

***The Once and Future King* by T. H. White (Published by Ace Books)**

Approved for use in Honors Communication Arts II and Communication Arts II (the first book only)

Summary

This collection of books traces the life and tales of King Arthur. Included are T. H. White's account of the child Arthur meeting his mentor, Merlyn; Arthur pulling the sword from the stone and becoming king; King Arthur meeting his greatest knight, Lancelot; King Arthur developing Camelot and the Knights of the Round Table; and Arthur tragically falling in love with Guenever. The final book reveals the end of Arthur and the passing on of the legend to his page, Thomas.

Connection to the Curriculum

CAII students will read the first of the four books in this collection titled "The Sword in the Stone." This traces the legend of King Arthur's beginning including working with his tutor Merlyn and pulling the sword from the stone. This legend is critical for all students of literature to read. Honors students will extend the lesson by reading the remaining three books of the collection to include the stories of Camelot, Lancelot, Guenever, and Mordred. Again, these stories/legends are important for the serious student of literature. Examining White's version of the legends of King Arthur extends the students' review of the hero's journey (initiated in 9th grade/CAI or Honors CAI). The themes of the novel extend to the power of man to overcome adversity (through becoming an unlikely king and struggling to maintain a kingdom) in the first book and man's struggle for power/establishment of rules/government in the final three. As Arthur deals with the poor decisions made by his best knight and wife, he is also forced to balance his conscience vs. the laws he has made. White's development of the archetypal characters provides reinforcement of the skills introduced in CAI. Examining character motivations throughout the novel provides higher-level thinking activities. As the legends of King Arthur are an example of the art of storytelling, students can examine several versions (through other excerpts) and discover this art. As many movie versions of the legends have been released, students may also view short clips of various interpretations to compare/contrast point of view, tone, and characterization. Honors students may also compare/contrast the four storylines/plots and review White's ability to weave the four stories into one.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Writing: 3.9- The students use a variety of modes of writing for different purposes and audiences.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.2.1- The student adjusts reading rate to support comprehension when reading narrative texts.

1.3.1- The student determines meaning of words or phrases using context clues from sentences or paragraphs.

1.3.4- The student identifies, interprets, and analyzes the use of figurative language.

1.3.5- The student discriminates between connotative and denotative meanings and interprets the connotative power of words.

1.4.4- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions during and after reading the text.

1.4.5- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

1.4.7- The student compares/contrasts varying aspects in one or more age-appropriate level texts.

1.4.10- The student identifies the topic, main idea(s), supporting details, and theme(s) in text across the content areas and from a variety of sources in appropriate-level text.

1.4.11- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style and use of literary devices work together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates how the author uses various plot elements.

2.1.4- The student analyzes themes, tone, and author's point of view.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices.

2.2.2- The student compares and contrasts works of literature that deal with similar topics and problems.

Writing:

3.9.3- The student writes pieces e.g., research, informational writing, summaries, and literary analyses.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)
Readers should be reminded that there are battle scenes that are inevitable in a story of King Arthur and his quest for right. There is also mild violence and magic associated with the sisters of Arthur. In addition, the famous love triangle of Arthur, Guinever, and Lancelot is explored in the third book. White's version, however, is conservative in its handling of these mature situations.

AP Connections

The legends of King Arthur are essential for the serious student of literature. The allusions stemming from these legends are evident in writing today. This version (reading all four books) provides the key stories of the legend: Guinever, Lancelot, Camelot, Merlyn, and Mordred.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities