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## Before you start

1. What do you already know about King Arthur? Arrange your ideas in a mind map. You can add more information when you learn more about him from the story.



2. You will read these words very often in the story. Match the words with their meaning. Use a dictionary if you need to.

- |               |                          |                    |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. sword      | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. magician        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. chieftain  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. to betray       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. to fight   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. handsome       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. invincible | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. the Holy Grail | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. knight     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Saxon          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. lake       | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. mysterious     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. rebellion  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. staff          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- a. A large area of water that is surrounded by land.
- b. Attractive, good-looking.
- c. Someone with magical powers, a wizard.
- d. A long stick.
- e. A weapon with a long metal blade and a handle.
- f. The leader of a group of people or a large family.
- g. A situation where people fight against the rulers or government in their country.
- h. Impossible to beat.
- i. The cup that Jesus Christ is said to have used just before his death.
- j. A member of a people who were originally from Germany and who came to live in Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries.
- k. Strange, unknown or interesting.
- l. To use physical force to try to defeat sb.
- m. To behave in a bad or dishonest way to someone who trusts you.
- n. A man trained to fight as a soldier in the Middle Ages.

## The characters

The legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, also known as the Arthurian legend, is set in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and is an important part of British culture. Told for centuries, the stories are a mix of history, myth, romance, fairy tale and religion. Here are the legend's most important characters:



**King Arthur** was a legendary king of Britain who fought against the Saxon invaders in the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> cent. After many great battles, Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table finally defeated the Saxons. He ruled from the castle Camelot where he lived with his wife Guinevere.



**Guinevere** was the beautiful wife of King Arthur. Some people say she had a love affair with Arthur's knight, Sir Lancelot. Other people say she was a good wife and queen to Arthur. Many people think Arthur's punishment of his wife was the beginning of his downfall.



**Excalibur** was a magical sword with special powers. The owner of the sword could not be wounded or killed. King Arthur was given Excalibur by the Lady of the Lake. Before he died, he asked one of his knights to bring the sword back to the Lady of the Lake.

**culture** the habits and traditions of a country | **myth** a very old story about heroes and gods | **battle** a fight in a war | **to defeat** to win against sb | **punishment** if you do sth bad, you receive punishment | **downfall** a loss of power



**Merlin** was a famous wizard. His mother was a normal woman, but his father was said to be a spirit. It was from him that Merlin got his supernatural powers.



**Galahad** was Lancelot's son and was known as the 'pure knight'. He was best known for his success in finding the Holy Grail, the cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper.



**Lancelot** was the most famous of Arthur's knights. He was Arthur's most trusted knight. Also known as Lancelot of the Lake, he fell in love with Guinevere.



**Mordred** was King Arthur's nephew and he was one of the Knights of the Round Table. Mordred betrayed Arthur and fought against him at the Battle of Camlann, where he was killed after wounding Arthur.

**spirit** supernatural being, like a ghost or fairy | **supernatural** that cannot be explained by science or the laws of nature | **pure** here: completely good





The towering castle of Tintagel. The wild sea of the Atlantic Ocean. The black cliffs of the coast. Night-time.

In the sky, a storm is brewing. A man in a long white robe walks over the bridge to the castle gates. He walks with a long stick. On top of the staff is the head of a goat.

The soldiers at the castle gates do not speak to him. They do not ask him his name or why he is here. They just open the gates and let the man in. As the rain begins to fall and a flash of lightning lights up the sky, the man goes into the castle. He goes up the stairs to the king's chambers.

"Welcome, Merlin," King Uther says as the man comes into the room.

The king's wife is asleep in her bed. Her stomach is big and round like a ball. She is pregnant.

"These are bad times to bring a child into the world," Uther tells Merlin.

"The chieftains are fighting each other. The Saxons are coming from the north. There is danger everywhere."

cliffs high, steep rocks beside the sea | chamber room



Merlin puts his ear to the queen's stomach and listens. "The child will be here tomorrow," he says. "A boy."

"My first son. The future king," says Uther. "They will try to kill him, Merlin. The chieftains will take him away from me. I cannot let that happen."

The woman in the bed is dreaming. She lifts her hand and touches Merlin's face. "Arthur! He is here," her eyes closed. "Arthur, my child!"

"You must take the boy with you," Uther says. "You must make him king when I die."

Merlin puts his hand on the queen's head to calm her. "It will break her heart," he says out loud.

"Yes, it will. But we must do it. To protect the boy and the kingdom. Will you do this for me, Merlin? Will you take my child and make him king?"

Merlin puts his hand on the queen's belly. "You will give him the name of Arthur?" he asks.

The king nods. Merlin touches the queen's stomach with his staff. "Then the boy Arthur will be king," he says. Outside lightning strikes again.

to calm sb to make sb stop feeling worried or scared | belly stomach, tummy