

Legend of King Arthur

- **LEGEND**

- *A legend is a story purported to be historical in nature, but without any proof.
- * Examples: King Arthur, Robin Hood
- * Where evidence of the existence of actual historical figures exists, figures like King Arthur are legends due in large part to the many stories that have been created about them.

Who was he?

- The figure at the heart of the Arthurian legends
- Said to be the son of Uther Pendragon and Igraine of Cornwall
- He has been presented as a near mythic figure in Celtic stories, and in early Latin chronicles he is known as a military leader



- In later romances he is presented as a king and emperor
- Arthur was most famous for designing an order of the best knights in the world



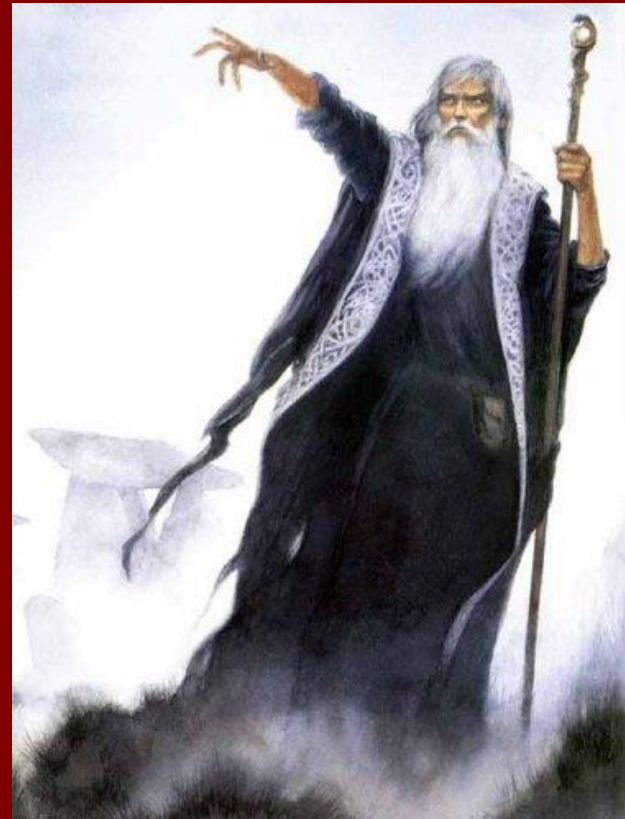
Did King Arthur really exist?

- Some modern scholars believe that there was an actual person at the heart of the legends, though not necessarily a king with a band of knights in shining armor.
- If there is a historical basis to the character, he would have gained fame as a warrior battling the Germanic invaders of the late 5th and early 6th centuries, **though it is the Arthur of the late Middle Ages who has most captured the imagination.**

- What is important about this legendary figure is his influence on literature, art, music, and society from the Middle Ages to the present.

Important people from the legends

- **Merlin:**
 - **Arthur's advisor, prophet, and magician**
 - Foretold much of what would happen to Arthur



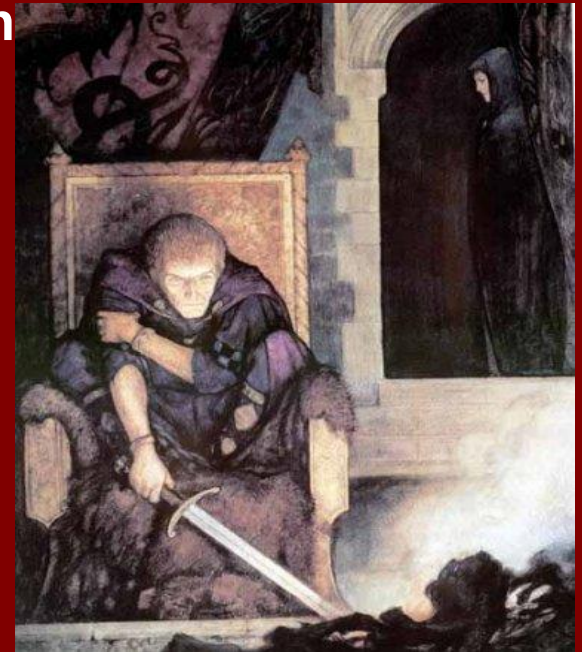
- **Guinevere:**
 - **Wife of King Arthur**
 - **Beautiful and desirable**
 - Was either forced into or agreed to an extra-marital relationship with Launcelot and was condemned



- **Morgan le Fay:**
 - Arthur's half-sister and adversary**
 - Wicked enchantress**
 - Plotted with her lover to steal Excalibur**



- **Mordred:**
 - **Arthur's nephew**
 - **As an adult, Mordred became one of Arthur's knights**
 - **When Arthur went to fight Launcelot (over Guinevere), he left Mordred as regent in his absence**
 - **Mordred proclaimed Arthur as dead and went on to try to claim the throne, so Arthur had to return**



Items of Tradition

- **Excalibur:**
 - The sword given to Arthur by the Lady of the Lake
 - After Arthur's last battle, he made one of his knights return it to the water where it was grasped by a hand and drawn under.
 - Its scabbard prevented the wearer from losing blood

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Items of Tradition

- ***Quest for the Holy Grail:***
 - Holy Grail considered to be the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper
 - It was used by Joseph of Arimathea to collect Christ's blood and sweat while Joseph tended him on the Cross
 - At the Court of King Arthur, it was prophesied that the Grail would one day be rediscovered by the best knight in the land, so the Knights of the Round Table traveled far and wide, searching for it

- ***The Round Table:***

- Large table at which Arthur's knights met to tell of their deeds and from which they set forth in search of further adventures.
- The table was said to have seated 50 knights and its shape suggested equality among the knights who sat there.
- Accounts differ about the origin of the Round Table...



Arthur's Rise to Fame and Power

- Arthur raised by Merlin
- A sword was placed in a stone; whoever drew it out would be king
 - Arthur did so, and was crowned
 - This led to a rebellion, in which Arthur managed a victory through strategy and bravery (though the odds were against him)
- Arthur married Guinevere, whose father gave Arthur the Round Table as a dowry
- Round Table became the place where Arthur's knights sat and a magnificent reign followed.

- Quest for Holy Grail and love affair between Guinevere and Lancelot
- Lancelot fled and Guinevere was sentenced to death
- Lancelot rescued her and took her to his realm
- Arthur followed, making war on his former knight and leaving Mordred in charge
- Mordred rebelled, and Arthur had to return
- Last battle on Salisbury Plain, Arthur slew Mordred, but was gravely wounded
- Arthur carried off in a barge, body never found...

The Knights of the Round Table

- **Arthur was most famous for designing an order of the best knights in the world.**
- ***Knights of the Round Table:***
 - Men of courage, honor, dignity, courtesy, and nobleness
 - They protected ladies and damsels, honored and fought for kings, and undertook dangerous quests.
 - **Logres was the Arthurian realm of virtue-** the spiritual counterpart of Arthur's material kingdom (Britain)
 - Only vulnerable from within, through dissent and treachery in Arthur's court



- According to Sir Thomas Malory, an English author and compiler of the legend of King Arthur, the code of these knights was the following:
 - To never do outrage nor murder
 - Always to flee treason
 - To by no means be cruel but to give mercy unto him who asks for mercy
 - To always do ladies, gentlewomen and widows succor (help, aid)
 - To never force ladies, gentlewomen or widows
 - Not to take up battles in wrongful quarrels for love or worldly goods

Knights as Heroes

- The knights fight for abstract principles of justice, honor, and purity
- They also have serious flaws- pride, lust, vengeance- but they rise above their faults in their contribution to Logres
- Each knight is tested for his weaknesses

Knights as Heroes

- These assorted tales carry a valuable insight: a man's self-respect does not depend on external qualities (wealth, position, physical strength, size)
- Instead, it depends on his private integrity and his valor



The Emblem of the Knights

The emblem of the Knights of the Round Table worn round the necks of all the Knights was given to them by King Arthur as part of the ceremony of their being made a knight.

The order's dominant idea was the love of
GOD, MEN and NOBLE DEEDS.

- **CROSS:** To remind them that they were to live pure and stainless lives, to strive after perfection and thus attain the Holy Grail
- **RED DRAGON of King Arthur:** Represented their allegiance to the King
- **ROUND TABLE:** Symbolized the Eternity of God, the equality, unity, and comradeship of the Order, and singleness of purpose of all the Knights.



A Knight's Code of Chivalry

- **Prowess:** To seek excellence in all endeavors
- **Justice:** Seek always the path of “Right”, unencumbered by personal interest
- **Loyalty:** Be known for unwavering commitment to your ideas and friends
- **Largesse:** Be generous in so far as your resources allow
- **(Generosity)**
- **Courage:** Often means choosing the more difficult path
- **Nobility:** Show your character by holding to the virtues and duties of a Knight
- **Humility:** Value first the contributions of others- do not boast
- **Defense:** Defend your country, family, and friends, and those who can't defend themselves