He simply feels that, since everyone in his family before him has hunted it, he should hunt it too. However, when he has a chance to kill it, he doesn't. Instead, he nurses it back to health. He feels he has a duty to hunt the Beast, for its own good (it gets sick when no one hunts it, because it thinks no one cares about it.) When he stops hunting it, he gets upset with himself, feeling like he has forgotten his duty, even though his relationship with the beast doesn't make much sense, since he never wants to actually catch it.

## Book 1, Chapter 19

Duty 3: The geese have an understanding of duty that the ants do not. They feel instinctively what needs to be done in order for everyone to be as peaceful as possible, and they do it. Unlike the ants, they do not blindly serve one leader. Instead, they all make their own decisions, but in such a way that it benefits the whole group. They are organized without being restrictive.

## Book 1, Chapter 20

Duty 4: Arthur has somehow developed a sense of knighthood that is different from any of the knights he knows: he feels a great duty to the world. He wants to rid it of evil, and he is willing to sacrifice a great deal to do it. Neither Kay, nor Sir Ector, nor Grummore or Pellinore seem to feel this way.

## Book 1, Chapter 23

Duty 5: Even though moments before, Sir Ector was Arthur's adopted father, and Kay was Arthur's master, as soon as they realize Arthur is King, they fall to their knees. Their sense of duty to the King, whoever he may be, overrides any personal feelings they have for Arthur.

## Book 3, Chapter 6

Duty 6: Lancelot tries to crush his love with his sense of duty. Even though he loves Guenever, he believes his loyalty to the King-and to his own ideas of Right and Wrong-are more important.



### **Book 3, Chapter 17**

Duty 7: Lancelot rescues people even when he doesn't want to, because he can't help himself-he feels completely bound to his sense of duty.

### **Book 3, Chapter 36**

Duty 8: Arthur feels he has a duty to his country, since he has so unexpectedly been made king. He understands what it is like to be powerless (he has been bullied by Kay all his life) so he wants to protect his powerless citizens. This is where the idea of the Round Table begins--and ends.

### **Book 4, Chapter 8**

Duty 9: Gawaine feels such a duty toward his family that he becomes completely lost without them, and is obsessed with avenging his brothers' deaths.

Duty 10: Even as Arthur says he loves the Queen, he argues that he must be just with her: since she has done wrong, she must be punished, whether he wants her to be or not. Mordred, at the same time, uses Arthur's conviction to manipulate him.



# Topic Tracking: Jealousy

## Book 1, Chapter 9

Jealousy 1: Kay is jealous of Arthur, but nothing can be done about it, because it is Arthur's destiny to be special. Kay's jealousy is painful, because there is nothing he can do about it. He feels the pain of being "ordinary" without being able to change it.

## Book 3, Chapter 3

Jealousy 2: Lancelot does not only want to be the greatest knight in the world, he also wants to be Arthur's favorite. He cannot bear that Arthur should even be married, even though a wife is very different from a best friend. He does not want Arthur to be closer to anyone else. Yet he is ashamed of this feeling.

## Book 3, Chapter 4

Jealousy 3: Jealousy blinds Lancelot to the kindness and beauty of Guenever. He cannot see her for who she is, because he has developed his own ideas about her.

## Book 3, Chapter 15

Jealousy 4: Guenever's jealousy of Elaine is so out of control that it drives a wedge between her and Lancelot, even though it is completely unfounded.

## Book 3, Chapter 16

Jealousy 5: Arthur is not inclined to be jealous, so he tries to ignore Lancelot and Guenever's affair. Ironically, it is this good-natured attitude which later allows Mordred to manipulate Arthur so well.

## Book 3, Chapter 26

Jealousy 6: Agravaine is jealous of Morgause's lovers, since she has taught her children to think of her possessively, as a lover. His jealousy is completely out of control, and he kills both Lamorak and his mother.

## Book 3, Chapter 27

Jealousy 7: Mordred is jealous of Arthur because he is a good man, with an easy temper, who is well-liked. Mordred has never been well-liked, and he takes it out on everyone who knows him, making it even more difficult to like him.

## Book 3, Chapter 35



Jealousy 8: Guenever refuses to understand why Lancelot would hide Elaine from her—her jealousy blinds her, making her unable to be reasonable or see the truth. She drives Lancelot to madness.

**Book 4, Chapter 43**

Jealousy 9: Meliagrance's jealousy, not his search for truth, makes him accuse Lancelot of sleeping with Guenever.

**Book 4, Chapter 7**

Jealousy 10: Agravaine and the other attacking knights are jealous of Lancelot. They know that he really hasn't done anything punishable, but they want to see him punished anyway, because his success makes them feel like failures.

**Book 4, Chapter 12**

Jealousy 11: Mordred is jealous of Arthur because Arthur slept with Morgause, and Mordred was made to love his mother because of her possessive nature.



# Topic Tracking: Love

## Book 1, Chapter 7

Love 1: Though it doesn't seem this way to Arthur, Merlyn is giving him a very thoughtful, kind sort of love. He is mean to him so he will get angry at Merlyn rather than feeling sad about not being a knight. Merlyn is willing to accept this in order to make Arthur feel better. At the same time, he feels very touched at Arthur's sadness.

## Book 1, Chapter 19

Love 2: Lyo-Lyok shows Arthur love by forgiving him for his ignorance, and helping him understand the geese. In turn, he loves and respects her back-even though she is a girl, which he normally would not like.

## Book 1, Chapter 24

Love 3: Arthur is surrounded by love of all kinds. Every animal has something different to offer him.

## Book 2, Chapter 1

Love 4: Morgause's sons love her for all they are worth, even though they are frightened of her and confused by her turns of indifference and affection. Because she is so distant, they long to make her love them.

Love 5: Morgause's idea of love is self-serving. She uses her beauty and power to attract people to her, and then uses that to her advantage. This is true even for her children.

## Book 3, Chapter 12

Love 6: Elaine's love for Lancelot is desperate, needy and immature. She manipulates him to get him to stay with her even though she knows he doesn't want to. She is not strong enough to let him go.

## Book 3, Chapter 14

Love 7: Lancelot tries to share his self-hatred with Guenever, in order to help her understand him and therefore, perhaps, improve their love. Since he is so private and ashamed of himself, this means a lot to him.

Love 8: Guenever completely misunderstands Lancelot's gesture of love. She does not understand shame or self-hatred, and she lets jealousy get in the way of her love. She often suspects Lancelot of loving God, or Elaine, more than her.

## Book 3, Chapter 15



Love 9: Because of her love for Lancelot and her underlying fears that their love is doomed, Guenever becomes insanely jealous of Elaine. She knows deep down that this is ridiculous, but she becomes hysterical and cannot bring herself to trust Lancelot.

**Book 3, Chapter 16**

Love 10: Guenever shows her love and trust of Lancelot, and her generosity and pragmatism, when she tells Lancelot that he should try to love Elaine if he can. Guenever realizes that since her love for him is doomed, it would be better for everyone if Lancelot could simply be with the mother of his child.



# Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right

## Book 1, Chapter 5

Might Makes Right 1: The "King of the Pond" terrifies Arthur with his thoughts on life: power is the most important thing, claims the huge fish. This is exactly why Merlyn has brought Arthur to meet him: Merlyn wants to teach Arthur about this kind of thinking, and get him to understand that it is wrong. He wants Arthur to see that the point of ruling is to create order and peace, not just to make people do what you want. Merlyn shows Arthur what a nasty creature the fish is, to make him realize that that isn't what he wants to be.

## Book 1, Chapter 13

Might Makes Right 2: The ants completely and blindly agree with a "might makes right" philosophy. They believe that as long as they *can* overpower their enemies, that means that they were meant to. Thus, they spend all their time fighting with other ants, believing it is their right to kill others, while getting angry if others kill them.

## Book 1, Chapter 18

Might Makes Right 3: Lyo-Lyok teaches Arthur her own views about fighting and power struggles: she thinks they are immature. It just doesn't make sense to her to try to overpower your own people, when you can be so much more successful working together. She gives Arthur, who enjoys fighting because he thinks that is what knights do, a very different perspective.

## Book 1, Chapter 21

Might Makes Right 4: Badger tries to help Arthur understand the other animals of the world, who are bullied by powerful humans. He implies that humans did not originally set out to be the masters of all animals, but that God gave them that blessing-which may not always be a blessing at all, since it makes other animals afraid of humans. Badger pointedly asks Arthur who he liked better, the ants or the geese (when he knows that Arthur liked the geese better, even though the ants are more similar to most humans) so that Arthur will see that some human qualities are not always good qualities.

## Book 1, Chapter 23

Might Makes Right 5: When Arthur simply tries to use force-"might"-to remove the sword, he can't do it. When he draws on all the power and knowledge he has learned from his animal friends, however, he removes the sword easily. He is not able to remove the sword because he is the strongest, or the biggest, but because he has a better understanding of the secret powers of the world, which Merlyn has given him through his education.



### **Book 2, Chapter 2**

Might Makes Right 6: Merlyn makes Arthur understand that, even though it might be nice for him, as the King, to engage in battle while never really having to risk anything, forcing the peasants to do the real work, it is not morally right. He decides that he wants to use his power to change that, so that no one will be able to use their wealth or power to harm others again.

### **Book 2, Chapter 6**

Might Makes Right 7: Arthur finally realizes why he was made King: so that he could stop bullies from running England just because they have money or power. Finally, Merlyn is pleased with Arthur, because this is what he has wanted him to learn all along.

### **Book 3, Chapter 26**

Might Makes Right 8: Arthur is convinced that, because he founded the Round Table by force, even though he was founding it to avoid people using force in the first place, the Table will fail and he will be punished. When Morgause's sons kill her and Lamorak, his prophecy seems to be coming true.

### **Book 3, Chapter 37**

Might Makes Right 9: In order to avoid power equaling justice, Arthur is willing to see his wife burn to death. However, he is unsure whether that will really solve anything, and he finds it extremely difficult to allow it to happen.

### **Book 4, Chapter 14**

Might Makes Right 10: Arthur finally realizes that his idea will work. He will return one day to establish justice on earth, and it will begin with Tom, the young page who Arthur convinces not to fight.





## Book 1, Chapter 1

Arthur, or "Wart," as his bullying brother Kay has nicknamed him, is a young boy of about ten growing up in a small castle near a forest in Medieval England. The boys learn many skills appropriate for young gentlemen of the time: they study Latin as well as jousting, for example. Kay, who is older, is somewhat spoiled and moody: he throws tantrums if things don't go his way. Their father, Sir Ector, is a good-natured man who entertains his friend, Sir Grummore Grummursum, over dinner. They discuss Sir Grummore's day: he has spent it chasing hooligans around the countryside. Sir Ector tells him he really wants his boys to have a tutor, and his friend agrees. The next day is hay-making day, when everyone works in the field under Sir Ector's direction. Arthur is better at it than Kay, but Kay won't admit that. Then it begins to rain, so the hay-making ends and the boys soon decide to take Cully, their hawk, out rabbit-hunting. Kay bullies Wart, because he is adopted. Wart usually allows Kay to bully him, because he doesn't want Kay to bring this up, and also because "He...was a born follower. He was a hero worshipper." Book 1, Chapter 1, pg. 4 Once they find Cully in the Mews, a clean, mysterious room full of tools for flying hunting birds, Arthur worries that Cully might not be right to fly. Kay sneers at this, and takes Cully out, making him fly before he is ready. Arthur knows what to do but realizes that the older boy will get angry if he gives him advice. The hawk flies away, and the boys have to chase after it.



## Book 1, Chapter 2

Kay gets angry and decides to go home, but Wart stays there because he knows that Hob, the servant who trained Cully, would be very upset to know that he was lost. Arthur asks Kay to send Hob to help him. He follows the hawk from tree to tree, getting closer to the huge, dark, dangerous forest. He tries to hatch a plan, but he is afraid. Then he sees something fantastic: a motionless knight in silver armor. When he speaks to him, however, the knight turns out to be less solemn than silly: he rambles about being lost, searching for a "Questin' Beast" for seventeen years, and says his name is King Pellinore. Arthur listens and nods, not sure what to do. Suddenly they hear a terrible sound, which turns out to be the Beast herself, and King Pellinore leaves quickly.



## Book 1, Chapter 3

Arthur falls asleep in the forest, and when he wakes up, searching for food, he finds a cottage. Inside is Merlyn, an elderly magician who lives there with his owl, Archimedes. Merlyn's house is full of wonderful, talking furniture. Merlyn is dirty and muddled and easily frustrated, but he talks to Arthur respectfully, as if he were grown up, and takes a real interest in him. He also, strangely, seems to know who Arthur is. Archimedes is more reserved: at first, he doesn't trust or like Arthur. Slowly, though, he calms down and becomes friendly. They have tea, and Arthur asks Merlyn how he knew he was coming. Merlyn tells him he can see the future and the past as well as the present, which is helpful but also confusing. Suddenly Merlyn tells him that he will be going home with him---he is the tutor Sir Ector has been wanting for Arthur and Kay.

## Book 1, Chapter 4

Arthur returns home, full of happiness. He and Merlyn have recaptured Cully, setting a trap without using magic, because Merlyn tells Wart, "you could not use magic in the Great Arts." Book 1, Chapter 4, pg. 32 Ector is skeptical about Merlyn's powers at first, until Merlyn creates a snowstorm in the castle! Merlyn seems to know about everything, even Kay's bullying, and at first he scolds him about it, but then gives him a hunting knife to make him feel better.



## Book 1, Chapter 5

Sir Ector's castle and surrounding land are called The Castle of the Forest Sauvage. The castle is beautiful, and a very exciting place for a young boy. One day Wart is playing with his dog, Cavall, when Merlyn comes in and begins to speak to him, never talking down to him, just speaking naturally. Suddenly Wart thinks he would like to be a fish. Merlyn seems to expect this, and changes him into one, coming with him (just this once, he says.) Merlyn teaches him to swim, and then takes him to the King of the Moat they swim in--a pike, named Black Peter. The King tells Wart that Might is Right--the only real thing in life is power, and everything else is illusion. He tells him, "There is nothing except the power which you pretend to seek." Book 1, Chapter 5, pg. 47 He uses a lot of big words in his long speech, so that Wart doesn't even realize, at first, that he is about to eat him! He and Merlyn quickly swim away, and reappear on the banks of the moat as frightened humans.

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 1



## Book 1, Chapter 6

One night after dinner Merlyn falls asleep under a tree and Kay and Arthur practice archery. Kay kills a rabbit, and to celebrate they shoot Arthur's best arrow into the air. A bird flies out of nowhere and takes the arrow. Arthur is angry, but Kay thinks the bird was a witch and is frightened.



## Book 1, Chapter 7

Arthur and Merlyn watch Kay practice jousting with a servant. Arthur tries to pretend he is not upset by the fact that Kay, because he is a "proper son," will be a knight, while Arthur, an adopted child, has to be Kay's squire. Merlyn sees that Arthur is upset: "'What is the matter now?' he enquired nastily. His inspection had shown him that his pupil was trying not to cry, and if he spoke in a kind voice he would break down and do it." Book 1, Chapter 7, pg. 56

Topic Tracking: Love 1

Arthur tells Merlyn that he would not have a wife, but that he would have a "lady love"--he's young enough that he doesn't like girls, but he enjoys thinking of himself as a typical knight. Then Merlyn asks Arthur if he wants to see real knights jousting--something he has never seen before. Arthur says he wants to see King Pellinore joust, and Merlyn casts a spell.

At first Pellinore is afraid of Merlyn, because he is so solemn, but they quickly warm up to each other. Pellinore is challenged to a joust by Sir Grummore, even though they have never met and are friendly. In fact, the entire thing is scripted like a play---there are specific lines knights say that they remind each other of. It's not a graceful, legendary sight: the knights are crammed into hot, heavy armor, and they charge at each other clumsily. After a while they get irritated and begin to fight in earnest, but since it is very difficult to hurt someone hundreds of pounds of armor, they don't do much damage and eventually get tired. Sir Grummore conquers Pellinore, but then Pellinore cheats out of it. They chase each other around until they both get knocked unconscious. Merlyn assures Arthur that they are all right and will be best friends when they wake up, and casts the spell to return home.



## Book 1, Chapter 8

It's raining, and Arthur is so bored he goes to Merlyn and begs him for something to do. Merlyn feels offended at first, and asks Arthur, "You think education is something to be done when all else fails?" Book 1, Chapter 8, pg. 69 But finally he decides Arthur can learn from the birds in the Mews (where Cully and the rest are kept), because they are hunting birds and act like soldiers, discussing their great ancestors, and their techniques. Once Merlyn brings Arthur, in his bird form, to the Mews, the other birds begin questioning him harshly about the ways of birds. He barely passes their exam, because of what he has learned in the castle. Then he is forced to stand near Cully, who, it turns out, is crazy and cannot control his predatory urges. Cully almost eats him, but Arthur escapes and the other birds admire him.





## Book 1, Chapter 9

When Arthur wakes up in his own bed the next morning, Kay is angry because he knows Arthur went out without him. They fight, but then Arthur asks Merlyn to include Kay in later adventures. Merlyn says he cannot do this, because he was only sent to educate Arthur, even though that might not seem fair. Arthur protests, and Merlyn tells him a story about a kind man who has bad luck and a cruel man with good luck. In the story, it turns out that what happens to each man is actually part of God's greater plan. In the story, a rabbi says, "Say not therefore to the Lord: What doest thou? But say in thy heart: Must not the Lord of all the earth do right?" Book 1, Chapter 9, pg. 85 Arthur does not understand this, and Merlyn gets angry, but agrees that he can do some small magic for Kay. He tells the boys to follow a path near the castle after breakfast.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 1

## Book 1, Chapter 10

The boys follow the path and enter a forest, and are surprised to find a giant man lying in the grass. He introduces himself as Little John, and tells them he is taking them to his master, "Robin Wood"--the real name, he says, of Robin Hood. They find Robin Wood in a huge lime tree, a very tall young man lying with his head in his companion, Maid Marian's, lap. Robin asks the boys to shoot an arrow, and then decides they are up for the challenge he has for them--even though Marian continually says they are too young to be sent. It turns out that a member of their group, Friar Tuck, was captured by the Queen of the Fairies, Morgan le Fay, and only children can enter a fairy castle. Tuck happened to be with Cavall, one of Arthur's favorite dogs, when it happened, and they vanished into thin air. Immediately, Kay and Arthur agree that they must rescue the victims.



## Book 1, Chapter 11

The boys are told that fairies cannot stand iron, so as long as they hold small iron knives, they can walk into the castle and retrieve the captives, walking out again, as long as they don't eat any of the fairies' enchanted food. The boys are sent with Marian through the dark, wild forest. At first they resent being with a woman, but soon they find that she is a great warrior. The fairies sense the iron knives the boys carry, and turn their castle into food, to tempt the boys to eat. A drawbridge made of butter, however, is not very appetizing, and the boys simply walk in, confront Morgan with their iron, and leave with the prisoners. But a giant Griffin has been guarding the castle—a creature that is part falcon, part lion and part snake—and Morgan releases it to attack Robin and his crew. Just as Arthur is about to be killed by the Griffin, Kay shoots an arrow through its eye and kills it. They all go to sleep, because it is too late to return home, and in the morning, Kay brings the Griffin's head home with him with great pride.

## Book 1, Chapter 12

The boys arrive at home with a flurry of welcome and worry and congratulations. Their nurse is very upset at Arthur's dislocated shoulder, and orders him off to bed. The boys have brought with them "Wat, " a man with no nose who was teased so savagely by the neighborhood children that he lived in the wild forest. Wat becomes friends with "the Dog Boy, " whose nose he bit off because the Dog Boy was teasing him, and the two become friends, and prefer sleeping the kennel with the dogs to being in the castle.



## Book 1, Chapter 13

Arthur rests for three days, and by the end of it he is going crazy with boredom. He begs Merlyn to turn him into an ant, because that way he can slip through the keyhole to his room, which his nurse has locked. Merlyn grudgingly agrees, and Arthur immediately becomes tiny. He sees a sign above him: "EVERYTHING NOT FORBIDDEN IS COMPULSORY." Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 121 He hears a noise in his head, like a song on the radio that repeats over and over, and he hears a voice, constantly giving him simple directions. He meets another ant, who is pulling dead ants into a certain confused order in such a way that makes Arthur want to ask him, "Are you happy?" He finds, however, there are no words for "happy" in the ant language--no words for any kind of abstract feeling. He cannot say right or wrong---only "done" or "not done." When Arthur tells another ant he is not doing anything, the ant pronounces him insane--"not done." Arthur is able to pretend he is an ant who fell off the nest that morning, and they send him to prepare mash in another part of the nest. He chews the food, preparing it to be stored. He listens to the conversations of the other ants, which are repetitive, stupid and boring. Arthur realizes, "he was a dumbwaiter from which dumb-diners fed. Even his stomach was not his own." Book 1, Chapter 13, pg. 126 Arthur learns some of the philosophy of the ants. They believe that any ant not from their nest should be killed, even if it is of the same species. They believe they are being threatened by "enemy" ants, and have a right to kill them. They say that the enemy is more numerous than they, and is thus unfairly trying to conquer them, but also that they are more numerous than the enemy, so they have a right to be conquerers. They are just preparing to go to war when Merlyn rescues Arthur, sending him to bed in his own house.

Topic Tracking: Duty 1

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 2



## Book 1, Chapter 14

Sir Ector, a kind man who cares for his employees, receives a letter from King Uther Pendragon. The letter says that Uther's hounds will hunt in the Forest Sauvage. The forest does belong to the King, but Sir Ector nevertheless considers it his forest, and is upset. He considers that the King's huntsmen might be killed by any number of wild beasts that live in the forest, and begins to feel better.

## Book 1, Chapter 15

It is Christmas time in Old England, and the snow is thick and beautiful. Sir Ector hosts a huge party in the castle, and everyone sings and eats heartily. They sing a song in honor of their King, and everyone goes home in groups to avoid the wolves.



## Book 1, Chapter 16

Sir William Twyti, who has been sent to hunt for the King, is a sad man who only wants to hunt hares, but is forced to hunt other animals. He and the entire group go out to hunt a boar one morning. Robin Wood, who is a great hunter but an outlaw in the eyes of the King, appears, and Sir Ector nervously asks him not to identify himself. They come upon the boar, who is very dangerous, and everyone is afraid but Arthur, Robin, and Sir William. One of the dogs is killed by the boar, and Robin kills the boar. Sir William blows his horn not in victory over the kill, but in sadness over the dog. King Pellinore later discovers the Questing Beast, nearly dead from grief. Pellinore has quit his search for the beast because he is now living with Sir Grummore--he enjoys having a bed to sleep in at night-and now the beast is lonely. Pellinore, shocked, blames Grummore, and takes the Beast back to the castle to nurse it back to health.

Topic Tracking: Duty 2





## Book 1, Chapter 17

Merlyn decides Arthur needs more education, and sends him out with Archimedes the owl to learn more about birds. Arthur says he likes rooks best of all birds, because they have fun flying, and because they are brave fighters. Archimedes tells him that his favorite bird (not to eat, but simply in terms of their habits) is the pigeon—a bird that is not aggressive, but knows how to avoid all kinds of danger. Merlyn says his favorite bird is the chaffinch, because the males and females separate in the winter, which makes each flock peaceful. Merlyn explains his theory about how birds first learned their songs (they imitated their prey, or the noise of the wind, and then varied it) and Archimedes gets offended. They talk about all the different songs the birds sing and where they came from (owls hoot because of the wind in the trees) and then Kay comes in, late for his geography lesson, and tells them proudly he has killed a small bird.



## Book 1, Chapter 18

Arthur waits in his bed for Archimedes to come get him and turn him into a bird. He thinks about the beautiful spring night, and the infinity of the stars in the sky, and falls asleep. Archimedes arrives and gives him a dead mouse to eat, which somehow he suddenly finds delicious. He gets his bearings in the air and takes off. Archimedes teaches him how to fly as an owl. He catches a sparrow for himself, but tells Arthur he can't do it too, because no owl kills unless he is really hungry. Archimedes, on Merlyn's instructions, then turns Arthur into a wild goose.

The world is now flat for Arthur, because it is night and the only thing he can see is mud, which is totally featureless. The only other things he can make out are the sound of the roaring ocean and the dim lights from a few fishermen's cottages. He stands amid a large crowd of geese, who begin talking excitedly as the sun comes up. They are in family groups, and Arthur feels uncomfortable joining one, but as soon as the goose next to him flies up into the air, he follows her instinctively. Later, he talks with her as they eat the grass from a field. He admits that he doesn't know the ways of geese because he is human, and she isn't too surprised-she has heard of this before. But when he asks her if they are at war with any other geese, she gets very offended. She can't believe that any species would fight against itself. She only understands defending oneself from natural predators, like foxes. For a while, she won't even talk to Arthur about it. Then she forgives him, seeing he is confused. She tells him her name is Lyo-Lyok and that the reason birds don't have war is because they can't fight over boundaries-there are no boundaries in the air. Arthur tells her he likes fighting, and she answers, "Because you're a baby." Book 1, Chapter 18, pg. 172

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 3



## Book 1, Chapter 19

Lyo-Lyok explains the ways of the geese. They have no laws, except ones that are naturally agreed on, and there is no sense of large-scale ownership: if a goose finds food, it belongs to that goose only, and each goose has its own nest, but no more. One day, Arthur and the rest of the geese feel instinctively that it is time to migrate. It is a wonderful feeling, to fly with such a purpose, and it feels like a party for Arthur, since there are so many geese. There is a story that a farmer caught an old "admiral" goose—one of the leaders—and tied it in his yard. He found that soon, the goose was controlling the hens, rounding them up into the hen house each night. Geese have a sense of what needs to be done. When they have crossed the North Sea, Arthur finds himself in bed and human. Kay tells him he's been snoring like a honking goose all night.

Topic Tracking: Love 2

Topic Tracking: Duty 3



## Book 1, Chapter 20

Six years pass at the castle without much change. Kay continues to bully Arthur and make fun of people meanly, even though he doesn't seem to want to. It seems like he cannot help himself. Arthur continues to like Kay and be altogether pretty naïve. They grow apart, because Kay will be knighted soon, and Arthur will have to be his squire, so they cannot be friends in the same way anymore. Arthur is very unhappy about not getting to be a knight. He asks Merlyn what becoming one is like, and Merlyn tells him it's mostly unnecessary fuss. Arthur tells him he would take it very seriously if he were to be a knight. He would want to confront every evil in the world, so that he could either destroy it or take the blame himself if he failed. He relates all this in a very innocent but heartfelt way. This seems to upset Merlyn, but he doesn't discuss how he feels.

Topic Tracking: Duty 4



## Book 1, Chapter 21

Kay is about to be knighted, and Arthur is unhappy but trying not to show it. He goes to see Merlyn, who tells him, "The best thing for being sad is to learn something." Book 1, Chapter 21, pg. 186 He says that will cure anything. He tells him that he should learn about the animals of the earth, and that aside from Archimedes, the badger is the most knowledgeable creature he knows of, so he turns Arthur into one. First, though, he tells him that this will be the last time he can turn Arthur into anything: once Kay becomes a knight, Merlyn must leave Arthur. As a badger, Arthur walks around, very unhappy about having to be a squire and Merlyn's leaving. Badgers are vicious and fierce and very tough, so this makes Arthur feel a little better. He meets a hedgehog, which he decides to mercilessly devour. The creature, however, curls up tightly and sings to Arthur in such a pitiful way that Arthur cannot eat him. He asks him where he learned to sing. He learns that Merlyn raised the hedgehog, and begs him to uncurl and talk to him. But the hedgehog doesn't trust badgers, and refuses to uncurl. Arthur finally leaves him alone, telling him that he has cheered him up immensely by being so charming.

When Arthur meets him, Badger tells him that the only two things he can teach Arthur are to dig and to love his home. He shows Arthur around his house, which is clean and well-kept. He sits down with Arthur and they talk about learning. Arthur says, "I can bear a good deal of learning if it is about natural history." Book 1, Chapter 21, pg. 192 The Badger tells him that he has recently written a paper about how Man came to be the leader of the animals, and describes it to Arthur. He tells him the story of how God created all the animals. God gave them each a choice of what tools they would like-for example, badgers asked for their skins to be tough shields, for their mouths to be weapons, and for their arms to be strong tools to dig with. But Man asked for nothing: Man only wanted to be able to use homemade tools, but to be defenseless without them. God was pleased by this, and made Man the master of all the other animals. Still, the Badger does not think that Man is really the luckiest of all the animals, because Man is one of the very few that makes war on its own kind. Arthur protests that war sometimes brings good things: bravery, and good friendship between soldiers, and endurance. Badger thinks for a moment, then simply asks him, "Which did you like best, the ants or the wild geese?" Book 1, Chapter 21, pg. 196

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 4



## Book 1, Chapter 22

King Pellinore arrives with big news: King Uther Pendragon is dead, and he has no children to take his place. A sword has appeared outside a church, stuck in an anvil which is placed on top of a stone. The sword passes through the anvil into the stone, and written on it are the words, "Whoso pulleth Out This Sword of This Stone and Anvil, is Rightwise King Born of All England." Book 1, Chapter 22, pg. 201 No one has been able to pull the sword out. There will be a tournament held in London, where anyone who wants to can try to remove the sword. Kay and Sir Ector decide to go, so that Kay can make an attempt, and they tell Arthur (who was with Merlyn during the whole discussion of Uther's death) just as he is saying good bye to Merlyn. Arthur wants to go to London, but he is more concerned about Merlyn's departure-he has to leave the room once Merlyn is gone, because he is so overcome with unhappiness.



## Book 1, Chapter 23

The castle's inhabitants make their journey to London---a very dangerous one, because most of the way the roads are barely clear through the forest. London is very crowded, but Sir Ector owns a bit of land there, so they are able to find rooms to sleep in. However, the next morning Kay forgets his sword on the way to the tournament (where he hopes to joust) and sends Arthur back to their inn to get it. Arthur finds the inn locked up, so he walks around town trying to think of how to get a sword for Kay. He comes upon the famous sword in the stone and, not knowing what it is, tries to remove it. He can't move it, but he feels strange whenever he touches it: everything seems clearer and more beautiful and he can hear the voices of all the animals he knew throughout his childhood. "There is something in this place," says Arthur curiously Book 1, Chapter 23, pg. 207 He hears each voice telling him how to take the sword-the owls, badgers, geese, etc. all contributing their strengths and knowledge-and then, suddenly, he removes the sword very easily.

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 5

Arthur brings the sword to Kay, who sees that it is not his sword, and, learning that it is the sword from the stone, he runs to Sir Ector-and tells him that *he* removed the sword! However, when Ector asks him directly whether he is telling the truth, Kay admits that Arthur brought him the sword. The three of them go back to the churchyard and put the sword back into the stone, and watch Arthur pull it out several more times. Once they realize that Arthur really is the King of England, they both get on their knees before him. This makes him very upset, and he wishes he had never seen the sword.

Topic Tracking: Duty 5

## Book 1, Chapter 24

Though there is naturally some resistance to the idea of a young nobody becoming king, most of England's citizens are happy to welcome someone new, because Uther's reign was chaotic. Stronger, more powerful knights were able to bully weaker or poorer people, and there was very little law or justice. All of Arthur's friends, human and animal, send him something in congratulation. Merlyn returns to him then, telling him he will stay for a long time. He tells him that, since he can see the future and the past, he always knew that Arthur was Uther's son-in fact, he was the one who brought Arthur to Sir Ector as an infant in the first place. He knows Arthur's future-- his joys and his sorrows.

Topic Tracking: Love 3





## Book 2, Chapter 1

There is a castle with a tower, at the top of which is an uncomfortable room, cold and damp. It is the bedroom of four boys: Gawaine, Agravaine, Gareth, and Gaheris. They are Scottish and are collectively called the Orkneys, because they are from those islands. The room is unfurnished and they have no beds. They are telling a story quietly, because they can hear their mother downstairs. She is the sort of mother who might punish her children, or might not, depending on her mood, so the boys are afraid of her. The boys are aged ten to fourteen, and Gawaine is the oldest, so he tells the story. They know little English—they speak Gaelic and the old language of chivalry—but that will change once they grow up and become knights at King Arthur's court. Gaheris is a good, reliable person, and Gareth is the baby of the family. Gawaine tries to be authoritative, and Agravaine does too, but in a more bullying way. The story is about King Uther Pendragon. Many years before, he had fallen in love with Igraine, the boys' grandmother, even though she was married and had three daughters—the boys' mother, Morgause, and their two aunts, Elaine and Morgan. Uther went to war with the Earl of Cornwall, Igraine's husband, and the Earl was killed in battle. Then, according to the story an evil magician named Merlyn brought Uther to Igraine, who was forced to marry him, even though he had been responsible for her husband's death. The boys, even though they have heard the story many times, are still shocked by how evil the English can be. Their mother had taught them the story.

In the room below, their mother, Morgause, is entertaining herself while her husband is away at war. She is boiling a live cat, so that she can take one of its bones, which will make her invisible. Her sister, Morgan, is the witch who kidnaped Friar Tuck, but Morgause is not so involved with magic. She is lazy and ignorant and cruel, but she is very beautiful.

The boys reflect on the story. Gareth is upset by it because it involves someone being forced into marriage: he doesn't like the idea of bullies overpowering the weak. Gawaine is not too bothered by this, but he is loyal to his own family, so he resents that the wrong was done to Igraine, his grandmother. Agravaine is upset because the story involves his mother, who he feels strangely about. Gaheris simply agrees easily with others. They all agree that they must hate Arthur, because their mother has told them that he is a Pendragon, and they love their grandmother Igraine, and, especially, their mother Morgause. This, they say, is the reason "we of Cornwall and Orkney must be against the Kings of England ever more" Book 2, Chapter 1, pg. 223 Morgause, however, does not particularly care about her sons. She is too self-absorbed to really be interested in anything but her own beauty and charms.

Topic Tracking: Love 4

Topic Tracking: Love 5



## Book 2, Chapter 2

Arthur and Merlyn look down from the castle at the town. There has been some letup in the Gaelic wars lately (Morgause's husband, King Lot, and others, are fighting Arthur). Arthur is still young and naïve—he thinks of fighting as a game—and Merlyn is still frustrated about this. He reminds Arthur that many people die in battle. He tells Arthur not to be like his father, to change the fact that kings and knights do whatever they want, while the peasants who are forced to fight for them are murdered. Arthur agrees that it is wrong, and that he will think about it. He is confident, and young: "So far as he was concerned, as yet, there might never have been such a thing as a single particle of sorrow on the gay, sweet surface of the dew-glittering world." Book 2, Chapter 2, pg. 230

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 6



## Book 2, Chapter 3

On a hunt with Arthur, Kay asks Merlyn who Queen Morgause is, and why her husband, King Lot, is fighting Arthur. Merlyn tells them simply that Lot fights Arthur because Arthur's ancestors have been conquering Lot's ancestors for thousands of years, and because since Uther raped Morgause's mother, Morgause hates Arthur as Uther's son. Merlyn doesn't believe that any of these are good reasons for a war.

## Book 2, Chapter 4

Arthur, Kay and Merlyn continue to discuss whether a war could ever be a good thing. Merlyn says it could not, because no matter how terrible someone is, they can always be stopped by reason rather than war, and therefore, whoever makes the first move toward real warfare is always the one most in the wrong. Merlyn tells Arthur: "Unless you can make the world wag better than it does at present, King, your reign will be an endless series of petty battles..." Book 2, Chapter 4, pg. 241



## Book 2, Chapter 5

Mother Morlan's house, in the Out Isles where Morgause's sons live, is small but interesting. Gawaine, Agravaine, Gaheris and Gareth visit her and ask for a story from her guest, Saint Toirdealbhach. The old man tells them a story about a king who gets a bullet lodged in his brain, and is told that as long as he doesn't get excited, he will be all right. Then one day he gets excited by his religion, and dies. The boys all react to this differently: Gawaine thinks it is silly because it didn't concern his family, so there was no reason to get so worked up; Agravaine thinks the king should have worried more about his health; and Gareth thinks it was a noble way to die. After the story, the boys leave and are confronted by a magic barge, which contains King Pellinore, Sir Grummore, and a wise, non-Christian knight named Sir Palomides. The entire village is entranced by the sight of these three men arriving in the water. The villagers, who are subjects of King Lot, wonder if these men are coming to attack Lot in the name of King Arthur. The three knights, however, have been on a quest, so they are comically ignorant of the war between Lot and Arthur.

## Book 2, Chapter 6

Arthur summons Kay and Sir Ector Merlyn and talks about his ideas on chivalry. He says that he has suddenly realized that Merlyn, even though he doesn't agree with fighting, is helping Arthur win the war against Lot and the other aggressors so that he can then stop war from being the solution to everything. Arthur says that once he gets control of his country, he will stop the murder and thieving that the powerful people have been subjecting the weaker ones to. "Why can't you harness Might so that it works for Right?" he asks Book 2, Chapter 6, pg. 254 Merlyn seems to finally believe that Arthur is thinking right.

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 7



## Book 2, Chapter 7

Pellinore is in love with Piggy, a middle-aged woman who is the daughter of the Queen of Flanders. He and the other two knights were with her until the magic barge arrived at her castle. They got into it, because knights never refuse an adventure, and it took them away from her, all the way to Morgause's island. Pellinore is therefore very unhappy. Morgause tries to attract Palomides, Grummore and Pellinore, by taking them hunting for a unicorn. Her four sons are disturbed. They visit Saint Toirdealbhach again-he has been their teacher, since their mother cared little about their education-and ask him for another story. He tells one about a witch, then the boys decide that, to get their mother's attention, they will catch a unicorn. They learn that they must have a virgin girl as bait, so they force their kitchen maid, Meg, to come with them. She doesn't want to go, but they make her. They make plans, and Agravaine seems the most interested in making people do what he wants. He suggests that they drive the unicorn home with sticks, then adds, "We could hit Meg too." Book 2, Chapter 7, pg. 265 A beautiful, tame, sweet unicorn arrives, but Agravaine, who has pretended Meg was his mother, cannot stand it to be near her and kills it. The other boys are furious. They decide that they can at least bring the unicorn's head to their mother, so, miserably, they hack it off. But when they finally get it to the castle, Morgause is too busy with Sir Grummore to even notice them.

## Book 2, Chapter 8

Instead of planning for the war against Lot and the other rebels, Arthur talks about his idea for a new kind of law. He wants to have a hundred and fifty knights, all at a Round Table that will be like a wheel, with the servants serving food by walking around the inside. Merlyn is very pleased with Arthur. Arthur says that the knights should be young, so they can be taught this new way of thinking. Merlyn tells him that, since he is going to marry King Leodegrance's daughter, Guenever, he might ask her father for his Round Table. Arthur is uncomfortable knowing the future. Kay tells Merlyn he knows of a good reason to start a war: to force people to follow a good idea. Merlyn says it makes more sense to make the idea available, but not force it on people, but Kay argues that this is not what Arthur is doing.





## Book 2, Chapter 9

Pellinore is still very lovesick for Piggy, so Palomides and Grummore decide to dress as the Questing Beast and let Pellinore hunt them to cheer him up. After much trouble, they build a costume. Morgause realizes that the knights are too silly to realize she is trying to seduce them, so suddenly she becomes interested in her children, to their surprise, pleasure and nervous confusion. Agravaine thinks they should write a letter to their father, to let him know their mother is spending so much time with Pellinore and the others. Gawaine is furious that he wants to betray their mother. They fight, and Agravaine pulls a knife on his brother. Gawaine goes into an uncontrollable rage, beating his weaker brother until he is almost dead.

Palomides and Grummore convince Pellinore—who has had a vision of the children he will have with Piggy—to go out and hunt the Questing Beast. But once they dress up in their costume, the real Questing Beast appears, and falls in love with them, following them around. Pellinore never finds them, and goes to bed, disappointed.



## Book 2, Chapter 10

On the eve of the battle with Lot, Merlyn worries about something he has forgotten to tell Arthur. Arthur doesn't care, because he doesn't like knowing the future anyway. But Merlyn is very upset. He has told Arthur that Arthur's best knight, Lancelot, and Guenever will fall in love, and that Merlyn himself will fall in love with a woman named Nimue, who will lock him in a cave for many years. But he has forgotten something. Merlyn tells Arthur that even knowing the future cannot change it: fate cannot be changed. He tells him, though, that Arthur's tombstone will read: "The Once and Future King." Book 2, Chapter 10, pg. 295, so Arthur, like Merlyn, will return one day.

## Book 2, Chapter 11

Palomides and Grummore beg Pellinore to kill the Questing Beast, because she has fallen in love with them and will not leave them alone. Pellinore refuses, telling them to run back to the castle while he holds her so she can't chase them. They do so, nearly fainting from exhaustion, and the Beast eventually gets loose and waits outside the castle, crying. Suddenly King Pellinore appears with Piggy, the Queen of Flanders' daughter (she and the Beast searched for him together). They slip into the castle before the Beast can follow. Pellinore and his friends are brought to a bachelor party held by Saint Toirdealbhach, who is marrying Mother Morlan, and everyone gets along well.



## Book 2, Chapter 12

The battle is fought like two battles: the masters (kings, knights, etc.) who don't seriously want to hurt each other, and the slaves, who fight mostly for their masters' entertainment. Arthur, on the other hand, wants his men to fight the enemy's leaders: "They were to press the war home to its real lords-until they themselves were ready to refrain from warfare, being confronted with its reality." Book 2, Chapter 12, pg. 308 Arthur does not fight by the rules: he attacks at night, and he only attacks the leaders of the opposition, leaving the foot soldiers alone. King Lot, who is used to the old, chivalric way of fighting, is confused and cannot respond well to these attacks. He and his comrades surrender.



## Book 2, Chapter13

Pellinore and Piggy talk about the four sons they will have: Aglovale, Lamorak, Dornar and Percivale. The Questing Beast still waits outside the castle for her "mate." Merlyn comes to visit. He still can't remember the one thing he knows he needs to tell Arthur. Palomides and Grummore try in vain to explain the situation to the Beast. Meanwhile, Queen Morgause is preparing to go to visit Arthur, bringing her children along. She has heard he is young, charming, and in love with a girl called Lionore. Morgause has magic planned: she has cut an outline of skin from a dead man, which she will throw over Arthur's head while he sleeps and tie in a bow. This will make him fall in love with her. The boys, meanwhile, pray that they will never forget their heritage, and that they will never disappoint their mother.



## Book 2, Chapter 14

The Questing Beast finally believes Sir Palomides' explanation of who her "mate" really was (Palomides and Grummore dressed as a beast!) but then she falls in love with Palomides himself. She is no longer interested in Pellinore, even though he has chased her for eighteen years, so from then on Palomides "hunts" her. There is a fabulous double wedding at Arthur's castle, with Pellinore and Toirdealbhach and their new wives. Merlyn is far away, on a vacation, but he wakes up suddenly, remembering what he needed to tell Arthur: who his *mother* was! Arthur's mother, Igraine, was also the mother of Morgause, Morgan and Elaine-the three sisters whose father was killed by King Uther. Uther had fallen in love with Igraine, and forced her to marry him, even though she already had those three daughters. Arthur was the child of that marriage. No one knew where Arthur had been taken when he was born but Uther and Merlyn-not even Igraine. Now Merlyn remembers that he never told Arthur this, but he is sleepy, and figures he can tell him in the morning.

Now it is too late, however, because Morgause-Arthur's half-sister-has come for Arthur. She appears before him, beautiful, with her four children behind her to make her seem more appealing. Arthur falls for her, and she has his baby nine months later. She names him Mordred. Thus, Arthur's family tree includes incest, even though he did not know it at the time. "But it seems, in tragedy, that innocence is not enough." Book 2, Chapter 14, pg. 323



## Book 3, Chapter 1

Lancelot is a young man living in the castle of Benwick. He has been to Arthur's castle, because his father, King Ban, helped Arthur stop Lot and the others. Arthur noticed him because he was good at knightly games, and told him about his Round Table plan. Lancelot was in love with Arthur, his power and his goodness, and would do anything he wanted, so he agreed to join the Round Table when he was old enough. Now, he is exercising in the castle, preparing himself to go to Arthur. There is something wrong with him, though-he dislikes himself for a reason he himself does not quite understand. He is also very ugly, and for this reason, he decides that when he becomes a knight, he will call himself The Ill-Made Knight.

## Book 3, Chapter 2

Lancelot is to become Arthur's greatest knight. He is not, however, the romantic figure that popular myth has made him out to be. He is fiercely devoted to Arthur's cause, and he is solitary and unhappy with himself. With the help of his uncle and personal aide, Uncle Dap, he works very hard for three years, even though he is so young, to be strong enough for Arthur. He also wants to be holy and good, because he thinks he is a terrible person. He wants to be able to heal people miraculously.





## Book 3, Chapter 3

Uncle Dap and Lancelot understand each other, even though no one else does. Uncle Dap is a great expert on knightly matters. When Lancelot is eighteen, Merlyn comes to tell him to join Arthur's Round Table. He tells Lancelot that Arthur and Guenever are married, and that Arthur has already made several people, including Gawaine, knights of his court. Lancelot is terribly disappointed that he was not the first. Merlyn introduces the woman with him, who turns out to be Nimue, and when they leave together, it is clear that Merlyn has finally been bewitched by her. Lancelot and Dap leave the next morning for England.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 2



## Book 3, Chapter 4

Lancelot is very upset that he is not the closest to Arthur. On his way to the castle, he comes upon a knight dressed in black. They spar and Lancelot wins. The knight turns out to be Arthur. They are very happy to see each other, and Arthur gives him news: Gawaine killed a woman in a rage, and Pellinore killed King Lot by accident in a tournament, and the Round Table was going fairly well. When he meets Guenever, Lancelot feels nothing but anger and jealousy. Lancelot stays at the castle, and Guenever goes out of her way to be nice to him. She goes with him when he trains his hawk, and tries to help him with his supplies, but he gets angry with her. When he sees she is hurt, for the first time he realizes she is human: "She was pretty Jenny, who could think and feel." Book 3, Chapter 4, pg. 348

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 3



## Book 3, Chapter 5

Lancelot and Guenever fall in love, and King Arthur and Uncle Dap notice it immediately. Dap gives Lancelot a lecture about throwing away his jousting career for a woman. Lancelot denies it, trying to cling to his virtue. Arthur isn't sure what to think—Merlyn has warned him about this, but he can't quite believe it. So he decides to take Lancelot with him on a war, away from Guenever. Lancelot is annoyed at this, because, since at this point Gawaine is the captain of the knights, the only reason Lancelot would go along is to be kept from Guenever. During the war, both of them grow more fond of each other, and decide mutually that Guenever should never come between them.

## Book 3, Chapter 6

Lancelot is more than just good at knight's games: he is also obsessed with honor. This, ironically, makes the situation at court worse, because even though Lancelot was in love with Guenever, he does not run away with her. To do so would have been simpler, and, it turns out, less destructive. When he returns from the war with Arthur, he asks for a leave of absence, hoping to put Guenever out of his mind entirely.

Topic Tracking: Duty 6



## Book 3, Chapter 7

Lancelot goes on many quests to escape Guenever. One day, he comes upon a wicked knight named Sir Carados, who has taken Gawaine prisoner. Lancelot offers to fight for Gawaine, and fairly easily kills Sir Carados. They ride off, and Lancelot joins his cousin Lionel in other quests. But soon Lionel is captured by Sir Turquine, a brother of Sir Carados, who likes to keep people captive, beating them. Meanwhile, Lancelot is captured by four witches, including Morgan le Fay. They keep him prisoner and tell him that although he and Guenever are having an affair, he must choose one of them for his mistress. He denies the affair, and says he will not choose any of them. A young maiden in the castle promises to help Lancelot escape if he will fight with her father in a coming tournament. He agrees to meet her and her father, but gets lost on the way and goes to sleep in a strangely deserted building in the middle of the forest. He wakes up when the owner of the place comes home, and they fight but soon make up, and Lancelot brings the man (Sir Belleus) to be a knight at Arthur's Round Table. He then wins the tournament for the young maiden's father. He meets a woman in the forest afterward who tells him about Sir Turquine (though she does not know Turquine has captured Lancelot's cousin.) Lancelot goes to fight Turquine simply because he believes in Arthur's ideas about Might not making Right. Turquine is a great fighter, but Lancelot beats him, and rescues, among others, Gaheris.



## Book 3, Chapter 8

Lancelot helps a woman get her lost falcon out of a tree, but it turns out that she only asked for his help to trap him-her husband wanted to have a chance to kill him without his armor on. Shocked, Lancelot nevertheless defeats the knight and killed him. He even feels bad about it. When he comes upon a married couple fighting, and tries to end the fight, the husband tricks Lancelot into looking away and then cuts his wife's head off. Even though Lancelot is furious at the man, he cannot kill him--even the fact that he wants to makes him sick. All the people he beats in fights, he sends back to Camelot to kneel before Guenever.



## Book 3, Chapter 9

Guenever, who is Lancelot's age-eight years younger than Arthur-loved her husband in every way except with romantic passion. This, she felt for Lancelot. So, she did love them both at the same time. And When Lancelot sent her all those captives, she truly fell in love with him. When he returns from his quests, Arthur tells him what has been happening with the Round Table. It has turned into a huge competition over who can rescue the most virgins, etc. Arthur is disappointed, and Lancelot tells him to cheer up. Arthur sees the way Lancelot and Guenever are looking at each other, after having been apart for so long.

## **Book 3, Chapter 10**

Lancelot is torn about his love for Guenever. He no longer even cares about his great sword, Joyeux. To steal her from Arthur would be against his religion and against his belief in Arthur's vision of Round Table justice. But, even more than that, he can't be with Guenever because he hates himself too much.



## Book 3, Chapter 11

Lancelot is tortured by his love. He worries that if he gives in to Guenever he will lose his strength, because he believes his purity relates to his powers as a knight. He goes away again, and this time, his quest changes his life. He goes to Corbin to investigate the haunted castle of King Pellès. Once there, he learns that there is a lady kept in boiling water by magic, and feels obliged to help her, since she can only be released by the best knight in the world. Once she is out, he realizes he has done a miracle, as he has always wanted. He learns that the beautiful girl is Elaine, daughter of King Pellès.

Topic Tracking: Duty 7



## Book 3, Chapter 12

Lancelot stays at Corbin for days. One night the butler, who realizes that Elaine has fallen in love with Lancelot, gets Lancelot drunk. He tells him that Guenever is waiting for him nearby. When he wakes up in the morning, he learns that Elaine is in bed with him-she and the butler have tricked him together. He is furious and deeply wounded, believing he can no longer be the greatest knight in the world, since he is not a virgin. She is sad too, but she is so young she doesn't understand what she has done. She says she wants to have his baby, but he tells her that it wasn't his fault that he slept with her, so he cannot be responsible if she has a child.

Topic Tracking: Love 6

## Book 3, Chapter 13

Guenever is twenty-two-older than Elaine, but not old enough to completely be an individual and have her bearings in the world yet. She does, however, have a vague sense of herself. So when Lancelot returns from Elaine, so completely ashamed of himself that he figures he may as well totally betray God, she goes to him without any debate. She always knew they would be together eventually.



## Book 3, Chapter 14

Arthur asks Lancelot to stay at the castle while he helps another king at war. Lancelot and Guenever are thus alone together for a year, during which they are completely happy. Lancelot feels some remorse, though Guenever does not. He tries to tell Guenever his secret about how he hated (and still hates) himself, and has always wanted to do miracles, and how now that they have sinned, he can never do it again. She misunderstands and thinks he would rather be holy than be with her, when really what he means is that he has traded his holiness for life with her.

Topic Tracking: Love 7

Topic Tracking: Love 8

## Book 3, Chapter 15

After Arthur returns, there is news of the birth of Lancelot and Elaine's son, who Elaine has named Galahad. Guenever, who didn't know about Elaine, is very angry with Lancelot. She accuses him of cheating her, and they both cry, and they make up. But she is still doubtful about what Elaine means to Lancelot. "Now, in their love, which was stronger, there were the seeds of hatred and fear and confusion growing at the same time..." Book 3, Chapter 15, pg. 403

Topic Tracking: Love 9

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 4



## Book 3, Chapter 16

Elaine comes to court. She is young and naïve and dull, and she thinks she can make Lancelot love her. Meanwhile, Arthur is back at court, and this makes Lancelot, whose deepest feeling in life is his love of Guenever, feel that this feeling is evil. He still loves Arthur, and feels very guilty. Guenever has hurt him by not believing him when he explained about Elaine. Guenever, knowing unconsciously of all the trouble that is to come from her relationship with Lancelot, is restless and turns mean. Arthur, finally, makes everything worse by allowing the situation to continue: he is too kind and free of jealousy to hate his wife or Lancelot. He mostly tries to pretend it isn't happening. He tries to ask Lancelot about the affair, but can't quite bring himself to do it. When Elaine arrives, Guenever tells Lancelot she will stay away from him for a while, to let him see if he could love Elaine after all, since that would be best for all of them.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 5

Topic Tracking: Love 10

## Book 3, Chapter 17

With Elaine in the castle, Guenever is extremely jealous. She simply cannot believe that Lancelot doesn't want Elaine. Lancelot is courteous with Elaine, but he cannot stand to pretend to love her: he leaves the room when she tries to embrace him.

Topic Tracking: Duty 7

## Book 3, Chapter 18

The next morning, Guenever calls Lancelot and Elaine to her. It turns out that Elaine enchanted herself the night before so that she would appear as Guenever to Lancelot. Guenever does not believe this, even though Elaine admits it, and in a rage throws them both out of the castle. Lancelot runs away in madness, crying. That very morning, he had considered finally leaving with Guenever.



## **Book 3, Chapter 19**

Everyone thinks Lancelot is dead, killed by a boar, but he has really gone crazy and has been living for two years as a "wild man." Elaine is about to become a nun, but she is coming home on the weekend to her father's house.

## **Book 3, Chapter 20**

Lancelot arrives at King Pelles' castle, insane and filthy. No one recognizes him, and he is made a clown.



## Book 3, Chapter 21

Elaine is going to become a nun because she knows she can never love anyone more than she loved Lancelot, and she thinks he is dead. But now he has come back to the castle, and she recognizes him. This changes everything for her. She and her father nurse him back to sanity, and he is ashamed of himself.

## Book 3, Chapter 22

Lancelot tells Elaine that he will stay with her if that is what she wants, but he will not marry her, because marriage implies love, and he would only be doing it out of obligation. Elaine says she would be very happy living with him. They move into Bliant Castle, and Lancelot calls himself the Chevalier Mal Fet, so no one will know who he is. He is very uncomfortable living there with Elaine, but he feels obliged to stay.

## Book 3, Chapter 23

Elaine arranges a tournament for Lancelot, and soon everyone is wondering who the great knight is. Two unidentified knights fight with Lancelot, then reveal that they are from Camelot. Everyone has been looking for him for years. Immediately Elaine knows that Lancelot will finally leave her.

## Book 3, Chapter 24

The knights from Camelot try to convince Lancelot to return there, but he protests that he owes something to Elaine. They tell him that Guenever is crazy with grief over him, and he tells them, doubtfully, that he loves Elaine. But Elaine feels he is going, and asks him to promise that he will one day return. He promises. Then Uncle Dap arrives, carrying his armor and embroidery done by Guenever. Lancelot leaves for Camelot immediately.

## Book 3, Chapter 25

Fifteen years later, things are much the same between Lancelot, Guenever and Arthur, but the court has changed: the knights are younger men who have admired Arthur and Lancelot from their childhood. Arthur's vision of law has evolved, bloodily: even Pellinore was finally murdered by Gawaine, in revenge for the murder of King Lot. Everyone is much more civilized, from the way they fight to the way they eat dinner. Gareth and Mordred both come to court at this time.



## Book 3, Chapter 26

Lancelot and Arthur talk about the state of the court. Gareth and Mordred have both run away from Morgause to be with Arthur, which has enraged their mother. Lancelot dislikes Mordred instinctively. Lancelot tells Arthur that Morgause is having an affair with Lamorak, the son of Pellinore-even though Pellinore killed her husband (by accident). Arthur is terrified of what Gawaine and the rest will do to Lamorak, since they were such a close family. Arthur claims that he has established the Round Table by force, even though doing so went against the very purpose of the Table, and that now he will be punished for it. Sure enough, Gareth arrives to tell them that Agravaine has murdered his mother after finding her in bed with Lamorak. Then Gawaine, Agravaine and Mordred hunted down Lamorak himself.

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 8

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 6





## Book 3, Chapter 27

Gawaine feels terrible about murdering his mother, though he believes Lamorak deserved to die. He hopes to be punished at court. Mordred, however, feels no shame and asks for his pardon from Arthur almost sarcastically. Arthur pardons them both, but is very angry. He believes that now that his knights' Might has erased all the dragons and evil kings from the land, they are fighting amongst themselves simply to use up energy. He decides, therefore, to send his knights on spiritual quests, though the idea makes him a little nervous: "If people reach perfection they vanish, you know." Book 3, Chapter 27, pg. 458 Lancelot is very excited at the idea-he wants to find the Holy Grail--and this upsets Guenever. She has always resented his holiness.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 7



## Book 3, Chapter 28

Many knights die in the search for the grail, and many return empty-handed. Gawaine tells the story of Galahad, who has apparently been self-righteously rescuing people all over the country. He has even beaten his father, Lancelot, in a fight! Still, no one likes him because he is a know-it-all and too holy. Gawaine thinks the whole quest is useless. He has been told by a hermit that he has been having no success on the quest because he has been using it as an excuse to fight with other knights, rather than become pure by finding the Grail. Gawaine disregards the idea, but Arthur is very interested in it.



## Book 3, Chapter 29

The next knight to come home is Lionel, Lancelot's cousin. He reports on his brother Bors, who is holy and pure (and annoying) like Galahad. Bors worries about what is morally right so much that he almost lets his brother be killed because he decides to save a more virtuous person instead. Lionel is at first furious that his brother could neglect his own brother for some "greater" cause, but then he begins to understand Bors's logic. He sees that Bors will find the Grail, because he is truly committed to being good. Arthur is fascinated.



## Book 3, Chapter 30

Sir Aglovale the son of the dead King Pellinore, then arrives. He tells Guenever and Arthur that he must kill Gawaine and his brothers because they killed his father, then he tells a story. His brother Percivale, who is kind and simple and devout, climbed into a magic boat with Bors and Galahad. On the boat, which can only be occupied by those of perfect faith, they find three swords: a great one for Galahad and a lesser one for the other two.

Before the story, Arthur tried to convince Aglovale not to start a long-lasting feud with the Orkney brothers, and now, Aglovale suddenly asks Arthur to invite them to dinner. Arthur is thrilled and very proud of Aglovale.



## Book 3, Chapter 31

For a long time no one hears from Lancelot. There are rumors of him being defeated in battle, going mad, or being killed. Guenever is disturbed, and often almost says something to bring her affair with Lancelot out in the open. Mordred and Agravaine, who dislike Arthur, Guenever and Lancelot--indeed, they resent the entire idea of the Round Table--wait for her to slip. Finally, Lancelot comes home, nearly dead from exhaustion. He has been torturing himself, trying to become pure. He tells his friends that Galahad, Percivale and Bors have found the Holy Grail and gone to Babylon. Bors will return, but the others--and the Grail--will never be seen again.



## Book 3, Chapter 32

Guenever dresses up when she first sees Lancelot, wanting him to still see her as beautiful, which, of course, he does. They are a little awed by him, since they think he has seen the Grail, but he tells them he was not allowed to see it. He says that Galahad is now the best knight in the world, and when he found this out, he became totally miserable. Then he realized that he was only miserable because he himself had set such a great value on being the best knight. He decided to confess all his sins. In telling the story to Arthur and Guenever, he makes clear that he even confessed his affair with the Queen. They realize that he is about to finally confess to Arthur, and Guenever won't accept this. Lancelot knows it is now or never, but Guenever clearly does not want him to tell Arthur. He hesitates but goes on with the story, telling them that he learns that his other great sin was pride-he loved being the greatest knight in the world so that he could show off. Once he gives up this sin, he is still beaten by another knight. Guenever doesn't understand and thinks God is still punishing him even though he has repented, but Lancelot is simply happy to finally have given up his pride and become more holy.



## Book 3, Chapter 33

Lancelot is happy that he has been given the chance to give up his sins. He is told by a dream to get on a fabulous, beautiful boat, where he is in a state of grace and is given everything he wants. Soon, Galahad joins him there, and Lancelot learns that Galahad isn't stuck-up, he's just preoccupied with higher things. Then Galahad is taken away to find the Grail. Lancelot is taken to a chapel, and through the door he sees Bors, Galahad and Percivale, and the Grail. Lancelot is not allowed to enter.



## Book 3, Chapter 34

Guenever is hard to explain, because she is hot-tempered and jealous and possessive, but she is also generous, and faithful, and the men who were drawn to her were good as well. She was not afraid to take what she wanted, but she tried not to hurt others in the process. "Guenever's central tragedy was that she was childless." Book 3, Chapter 34, pg. 498 And she was made for children-she would have been a great mother. So perhaps she took Lancelot as a lover because she had no children to focus her love and attention on. Now, she knows that even though he thinks he cannot come back to her after seeing the Grail, he will. She does not see this as a betrayal of God-she thinks they can have God together. Ultimately, while he thinks their affair is wrong, no matter how much he loves her, she does not believe it is.





## Book 3, Chapter 35

Still, Lancelot does not come back to her, and time passes. She begins to get angry, believing he has abandoned her for God, which isn't fair, because she has always given herself to him. When he sees how upset she is with him, he says he will go back to her, but instead, she tells him to leave, and he does. No one knows where he goes.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 8



## Book 3, Chapter 36

The court has changed. Most of the best knights died in the quest for the Grail, and all the youthful excitement of Arthur's Table has died away. Everyone is most interested now in Guenever's infidelity. She has never been easy to like, and now she has become unpopular. When a knight tries to poison Gawaine at dinner in revenge for Pellinore's murder, another knight dies by mistake. Because Guenever served the food, she is accused of the murder. She needs someone to fight for her, (that is the way guilt or innocence is decided) and she begs Bors (who never liked her) to do it. She cannot find anyone else willing, and Arthur, though he believes she is innocent, feels it is his duty to allow a trial.

Topic Tracking: Duty 8



## Book 3, Chapter 37

Before Arthur's reign, someone accusing the Queen of anything would be killed immediately, but now, because of the new justice, she could be burned if found guilty. Lancelot comes to the rescue at the last moment. He had gone to God because he felt in a very personal way that he loved God more than he loved Guenever, and that maybe God even needed him more. He returns to Guenever now because he does still love her, and she is in desperate need of him. He defeats the knight who has accused her, and Arthur thanks him in front of everyone, as Guenever cries behind him.

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 9

## Book 3, Chapter 38

Even after the trial, Lancelot remains true to the Grail, and Guenever is very angry with him. Arthur organizes a tournament near Elaine's castle, and Guenever forbids Lancelot to go. When she sees she is driving him crazy, she relents and more kindly tells him to go. Of course, he must visit Elaine, since he has the news of their son Galahad finding the Grail and going to God. When he arrives, Elaine assumes he is staying for good.

## Book 3, Chapter 39

Lancelot performs perfectly at the tournament. He cannot tell Elaine he doesn't want to stay with her. She is sensitive enough to try to pretend she hasn't been hurt all these years, and she tries not to expect much from him. This moves him, so that he feels obligated to do what she wants. When he wears a cloth she made at the tournament, Guenever finds out and is furiously jealous. But Lancelot finally seems about to tell Elaine he will leave her again.

## Book 3, Chapter 40

Lancelot returns to Camelot, and Guenever is still raging. They fight, but they fight like lovers. Then Elaine commits suicide. Lancelot feels very strongly that he is responsible, and Guenever, not realizing that Elaine is still between them, even though she is dead, now feels pity for her.



## Book 3, Chapter 41

Things get darker at court. There is another tournament, and Arthur suddenly begins to assert himself against Lancelot, trying to wound him. Also, Gareth fights against his own brothers, and Lancelot beats each one of the Orkneys--Mordred, Gawaine, Gareth, Gaheris and Agravaine. Agravaine and Mordred later plot against Lancelot, partly for this reason. Meliagrance, a knight who has never felt at home at court and is in love with Guenever, kidnaps her, and Lancelot goes to rescue her.

## Book 3, Chapter 42

When Lancelot arrives, Meliagrance gives in immediately-he was never really evil in the first place, just in love. He asks them to stay the night, and they agree. When Lancelot sees Guenever, he understands that she has given him up to God-she is no longer jealous, and only wants him to be happy. Curiously, this makes him love her again, as if nothing had ever come between them.



## Book 3, Chapter 43

Lancelot comes to Guenever that night, in Meliagrance's castle. He cuts his hand breaking through the window, and in the morning, Meliagrance sees the blood. Stricken with jealousy, he accuses her of cheating on the King. When Lancelot tries to calm him down, Meliagrance refuses, and says he will fight him as a trial for Guenever. Then he secretly locks Lancelot in a dungeon, and tells everyone Lancelot has ridden ahead to the scene of the trial.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 9

## **Book 3, Chapter 44**

Lancelot escapes at the last moment and fights with Meliagrance. He and the Queen decide Meliagrance is dangerous to them, so Lancelot kills him in a fair fight.

## Book 3, Chapter 45

Things begin to improve at court again. Lancelot and Guenever are in love, and Arthur trusts them not to let him know it outright-because then, according to justice, he would have to punish them-and Arthur is inventing Law as Power. He is trying to end bullying and fighting altogether.

Lancelot still has not been able to do a miracle since he slept with Elaine. Then Sir Urre, a knight who has been cursed so that he will bleed continuously until he is healed by the best knight in the world, arrives. Arthur decides to let everyone else try before Lancelot, just in case. This tortures Lancelot-what if he fails? Then everyone will know his sin. Terrified, Lancelot comes forward-and cures the knight. Everyone cheers, and Lancelot alone recognizes that the real miracle is that he was allowed to do a miracle at all.

## Book 4, Chapter 1

Several years later, Agravaine and Mordred talk about Guenever and Lancelot's affair. They both want to use it against the crown--Mordred because he hates his father, and Agravaine because he hates Lancelot. Mordred's reasons for revenge are more specific and craftier: Agravaine just enjoys being destructive. Agravaine says that they cannot start a conflict based on something personal: it has to be broadly political. Mordred reveals that Arthur tried to drown him when he was a baby, because he was the product of incest. Morgause taught Mordred, who grew up alone with her, to hate Arthur, but now that he is at court, Arthur is kind to Mordred, which confuses and angers him. Agravaine argues that bringing up the past will just make everyone hate Mordred. He continues that, were they to address Lancelot's infidelity directly, Arthur would be forced to investigate. His new form of justice requires that he try seriously to find the truth (rather than, for example, just killing the accuser.) No one has ever directly accused the Queen of the treason of cheating on her husband before, even though everyone knows about it. By splitting Arthur from his best knight, they could gain power at the castle.

## Book 4, Chapter 2

The Orkney brothers all meet together. Gawaine, Gaheris and Gareth try to avoid discussing Lancelot and Guenever, but Agravaine and Mordred press the issue. Gawaine especially views this as indecent. Mordred pushes the idea that Arthur seduced their mother and defeated their father, and is only kind to them because he fears them. The others protest, and try to keep them from going to Arthur and telling him the truth, once and for all. They fight, and Mordred nearly stabs Gawaine as Gawaine tries to attack Agravaine, while Gaheris and Gareth hold them back. Then suddenly, the King enters the room.

## Book 4, Chapter 3

Lancelot and Guenever look out over a beautiful landscape, where cruelty has largely been replaced with beauty, intelligence and kindness. In some ways, they may even be better than people today, who still fight with each other and believe humans are the center of the universe, but have little sense of moral rules.



## Book 4, Chapter 4

Lancelot and Guenever talk like young lovers, complimenting and nagging each other. He asks her to come to live with him, but she refuses-she does not believe it could be as simple as he thinks. She knows Arthur would have to declare war on them. They argue about the unsolvable problem, then embrace. Arthur has been watching them for some time, and acts as if he has just arrived. The lovers try to cover their emotion and guilt. Arthur decides to make a point: he tells the story of his affair with Morgause. He adds that when Mordred was born, Arthur didn't know where he was, so he had all the babies born at that time killed. Mordred, by some chance, survived. Arthur still feels very guilty. Lancelot and Guenever are shocked he has not told them before. He tells them he has told the story because he is afraid that Mordred hates him, and will try to use anything he can against him and his kingdom. Lancelot suggests that Arthur kill Mordred, but Arthur says that if kings behave that way, so will their people, and then there will be chaos. He continues that, in order to have real justice, a king must be able to punish his friends as well as his enemies-anyone who does something wrong. He reminds them that Mordred may one day be King of England. Lancelot says he will kill Mordred if he tries to steal the throne, but Arthur, who still feels guilty about murdering all those babies, forbids it. With this subtle warning to be careful, he leaves Lancelot and Guenever alone.



## Book 4, Chapter 5

Gawaine, Gaheris, and Gareth try to dissuade the other brothers from telling Arthur about Guenever's affair. They worry that the accusation would start a war, and split the family apart-little do they know that this is exactly what Agravaine and Mordred want. Gawaine tries to make up with Agravaine, and the three try to defend Lancelot against the other two. Absurdly, Agravaine and Mordred claim that Lancelot only does good deeds for his own honor-though Mordred admits that he doesn't care about Lancelot particularly; Arthur is the one he hates. Arthur enters the room, and the three assure him that what their two brothers are about to say has nothing to do with them. Agravaine and Mordred press on, accusing the Queen to her husband's face. Arthur says that, if they can provide evidence of the affair, he will unfortunately (for justice's sake) be forced to punish Lancelot and Guenever. However, he assures them that if they cannot prove it, he will punish them as severely as justice allows. Through all this, Agravaine has been hesitant-he may not like Lancelot, but he's not sure if he wants to start a war-but Mordred is unstoppable. He obviously does not care at all about the King's honor (the supposed reason he is accusing the Queen in the first place). He is doing this out of hatred for the King, and as a ploy for power.





## Book 4, Chapter 6

It is night, some time later. Lancelot, knowing that the King has gone hunting, is sure Guenever will send for him. Gareth comes to see Lancelot, however, and begs him not to go to her. He believes that Arthur has been forced by Gareth's brothers to go away, so as to set a trap for Lancelot. He tries to convince Lancelot of how much they hate him, but he is too innocent-and eager to see the Queen-to listen. He brushes a very upset Gareth off.



## Book 4, Chapter 7

In Guenever's room, she and Lancelot talk for a while, and he mentions the scene with Gareth. They talk about how Agravaine is jealous and resentful of Lancelot-and how the other two people Agravaine hated, Tristram and Lamorak, are now dead. Suddenly, she has a sense that Gareth was right-they are about to be trapped-and she begs Lancelot to leave. He tries to brush her off, and then they hear a voice at the door: "Traitor Knight, Sir Lancelot, now thou art taken." Book 4, Chapter 7, pg. 601 Mordred, Agravaine, and many other knights have come to either capture or kill Lancelot. He has no armor, but opens the door slightly anyway, and one armored knight slips in. Lancelot easily takes his sword and kills him-and, checking under the visor, sees that it is Agravaine. He wishes he had not had to kill him, but he had no choice. He puts on Agravaine's armor and they discuss different plans: if Lancelot can fight his way through the fray of knights outside the door, and Arthur is forgiving, he can come back to Camelot. If Arthur is not forgiving, Lancelot can rescue her and take her to Joyous Gard. He then opens the door and offers the men outside a peaceful meeting to decide whether he has done anything wrong or not. Of course, they reject the offer, telling him that they will kill him if they want to. Lancelot sees that he has to fight them.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 10



## Book 4, Chapter 8

The Orkney brothers wait in the Justice Room, where Arthur will have to watch his wife being burned. Mordred is excited, but everyone else is desperately hoping that Lancelot will rescue her. They remind Mordred that, although Agravaine was their brother, he and thirteen other knights tried to attack Lancelot when he was unarmed, and was killed in a fair fight. They remind him that all the other knights were killed, but Mordred survived because Arthur made Lancelot promise not to kill him. Arthur enters and is kind to Mordred, comforting him as he screams at his brothers for implying that he is a coward. Mordred argues that, since Lancelot will surely try to rescue Guenever from being burned, Arthur should send Gawaine, Gaheris and Gareth to fight him when he comes. Gawaine refuses to go, so the other three leave and he and Arthur wait hopefully for Lancelot, looking down at the field where the Queen will be burned. Arthur wonders whether he should have just ignored Mordred's accusations, but then decides that justice must be done. At the last moment, Lancelot appears, and Arthur is happy, though he is disturbed at how many men have to die in order for Lancelot to save Guenever. He begins to think that maybe after this, everyone can just forget about what has happened. Gawaine doubts that Mordred would ever let that happen. Mordred comes in just at that moment, and tells them that Lancelot has murdered Gareth and Gaheris, even though they were unarmed. At first they don't believe it, but then they learn it is true, and Gawaine falls apart in grief.

Topic Tracking: Duty 9

Topic Tracking: Duty 10

## Book 4, Chapter 9

Six months later, Guenever and Lancelot are at Joyous Gard, which is surrounded by Arthur and his troops. Lancelot tries to explain to Guenever what happened to Gareth and Gaheris: he was surrounded, and had to cut his way through the crowd to rescue her. He could not avoid killing them. Lancelot feels that the entire war is his fault: he thinks that Arthur would have forgiven him, but now Gawaine never will. Lancelot doesn't know what to do: he doesn't want to fight, but putting it off is causing the deaths of many lower soldiers. Suddenly it occurs to Guenever that they could appeal to the Pope. He could threaten to excommunicate them unless they stopped fighting, and Lancelot and Guenever could accept whatever terms he imposed on them, and peace would come. Mordred and Gawaine would have no choice but to listen to the Pope.



## Book 4, Chapter 10

Mordred has become the leader of the popular party, the Thrashers. Mordred continually pushes Gawaine to hate Lancelot by reminding him of Gareth and Gaheris. Mordred has become subtly stranger in the past few months. The Pope has brought peace, forcing Arthur to take Guenever back, and allowing Lancelot to bring her to Camelot and to leave safely. But after that, there are no orders concerning Lancelot, and Gawaine has determined to kill him. Lancelot and Guenever arrive during a ceremony watched over by a bishop, and Gawaine and Mordred sit with the King. Lancelot claims that Guenever is innocent, and he will prove it by fighting anyone but Arthur or Gawaine. He says that Guenever called him to her room that night and, before he knew why he had been called, Mordred and the others were beating on the door, calling him a traitor. Gawaine refuses to accept this, saying that he will never forgive Lancelot for what he did to his brothers and to the King. Lancelot tries to appeal to Arthur, but Arthur, trying to be just and not knowing what to do, allows Gawaine to take over. Gawaine banishes Lancelot to France, and tells him that he will pursue him there. Painfully, Lancelot says good bye to Guenever and tells them all that he will be there to serve Arthur if he is ever needed, as he has been for his entire life. It is the last time he, Arthur and Guenever are ever together. Everyone in the room is humbled, and frightened of what might come of Mordred's ambitions.



## Book 4, Chapter 11

Guenever is at Carlisle, a Northern castle, while Arthur and Gawaine fight Lancelot in France. Mordred has been made the Lord Protector, since Arthur is away. Guenever talks with her maid, Agnes, about her letters from Lancelot and Arthur, which say that Arthur is simply trying to hold onto what is left of his Table by providing justice for Gareth and Gaheris's deaths, but most of the soldiers fight Lancelot to promote themselves. Lancelot has been forced to fight Gawaine, and knocked him down, hurting him badly. Gawaine begged him to kill him, but Lancelot could not do it, and seeing this, Arthur broke down. Guenever pities Mordred, because she believes he was ruined by his mother: "I expect she ate Mordred like a spider." Book 4, Chapter 11, pg. 644 Mordred has been left with Guenever because he is the heir to the throne, so both he and the King should not be fighting at the same time. But Guenever feels uncomfortable alone with Mordred. She has a vague understanding that he has lost his mind. Suddenly, both women feel that Mordred is listening outside the door. They open it, and sure enough, he is there. He enters, and begins to sarcastically and cruelly tease Guenever, pretending simply to be visiting her. It is clear that he was driven mad by his mother—he was so much younger than his brothers that he was raised alone with her, and she was so possessive and yet so cruel that she destroyed him. He has taken on her personality to the point where he seems to be keeping her alive, like a vampire. Guenever is not afraid of him, but she certainly dislikes him. He tells her that he is going to tell the people that Arthur and Lancelot have killed each other, which would create chaos in the country. Horrified, she asks him to have pity on the country people, if not on her. He smiles and says that he does, in fact, pity her. He tells her: "My father committed incest with my mother. Don't you think it would be a pattern, Jenny, if I were to answer it by marrying my father's wife?" Book 4, Chapter 11, pg. 652



## Book 4, Chapter 12

Gawaine, in his tent, is miserable that Lancelot has again spared his life. He is finally learning that bullying does no good, and he is starting to believe that Lancelot does not hate him (as Mordred has made him believe) but he does not believe that things will ever be made right again. Also, he would feel like a coward if he gave up after challenging Lancelot to a fight to the death. Arthur tries to be optimistic. He wants to go home. Gawaine is beginning to realize that Mordred is evil: he even suggests that Mordred was jealous of Arthur because Mordred was in love with Morgause. Still, Gawaine says he will not give Lancelot mercy until he has conquered him. Arthur reads a letter from Guenever, which she has somehow managed to slip through. It says that Mordred has gone through with his plan: he has told the people that Arthur is dead, and that he, therefore, is King of England, and will marry Guenever. Without any other options, she has accepted him. Mordred is now using guns and a cannon, which is unheard of. Arthur says, "Now that the guns have come, the Table is over. We must hurry home." Book 4, Chapter 12, pg. 658 Even Gawaine wants to fight against Mordred now.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 11



## Book 4, Chapter 13

Inside Lancelot's castle, no one knows why Arthur and the others have left for England so quickly. Suddenly Lancelot comes in, holding a letter, and tells his soldiers that they must go to England immediately. He tells them about Mordred's plans. The letter turns out to be from Gawaine, who is dead. When he was dying, he wrote to Lancelot to forgive him for killing his brothers, and to tell him to pray for him, and to ask him to help Arthur against Mordred--his last brother.





## Book 4, Chapter 14

Arthur, who has already fought two battles against Mordred, is tired. His wife is captive, his best friend is banished, and his last good knight, Gawaine, is dead. But what hurts him most is that his ideas about justice have fallen apart. Merlyn taught him that people were basically good, but now he is not so sure. He tries to think about what he might have done, or still could do, to make peace. He feels that maybe war is caused by so many things it is impossible to stop, unless someone is simply willing to forgive a wrong done to them. Or maybe the real problem is that people insist on being possessive. Arthur calls in a page, a very young boy who is eager to fight the next morning. Arthur asks him not to fight, and tells him the story of his life. He tries to explain his idea for the Round Table. He tells the page, named Tom, that he will be the only survivor of the war. Arthur knows this is true, and he wants someone to record his vision of justice so that future generations will know about it. The King sends Tom away and drifts in and out of sleep, thinking of Merlyn, of the way Merlyn educated him with animals. "The old King felt refreshed, clear-headed, almost ready to begin again." Book 4, Chapter 14, pg. 676 He knows he will die, that Lancelot and Guenever will become a monk and a nun, and that Mordred will be killed. But Arthur knows that he will come back, that the Table will return, and even as he hears his enemies' cannons thundering, he is at peace.

Topic Tracking: Might Makes Right 10