

The Once and Future King

Book One: The Sword in the Stone

Chapter 1

1. How does the disjointed structure of Sir Grummore and Sir Ector’s conversation help to establish their characteristics?

2. In the middle of Sir Grummore and Sir Ector’s conversation, the narrator employs an aside to the reader: “It was not really Eton that he mentioned, for the College of Blessed Mary was not founded until 1440, but it was a place of the same sort. Also they were drinking Metheglyn, not port, but by mentioning the modern wine it is easier to give you the feel.” What does this aside accomplish?

3. What techniques are used in this chapter to help establish the setting for the novel?

4. How are Kay and the Wart different? Describe their relationship.

Chapter 2

1. What does the Wart's desire to get Cully back reveal about his character?

2. Discuss the contrast between the Wart's *initial* impression of King Pellinore and King Pellinore's behavior. What does this contrast accomplish?

3. How is King Pellinore's attitude toward the Questing Beast unexpected?

Chapter 3

1. How does the long description of Merlyn's house illuminate his character?

2. What does Merlyn ask the Wart to do to illustrate his peculiar way of looking at time? How does this illuminate his confusion?

Chapter 4

1. How does sir Ector respond to Merlyn's testimonials and demonstrations of his magic, and what does this reveal about his character?

2. How does Merlyn treat Kay differently than he treats the Wart, and what might this foreshadow?

Chapter 5

1. Near the beginning of the chapter, the writer describes the Castle of the Forest Sauvage as it stands currently, rather than during the setting of the novel. What function does this aside serve?

2. How is the Wart's lesson unexpected?

3. Merlyn claims that the roach is "neurotic," but helps her anyway. What does this reveal about his character?

4. How is Mr. P., the pike in the moat, characterized? Given this description, what is the narrator's attitude toward the idea that "Might is Right?"

Chapter 6

1. How does this short chapter further develop Merlyn's character? Kay's?

2. What might the gore-crow's action foreshadow?

Chapter 7

1. What is Merlyn's tone toward athleticism and knighthood? Why?

2. What tone does the narrator use in depicting King Pellinore and Sir Grummore's joust? What does this tone accomplish?

Chapter 8

- 1. What does Merlyn claim is “the way to learn?” Does this statement give significance to the Wart’s unusual lessons so far?

- 2. How are the hawks in this chapter likened to the military?

- 3. What does Colonel Cully’s insanity imply about military society or culture?

- 4. Cully makes copious allusions to Shakespeare, specifically Macbeth. What function do these allusions serve in characterizing Cully? In foreshadowing the Wart’s future?

- 5. What does the title that the hawks give to the Wart foreshadow?

Chapter 9

1. What does the aftermath of the fight between the Wart and Kay reveal about the Wart's character?

2. Merlyn claims that he lacks the power to change Kay into other creatures. What might this foreshadow about the Wart?

Chapter 10

1. How is the aftermath of Kay and the Wart’s fight similar to the aftermath of King Pellinore’s joust with Sir Grummore? What does this indicate about the chivalric code?

2. Describe Little John’s dialect. What does the narrator’s use of this dialect reveal about Little John’s character?

3. How does the inclusion of the well-known character Robin Hood, (called Robin Wood here), affect the tone of this chapter?

Chapter 11

1. How do the fantastic elements in this chapter affect the tone of the novel?

2. How are the foods the Oldest Ones choose to construct the castle ironic? How does this irony affect the plot?

Chapter 12

1. How is Kay's character further developed in this chapter?

2. How is the Wart's character further developed in this chapter? What does his choice of old Wat as his gift reveal about his character?

Chapter 13

- 1. What tone does the narrator employ to describe life in the ant colony? Support your answer.

- 2. What function does the description of the ant language, particularly the emphasis on the use of “Done” and “Not-Done,” serve?

- 3. What theme do the ants’ constant broadcasts develop?

- 4. How does the Wart respond to his life among the ants, and what does this reveal about his character?

Chapter 14

1. How does the narrator portray the feudal system?

2. How does this chapter further develop Sir Ector's character?

Chapter 15

1. What techniques does the narrator use to establish an idyllic setting in this chapter? Give examples.

Chapter 16

1. Compare and contrast the adventure of the boar hunt with the Wart's earlier adventure at the Castle of the Old Ones. What effect does the author create by juxtaposing realistic chapters against fantastic, magical chapters?

2. Discuss the irony behind King Pellinore's meeting with the Questing Beast. How does this section develop the narrator's tone towards knighthood and questing?

3. How does this chapter further develop King Pellinore's character?

Chapter 17

1. What does Archimedes' personification of pigeons as Quakers accomplish?

2. How does this chapter further develop the Wart's character?

3. What is the effect of the juxtaposition between Kay and the Wart at the end of the chapter? What does this suggest about Kay's character?

Chapter 18

1. What tone does the narrator employ in describing the geese and their society? Support your answer.

2. How does goose society differ from ant society? How is this significant?

3. What theme is reinforced by the last line of Chapter 18?

Chapter 19

1. Contrast the songs the geese sing with the songs the ants sang. What does this difference reveal?

Chapter 20

- 1. Why do Kay and the Wart drift apart in this chapter? What does this indicate about medieval society?

- 2. How does the Wart’s conversation with Merlyn about ridding the world of evil further develop the Wart’s character?

- 3. Analyze Merlyn’s response to the Wart’s desire to rid the world of evil. What might it foreshadow?

Chapter 21

- 1. How does the Wart's decision to spare the hedgehog relate to the theme of might and right? What does it reveal about the Wart?

- 2. What is the function of the badger's parable?

- 3. What does the Wart's continued glorification of warfare reveal about his character?

Chapter 22

1. What does King Pellinore's proclamation about the sword in the stone foreshadow?

Chapter 23

1. Near the beginning of the chapter, the narrator writes, “Perhaps, if you happen not to have lived in the Old England of the twelfth century, or whenever it was...” What is the function of the phrase “or whenever it was,” and what tone does it lend to the novel?

2. How does this chapter further develop Kay’s character?

3. How is the pivotal moment, when the Wart pulls the sword from the stone, the culmination of the Wart’s education?

Chapter 24

1. How does the narrator’s inclusion of the list of gifts sent to the Wart help to conclude Book One?

2. What tone does the narrator employ in this chapter? What does this tone foreshadow about King Arthur’s rule?
