

# The Legend of King Arthur



Archetypes, Historical  
Context,  
And Synopsis



# Powerpoint Menu

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Archetypes and Connections

Story Synopsis

Themes and Historical Context



# What is a Legend?

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- a traditional historical tale or collection of related tales popularly regarded as true, but usually contain a mixture of fact and fiction
- not to be confused with a **myth** (A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society)

# Archetypes

- **Definition:** a reoccurring character type, setting, or action that is recognizable across literature and cultures that elicits a certain feeling or reaction from the reader.
- These characters draw on typical human experiences.
- They should cause an emotional reaction in the audience provide a kind of clue to their future actions or motivations
  - Think for a moment of the typical super hero movie. You expect certain things to happen and you expect to see certain types of characters (i.e. an arch enemy, that the hero will triumph etc).



# A Brief Character List by Type

## THE GOOD

- ❑ The Hero
- ❑ The Mother (can also be evil)
- ❑ The Sage
- ❑ The Scapegoat or sacrificial lamb
- ❑ The Star-crossed lovers
- ❑ The Orphan
- ❑ The Fool (can also be evil)

## THE BAD

- ❑ Doppelganger
- ❑ The Monster
- ❑ The Trickster
- ❑ Outlaw/destroyer
- ❑ The Rebel
- ❑ The Tyrant
- ❑ The Hag/Witch/Shaman
- ❑ The Sadist

## Powerpoint Break!

# Lord of the Flies Connections



- ❑ Archetypes exist in almost all the stories we tell. Think back to *Lord of the Flies* for a moment.
- ❑ With the person sitting next to you, use your character Archetype notes to try to place each of the characters in to a category
- ❑ Make sure you can justify your responses.
- ❑ Also think about the setting in terms of archetypes. What did you expect from certain places on the island based on other stories with similar settings?

Write the Archetype below the character. Make sure you can explain it!

# LORD OF THE FLIES



Piggy

Ralph

Jack

Simon

Samn'Eric

Roger

Anyone else?



# Archetypes

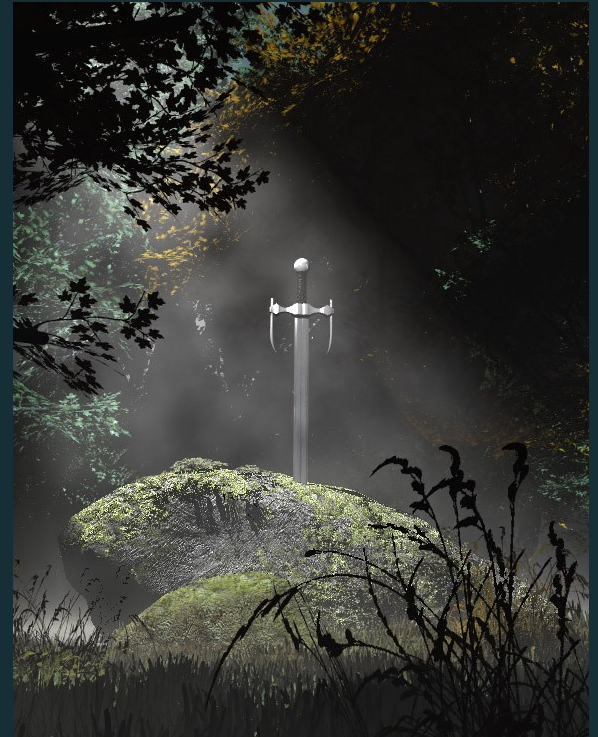
- What do archetypes do?
  - They help the reader recognize certain character types.
  - How did you know that Roger and Jack would be the bad guys and Ralph would be the good guy?





A Quick Introduction to the Entire

# LEGEND OF KING ARTHUR





KING ARTHUR AND LANCELOT

## A Brief Introduction from National Geographic

<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/videos/king-arthur/>



**Now that you have read the Sword in the Stone...**

Let's examine the rest of the Legend and preview the pieces that you will be reading.

Remember, with each tale you should be looking for **Archetypes!**

# Arthur's Birth and Childhood

- Uther Pendragon, King of the Britons falls in love with another man's wife and has Merlin disguise him to look like her husband to have an affair with her
- A child is born. King Uther dies shortly after and the child is taken by Merlin to be hidden for his own protection. This is Uther's second child, but first son.
- Merlin gives the child, Arthur, to a peasant who raises him as his own son. Arthur grows up ignorant of his royal background.





# Sword in the Stone



- Upon King Uther's death, Merlin places the sword Excalibur (a magical sword given to Merlin by the Lady of the Lake) in a stone containing a spell that only the rightful king could remove it from the stone
- In need of a sword for his adoptive brother, Arthur pulls Excalibur from the stone, proving himself the rightful king of England
- Did this sound familiar?

# The New King's First Challenge



- When Arthur assumes power, England is torn apart by war, is fractioned into city-states, and is on the brink of invasion by the Saxons
- Recently married, Arthur is gifted a round table by his father in law, King Leodegrance. This table was once a prized possession of his father's. It seats hundreds of knights.



# The New King's First Challenge



- It is not the table alone that is part of this fabled story, but how Arthur uses it. To unite the country and defeat the Saxons, Arthur creates the Knights of the Round table. This is a revolutionary idea for the time in which each city state (kingdom) is represented by a knight. No one knight, including King Arthur himself, has more power than another. Arthur creates a democratic society.
- Because of this alliance, Arthur and his knights defeat the powerful Saxons in a series of 12 battles. It is said that the key to Arthur's success is the sword Excalibur which he always takes into battle. Excalibur is said to make its bearer invincible.

# Guinevere



- As the last slide states, Arthur chooses the beautiful Princess Guinevere as his bride
- As your reading states, Merlin sees this will end disastrously.
- Guinevere, as tradition dictates, does not have a choice nor sees her husband to be before the wedding.
- Notice the special attention Guinevere and the other member of the court pay to the young talented knight, Lancelot.
- This knight will become one of Arthur's favorites and closest friends.





- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is one of the many stories that focuses on the other knights of the round table. This story comes at a time of peace, after the Round table has been established and Arthur is happily married to Guinevere.
- Important to note: Gawain is Arthur's Nephew, son of a sibling of Guinevere.

# Mysteries and Evil Plots

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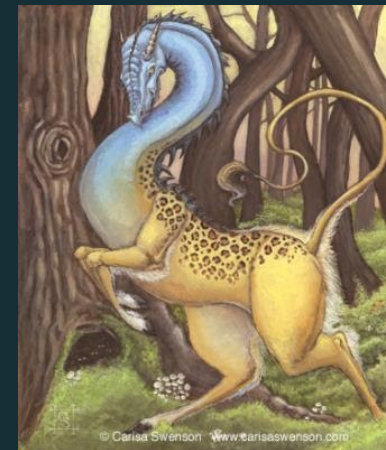
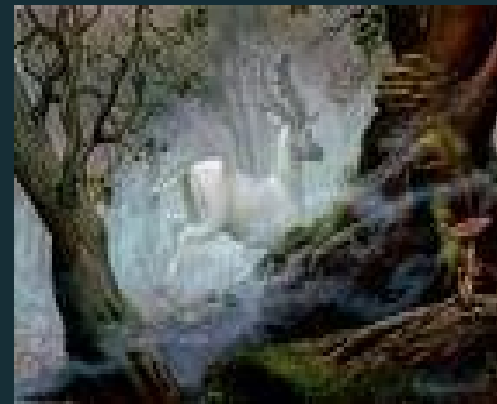


- During this time of peace in Camelot, other parts of kingdom are restless.
- Arthur unknowingly had a half sister, Morgan de Fey. She believed that she was rightful ruler since she was the first child of King Uther. In an attempts to usurp the throne, she slept with him and conceived a son. Morgan was said to be a witch and a powerful woman. Her son, Mordred, threatened Arthur's marriage and his throne.

# Mysteries and Evil Plots

- as any good legend there are several mysterious stories that parallel the legend of King Arthur. King Arthur's Camelot is one that is surrounded by countless stories of chivalry, fairies, magic and monsters. Some of the most famous of these stories are the following:

- The questing beast
- Tristan and Isolde
- The White Stag
- The Lady of the Lake





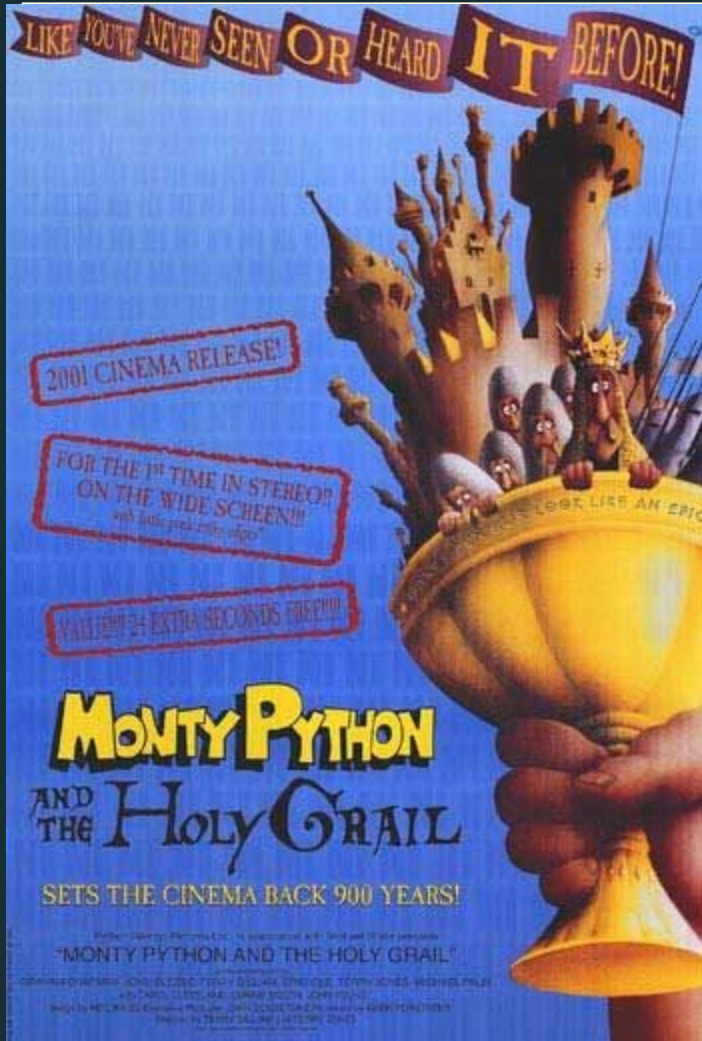
# A Country Religiously Divided

- Arthur was a member of the Old Religion, known as Celtic (as evident by keeping a Royal wizard, Merlin)
- However, a new religion, Christianity was beginning. Guinevere, Arthur's wife was a member of this religion.
- Arthur and Guinevere were having trouble conceiving. Guinevere believed this was because God was punishing Arthur for believing in pagan gods and encouraging his people to do so as well.
- To try to remedy the problem of an heir and heal the country, which had once again grown restless, Arthur established the crusades.





# Crusades and the Holy Grail



- Because the Celtic religion is based upon tangible items and nature, Arthur would need artifacts to convince his country to convert to Christianity.
- With the help of Merlin, Arthur decided to send his knights on a quest for religious artifacts, more commonly known as the crusades.
  - The body of Joseph of Arimathea
  - The spear of Destiny
  - The Holy Grail
  - King Solomon's Temple
  - Brazilian Crown of Thorns
  - Holy Rood

# Trouble At Home



- During the search for the Holy Grail Arthur's life begins to fall apart. Some versions of the story have Arthur gone 10-20 years on his quest.
- During this time, Merlin is seduced by a young woman who steals his powers and imprisons him. Arthur is left without an advisor.
- In Arthur's absence Mordred has been raised to hate Arthur and upon his return, Arthur unknowingly knights his own son and invites him to the round table.
- Guinevere has begun to realize her true love for Lancelot, not Arthur, during both their absences.

# The Most Famous Affair in Literary History



- ❑ Mordred sees the possibility to overthrow his father in Lancelot.
- ❑ Mordred discovers Guinevere and Lancelot's affair (the two people that Arthur loves most) and convinces the rest of the Round Table to capture Lancelot in the act.
- ❑ Lancelot escapes but Guinevere is captured and is to be burned at the stake for her treachery against the king. This leads to a civil war between the two and their knights.





# The Fall of Camelot

- Metaphorically, the country already had fallen with the betrayal of Arthur's only love and his best friend
- There are many versions of the story. All of which end with Arthur's death in battle. Some of the versions include the following battles:
  - Saxons
  - Romans
  - Goths
  - French
  - Irish
  - Lancelot
  - Morgan de fey
  - Mordred
- All of the stories end with Arthur's glorious death in battle, all that any legendary king or hero can ask for



# True History



- Most scholars believe that a King named Arthur did defeat the Saxons in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century. This is outlined in one of the oldest accounts of English History Geoffrey of Monmouth's fanciful and imaginative 12th-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*
- There are ruins of a castle in Cornwall that many believe to belong to Arthur
- Not much else is known, accounts of Arthur seem to be mysteriously missing from all Anglo-Saxon chronicles and other such history books.