



Objectives

For pages 247–258

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

Literary Study: Analyzing legend.

Reading: Making generalizations about characters.

Young Arthur

By Robert D. San Souci

Young Arthur

Connect to the Legend

Imagine you are a knight in ancient times in England. What do you think your life might be like? Complete the sentences below.

1. I sleep _____.
2. For breakfast, I eat _____.
3. I wear _____.
4. I am skilled at _____.
5. People expect me to be _____.

Build Background

There is no proof that King Arthur was a real person, but stories have been told about him since the sixth century. These stories are known as Arthurian legend.

- Arthur became the King of England after he pulled the sword from the stone.
- Merlin the wizard is an important character in King Arthur's life.
- King Arthur ruled from the castle Camelot.
- Arthur's queen was named Guinevere.
- King Arthur had a powerful sword called Excalibur.
- Many stories are told about his knights, the Knights of the Round Table.

Set Purposes for Reading

Read "Young Arthur" to find out how the legendary king became a leader. As you read, predict how Arthur might discover who he really is.

Literary Element Legend

A **legend** is a story that is usually based on a real person from history. It is a type of traditional story, like folktales and myths. It is also part of the **oral tradition**, which means legends have been passed down through the generations by word of mouth.

Many legends reflect the values of a culture. In “Young Arthur,” you can learn what characteristics were most highly valued in the knights in England.

Reading Skill Make Generalizations About Characters

When you make generalizations, you form a general conclusion based on facts and examples that you have. When you **make generalizations about characters**, you take the information the author gives you about a character and form a general conclusion about that character.

To make generalizations about characters

- pay attention to the details the author gives about the characters.
- think about what you already know about how people behave.
- connect the author’s details with what you already know.

Vocabulary

Read each word and definition at the right. Then write the word that best completes each sentence below.

1. The man apologized for his _____ crime.
2. Students staged a _____ to oppose a new rule.
3. Some people feel _____ on rainy days.

Vocabulary

melancholy (mel' ən kol' ē) *n.* sadness

rebellion (ri bel' yən) *n.* a struggle against the people in charge

grievous (grē' vəs) *adj.* very serious

Young Arthur



Reading Skill

Make Generalizations About Characters

Reread the highlighted text. What can you tell about King Uther's character?

Vocabulary

melancholy (mel' ən kol' ē)
n. sadness

Vocabulary

rebellion (ri bel' yən) *n.* a struggle against the people in charge

King Uther¹ heard the baby's wail and leaped to his feet. There was a sharp rap at the chamber door, and a servant entered grinning happily. "You have a son," he told the king. Uther's joy knew no bounds. When he was ushered into Queen Igerna's² bedchamber, Uther looked lovingly at mother and son. "The boy's name shall be Arthur," he declared, "and he shall be a great king. For Merlin³ [the magician] has foretold that he will one day rule the greatest kingdom under heaven."

¹⁰ But Uther's happiness did not last. His beloved queen died soon after Arthur's birth, and sadness sapped the king's spirit. He lost interest in ruling, and Merlin was unable to rouse him from his **melancholy**. "Unrest grows throughout the land," Merlin warned. "Your old foes are rising in **rebellion**. Give the babe into my keeping, for you have enemies even at court."

Anxious for his son's safety, Uther agreed. So Merlin, disguised as a beggar, took the infant Arthur to Sir Ector and his lady, who lived some distance from the court and
²⁰ all its dangers. He told them nothing about the child, save that his name was Arthur. The couple had recently lost

1. In the legend, **Uther** Pendragon was an early king of Britain.

2. **Igerna** was Uther's queen.

3. **Merlin** the magician is an elderly man. He can see the future and he uses magic to guide and protect King Arthur.

their infant son and welcomed Arthur as their own. Soon rebellion divided the kingdom. Uther, reclaiming⁴ his old spirit, rallied⁴ his knights and barons. Merlin always beside him, he drove back his enemies.

But as Uther celebrated his victory in the town of Verulum, traitors poisoned the town's wells. The king and his loyal followers were stricken.⁵ Merlin alone escaped. Though he tried his healing arts on Uther, he was forced to confess, "Sire, there is no remedy."

"Then," said the dying monarch, "I declare that my son shall be king of all this realm⁶ after me. God's blessing and mine be upon him." With these words, Uther died.

When the rebels entered Verulum, only Merlin was alive.

"Tell us where Uther's son is hidden," they demanded, "so that we can slay him and end Uther's line."

But Merlin vanished before their eyes.

Young Arthur was raised as a son in Sir Ector's house. He learned to read and write alongside his foster brother, Kay, who was four years older. By the time he was fifteen, Arthur was a tall, handsome, quick-witted lad. Though he had great strength, he also had a gentle manner.

Kay, who had recently been knighted,⁷ decided to train Arthur in the knightly arts himself. But Kay was vain and jealous of the favor Arthur found with their father, so he was a harsh taskmaster. Arthur came away from his lessons in swordsmanship with many bruises and cuts. When he



Literary Element

Legend Underline the sentence or sentences that tell what kind of person Arthur was. Why do you think the author includes these details about Arthur?

4. **Reclaiming** means getting something back that you lost. **Rallied** means gathered and ready to act.

5. Here, **stricken** means taken by illness.

6. A **realm** is a kingdom.

7. A person who is **knighted** becomes a knight, or soldier.

Vocabulary

grievous (grē' vəs) *adj.* very serious



Reading Skill

Make Generalizations About Characters

Reread the highlighted text. What does this tell you about Arthur's character? Check the correct answer.

- ☐ Arthur is excited to be Kay's apprentice.
- ☐ Arthur is obedient and respects Sir Ector's wishes.
- ☐ Arthur thinks he is too good to be an apprentice.

complained, Kay replied, "A knight must be thick-skinned and ready to bear even **grievous** wounds without
50 flinching." Yet if Arthur so much as pricked his brother, Kay would bellow loudly for the physician.

Eventually Kay appointed Arthur his apprentice. This was an honor the younger boy would happily have forgone.⁸ However, seeing that Sir Ector wished it so, Arthur sighed and agreed. But he felt in his heart that he already was a knight, though no lord had dubbed⁹ him such.

Both Arthur and Kay knew it was vital to earn the arts of war. The kingdom was still at the mercy of upstart¹⁰ lords
60 who ruled by fire and sword.



Broadsword

The story of Uther's lost son, the true heir to the throne, would have been forgotten but for Merlin. One Christmas Eve, the long-absent magician reappeared and summoned the bishops, lords, and common folk to London's square. There he drove a broadsword halfway into a huge stone. Written on the blade in blazing gold letters were the words: "Whose pulleth out the sword from this stone is born the rightful
70 King of England."

In the days that followed, knights and barons, cowherds and bakers, an endless parade of would-be kings eagerly pulled at the sword. But none could loosen it, let alone draw it forth.

When they accused Merlin of trickery, he said, "The rightful king has not yet come. God will make him known at the proper time."

8. An **apprentice** learns from a skilled person. A person who has **forgone** something has willingly gone without it.

9. A person is **dubbed**, meaning called or declared, a knight.

10. **Upstart** lords are newly powerful and self-important.

Now it happened that a great tournament was held in London. Among those who came were Sir Ector, Sir Kay, and young Arthur, who served Kay. So eager was the boy to see the jousts¹¹ that he forgot to pack Kay's sword. There was great upset when the mistake was discovered. 80

"Woe to you, boy," snarled Kay, "if your error costs me the victory I would otherwise win today!"

Even Sir Ector scolded Arthur and ordered, "Go back directly and fetch the missing sword."

Angry at his carelessness and impatient to see the contests, Arthur started homeward. Then he suddenly reined in his horse.

In the deserted city square was a massive stone with a sword plunged into its center. "Surely that sword is as good as the one left at home," he said. "I will borrow it. When Kay is finished, I will return it to this curious monument." 90

So saying, he dismounted,¹² scrambled up the stone, took the sword handle, and tugged. The sword did not move. Impatient to return to the tournament, he pulled

11. **Jousts** were events at tournaments, or medieval sporting events, in which pairs of knights on horseback fought each other.

12. When Arthur **dismounted**, he got down from his horse.

MY NOTES



Literary Element

Legend In the first paragraph, underline the sentence that shows an important action. Why is the moment so important in the legend of King Arthur?

again. This time, the sword slid easily out of the stone.

In his haste, he did not notice the words upon the blade.

Shoving the weapon into his belt, he remounted and raced
100 to where Sir Kay waited his turn upon the field.

The moment he saw the golden words upon the blade, Kay began to tremble with excitement. When Arthur asked what was amiss,¹³ Kay shouted, "Go! Get away! You have caused enough trouble."

But Arthur was curious. So he followed as Kay ran to Sir Ector. "Look, Father!" cried Kay. "Here is the sword of the stone. Therefore, it is I who must be king of all this land!"

When Sir Ector and the others saw the sword and read the golden inscription,¹⁴ they began to shout, "The sword
110 from the stone! The king's sword!" Hearing only this much, Arthur thought that he had stolen a king's weapon. As people hurried excitedly toward Kay, Arthur spurred his horse away, certain he had committed a great crime.

Looking back, he saw Kay and Sir Ector ride off, surrounded by the greatest lords of the realm. Were they taking Kay to trial? he wondered. Had he brought ruin upon Sir Ector's household?

"A true knight would not run away," he said to himself, "and I am a true knight in my heart." Fearful, but
120 determined to do what was right, the boy wheeled his horse around.

The great square was now filled with people. Just how terrible a crime had he committed?

Upon the stone stood Kay, holding the sword. The crowd shouted each time he held the blade aloft. Then silence fell over the throng: Merlin had appeared at the edge of the square. People stood aside to let the magician approach the stone.

13. **Amis** means wrong.

14. The **inscription** is the words carved on the surface.

"Are you the one who pulled the sword from the stone?" Merlin asked.

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"I am holding it, am I not?" Kay replied.

"The rightful king could pull it free a hundred times," said Merlin. "Slip the sword into the groove and pull it out again."

With a shrug, Kay reinserted the sword. But when he tried to jerk it free, it would not budge.

Suddenly all eyes turned toward Arthur, who was pushing his way through the crowd, bellowing at the top of his lungs. "It wasn't Kay's fault! I brought him the sword!" Merlin peered closely at Arthur. Then he smiled and said, "Climb up and draw the sword from the stone." Uncertainly Arthur clambered up beside Kay. Grasping the pommel,¹⁵ he easily pulled the sword out.

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Then Merlin cried, "This is Arthur, son of Uther Pendragon, Britain's destined¹⁶ king."

An astonished Sir Ector knelt to pay the boy homage,¹⁷ followed by Kay and many others. But all around, there was growing confusion and dispute. Some cried, "It is the will of heaven! Long live the king!" while others cried, "It is Merlin's plot to put a beardless boy, a puppet, on the throne, and so rule the land."

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[But] The cries of "Long Live King Arthur!" soon carried the day.



Literary Element

Legend Underline the text that shows that Merlin knew who Arthur was.

15. The **pommel** is the knob on the handle of a sword.

16. **Destined** means already set, or "bound to happen."

17. **Homage** is a show of loyalty and respect.

Young Arthur

Connect to the Short Story

Look back at the things you wrote about life as a knight in ancient times in England on page 248. Now think about what life was like for the characters in "Young Arthur." Imagine that you could be one of the characters for one day. Which character would you choose?

I would want to be _____ because _____

Literary Element Legend

Based on "Young Arthur," what do you think some of the most important values of English culture were during this time period? List what you think was an important value. Then give an example of that value from the story.

Important Value: _____
 Example: _____

Reading Skill Make Generalizations About Characters

Based on the statements below and what you already know, make generalizations about the characters. Read the sentence and then write a generalization about that character.

1. King Uther gave Merlin his son in order to keep him safe.

Generalization: _____

2. Arthur agreed to be Kay's apprentice when he saw that Sir Ector wanted him to do it.

Generalization: _____

3. Kay pretended that he was the one who had pulled the sword from the stone.

Generalization: _____

Young Arthur

Vocabulary

grievous

melancholy

rebellion

A. Word Meaning Write the vocabulary word that best answers the question.

1. What word goes with "very sad"? _____
2. What word goes with "serious"? _____
3. What word goes with "a uprising"? _____
4. What word goes with "unhappy"? _____
5. What word goes with "fighting"? _____

B. Vocabulary Skills Practice Write the vocabulary word that best matches each sentence or phrase.

1. Uther missed his wife. _____
2. Enemy soldiers stormed the castle. _____
3. Kay lied about taking the sword. _____
4. Fighting divided the kingdom. _____
5. It was a life-threatening injury. _____

After You Read

Young Arthur

In "Young Arthur," Arthur and his foster brother Kay are very different characters. Kay is a knight, but Arthur is the one who is destined to be king. In the chart below, list three details about each character that the author gives to show who they truly are.

Arthur	Kay

Selection Quick Check *(page 626)*

Young Arthur *ROBERT D. SAN SOUCI*

Read each of the following questions. Answer each question in a complete sentence.

1. Who are Arthur's parents?

2. How do King Uther and his followers die?

3. Who puts the sword in the stone?

4. Why does Arthur take the sword from the stone?

5. How does Merlin prove that Kay is not the rightful king?
