

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Once and Future King

by T.H. White

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The Once and Future King

Objectives Book One

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. find examples of each of the following literary terms: anachronism, parable, myth.
2. cite incidents from the story to support the idea that this novel is a fantasy.
3. understand day-to-day activities which are part of medieval life including: hawking, knighthood, and education.
4. discuss the life lessons Merlyn teaches Wart by turning him into a roach, an ant, a goose, a hawk, an owl, and a badger.
5. discuss what Wart learns from the animal societies about the concepts of might versus right, justice, and individual rights.
6. write a character sketch of Kay pointing out the ways in which he is being raised in a different manner than is Wart.
7. discuss the ways knighthood is satirized. Include the formalities of fighting, the lack of vulnerability of armored knights, and the lack of real purpose in the life of a knight.
8. describe Merlyn, including his physical appearance, powers as a magician, acceptance into Wart's life, and Merlyn's unique life path.
9. cite incidents from the story to establish Wart as having courage, sensitivity, and loyalty.
10. write a character sketch of King Pellinore; discuss his quest, armor, and purpose in life.
11. point out examples of humor in the story.
12. identify each of the following creatures as they appear in the story: griffin, fairy, the Questing Beast, Archimedes.
13. understand the reasons Wart is able to pull the sword from the stone.

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Book Two

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. trace the unfolding relationships of Arthur with Morgause and her sons; discuss the reasons why the Orkney faction dislikes the Pendragon line.
2. discuss Arthur's new ideology of Might for Right and how it differs from the ideology of Might is Right from Book One.
3. cite incidents from the story to show that Arthur is learning to think for himself.
4. find examples of satire and comic relief in Book Two.
5. discuss how Arthur changes traditional battle tactics so that the new tactics conform with his new ideology.
6. identify Mordred and discuss the ways his existence might contribute to the tragic end of Arthur's Camelot.
7. discuss Merlyn's view regarding the destiny of man and his views on the reasons for fighting wars.
8. state the lesson learned from the death of King Conor.
9. identify the basic elements in Arthur's plan to create an order of chivalry.
10. relate the parable of the man who comes face to face with death and discuss the lesson taught by this story.
11. comment on the significance of the novel's title, *The Once and Future King*.

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Objectives Book Three

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the reasons Lancelot wishes to perform miracles, undertake quests, search for the Holy Grail, and become the greatest knight at the round table; point out how these desires sometimes conflict with his relationship with Guenever.
2. point out the irony in Lancelot's relationship with Arthur. Mention Lancelot's desire to be an honorable knight and his desire to remain pure and perform miracles.
3. comment on the significance of the title of the third book, The Ill-Made Knight.
4. contrast Sir Galahad with Lancelot and discuss the ways Sir Galahad surpasses his father.
5. write a character sketch of Guenever exploring her relationship with both Arthur and with Lancelot; discuss whether or not she is a noble character.
6. discuss Elaine's relationship with Lancelot and point out the extent to which she is a destructive force in Lancelot's life.
7. compare Lancelot's training from Uncle Dap with Arthur's training from Merlyn; discuss the benefits each boy received from his education
8. find examples of breaks in the narration where the narrator talks directly to the reader.
9. discuss Arthur's reaction to the relationship between Lancelot and Guenever.
10. relate those stories of Lancelot's quests which involve treachery; discuss whether or not Lancelot seems to learn from these experiences.
11. discuss Arthur's definition of civilization and why he changes his focus from "Might for Right" to "Might for God."
12. define a tragic flaw and state whether or not Lancelot has a tragic flaw.
13. relate the legend of how Gareth becomes a knight.
14. summarize the three trials that Bors must pass before he is worthy of finding the Holy Grail.

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Book Four

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the character of Mordred; include his hatred for his father, his decline into insanity, his cowardice, and his plan to take his father's throne.
2. discuss Arthur's ideology concerning justice; point out how his beliefs ironically contribute to his downfall.
3. comment on why Arthur's Camelot can be called the "Age of the Individual."
4. discuss the emerging philosophy that all men have souls and relate that philosophy to the power of the church in Arthur's England.
5. discuss how Arthur's belief in the goodness of man contributes to his decisions as King.
6. point out the significance of the title of Book Four, *The Candle in the Wind*.
7. discuss why Lancelot's refusal to heed Gareth's warnings is an example of irony.
8. understand Arthur's views on war and the reasons for it; point out how his childhood experiences with the geese help him to understand this problem.
9. discuss Arthur's decision to warn Lancelot and Guenever and the reasons why his warning goes unheeded.
10. define a tragedy and comment on whether or not this story is a tragedy.

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Study Guide Student Copy

BOOK ONE – The Sword in the Stone

Chapters 1 – 12

1. What does Kay's lack of a nickname reveal about his character? Why is Arthur called Wart?
2. For what reason does Kay claim the privilege of carrying the goshawk and flying her instead of giving Wart a turn with the hawk?
3. Why does Wart decide to stay with Cully instead of going home with Kay? Why is this an act of courage?
4. Explain the biblical allusion on page 17.
5. Find an example of personification on page 18.
6. Briefly describe King Pellinore. What is the Questing Beast, and why is Pellinore searching for it?

BOOK TWO – The Queen of Air and Darkness

Chapters 1 – 7

1. Trace the family relationship between Queen Morgause of Lothian and Orkney with King Uther Pendragon. What is King Arthur's connection to Queen Morgause? How do Morgause's sons, Gawaine, Gaheris, Gareth, and Agravaine, feel about the Pendragon family?

2. Study the following passage from the story and use it to answer the following three questions.

“You, see it is a question of the people, as well as of the kings. When you said about the battle being a lovely one you were thinking like your father. I want you to think like yourself, so that you will be a credit to all this education I have been giving you—afterwards, when I am only an old man locked up in a hole.”
(Pg. 224)

3. What is Merlyn trying to encourage Arthur to do?
4. Why does Merlyn refer to himself as “...an old man locked up in a hole”? (Pg. 224)
5. Merlyn and Arthur discuss the reasons for fighting wars. According to Merlyn, what is the destiny of Man? What question that Arthur asks makes Merlyn happy?
6. Find an instance of both anachronism and foreshadowing on page 226.

BOOK THREE – The Ill-Made Knight

Chapters 1 - 18

1. Why does Lancelot decide that when he is grown and becomes a knight, his name will be the Ill-Made Knight?
2. Briefly describe Lancelot's first meeting with King Arthur. After this meeting, what two goals does Lancelot set for himself?
3. Uncle Dap helps Lancelot train to be a great knight just as Merlyn helped Arthur to become a great king. Which mentor do you think is the most effective?
4. Why is Lancelot disappointed to learn from Merlyn that King Arthur has already established a round table with one hundred knights?
5. The narrator in this story sometimes breaks the narrative to speak directly to the reader. Find a short passage in Chapter 4 where the narrator does this.
6. In Chapter 4, Lancelot meets Guenever for the first time. Briefly describe her. How does Lancelot feel about her at their first meeting? What happens at the end of Chapter 4 to change Lancelot's opinion of the Queen?

BOOK FOUR – The Candle in the Wind

Chapters 1 – 9

1. Why do both Agravaine and Mordred dislike King Arthur?
2. How does Mordred plan to discredit King Arthur?
3. What occurs between Mordred and the brothers? What is the cause?
4. White writes that at the time of King Arthur's rule, England is in the Middle Ages, but that the Middle Ages are "not so dark." He writes, "Lancelot and Guenever were gazing on the Age of Individuals." (Pg. 531) Describe some examples of life in Arthur's England, which help to support White's beliefs.
5. In Chapter 4, why does Lancelot want to run away with Guenever? What reasons does she give for staying with Arthur and continuing the affair?
6. For what reasons does Arthur believe Mordred is justified in hating him?
7. What is Arthur saying about justice in the following passage from Chapter 4?
"Far from being willing to execute his enemies, a real king must be willing to execute his friends." (Pg. 550) Why do you think Arthur is taking the time to explain his ideas of justice to Lancelot and Guenever?