

Outside Text: King Arthur

A legend is a story or stories handed down from earlier times, but may not be totally true. It usually has a hint of the supernatural. Sometimes the hero seems like a superhero.

THE LEGEND OF KING ARTHUR

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People who study history have been unable to find out if King Arthur was a real person or not. Stories of him have been around for a long time. People love to think that he really was a person who lived not too long after the Romans left England.

Legend has it that he was the son of a powerful warrior king of England before it organized into a country. When the king was killed in battle, a person named Merlin took the boy to a family in the country to protect him from the king's enemies.

There Arthur grew up not knowing he was the son of a great man. Merlin came one day and took him to a castle where he began learning about how to be a soldier. Arthur took care of the horses, polished the swords, and practiced sword fighting with sticks.

Soon he became a page and learned the ways of the rich landowner. He learned manners, riding tricks, fighting plans and even how to act at dinner. Merlin would come once in a while and teach Arthur things about life and how to get along with people. Some thought Merlin had special magic to help Arthur understand things better.

At fourteen, Arthur was old enough to be a squire for Sir Kay, a young knight from the castle where he was staying. One day Sir Kay and Squire Arthur went to a big tournament. As they were nearing the field where it was being held, Sir Kay realized he forgot his sword.

Arthur ran back to get it. However, along the way, he noticed a sword stuck in a big stone and thought it looked like a better sword. So, he pulled out the sword and took it to Sir Kay. When he showed it to Sir Kay, the people around them realized that it was the sword that had come from the stone.

The tournament was stopped and everyone went to where the stone was. They placed the sword back in the stone and then had several people try to remove it. No one could. They then asked Arthur to take it out and he easily lifted the sword from the stone. The people began cheering, "Long live the king." What Arthur had not seen before was the carving on the side of the stone that said, "Whoever draws this sword from the stone is the rightful high king of England."

Even though Arthur was pretty young, he had learned a lot from many people including Merlin who helped him with making decisions. It was too bad that the country of England was also pretty young and it was hard to get everyone in the country to follow one king. There was lots of fighting among the people of the country.

People finally started to like King Arthur and were willing to fight under his leadership. He viewed the knights as something more than just fighting soldiers. He wanted the people to look up to

knights instead of being afraid of them. He wanted the people to know that a knight was there to protect them not to be a bully because he had a bigger sword.

Arthur pushed the idea that being stronger than others does not make it right for you to be mean to them. Having more power does not make it right for you to shove them aside or knock them down. Right requires honor, self-discipline, respect, justice, purity, loyalty and truth.

You may have heard of King Arthur's Round Table at his city of Camelot. The table showed that no one sat in the honored seat at the head of the table because there was no head at a round table. Everyone was of equal importance at Arthur's table.

Some of the most famous knights of legend sat at King Arthur's table. Sir Gawain fought the evil Green Knight. Sir Lancelot was Arthur's favorite knight and Queen Guinevere's champion. Sir Percival went after the people who stole the king's golden goblet. Sir Galahad was considered the best knight at Arthur's table and spent many years looking for the Holy Grail.

Like so often happens, evil tries to battle against good. King Arthur had an evil half-sister who was jealous of him. She spent many years trying to destroy the king, his knights, and his kingdom. She practiced black magic and cast spells on the knights. Sir Mordred, a sly and wicked knight, began planting doubt about Sir Lancelot in King Arthur's mind. Soon, Arthur knew that his wife, Queen Guinevere, loved Lancelot more than she loved him.

When this was discovered, Guinevere was sent to prison. Soon, Sir Lancelot came to rescue her. There was nothing that Arthur could do but go after him and fight against him. The king saw his Round Table knights at war with each other and, before long, many of them were dead. The king, too, was badly wounded.

So, what became of King Arthur? Some say he died of his wounds and was buried on an island. Others say that a mysterious lady came and took him to be with Merlin. It is said that after King Arthur's loss, dark and evil days returned to England where bullies ruled again for a time.

Yet, people still look back on the time of King Arthur, his Round Table and the city of Camelot with hope. This legend encourages people to believe that honor, justice, self-discipline, and truth can create special people, in a special time, in a special place.

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