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Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Once and
Future King

by T. H. White

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



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The Once and Future King

Objectives - 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*.

The Once and Future King

Questions for Essay and Discussion - Book Three

1. List three goals young Lancelot has for his life. By the end of Book Three, how successful is Lancelot at achieving them?
2. For what reasons does Arthur overlook Guenever and Lancelot's relationship?
3. Try to put yourself in Queen Guenever's position as a woman in medieval times. Why does she have an affair with Lancelot? Do you think her treatment of Elaine is just? Why does Guenever refuse to spare Sir Meliagrance's life?
4. Discuss the title of this third book. In your opinion, is this an appropriate description of Sir Lancelot?
5. How does Galahad surpass his father? What is the Holy Grail? For what reasons is Lancelot denied access to it?
6. Point out the irony in the following incidents.
 - Lancelot comes to Camelot because he loves Arthur.
 - One of Lancelot's goals in life is to perform miracles.
 - Lancelot defends Guenever's honor by killing Meliagrance.
7. Cite incidents from the story to prove or disprove the following statement: Elaine deserves her terrible lonely life.
8. For what reasons is Uncle Dap a good tutor for Lancelot?
9. Why does Lancelot leave Camelot to go on quests? What does Lancelot learn about treachery while on his quests?
10. State Arthur's definition of civilization. Why does he change the focus of his round table from "Might for Right" to "Might for God"?
11. Analyze Lancelot's character. Do you believe Lancelot is a tragic character? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
12. What does the legend of how Gareth becomes a knight reveal to the reader about the lives of ordinary people living in Arthur's Camelot?
13. Briefly relate the three trials Bors must undergo. What is God testing in each trial?
14. What is the true miracle of Sir Urre's recovery?

The Once and Future King

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.

15. Briefly summarize the myth of how man became the master of the animals. State a life lesson Wart learns from this myth.

16. The badger tries to educate Wart on the nature of war. The badger points out that man is one of the very few species to make war on bands of the same species. For what reasons does Wart think he would like to go to war?

17. Why is King Pellinore excited because King Pendragon is dead?

18. Wart does not know the story of the sword. Why, then, does he try to pull it out? What happens to help Wart remove the sword?

19. What is Wart's favorite present at his coronation?

20. Define a fantasy novel. List three elements of a fantasy novel found in Book One.

15. Lancelot is furious with Elaine when he realizes she is not Guenever. What does Lancelot think Elaine has stolen from him? How does Elaine feel about Lancelot? Why does she plan to call their child, if she conceives one, Galahad?

16. What excuse does White offer in Chapter 13 for Guenever’s ability to betray her husband to seek out a relationship with Lancelot?

17. At the end of Chapter 15 White writes,

“Now, in their love, which was stronger, there were the seeds of hatred and fear and confusion growing at the same time: for love can exist with hatred, each preying on the other and this is what gives it its greatest fury.”

What is the nature of the hatred Lancelot and Guenever feel for each other?

18. Find a passage in Chapter 16, which helps the reader to understand why King Arthur ignores the affair between Lancelot and the Queen.
