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Sample

Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



A Connecticut
Yankee in
King Arthur's Court

by Mark Twain

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

Objectives

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

1. define vocabulary words from the text including vocabulary words relating to life in sixth-century England.
2. discuss the author's humorous use of satire to mock knight-errantry, the Catholic church, and the nobility.
3. recognize the following satirical devices in the story:
 - using understatement and/or overstatement to poke fun at a person or institution
 - using sarcasm to say one thing but mean another
 - distorting the facts to highlight the flaws in a person or institution.
4. discuss the following themes relating to government:
 - Democracy is the best form of government for ensuring justice for the common man.
 - In a hereditary monarchy, titled men and women are often unworthy of the respect of the commoners.
 - The romantic notion of knight-errantry needs to be recognized as foolishness.
5. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the following theme: A powerful central church favors the privileged nobility and takes advantage of the common man.
6. discuss the following themes relating to human nature:
 - Much of a man's behavior and thinking is determined by his training and is rarely examined by the light of reason.
 - Inhumanity, injustice, and barbarity remain part of human existence, despite man's attempt to civilize behavior with a code of laws.
7. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the struggle that takes place between the powers of superstition and the powers of rational thought.

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. List four ways Camelot as described in this story differs from the near-perfect, idyllic Camelot described in books and movies about King Arthur.
2. Write a three-paragraph essay comparing Hank to Merlin. Cite incidents from the story and consider the following in your answer:
 - the level of power each possesses to perform magic
 - the control or influence each has over the people of Camelot
 - whether or not each wields his power responsibly and for the welfare of the people.
3. Write a character sketch of King Arthur. Include a discussion of the following:
 - how he views slavery and how these opinions change as the story progresses
 - how he views the rights of the privileged nobility
 - how he is perceived by his people
 - how he is perceived by Hank.
4. Write a paragraph in which you define an “anti-climax” and discuss how the conclusion to Sandy’s and Hank’s adventure is anticlimactic.
5. Write a paragraph describing the most humorous incident you remember in this novel, including what you think the incident is satirizing.
6. Write a paragraph describing the most moving or sad incident you remember in the novel, including what theme(s) you think Twain is illustrating by including it in this otherwise humorous tale.
7. Discuss the ending of this story. Why do you think Twain ends the tale with a terrible war? What is he saying about human nature with this ending?
8. Cite three incidents in the story that support Twain’s view that a powerful central church favors the privileged nobility and unjustly takes advantage of the common man.
9. Find and discuss an excerpt in the text illustrating each of the following satirical techniques:
 - using understatement and/or overstatement to poke fun at a person or institution
 - using sarcasm to say one thing and mean another
 - distorting the facts in order to highlight the flaws in a person or an institution.

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

Introduction

Vocabulary

anon – soon, shortly
beguile – mislead
cicerone – a guide who explains the history and chief features of a place to sightseers
clave – divided by a blow, as with an ax; split
courtelage – archaic of cottage
covenant – a binding and solemn agreement
epoch – a period of time considered in terms of noteworthy and characteristic events
espied – caught sight of
garret – a space, room, or rooms just below the roof of a house
hauberk – a medieval coat of armor, usually of chain mail
holpen – archaic form of help
loth – unwilling
palimpsest – a parchment that has been written upon
prodigious – of great size, power, extent
seneschal – a steward in a medieval household
smote – hit or struck hard; attacked with powerful or disastrous effect
strake – archaic form of strike
transmigration – the act of the soul passing into another body at death
Whitsunday – the seventh Sunday after Easter, Pentecost

1. Where does the author first meet the stranger? List three reasons the author is intrigued by this strange American.

2. Why does the stranger describe himself as “a Yankee of Yankees”? What is his profession?

Chapter IV: Sir Dinadan the Humorist

Vocabulary

bosh – nonsense

petrified – paralyzed, as with fear

scoffer – a person who shows mocking contempt

1. What does the Yankee think of Sir Dinadan's humor?

2. For what reasons is the Yankee shocked by Sir Kay's version of his capture?

3. An allusion is a reference to a person, place, poem, book, or movie outside of the story that the author expects the reader will recognize. Find an example of an allusion in this chapter.

4. The divine right of kings is a phrase used to describe the belief in many monarchies that the king is endowed by God with special abilities to lead the country and that this "divine right" is passed to his children. In this story, Twain is satirizing the Arthurian legends as a vehicle to also satirize the divine right of kings practiced in European countries of his time. Find an incident or a passage in this story illustrating that Twain does not believe people of noble birth are morally or in any other way naturally superior.

Chapter XIV: "Defend Thee, Lord!"

Vocabulary

enmity – the bitter attitude or feelings of an enemy

- 1. Why does THE BOSS decide in this chapter that he is "ready for any giant or any ogre that might come along"?

Chapter XV: Sandy's Tale

Vocabulary

eftsoons – repeatedly; again
exegesis – explanation, critical analysis, or interpretation
expletive – an oath or exclamation
portcullis – a heavy iron gate
usufruct – the right of using and enjoying all the advantages and profits of the property of another without altering or damaging the substance
venerable – worthy of respect or reverence

- 1. How does Hank feel while he is listening to Alisande's (Sandy's) tale about the knights? What is the subject of his dream?
