

Ye Olde Study Questions

Part One: “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”

Words to Own. Use the textbook to define the following:

1. Daunted:
2. Efficacious:
3. Feinted:

See page 158, Background section for the following questions:

1. What is the Green Knight’s challenge to Arthur’s knights?
2. What does the Green Knight call this challenge?
3. What must the knight who accepts this challenge agree to do?
4. Who accepts the challenge? Why?
5. What happens when Sir Gawain chops off the Green Knight’s head?
6. What “game” does the lord of the castle suggest to Gawain a year later?
7. What happens to Gawain each time the lord goes out hunting?
8. What does the lord’s wife give to Gawain on the third day? What magical properties does the gift have?
9. What does Gawain do when the lord returns that day?
10. What does he do with the gift when he leaves the castle? Why?

Pages 159-165

11. Where does Gawain find the Green Knight? What is the Knight doing?
12. Why is the Green Knight a romantic figure? (lines 26-34) Who does Gawain initially associate him with?
13. What elements of a romance are present in the poem (beginning to line 58)?
14. Why does the Green Knight keep Gawain waiting in lines 60-61?
15. In lines 91-99, what do we learn about Gawain from his response to the Green Knight? What type of characterization is this?
16. How does Gawain react to the Green Knight's taunts? How would a real person react? (lines 110-120)
17. Why does the Green Knight stop his second blow? (lines 129-135)
18. How many times total does the Green Knight raise his ax over Gawain's head?
19. What is significant/symbolic about the number of blows the Green Knight gives to Sir Gawain?
20. In what way is the action in lines 141-149 characteristic of a romance?
21. Give an example of alliteration in lines 151-153.

22. In what ways does the Green Knight sound lighthearted in lines 177-185?
23. Who does the Green Knight turn out to be? What does he tell Sir Gawain he arranged?
24. Why did the Green Knight and his wife try to trick and seduce Sir Gawain?
25. To what specific actions of Gawain's does the Green Knight link each of his strokes of the ax?
26. What does the Knight finally decide about Sir Gawain's character?
27. Why is Gawain miserable and ashamed in lines 210-214?
28. Why does Gawain throw off the sash?
29. In what ways is Sir Gawain a superhuman romantic hero? In what ways is weak or flawed like a real person?
30. Keeping in mind the idea that green usually symbolizes hope, Spring and new life in the plant world, describe the symbolic use of the color green in the story.

Part Two: "The Death of Arthur"

From: Le Morte Darthur, by Sir Thomas Malory

Pages 170-175

1. Who is Sir Mordred? (Page 170, background)
2. What animals did King Arthur dream were attacking him in his first dream? (171)
3. Who does Arthur see in his second dream? (171)
4. Is Gawain alive when the story opens? What does he warn Arthur not to do? (171)
5. What does Arthur do because of the dream? How does this present Arthur as a romantic hero? (171)
6. How many men did Sir Mordred have with him? (171)
7. What were the terms of the truce between Sir Mordred and the King? (171)
8. What were the terms of their meeting together? (171)
9. What instruction did both Arthur and Mordred give to their men as they left to meet with each other? (172)
10. What starts the battle? How is this ironic? What does the snake (adder) suggest? (172)
11. How long did the battle last? How many knights died by the end of the battle? (172)

12. Which of Arthur's knights lived? (172)
13. What did King Arthur do when he saw how many of his knights had died? Why? (172)
14. What is Sir Lucan's advice to King Arthur? Why? (172)
15. How was Sir Mordred wounded during his battle with Arthur? (172)
16. How was Arthur wounded? (172)
17. Who won the battle, Sir Mordred or King Arthur?
18. Where did Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere take the King right after the battle? (173)
19. Why did Sir Lucan want to take Arthur to some town? (173)
20. What happened to Sir Lucan? (173)
21. What task did King Arthur give to Bedivere? (173)
22. What is Excalibur? In what way does Excalibur and Arthur's request of Bedivere suggest that Arthur is a romantic hero? (173)
23. What does Bedivere do? Why? (174)

24. How many times does Arthur have to repeat the request in order for Bedivere to obey? Why does Bedivere finally do what is asked of him? (174)

25. What happens at the water's edge to suggest the sword belongs to a romantic hero? How did Arthur know Bedivere had been lying? (174)

26. Why did Arthur give Bedivere this task?

27. Where does Bedivere then take the wounded king? (174)

28. Who is the old hermit? What does he tell Sir Bedivere he is doing? (174-175)

29. Why does Bedivere swoon? (175)

30. Where is Arthur supposedly buried? (175)

31. Who does the narrator tell us were among the ladies who sailed away with Arthur to Avilion? (175)

32. What did Queen Guenevere do when she heard Arthur was dead? Why? (175)

33. What is the legend about the death of Arthur and his return? What is written on his tomb in Latin? (175)
34. What do all of these mysterious details around Arthur's last hours, and the inscription on his tomb suggest? What qualities of a romantic hero are revealed here?
35. Why is the story of Arthur so powerful even today?

Part Three: "The Lady of Shalott"
By Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Pages 808-812

1. What oppositions are present in the first stanza?
2. Where does the Lady of Shalott live?
3. How do the details in Stanza 2 also suggest opposition?
4. What sound devices contribute to the music of lines 28-36?
5. Why does the Lady stay indoors and weave night and day? (lines 37-41)
6. Why is the margin note on page 809 about the “mirror clear” of particular importance?
7. What role does the mirror play in the Lady’s life? (lines 46-54)
8. What does the Lady see that prompts her to say that she is “half sick of shadows” in line 71?
9. What does she mean by that statement? What do the “shadows” symbolize?
10. Who does the Lady see arriving at Camelot in Part III?
11. How does his arrival increase the narrative tension? What is ironic about this?

12. What is the meaning of the contrast between the dazzling light images associated with Sir Lancelot and the contrasting images of the Lady's world of shadows?
13. What is the Lady's curse? Why?
14. What happens when the Lady does look out of the window?
15. Why is this significant?
16. A Pathetic Fallacy occurs when a writer assigns human emotions and moods to a force of nature. How does lines 118-122 qualify as a pathetic fallacy?
17. What is the significance of the Lady's dressing in white in line 136?
18. How does she travel to Camelot?
19. How does the stanza beginning with line 145 and ending with line 153 suggest opposition?
20. How do the people in Camelot respond to her arrival?