



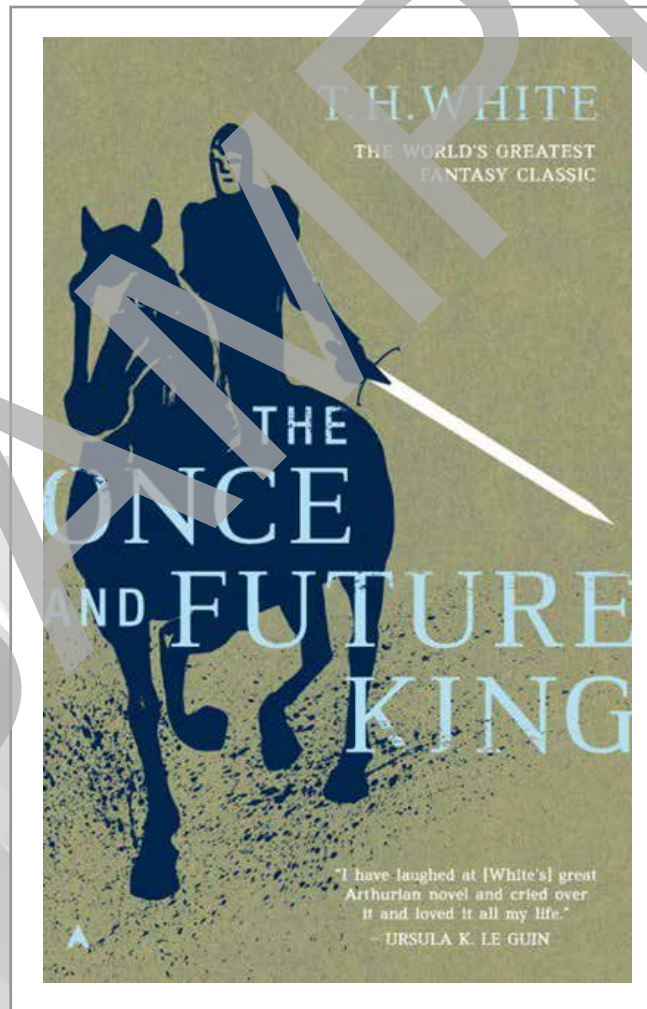
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Once and Future King

T. H. White



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Once and Future King

T. H. White

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,
analyze, brainstorm, critical
thinking

Writing

Prose, poetry, letter, fable,
sequel, ballad

Comprehension

Predicting, cause/effect,
inference, decision-making

Vocabulary

Key words, definitions,
application

Listening/Speaking

Oral reading, poetry reading,
film, viewing, music, drama,
discussion

Literary Elements

Symbolism, characterization,
irony, satire, personification,
metaphor, allusion, conflict,
anachronism, theme, simile,
universality, foreshadowing

Across the Curriculum:

Art—caricature, drawing,
coat-of-arms, collage;
History—research, maps;
Music—lyrics, mood

Genre: fiction

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Style: narrative

Setting: Medieval England (1100-1500), also called Gramarye

Themes: Might and Right (strength and justice), love, chivalry, war, friendship, justice

Conflict: person vs. self; person vs. person; clash of political powers

Protagonists: King Arthur and Lancelot

Antagonists: Mordred and Agravaine

Summary

Four books comprise *The Once and Future King*: *The Sword in the Stone*, *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, *The Ill-Made Knight*, and *The Candle in the Wind*. The books trace the legendary King Arthur from his childhood as “the Wart” and his retrieval of the sword Excalibur from the stone, to his ascendancy to the throne of England, the incorporation of his Knights of the Round Table, and the decline of his reign. In addition to narratives of the knights’ quests, the tales reveal the love triangle involving King Arthur; Lancelot, Arthur’s finest knight; and Guenever, his wife and Lancelot’s mistress. Galahad, Lancelot’s illegitimate son, successfully completes the quest to find the Holy Grail. Mordred, Arthur’s illegitimate son by the evil Morgause, rises to power and subversively attempts to take his father’s throne.

Characters

Note: The characters are listed in the first book in which they initially appear. Numerous minor characters are not listed.

Book One: *The Sword in the Stone*

The Wart: nickname for Art; an abandoned child raised by Sir Ector; naïve and candid; educated by the magician Merlyn; destined to become King Arthur

Kay: Sir Ector’s only biological son; stubborn, desires honor; eventually serves under King Arthur as Sir Kay

Sir Ector: Lord of the Castle of the Forest Sauvage; father of Kay, foster father of the Wart; kind and benevolent

Characters With Character

Directions: A person's **character** is evaluated by his or her actions, statements, and by the way he or she treats others. For each of the attributes listed in the center of the page, write the name of one character from the novel who has that trait, and the name of a character who does **not** have that trait. After each character's name, give an example of an action or statement which proves you have properly evaluated the character.

Has This Trait		Doesn't Have This Trait
	tells the truth	
	keeps promises	
	considers consequences of actions	
	sacrifices for others	
	listens to others without pre- judging them	
	is a good person	
	is kind and caring	

Note: Have students begin to identify literary devices and anachronisms as they read the novel. Examples of these devices are given in the Supplementary Activities for each section.

Book One: *The Sword in the Stone*

Chapters 1-4, pp. 9-40

Sir Ector oversees the care of his son Kay and his foster son, the Wart (Art), in a castle in Forest Sauvage, England. The Wart meets the wizard Merlyn, who returns to the castle and becomes the Wart's tutor.

Vocabulary

mews (14)

cabalistic (29)

melancholy (21)

benevolent (29)

vacuously (24)

phoenix (30)

zodiac (28)

necromantic (39)

Discussion Questions

1. Read aloud the inscription at the beginning of Book One. Analyze its significance. *(It sets the stage for the unusual events that will happen on the Isle of Gramarye [England] under the guidance of Merlyn. This speaks prophetically of the entire book.)*
2. Discuss Sir Ector and his relationship with and concerns for Kay and the Wart. *(He treats them both well and is concerned about their education. Kay, his son, is destined to become a knight. The Wart is Sir Ector's foster son and has many of the privileges of Kay but will become a knight's attendant. pp. 9-12)*
3. Contrast the Wart and Kay and what the experience with the hawk Cully reveals about each of them. Discuss which of the two boys has the most knightly characteristics. *(Kay is competitive and stubborn, loses his temper easily, resents advice, feels he is superior to the servants, and blames others for his irrational actions. The Wart is diligent, compassionate, willing to endure dangers of the forest to do what is right, has a stout heart, accepts responsibility for his own actions, and trusts God to help him. Kay insists on taking Cully hawking against the advice of the hawk's trainer, Hob, but he is willing to leave Cully in the forest to become lost. The Wart is willing to endure dangers of the forest to try to retrieve Cully. pp. 14-21)*
4. Discuss the caricature of a knight (King Pellinore) the Wart meets in the forest. Analyze the satire of his quest. *(The king is inept, i.e., his spectacles and his hated armor; he falls off his horse. He is confused and never knows where he is; he has been lost for seventeen years while chasing the Questing Beast and carries its droppings with him. He has an unlikely hunting dog that is overly friendly but shows no intelligence and is constantly getting the cord tangled up around the king, who longs for a house with a nice bed. pp. 21-26)*
5. Describe Merlyn and the upstairs room of his house and examine his importance to the plot. Analyze his response to the Wart's request to be allowed to ask him a question. *(Merlyn: flowing gown with signs of the zodiac and mystical symbols embroidered on it; pointed hat like a dunce's cap; carries a wand; wears a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles; long white beard and moustache; unclean with spiders and a bird's nest in his hair and bird droppings on his shoulder. Upstairs room: marvelous, with a magical talking owl, Archimedes, a set of encyclopedias, food*

and a looking glass that appear instantly, and a mustard pot that walks. Merlyn's response to the Wart's request, "It is what I am for," signifies that his role in the Wart's life is to answer all his questions. He will return with the Wart to the castle and become his tutor. pp. 28-37)

6. Analyze Merlyn's concern about his extraordinary birth. Elicit student response to whether or not they want to see into the future. (*Merlyn was born at the wrong end of time and has to live backward while surrounded by people who live forward. His concern is that, since he knows what is going to happen to people instead of what has happened to them, it is difficult to prevent or change what is happening in the present. p. 35*)
7. Note the significance of the Wart's statement, "I must have been on a Quest!" (p. 37) (*He is just beginning the great Quest of his life: becoming the King of England.*)
8. **Prediction:** What does Merlyn mean when he tells Kay, "Thy sorrow will come from thine own mouth"?

Supplementary Activities

1. Have students write a limerick about King Pellinore.
2. Have students draw a caricature of Merlyn.
3. Note the literary devices: **Similes**—arrow like a wasp (p. 20); Wart went like a snake (p. 20); eyes grew round as saucers (p. 25); stars shone like bits of looking-glass with the sun on them (p. 29); He (Archimedes) held it (mouse) up like a boy holding a stick of rock (p. 33); He (Hob) took Cully...reassuring him like a lame man putting on his accustomed wooden leg (p. 37) **Allusions**—Jacob's struggle with the angel (p. 17): Bible, Genesis 32:24; Aristotle (p. 39); Hecate (p. 39): Greek mythological goddess **Anachronisms**—electric light (p. 28); Encyclopedia Britannica (p. 31)

Chapters 5-7, pp. 40-72

Merlyn changes the Wart into a fish in the first step of his education and, through his magic powers, allows the Wart to see a jousting match between King Pellinore and Sir Grummore.

Vocabulary

barbican (41)

labyrinth (42)

portent (55)

joust (56)

panoply (63)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the Dog Boy and his significance to the story. Examine what Wart's response to him indicates. (*The Dog Boy, who had his nose bitten off by Wat, lives with the hounds day and night. Other village children taunt him because of his appearance. The Wart and the Dog Boy are good friends, and the Dog Boy views the Wart as being almost holy. Significance: the Wart, destined to become king, is compassionate toward all and never looks down on those who are different. pp. 43-44*)