

## Before You Read

### *The Miraculous Eclipse*

#### Connect to the Play

Think about a time when someone told you an entertaining, but unbelievable, story. What made the story interesting?

**Partner Talk** With a partner, talk about incredible stories you have heard people tell. Why were they fun to hear?

#### Build Background

*The Miraculous Eclipse* is adapted from the novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, by Mark Twain (1835–1910).

Published in 1889, the book examines the legend of King Arthur through the eyes of a nineteenth-century American.

- In Twain's view, King Arthur's England is a brutal place. The sixth-century characters are foolish and superstitious.
- Twain uses the book to satirize, or attack in a witty way, the problems he saw in the United States in the 1880s, such as political corruption and high taxes.

#### Vocabulary

**eclipse** (i klips') *n.* the partial or complete hiding from view of the sun or moon by another object in space (p. 776).  
*During the solar eclipse, the moon blocked the light from the sun.*

**fanfare** (fan'fār') *n.* a short tune sounded by bugle, trumpets, or other brass instruments (p. 776).  
*A fanfare announced the entrance of the king and queen.*

**barbarians** (bār bār'ē əns) *n.* people from a culture that others see as uncivilized (p. 777). *The explorers mistakenly thought that the people on the island were barbarians.*

**revenue** (rev'ə nōō') *n.* income; money taken in by a government or a business (p. 786). *The new salespeople helped increase the computer store's revenue.*

#### Meet Joellen Bland

**Virginia Playwright** Joellen Bland is an editorial assistant at the Marshall Foundation at Virginia Military Institute. She has been involved in all aspects of theatre, including directing, stage managing, costuming, and acting. She has also adapted many classic plays for young people.

**Literary Works** Bland's adaptations include *Nicholas Nickleby: A Play in Two Acts*, *Playing Scenes from Classic Literature: Short Dramatizations from the Best of World Literature*, and *Stage Plays from the Classics: One-Act Adaptations from Famous Short Stories, Novels, and Plays*.



Literature Online

**Author Search** For more about Joellen Bland, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and enter QuickPass code GL29763u6.

## Set Purposes for Reading

### BQ BIG Question

As you read, ask yourself, what makes Hank a good storyteller?

### Literary Element Stage Directions

A play is a story intended to be performed by actors. The written form of a play is called a script. The script includes dialogue, or the words the actors speak, and stage directions. **Stage directions** are instructions that describe props, costumes, sounds, and lighting, as well as the appearance and actions of characters. Stage directions are often in italics and enclosed in brackets.

Stage directions are important because they give instructions to the actors and the people who help backstage during a play. When a play is read, stage directions help readers better visualize and understand characters and events. As you read, pay attention to how the stage directions affect your feelings toward the characters and events.

### Reading Skill Analyze Plot

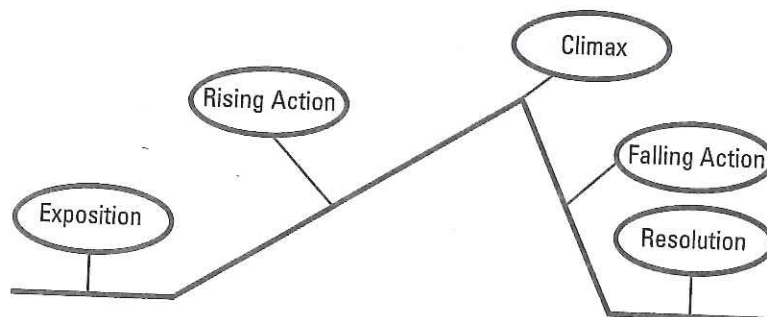
When you **analyze** as you read, you look at the different parts of a literary work in order to understand the work as a whole.

When you **analyze plot**, you try to understand how one event leads to another and advances the story. A plot is organized around a **conflict**, or central problem, which is introduced in the **exposition**, or the beginning of the story. The conflict builds with the **rising action** and reaches a high point at the story's **climax**. The climax is followed by **falling action**, and the **resolution** presents the final outcome.

To analyze the plot of *The Miraculous Eclipse*, ask yourself,

- What central conflict is introduced in the exposition?
- How do story events advance the plot?
- When does the plot reach its climax? How is the conflict resolved?

As you read, fill in a graphic organizer like the one below.



### Learning Objectives

For pages 768–789

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

**Literary Study:** Analyzing stage directions.

**Reading:** Analyzing plot.

### TRY IT

**Analyze** To practice analyzing plot, think about an episode of your favorite television show that you've seen recently. What was the main conflict in the episode? How did the events in the plot relate to the conflict? How was the conflict resolved?



# The Miraculous Eclipse

Joellen Bland

## Characters

OLD HANK MORGAN  
BOY  
HANK MORGAN,  
A YOUNG MAN  
CLARENCE, PAGE

SIR KAY, KNIGHT OF  
THE ROUND TABLE  
KING ARTHUR  
MERLIN THE MAGICIAN  
FOUR GUARDS

COURTIERS, LORDS AND  
LADIES  
KNIGHTS  
SERVANTS  
HERALD





## SCENE 1

[Time: 1879.

Setting: A street in Hartford, Connecticut. A barrel stands center.

Before Rise: OLD HANK MORGAN enters slowly right, followed by BOY.]

BOY. Excuse me, Mr. Morgan.

OLD HANK. [Stopping and turning.] Yes?

BOY. Some of the boys have been telling me that . . . well, that you sure can tell a whale of a story!

OLD HANK. That's what they told you, is it? [Fumbles in coat pockets, pulls out pipe.] You're new in town, aren't you?

BOY. Yes, sir. The boys dared me to ask you to tell *your* version of the story of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table.<sup>1</sup>

OLD HANK. They did, eh? Well, son, it just so happens I knew King Arthur well when I was a young man, so I can tell you anything you want to know about him.

BOY. [Amazed.] You knew King Arthur?

OLD HANK. [Nodding.] I knew all the folks at Camelot,<sup>2</sup> including that cagey old humbug, Merlin.<sup>3</sup>

BOY. [In awe.] You knew Merlin the Magician? But they all lived in the sixth century!

OLD HANK. [Tamping his pipe.] That's right. And if it weren't for Merlin, I might still be in the sixth century myself! [Smiles.] You don't believe me, do you?

BOY. Well, sir, if you've got some time, I'd like to hear your story. Then I'll tell you if I believe you.

1 According to legend, **King Arthur** ruled England in the sixth century, bringing peace to the country. Arthur started an order of knights known as the **Knights of the Round Table**.

2 King Arthur's castle was located at **Camelot**.

3 Someone who is **cagey** is cautious, or wary of being tricked. A **humbug** is someone who tries to trick others.

### BQ BIG Question

Why does the boy want Old Hank Morgan to share his story?

**Analyze Plot** What have you learned in the exposition of the play?

OLD HANK. I've got all the time in the world. [*Sits on barrel and hunts through his pockets as he talks, finally coming up with tobacco pouch. BOY sits cross-legged on ground.*] You see, I was born and brought up right here in Hartford, Connecticut, so I am a Yankee<sup>4</sup> of the Yankees, and very practical.

BOY. That's what the boys said about you, Mr. Morgan.

OLD HANK. As a young man, I first went to work as a blacksmith. Then later I went over to the Colt Arms Factory and learned how to make guns, cannons, boilers, engines—all sorts of labor-saving machinery. If there wasn't a quick, new-fangled way to make a thing, I'd invent one. I became head supervisor and had a couple of thousand men under me.

BOY. [*Impressed.*] A couple of thousand? Whew!

OLD HANK. Some of them were pretty rough characters, too. [*Stands.*] Say, you just come on home with me and we'll sit on my front porch. It'll be more comfortable. [*Starts left. BOY follows, carrying barrel.*] I was a man full of fight when I was supervisor, but one day I met my match. A big fellow named Hercules<sup>5</sup> and I had a misunderstanding, and we went after each other with **crowbars**.

BOY. That must have been some fight!

OLD HANK. It was! Hercules knocked me down with a crusher to my head that made everything crack! My world just went out in total darkness, and when I came to, I wasn't at the arms factory any more. [*OLD HANK and BOY exit left. Lights dim to indicate shift of scene to a country road in England. Lights come up full again on HANK MORGAN as a young man. He holds his head in pain.*]

YOUNG HANK. Oh, my aching head! Hercules will pay for this, or my name isn't Hank Morgan! [*Looks around.*] Where am I? This doesn't look like any place I've seen around

4 A **Yankee** is a person from the northern United States or New England.

5 **Hercules** was a hero from Greek and Roman mythology known for great strength.

#### Visual Vocabulary

A **crowbar** is an iron or steel bar with a wedge-shaped end that is slightly bent. Crowbars are normally used to pry apart two objects.



**Stage Directions** What important information do these stage directions include?

Hartford. [*SIR KAY, wearing full armor, bounds in left with sword drawn and takes threatening position in front of HANK.*]

SIR KAY. Will you joust, fair sir?

HANK. [*Staring rudely.*] Will I what?

SIR KAY. [*Waving sword.*] Will you fight with me to win land or lady or—

HANK. [*Interrupting.*] Now look here, who do you think you are, wearing that outlandish getup and swinging that dangerous weapon around? Get along back to the circus where you belong, or I'll report you!

SIR KAY. [*Holding swordpoint to HANK's chest.*] My name is Sir Kay, and in the name of the King, I take you captive! You are now my property and must come with me at once!

HANK. [*Aside.*] If this fellow isn't part of a circus, he must be crazy. But I'd better play along with him, or he might get nasty with that sword. [*Raises his hands in surrender and turns back to SIR KAY.*] All right, Sir Kay, you've got me. Where to?

SIR KAY. This way! [*Starts off left, pushing HANK in front of him with sword.*]

HANK. Uh, by the way, Sir Kay, how far are we from Hartford?

SIR KAY. [*Puzzled.*] I have never heard of that place.

HANK. [*Stopping.*] Never heard of Hartford? [*Aside.*] I reckon he must be from out of state. [*Turns back to SIR KAY.*] Well, what town are we headed for? Bridgeport?

SIR KAY. [*Shaking his head.*] Camelot! [*Pushes HANK forward.*]

HANK. Camelot? There isn't any town by that name in Connecticut!

SIR KAY. You are not in Connecticut.

HANK. [*Stopping again.*] Well, where in the world am I?

SIR KAY. England! [*HANK's mouth drops open in astonishment, as SIR KAY pushes him off left.*]

**Analyze Plot** What conflict does Young Hank face?

**Stage Directions** An *aside* is a comment heard by the audience but not by the other characters onstage. What does Hank's aside tell you about him?



[Time: England, in the year 528.

Setting: A courtyard in Camelot. At center is a throne on platform.

At Rise: COURTIER, KNIGHTS, GUARDS and SERVANTS move busily back and forth. SIR KAY and HANK enter left. At the sight of HANK, all stop to stare and point at him.]





COURTIERS. [*Ad lib.*] Look there! Did you ever see anything like it? Look at his strange clothes! Be careful, don't get too close! [*Etc.*]

SIR KAY. [*Poking HANK with sword.*] I warn you, don't try to escape. [*HANK looks around, puzzled, as CLARENCE enters, smiling and looking HANK over from head to foot.*] My page,<sup>6</sup> Clarence [*Pointing to him.*], will keep you in charge until I come back for you. [*Exits right.*]

HANK. Page, did he say? Go on! A boy your size can't be much more than a paragraph!

CLARENCE. You have an unusual way of speaking, sir, but you are welcome! I hope you will find me to be your true friend.

HANK. Well, my boy, if you're really my friend, you can tell me where I am. That escapee from a circus who brought me here said this was England, but he's obviously not in his right mind.

CLARENCE. Nay, sir, my master, Sir Kay, spoke the truth. You are in England.

HANK. England. [*Shakes his head.*] Well, either I'm crazy or something just as awful has happened. Now tell me, honest and true, what is this place?

CLARENCE. Camelot, the court of King Arthur.

HANK. The King Arthur who had the Round Table?

CLARENCE. Is there any other, sir?

HANK. [*Hesitantly.*] And according to your notions, what year is it?

CLARENCE. The nineteenth of June, in the year five hundred twenty-eight.

HANK. [*Repeating words mechanically.*] Five twenty-eight? [*Turns away; in a daze.*] Five twenty-eight. [*Looks at*

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<sup>6</sup> A *page* is a boy who serves as a knight's assistant.

COURTIERS, *then at himself.*] I'm sure it was 1879 when I got up this morning. I look like 1879, but all these people look like . . . five twenty-eight. [*Pacing.*] Five twenty-eight . . . that was the year when a total **eclipse** of the sun occurred . . . on June 21st at three minutes past noon. Just two days from now. [*Suddenly.*] I've got an idea! If I can just keep hold of my senses for forty-eight hours, I'll know for certain if this boy is telling me the truth. [*Turns back to CLARENCE.*] Tell me, Clarence, who is this Sir Kay?

CLARENCE. A brave knight, sir, and foster brother to our liege<sup>7</sup> the King. You are his prisoner, and as soon as dinner is finished, he will exhibit you before the King and brag about capturing you. He'll exaggerate the facts a little, but it won't be safe to correct him. Then you'll be flung into a dungeon.

HANK. [*Horried.*] Flung into a dungeon? What for?

CLARENCE. [*Casually.*] It is the custom. But never fear, I'll find a way to come and see you, and I'll help you get word to your friends who will come and ransom you.

HANK. Well, I'm much obliged to you, Clarence, but you see, all my friends won't even be born for more than thirteen hundred years. [*Fanfare of trumpets is heard off right.*]

CLARENCE. King Arthur is coming now. [*HERALD enters right, holding trumpet, and walks center.*]

HERALD. His Royal Majesty, King Arthur! [*KING ARTHUR enters, followed by MERLIN, and attended by several KNIGHTS. He sits on throne center. COURTIERS<sup>8</sup> bow low and stand in groups at either side of throne. SIR KAY enters right, seizes HANK by arm and pushes him to his knees in front of KING ARTHUR.*]

<sup>7</sup> In medieval times, people loyal to a king or lord referred to him as **liege**.

<sup>8</sup> **Courtiers** attend to a king or queen at his or her court.

### Vocabulary

**eclipse** (i klips') *n.* the partial or complete hiding from view of the sun or moon by another object in space

**fanfare** (fan'fär') *n.* a short tune sounded by bugle, trumpets, or other brass instruments

**Analyze Plot** What role do you think the eclipse will play in the plot?

**Stage Directions** What is the difference between Hank's and Clarence's reactions?

### Visual Vocabulary

A **herald** is an official who carries important news and messages.



SIR KAY. [*Bowing low.*] My lord King, most noble knights and ladies of the realm! Behold this curious captive I have conquered!

KING ARTHUR. And where did you find this strange creature, Sir Kay?

SIR KAY. I came upon this horrible ogre, my liege, in a far land of **barbarians** called Connecticut. Everyone there wears the same ridiculous clothing that he does, but I warn you, do not touch him! His clothing is enchanted! [*COURTIERS gasp and step back.*] It is intended to secure him from harm, but I overpowered the enchantment through my strong will and great courage! I killed his thirteen attending knights in a three hours' battle and took him prisoner!

HANK. [*Starting to rise.*] Now, just a minute—

SIR KAY. [*Pushing HANK down.*] Behold this enchanted, man-devouring monster who tried to escape from me by leaping into the top of a tree at a single bound!

HANK. [*Starting up again.*] Now, look here, you're carrying this thing a little too far—

SIR KAY. [*Pushing him down roughly.*] Behold this menacing barbarian while you may, good people, for at noon on the twenty-first he shall die!

HANK. [*Jumping up.*] What? What have I done to deserve death? I haven't even been in this century more than half an hour!

SIR KAY. You have suffered defeat at my hands, and I decide if you live or die. You must die!

KING ARTHUR. Well done, Sir Kay. But if his clothing is enchanted, how do you propose to put him to death? [*COURTIERS murmur excitedly.*]

### Vocabulary

**barbarians** (bär bär' ē əns) *n.* people from a culture that others see as uncivilized

### BQ BIG Question

Why do you think Sir Kay exaggerates his story?

**Analyze Plot** What main conflict is developing?



SIR KAY. Surely Your Majesty's mighty magician, Merlin, can break the enchantment.

COURTIERS. [*Ad lib.*] Yes, yes! Merlin will know what to do! Try, Merlin! [*Etc.*]

MERLIN. Make way, please. [*He steps forward, makes several sweeping passes with his arms. COURTIERS fall back respectfully, and watch him intently.*] How can all of you be so dull? Has it not occurred to anyone here but me that the thing to do is to remove the enchanted clothing from this— [*In disgust.*] this creature, and thus make him helpless and harmless? Proceed.

HANK. [*Starting to back away.*] Now, hold on here. . . . Hey! [*FOUR GUARDS seize HANK, push him to floor, pull off his boots, stockings, overalls, sweater, etc., leaving him wearing only his suit of long underwear.*]

MERLIN. [*With a wicked laugh.*] Now he is powerless!

SIR KAY. To the dungeon with him!

KING ARTHUR. A cheer for Sir Kay, truly a brave knight of the Table Round! [*HANK is dragged out left by GUARDS, as COURTIERS cheer SIR KAY. Curtain.*]

## SCENE 2

[*Setting: Dungeon cell. Pile of straw and low stool are center. May be played before curtain.*]

*At Rise:* CLARENCE sits on stool, watching HANK, who lies sleeping on straw. HANK stirs, stretches, his eyes still closed.]

HANK. [*Not seeing CLARENCE.*] What an astonishing dream I've just had! King Arthur's Court! What nonsense! [*Yawns and stretches.*] I reckon the noon whistle will blow shortly, and then I'll go down to the factory and have it out with Hercules. [*Turns over, opens his eyes sleepily, sees CLARENCE, and sits up abruptly.*] What! Are you still here? Go away with the rest of the dream! Scat!

**Stage Directions** What do the stage directions reveal about Merlin?

**Stage Directions** How do the stage directions help you understand what is happening in this scene?



CLARENCE. [*Laughing.*] Dream? What dream? [*Stands up.*]

HANK. Why, the dream that I'm in the court of a king who never existed, and that I'm talking to you who are nothing but a work of my imagination!

CLARENCE. [*Sarcastically.*] Indeed! And is it a dream that you're going to be burned tomorrow?

HANK. Burned! [*Jumps up.*] I'm still in the dungeon! This dream is more serious than I thought. [*Pleading.*] Clarence, my boy, you're the only friend I've got. Help me think of a way to escape from this place.

CLARENCE. Escape? Why, the corridors are guarded by at least twenty men at arms. You cannot hope to escape. Besides . . . [*Hesitantly.*] . . . there are other obstacles more overpowering than men at arms.

HANK. What are they?

CLARENCE. [*Nervously.*] Oh, I dare not tell you!

HANK. But you must! Come, be brave! Speak out!

CLARENCE. [*Looking around fearfully, then speaking close to HANK's ear.*] Merlin, that terrible and mighty magician, has woven wicked spells about this dungeon. No man can escape it and live! [*Nervously.*] There, I have told you. Now be merciful, and do not betray me, or I am lost!

HANK. [*Laughing.*] Merlin has cast a few spells, has he? That cheap old humbug? Bosh!

CLARENCE. [*Falling to his knees in terror.*] Oh, beware of what you say! These walls may crumble on us at any moment. Call back your awful words before it is too late!

HANK. [*Turning away; to himself.*] If everyone here is as afraid of Merlin's pretended magic as Clarence is, certainly a superior man like me with my nineteenth-century education ought to be shrewd enough to take advantage of this situation. [*Thinks a moment, then turns back to CLARENCE.*] Come on, Clarence, get up and pull yourself together. [*CLARENCE stands.*] Do you know why I laughed at Merlin?

CLARENCE. [*Timidly.*] No, and I pray you won't do it again.

HANK. I laughed because I'm a magician myself.

CLARENCE. [*Recoiling.*<sup>9</sup>] You?

HANK. I've known Merlin for seven hundred years, and—

CLARENCE. Seven hundred years?

**Analyze Plot** How do you think Hank might resolve his problem?

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<sup>9</sup> *Recoiling* means "pulling back in fear or disgust."



HANK. Don't interrupt! He has died and come alive again thirteen times. I knew him in Egypt three hundred years ago, and in India over five hundred years ago. He's always getting in my way everywhere I go, but his magic doesn't amount to shucks compared to mine. Now, look here, Clarence, I'll be your friend, and you must be mine.

CLARENCE. *I am your friend, I assure you!*

HANK. Good. Now, you get word to the King that I am the world's mightiest and grandest magician, and that if any harm comes to me I will quietly arrange a little calamity that will make the fur fly in these realms.

CLARENCE. [*Terrified.*] Yes, yes, at once! [*Backs off right, then turns and runs out.*]

HANK. That should get me off the hook pretty quick. [*Struts back and forth confidently for a moment, then suddenly stops.*] Ah! What a blunder I've made! I sent Clarence off to alarm the King with the threat of a calamity I haven't thought of yet! These sixth-century people are childish and superstitious. They believe in miracles. Suppose they want to see a sample of my powers? Suppose the King asks me to name my calamity? [*HANK sinks down onto stool, chin in hands, as lights fade out. In a moment, lights come up again. HANK remains on stool in same position.*] I've got to stall for time. I can't think of anything. [*Looks off right.*] Here's Clarence. I have to look confident. [*CLARENCE enters right, dejectedly.*] Well?

CLARENCE. I took your message to my liege the King, and he was very much afraid. He was ready to order your release, but Merlin was there and spoiled everything.

HANK. I might have known.



**Stage Directions** How does Clarence react to Hank's story?

**Analyze Plot** In what way do these lines add tension to the plot?

CLARENCE. He persuaded the King that you are crazy, and that your threat is nothing but foolishness because you have not named your calamity. Oh, my friend, be wise and name it, or you may still be doomed! [*HANK, deep in thought, frowns, then suddenly smiles.*]

HANK. Ah! I have it! Just in time, too. [*Turns to CLARENCE and draws himself up haughtily.*] How long have I been shut up in this miserable hole?

CLARENCE. Since yesterday evening.

HANK. Then today is the twentieth of June?

CLARENCE. Yes.

HANK. At what time tomorrow am I to be burned?

CLARENCE. [*Shuddering.*] At high noon.

HANK. Listen carefully. I will tell you what to say to the King. [*In deep, measured tones.*] Tell him that at high noon tomorrow I will smother the entire world in the dead blackness of midnight!

CLARENCE. [*Falling to his knees.*] Oh, have mercy!

HANK. [*Dramatically.*] I will blot out the sun, and it will never shine again! The fruits of the earth shall rot for lack of light, and the people of the earth shall famish and die to the last man! Go! Tell the King! [*CLARENCE staggers to his feet and backs off right, in terror.*]

HANK. [*Slapping his knee.*] Ha! The eclipse will be sure to save me, and make me the greatest man in the kingdom besides! Furthermore, I'll be the boss of the whole country within three months. After all, I have thirteen hundred years' head start on the best educated man in the kingdom! [*Sits down, smiling, then suddenly frowns.*] Hm-m, I hope my threat won't be too much for these simple people. Suppose they want to compromise? Then what do I do? [*Lights fade out for a moment to indicate brief passage of time, then come up again. HANK remains seated.*] Of course, if they want to compromise,

**Analyze Plot** How do you think King Arthur will respond to Hank's threat?

I'll listen, but I'll have to stand my ground and play my hand for all it's worth. [*1ST and 2ND GUARDS enter right.*]

1ST GUARD. Come! The stake is ready!

HANK. [*Terrified.*] The stake! [*GUARDS seize him.*] But . . . but . . . wait a minute! The execution is tomorrow!

2ND GUARD. The order has been changed and set forward a day. Come! [*GUARDS drag HANK, speechless, out right. Curtain.*]

### SCENE 3

[*Setting: Courtyard in Camelot. There is a stake center, with bundles of wood stacked around it.*]

*At Rise:* COURTIERS, CLARENCE, KING ARTHUR, and MERLIN stand right and left, as HANK is dragged in right by 1ST and 2ND GUARDS.

CLARENCE goes over to HANK, speaks to him quietly.]

CLARENCE. [*To HANK.*] My friend, it was through *my* efforts that the change was made for the day of your execution.

HANK. *Your efforts?* [*GUARDS tie HANK to stake and pile wood around him.*]

CLARENCE. Yes, and hard work it was, too. When I named your calamity, the King and all his court were stricken with terror. Then I had an idea. I told them that your power would not reach its peak until tomorrow, and that if they would save the sun, they must kill you today while your magic is still working. In the frenzy of their fright, they swallowed my lie, and here you are!

HANK. [*Miserably.*] Clarence, how could you!

CLARENCE. [*Excitedly.*] You only need to make a *little* darkness, and the people will go mad with fear and set you free. They will take me for a featherheaded fool, and you will be made great! But I beg of you, spare our blessed sun, for me—your one true friend! [*Backs away into crowd.*]

HANK. [*Miserably.*] My one, true, featherheaded friend! You have ruined me!



MERLIN. [*Approaching HANK, waving his arms and sneering.*] You call yourself a magician? Then stop the devouring flames if you can! I defy you! [*Beckons to GUARD, who comes forward with torch. HANK throws up his arms in an attitude of despair, and suddenly lights begin to dim. All gasp and look up.*]

COURTIERS. [*Ad lib.*] Look! The sun is disappearing! It's getting dark, and it's only noon! [*Etc.*]

HANK. [*Looking up in surprise.*] The eclipse! It's starting! I don't know where it came from, or how it happened, but I'd better make the most of it, or I'm done for! [*Strikes grand attitude, pointing upward.*]

MERLIN. [*Frantically.*] Apply the torch!

KING ARTHUR. I forbid it! [*MERLIN snatches torch from GUARD and starts toward stake.*]

HANK. Stay where you are! If any man moves, even the King, I will blast him with thunder and lightning! [*COURTIERS step back. MERLIN hesitates, then hands torch to GUARD, and backs away.*]

KING ARTHUR. [*To HANK.*] Be merciful, fair sir. It was reported to us that your powers would not reach their full strength until tomorrow, but—

HANK. That report was a lie. My powers are at full strength now! [*COURTIERS crowd around KING ARTHUR frantically.*]

COURTIERS. [*Ad lib.*] Oh, save us! Give him whatever he wants! Do whatever he wants, only save the sun! [*Etc.*]

KING ARTHUR. Name your terms, reverend<sup>10</sup> sir, but banish this calamity!

HANK. [*Looking up.*] Well . . . I must have some time to consider.

KING ARTHUR. But it grows darker every moment!

<sup>10</sup> Someone who is *reverend* is worthy of great respect.

**Stage Directions** How do the stage directions help you visualize what is happening?

**Analyze Plot** What does this event add to the play's climax?

COURTIERS. [*Ad lib.*] It's getting colder and colder! The night winds are blowing at noon! It's the end of the world! [*Etc.*]

HANK. Nevertheless, I must think! [*Looks up as lights continue to dim to almost complete darkness; to himself.*] What is this? How am I to tell whether this is the sixth century or not with this eclipse coming a day early? [*Pulls sleeve of 3RD GUARD.*] What day of the month is this?

3RD GUARD. [*Stepping back, terrified.*] The twenty-first, reverend sir.

HANK. The twenty-first! [*To himself.*] That featherheaded Clarence told me today was the twentieth! [*With sigh of relief.*] But his mistake about the date, and his good intentions in changing my day of execution, have saved me after all! I'm in King Arthur's court, all right, and there's only one course for me to take. [*Turns to KING.*] Sir King, whether or not I blot out the sun forever, or restore it, is up to you. You shall remain King and receive all the glories and honors that belong to you. But you must appoint me your perpetual minister,<sup>11</sup> and give me one percent of all increases in **revenue** I may create for the state.

KING ARTHUR. It shall be done! Away with his bonds! Do him homage,<sup>12</sup> all of you, for he is now at my right hand and clothed with power and authority! Now, sweep away this darkness and bring the light again.

[*GUARDS untie HANK.*]

HANK. [*To himself.*] I wish I knew how long this eclipse is supposed to last! [*To KING.*] Sir King, I may be clothed in power and authority in your eyes, but in my eyes, I am practically naked. I must have my clothes back.

**Analyze Plot** How has Clarence's confusion saved Hank and helped resolve the conflict?

<sup>11</sup> A **minister** is a high government official.

<sup>12</sup> To do **homage** is to pay special respect to someone or something.

### Vocabulary

**revenue** (rev'ə nōō') *n.* income; money taken in by a government or a business

KING ARTHUR. They are not good enough. Bring him costly garments! Clothe him like a prince! *[KING claps his hands several times, and servants rush in with rich robe, plumed hat, jeweled sword, etc., and start to put them on HANK.]*

HANK. *[As he is being clothed.]* Let it be known that I shall be called The Boss, and all who do as I say and don't get in my way will be spared any further calamities. *[Turning.]* As for you, Merlin, beware! Your magic is weak, and I have knowledge of enchantments that can knock you out of commission forever!

MERLIN. *[Menacingly.]* You have not seen the last of me!

KING ARTHUR. Everything shall be as you say, Sir Boss, only bring back the sun!

CLARENCE. *[On his knees.]* For your one true friend's sake, bring back the sun!

HANK. *[To himself.]* I hope it's time. *[Solemnly lifts his arms and gazes upward.]* Let the enchantment dissolve and pass harmlessly away! *[Darkness continues. The people stir uneasily. HANK waves his arms in grand flourish. Still it remains dark. HANK makes more flourishes, and slowly lights begin to come up, gradually becoming brighter and brighter. COURTIERs shout for joy.]*

CLARENCE. Oh, thank you, Sir Boss! You have worked a wondrous miracle, but I beg of you, never do it again!

HANK. Don't worry, Clarence, I won't perform this particular miracle again. Come, my boy, I'll find some suitable quarters in the castle and set up a factory. You can be my assistant, and I'll show you how to make all kinds of other miracles. *[Starts off left with his arm around CLARENCE'S shoulders, then suddenly stops, scratching his head.]* A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court! You know, a situation like this has all kinds of possibilities! And if I ever get back to Hartford, what a story I'll have to tell! *[Exits left with CLARENCE as COURTIERs bow to him, and curtain falls.]*

**Stage Directions** What important information do the stage directions add to this scene?

**BQ** **BIG Question**

What is the most entertaining part of Old Hank's story?



## After You Read

### Respond and Think Critically

1. Why does the Boy ask Old Hank to tell him a story? [Recall]
2. In your own words, briefly retell how Hank got from Hartford, Connecticut, to King Arthur's court. [Summarize]
3. Based on the way Merlin reacts to Hank, what can you infer about Merlin's ability to perform magic? Explain. [Infer]
4. How does King Arthur's court react to the eclipse? What does their reaction suggest about the author's view of sixth-century England? Explain. [Infer]
5. At the end of the play, Hank says, "a situation like this has all kinds of possibilities." How do you think Hank will take advantage of his situation? Use details to support your answer. [Conclude]
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** Have you ever known a good storyteller? What qualities made this person's stories entertaining? [Connect]

### Vocabulary Practice

On a separate sheet of paper, write the vocabulary word that correctly completes each sentence. If none of the words fits the sentence, write "none."

eclipse   fanfare   barbarians   revenue

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ signaled that the prince was entering the room.
2. The stranded hikers waited for a \_\_\_\_\_ to rescue them.
3. We looked up into the sky to watch the lunar \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Most of the store's \_\_\_\_\_ came from selling sandwiches.
5. It was very \_\_\_\_\_ that we didn't get completely lost.
6. You shouldn't think of people as \_\_\_\_\_ just because they are from a different culture.

### Academic Vocabulary

Hank escapes death by taking advantage of the **coincidence** that the eclipse begins just as he needs to prove his magical powers. In the preceding sentence, *coincidence* means "the occurrence of events that happen at the same time by accident." Think about a coincidence that has occurred in your life. How were you able to take advantage of the coincidence?

### TIP

#### Inferring

To answer question 3, you have to use your own knowledge and clues from the play to make an educated guess. Here are some tips to help you make an inference.

- Read the parts of the play in which Merlin appears. Then think about the times when Merlin is called upon to do magic.
- Consider what you already know about the world and the way people act. Do people sometimes take advantage of other people's foolishness?

**FOLDABLES** Study Organizer Keep track of your ideas about the **BIG Question** in your unit Foldable.



Literature Online

#### Selection Resources

For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and enter QuickPass code GL29763u6.

