

Exploring Stories – King Arthur

Lesson 1 – Who was King Arthur?

Learning objectives

Students will learn to:

- develop their understanding of King Arthur and Arthurian legend
- explore the significance of different types of media texts in the representation of Arthurian legend
- develop their understanding and analysis of the graphic novel form.

Resources

- Graphic novel extract: *Excalibur: The Legend of King Arthur* by Tony Lee and Sam Hart
- Comic book extract: *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* by Marcia Williams
- Google images (Arthurian Legend)
- Mind map template

Possible additional resources:

- Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* (opening clip), available on YouTube
- *King Arthur* trailer (2004), available on YouTube

Starter

Put up several different images relating to King Arthur and Arthurian legend on the whiteboard as students enter the room. Typing 'Arthurian legend' into Google images, for example, provides a wide variety. You could have the images timed to rotate on a PowerPoint. Consider showing as many different types of images as possible from historical paintings/drawings to more modern animation and film images. Elicit from students what they know about the content of the images. They could write down their thoughts to begin with on a blank piece of paper or on the mind map template provided. Then discuss as a whole group.

Subsequently, you could then ask students to consider the different types of media that have been shown (eg film image, cartoon image, modern painting, historical drawing) and the ways in which Arthurian legend has been represented throughout history. You could ask students whether they think the type of media influences the type of representation in any way. Consider, for example, the representation of Arthur in an image from Disney's *The Sword in the Stone*. There are some suggested YouTube clips to further support these opening activities and class discussion.

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Development

Put up the full image of Arthur pulling the sword from the stone in the graphic novel *Excalibur: The Legend of King Arthur* (see resources) on the whiteboard. Elicit from students the type of media text they are looking at and subsequently anything they know about graphic novels and their design.

Then tell students that they are going to start **reading** and analysing the image in front of them. Elicit what students might already know about the features of graphic novels. Support students to identify and define the key terminology below, to develop their understanding:

Panel/frame (the box shaped images on the page of a graphic novel)

Gutter (the space between panels/frames)

Camera distance (Long shot, mid-shot, close-up)

Camera angle (low/high)

Mise-en-scene (meaning what is 'put in the scene/frame' which includes colour, lighting, setting, props, body gestures/facial expressions)

Speech/Thought balloon or bubble

You might begin by modelling an example of analysis with regards to the low angle, tilted, long shot of Arthur holding up the sword and how it makes him appear strong and powerful. The size of the panel/frame also suggests that he is the central character and hero of the story.

When students have had sufficient time to work through the resource sheet, take some feedback from the class and discuss.

Plenary

Show students the previous pages of the graphic novel which build up to the sword being pulled from the stone and ask them to discuss with a partner what happens and how the Arthurian legend is being represented, using as much of the terminology for analysis as possible. Take some feedback from the group.

Homework

Give students a copy of the comic extract *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* by Marcia Williams and ask them to read it for the next lesson. You could ask students to consider the ways in which it is different from the graphic novel extracts. Students should consider the terms 'audience' and 'purpose' in doing so.

Lesson 2 – The story of Excalibur

Learning objectives

Students will learn to:

- develop their understanding of the story of Excalibur
- develop their understanding of the narrative form in poetry
- compare the similarities and differences between different types of texts.

Resources

- Comic book extract: *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* by Marcia Williams
- Poem extract from *Excalibur the Magic Sword* by Tony Mitton
- Cloze activity version of extract (available online)
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_poetry

Starter

Reflect on students' understanding of the story of Excalibur from the comic book for homework. They could discuss with a partner first and then share with the group. In addition, ask students to consider who they think the **audience** of this text is and why? How does this affect the **purpose** of the text in how it has been designed? You might also ask students to compare the visual techniques of this comic book style with those of the graphic novel from the previous lesson.

Development

Introduce the extract from the poem *Excalibur the Magic Sword* by Tony Mitton through a cloze activity where the final words of the second and fourth lines of each stanza have been removed (see resources). Ask students to work out the missing words. They could use the comic book extract from the starter as further support if necessary. They should hopefully discover for themselves that the words should rhyme, but if not, reveal the examples from the opening stanza. Once students have had sufficient time to do this, read through Mitton's version together as a class (students can then change words where necessary). Then discuss the story that is told within the poem (eliciting from students that this is a **narrative form** of poetry). Provide students with some background information about narrative poetry to develop their understanding. The following Wikipedia page has information which links the form with Arthurian legend: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_poetry

Then move on to analyse the form of the poem in more detail. Students should try to explain the effects of the language and techniques used. The following questions could be put on the whiteboard:

- What is the effect of the rhyme scheme and the words that are used in the rhymes?
- What is the effect of the rhythm created by the metre and rhyme scheme? How does it affect the tone and mood of the poem? (Some explanation of metre might be needed here. Students could count the number of syllables per line to see if there is any pattern.)
- Are there any other poetic devices used (ie alliteration/onomatopoeia). What is the effect of using these devices and the words within them?

Plenary

Ask students to look back at all three texts studies so far and to compare the differences in their presentation and the way they tell their stories. A table containing three columns could be used in which students summarise their observations, making links where appropriate.

Lesson 3 – King Arthur: Exploring myth, legend and fact

Learning objectives

Students will learn to:

- develop their understanding of the terms myth and legend
- consider the significance of authorship and narrative reliability
- begin exploring the historical evidence surrounding King Arthur

Resources

- Novel extract: *Here Lies Arthur* by Philip Reeve
- Non-fiction extract from *King Arthur's World* by Kevin Crossley-Holland
- Google images (Excalibur - Lady of the Lake)
- Questions sheet to explore understanding in the extract *Here Lies Arthur* (available online)

Starter

Show several different images of the 'Excalibur - Lady of the Lake' scene on the whiteboard. Typing this phrase into Google images provides a variety of different depictions of the scene. Ask students the question 'which image is a reliable depiction of the scene?' Try to steer the discussion so that the class begins to question the different versions of Arthurian legend that exist as well as the ideas of authorship and narrative reliability. Students could also look back at the comic book and poem previously studied to see if there are any differences in how this part of the story is told in these texts too and why those differences might exist. At some point during this activity it would be interesting to put the two words 'myth' and 'legend' on the whiteboard and explore what these words mean in more detail. Wikipedia or online dictionary websites provide some interesting explanations and definitions that could be used to support the discussion.

Development

Show students the opening paragraph of the extract from Philip Reeve's novel *Here Lies Arthur* on the whiteboard. Ask them to explain their understanding of the scene being described and who the narrative voice might be. The imagery of the sword and mist could be linked with the images and texts discussed in the starter activity, for example.

Then read the extract together as a class. When you have finished reading the whole extract, ask students for their initial response to this version of Excalibur. Follow this up with some specific questions (see resources) about the extract so that students can explore their understanding. They should try to support their responses with textual evidence where appropriate. Then feedback and discuss as a whole group.

Plenary

Put the six questions from the opening paragraph of Kevin Crossley-Holland's non-fiction extract on the whiteboard. Did King Arthur exist? Was there really a court called Camelot? Where exactly was Arthur's kingdom? When did he rule? And what was he like? Elicit students' responses in light of the discussions about myth and legend earlier in the lesson. With any remaining time, you could begin to read the text and ask students to finish looking at it for homework, highlighting key points and ideas for feedback next lesson.

Lesson 4 – King Arthur: Retelling the myth

Learning objectives

Students will learn to:

- develop role-play/drama skills
- explore their understanding of the retelling of stories and the different meanings that are created as a result.

Resources

- Play script extract from *Little King Arthur* by David Pemberton
- Short story: *King Arthur Gives Back His Sword* by Geraldine McCaughrean

Starter

Show students the character list from the first page of the play extract *Little King Arthur* on the whiteboard. Ask them what they notice about the range of characters presented, their names and what this suggests the play will be about. Students could discuss in pairs or larger groups with a spokesperson to feedback their thoughts to the whole class.

Development

Give each student a copy of the play-script extract and ask for volunteers to play the various characters. 12 individual characters are needed with the rest of the students acting as a group of outlaws and Camelot pupils in the crowd. Consider preparing two key props beforehand: a cardboard cut-out of a sword (or a plastic one if available) and another piece of cardboard, or box, with a hole cut in it to act as a TV screen. Allow for time to set the scene as described at the top of page two (students could be responsible for this) and then read through/perform the play as a class.

Plenary

When you have finished the performance, ask students to discuss some of the following questions in small groups:

- How does this version differ from other versions of the 'sword in the stone' myth? (Students could refer back to the graphic novel extract studied in the first lesson.)
 - How has the author added comedy into this retelling of the 'sword in the stone' scene? What effect does this have on the audience?
 - How has the author combined modern with more traditional elements of the story?
- Feedback and discuss as a whole class.

Homework

Give students a copy of the short story *King Arthur Gives Back his Sword* by Geraldine McCaughrean to take away and read. Mention that they could research whether there is any historical evidence to support what happens in the story as preparation for the next lesson where they will be looking at a newspaper report claiming to know where King Arthur's final resting place is.

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Lesson 5 – King Arthur: Making the legend real

Learning objectives

Students will learn to:

- develop their understanding of non-fiction texts (newspaper articles)
- develop creative writing skills

Resources

- Newspaper article from The Daily Record: 'King Arthur's Final Resting Place'

Starter

Students could begin by feeding back on their understanding of the short story extract from the previous lesson's homework, discussing whether they found any historical evidence in the events described from any research they did. Then read through the newspaper article from The Daily Record together as a class. Elicit students' response to this article in relation to the events told in the texts studied so far. Ask the question if there is any relationship between the enduring Arthurian myth and the reality suggested in this article. Typing 'the stone at yarrow' into Google provides a range of images and further websites/articles that could be looked at to support the discussion further.

Development

Tell students that they are now going to write their own newspaper article based on an event/scene told in one of the texts studied in the previous lessons. Begin by eliciting and establishing some of the key features of a newspaper article such as:

- An engaging headline (puns, alliteration)
- Who? What? Where? When? Why? (format)
- Reported and direct speech (eye-witness accounts)
- Past tense (usually)
- Formal language
- Variety of sentence lengths
- Emotive/dramatic vocabulary (words like 'shock', 'amazing', 'incredible')
- Time and sequence connectives - as soon as; following; eventually
- Short paragraphs

You could annotate some examples of these in The Daily Record article on the whiteboard.

A suggested writing task:

Imagine you are a reporter at the scene of the event when Arthur pulls the sword from the stone, or when Arthur takes Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. Write your report later that day for the next morning's exclusive news.

Plenary

Ask students to share some examples of their writing so far. They could swap examples with their peers and explain their approach and some of the techniques they have employed to each other. Students could then feedback to the whole class with some effective examples of work they have seen and discussed.

Poem

From *Excalibur the Magic Sword*

by Tony Mitton

Sir Pellinore cried, "Boo-hoo-hoo!
My helmet's got a _____.
My breastplate's burst, but what is worst –
My lovely lance is _____!"

"That's nothing," cried King Arthur.
"Your helmet's smashed my _____.
Another blade so nicely made,
I simply can't _____."

But as he spoke there came a flash,
a flicker, then a _____.
Before him stood old Merlin,
King Arthur's royal _____.

He shook the sparkles from his cloak,
the fizzles from his _____,
then, as he spoke, began to poke
his finger in the _____:

"As magic-maker to the court
I have things well in _____.
So come with me and soon you'll see
the sword that I have _____.

"It's being fashioned underground
with secret elvish _____.
With this fine sword you won't be bored.
You'll love it. Yes, you _____.

"Sir Lancelot can go back home
to Camelot, for _____.
But, as for you, your sword awaits,
so come along with _____."

King Arthur's eager face lit up.
"A brand new sword? That's _____!
A magic sword made underground!
Wow! I can hardly _____!"



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So Merlin and King Arthur
went riding off _____.
They rode through mist, they rode through fog,
all kinds of spooky _____.

They seemed to ride forever
down weirdly winding _____,
while all around there came the sound
of strange and eerie _____.

They rode through deep, enchanted woods,
they rode through dreary _____.
They heard the caw of ragged crows,
the howl of ghostly _____.

Then Merlin took a little path
that ribboned round a _____,
and soon they came upon a lake
that lay completely _____.

No birds sang in the silent trees.
No frogs went croak or _____.
No breezes whispered in the reeds.
No little fish went _____!

“But see,” said Merlin, “yonder...
the centre of the _____.”
So Arthur looked, and at the sight
his legs began to _____.

A slender arm that gripped a sword
rose slowly from the _____.
“I’ll save her!” cried young Arthur.
“She must be some knight’s _____...”

“Be still,” hissed Merlin. “There you see
the Lady of the _____.
She’s like a kind of mermaid.
That sword is yours to _____.”

This poem is reproduced by kind permission from Tony Mitton and is taken from *Crazy Camelot: Excalibur the Magic Sword*, Hachette Children’s Books.

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Questions to explore understanding in the extract Here Lies Arthur

- Whose perspective is the story written from?
 - How does the author create a mood of suspense and mystery in the opening of the story?
 - Who is Myrddin? What other name do we know him by in other versions of the story?
 - What is the significance of story-telling in the extract? Who talks about telling stories and why?
 - Some names and words might appear strange or unfamiliar in the extract. Why do you think this is?
 - How is the scene described when they reach 'the pool'? How does it compare with other images of this scene that you know?
 - Arthur is joined by a group of men at one point in the story. What name(s) also exists for this group of men in Arthurian legend?
 - What does 'Caliburn' mean?
 - Why do you think Philip Reeve's writes his version of the story with the narrator handing Arthur the sword? Do you think it challenges the accepted version of events that you discussed earlier in the lesson?
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