

The Sword in the Stone

A World Premiere by
Shaan Sharma



STUDY GUIDE

PROVIDED BY



PERFORMANCE DATES & TIMES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCES:

- March 17th, 18th & 19th @ 10am
- March 20th @ 10:30am & 12pm
- March 31st, April 1st & 2nd @ 10am
- April 3rd @ 10am & 12:30pm
- April 7th & 8th @ 10am
- April 8th @ 10am and 12:30pm
- April 14th - 17th @ 10am
- April 21st & 22nd @ 10am
- April 23rd and 24th @ 10am & 12:30pm

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES:

- April 4th @ 2:30pm & 7:30pm
- April 18th & 19th @ 2:30pm



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This classroom guide for *The Sword in the Stone* is designed for Alabama students ranging from grades K-12. It offers activities to help you integrate classroom activities into English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, and Theatre curricula.

All activities in this guide are linked to the Alabama State Department of Education content standards.

The standards represented in *The Sword in the Stone* are:

SCI.3.1.1:	ELA 3.1.1:	ELA 3.3.5:	ELA 5.3.4:
SCI.3.1.2:	ELA 3.1.2:	ELA 4.12.2:	ELA 7.3.1:
SCI.3.1.3:	ELA 3.1.3:	ELA 4.12.4:	ELA 7.3.2:
SCI.3.1.4:	ELA 3.3.1:	ELA 5.3.1:	ELA 7.3.3:
SCI.3.1.5	ELA 3.3.2:	ELA 5.3.2:	ELA 7.3.4:
H.8.16.1	ELA 3.3.3:	ELA 5.3.3:	ELA 7.3.5
H.8.17.1	ELA 3.3.4:		

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A NOTE TO FELLOW EDUCATORS

Greetings!

We are excited for you and your students to attend *The Sword in the Stone*, with book by T.H. White and adaptation by Shaan Sharma, at the Birmingham Children's Theatre. We invite you to use this packet in your classroom to prepare for and reflect on your upcoming visit.

This packet is designed to assist you in introducing the play's plot, characters, settings, language, and themes to your students. We encourage you to use these activities prior to the show to guide your students to a better understanding and enjoyment of what they will see at the theatre, and also after you visit to reinforce the show's themes and tie them into the STEM curriculum.

Thank you for helping to extend the learning process beyond theatre walls and for instilling an appreciation of the arts in the lives of Birmingham children.

See you at the theatre!

Birmingham Children's Theatre

YOUR ROLE AS THE AUDIENCE

Dear Audience Members,

Birmingham Children's Theatre is excited to welcome you as a member of our audience! Theatre is a world of imagination and fun, where the impossible comes to life. The audience is an extremely important part of our storytelling, so before you attend a performance we want to share a few theatre etiquette guidelines with you.

Do:

- Feel free to laugh, gasp, and applaud!
- Participate when asked
- Arrive on time (30 min early is a good goal)
- Turn off and put away ALL electronics
- Sit in your assigned seating (an usher will help you)

Don't:

- Talk, wave, or shout during the performance
- Eat or drink

Thank you for playing your part! We are excited to share our production with you!

Birmingham Children's Theatre

PLOT SUMMARY

In this World Premiere performance of "The Sword in the Stone," we are introduced to Wart, a young boy who eventually becomes King Arthur. Wart grows up in the castle of Sir Ector, his foster father. Wart spends his days in the company of Kay, Sir Ector's son and the heir to his title, amusing himself as best he can while Kay is instructed in the proper ways of knighthood. One night while lost in the forest, Wart encounters the magician Merlyn, a befuddled but powerful old man who announces that he will be the Wart's tutor. During the next six years, Merlyn tries to instill some of his wisdom in Wart, teaching him about virtue and the world by turning Wart into various animals. Finally, Kay is knighted, and Wart becomes his squire, a kind of servant who assists and attends to his master as the knight travels in search of adventure. When the king of England, Uther Pendragon, dies, he leaves no heir, and it is proclaimed that the next rightful king will be whoever can pull out a mysterious sword that has been driven into a rock. Wart and Kay travel to London, where a tournament is being held so that the finest knights will have the opportunity to try to remove the sword. While running an errand for Kay, the Wart removes the sword from the stone, and he is declared the next king of England.

THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

1. The Sword in the Stone is a stage play.

What is a stage play?

- How is a play similar to a TV show or movie?
- How is it different?

2. Who Performs the parts (roles) in a play?

- What kinds of skills do you think performers need to have to perform in plays?
- Who else works on plays?
(Remember: you may not see them on stage!)

DURING THE PERFORMANCE:

1. When you watch a play, you are a member of the audience.

What kinds of things should you do as an audience member?

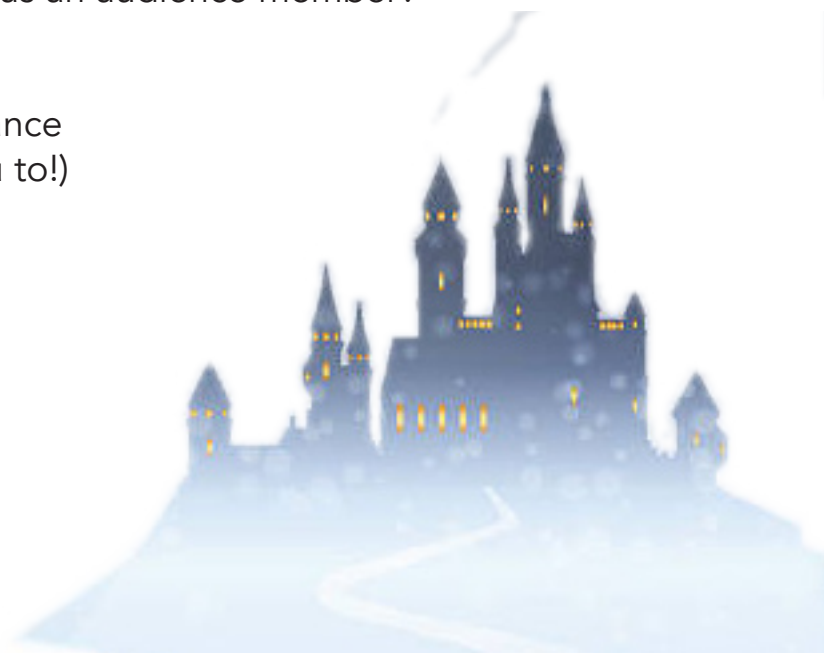
Examples:

- Pay attention
- Laugh when something funny happens
- Clap if you enjoy something

2. What kinds of things should you not do as an audience member?

Examples:

- Talk to your neighbor
- Use a cellphone during the performance
- Yell at the actors (unless they ask you to!)



THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONT.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

1. What did you think of the play?
 - If you'd read *The Sword in the Stone* beforehand, how was the book similar to the play?
 - How was it different?
2. Describe the performers in the play.
 - What did they do to make their characters special (different from other characters)?
 - How did they use their bodies to play their characters (using voice, movement, etc.)?
 - Did you see anyone else who worked on the play besides the performers on stage?
3. Describe the characters' costumes.
 - What did each character's costume tell you about that character?
 - Did any of the performers change costumes?
 - If so, why do you think they needed to change costumes?
4. Describe the set of the play.
 - Did it have a lot of locations?
 - Did it look like a place you've been before?
 - How did different lighting change how the set looked for different scenes?
5. Did the play have music in it?
 - If so, was it only in the background, or did it help tell the story?
 - What instruments did you hear in the music?
6. If you were going to direct *The Sword in the Stone*, how would your production be different than the play you saw by BCT?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

BCT MUST READS

For each of our productions at BCT, we choose a few themes related to the show. Then, we create a list of BCT Must-Reads on those themes.

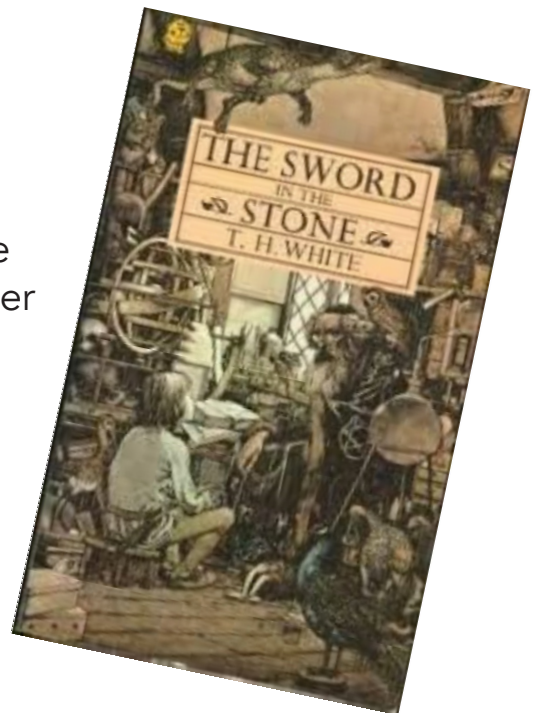
Themes are the main ideas behind a book or other literary work. The Sword in the Stone has several themes of varying importance, including strength, morality, justice, and honor.

OTHER T.H. WHITE STORIES:

- England Have My Bones
- Burke's Steerage or, The Amateur Gentleman's Introduction to Noble Sports and Pastimes (1938-1939)
- The Queen of Air and Darkness (originally titled The Witch in the Wood, 1939)
- The Ill-Made Knight (1940)
- Mistress Masham's Repose (1946-1947)
- The Book of Beasts, A Translation of a Medieval Bestiary (1954-1955)
- The Candle in the Wind (1958)
- The Once and Future King (1958)
- The Book of Merlyn (1977)

SIMILAR STORIES:

- The Discovery of King Arthur by Geoffrey Ashe
- The World of King Arthur by Christopher Snyder
- Idylls of the King by Alfred Tennyson



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

BCT MUST READS CONT.

Read them as a class or let students choose two or more to read.
Then use these questions for discussion or book reports:

THEME:

How did the different themes show in each book? Explain.

SETTING:

Describe the settings of each book.

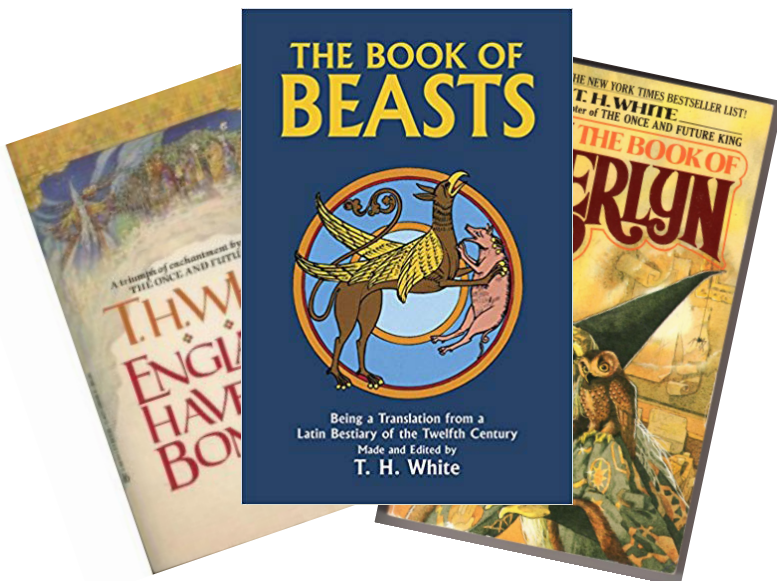
- What details can you remember?
- Were the settings similar to a place you know or a place you've visited?
- How were the settings similar to each other? How were they different?

CHARACTERS:

1. Who were the main characters of each book?
2. Did any characters show up in more than one book?
3. Were the characters of one book similar another book's characters in any other ways?
4. How were the characters related to the theme? Explain.

PLOT:

1. What did the main characters of the books want most?
2. Did anyone or anything stand between the main characters and their goals?
3. Did the main characters get what they wanted? How?
4. How were the plots of the books similar? How were they different?



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

WHO WAS KING ARTHUR?

Learning Objectives

- 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. 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.

READING/ELA

EXPLORING STORIES

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:

1. Panel/frame (the box shaped images on the page of a graphic novel)
2. Gutter (the space between panels/frames)
3. Camera distance (Long shot, mid-shot, close-up)
4. Camera angle (low/high)
5. Mise-en-scene (meaning what is 'put in the scene/frame' which includes colour, lighting, setting, props, body gestures/facial expressions)
6. 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.

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.

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

SETTING THE STAGE

Begin the lesson by asking who has heard of King Arthur. Discuss with students to determine how much they know about him and what sources—movies, books, and so on—inform their ideas. Then ask whether they think King Arthur was a real person. (Most people believe he was mythical.) Explain that the stories about Arthur are based upon the exploits of a chieftain who really lived many centuries ago. Discuss the background material provided at the beginning of this lesson plan, stressing how the stories evolved and changed over the years. You might want to create a timeline on the board to help the students better understand the chronology. Indicate the period of the Middle Ages (from the 5th century to the 15th), and then point out when the “real” Arthur lived and when the major versions of the legend appeared.

Video- The Search for King Arthur- <https://youtu.be/Pa4v5gH3b18>

After viewing the National Geographic video on the legend of King Arthur, locate the geographical setting of the stories. Access the map of Europe and locate southwestern England. Explain that this is where the battles were fought between the Celts and the Saxons in the 6th century. Find Winchester and Glastonbury. These cities are closely connected with the legend of King Arthur. Note how closely southern England lies to France. This is where the Saxons crossed the Channel to invade England during the Dark Ages. (William the Conqueror took the same route in 1066!) The proximity of the two countries also encouraged the spread of the tales from Britain to France.

Now that the students have a general idea of the setting behind the evolution of the tales of King Arthur and where they took place, tell them they will be reading and sharing opinions about some of the more famous episodes.

HISTORY

THE SWORD IN THE STONE - ACTIVITY

In this activity the students will read together a passage describing how Arthur became king taken from King Arthur's Knights by Henry Gilbert. Like many tales derived from folklore, the stories of King Arthur are a blend of history and fantasy. As the students read this passage, they should think about which aspects seem realistic and which are more fanciful or unrealistic.

Access Gilbert's King Arthurs Knights. Gilbert's book, published in 1911, was intended to offer a more "kid-friendly" version of Malory's Morte d'Arthur. It is indeed a gripping, beautifully written version of the legend, but because the style and vocabulary can present a challenge for modern students, you might consider having passages read aloud as a group under your guidance. If you do so, consider pausing after each paragraph or two to discuss specific images, characters, or events. You should write any difficult words on the board and explain their meanings.

Begin by calling upon a student or students to read aloud up to the paragraph that begins "As it neared the feast of Christmas." Remind the class that the Saxons were tribesmen who invaded England in the 6th century (when the "real" King Arthur lived). Point out that "pagans" were non-Christians. (You might use this word to begin your vocabulary list on the board.) After this section has been read, ask for a volunteer to explain the meaning of the red and white dragons.

Select students to continue reading the text, ending at the paragraph that begins "So that the kings and lords should be kept together..." Then ask what event in this passage seems most unrealistic or fanciful. (The sudden appearance of the sword in the stone.) Doesn't this add a measure of suspense that makes one want to read further?

Read together the rest of the passage. Then ask the students their opinion of the character of Sir Kay. What causes him to confess that he has lied. (Remember the influence of the Christian church in the stories.) Once he realizes he is king, what promise does Arthur make to Sir Kay? What does this tell about Arthur's character? View an illustration of this famous scene by accessing [Arthur Draws the Sword from the Stone](#).

Next, arrange the students in groups. Create a History /Fantasy Chart Worksheet. Instruct the students to discuss in their groups the story they have just read. They should select four elements of the story that seem realistic and note these in the first column of their chart. Then they should consider elements that seem unreal, magical, or mythical, noting them down in the second column of the chart. After all the charts have been completed, call upon a volunteer from each group to describe realistic and one fanciful element appearing on the group chart. Ask students to discuss what effect including fantastic elements has on the story. How does it both add to and detract from Arthur's legitimacy as king? What is the general effect of mixing realistic and non-realistic elements?

THEATRE ARTS

KING ARTHUR: RETELLING THE MYTH

Learning Objectives

- 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 and 'purpose' in doing so.

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.

ART

CARDBOARD SWORD

1. Gather Sufficient Materials

Above anything else, you'll need cardboard for this project. Your cardboard should preferably be thick, and in large enough pieces that you can make the sword in one piece. Other than that, the only necessary thing is a set of scissors. Other things, like markers, paint, masking tape or construction paper, can and should be added to suit the design of your sword. Gather as many of these ingredients as you can. Even if you don't end up using all of it, it's still useful to have nearby just in case.

- If you don't have enough cardboard, a nearby store may be willing to give you some of their spare boxes.



2. Look Into Different Types of Swords

Even if you already have an idea what you want your sword to look like, it doesn't hurt to research some different kinds of swords. The different visual designs are bound to factor into your own design, resulting in a more nuanced and interesting weapon. There are lots of sites online that compare and contrast swords, and historical encyclopedias should have a section on weapons you can browse for inspiration.

-Cardboard sword designs are also available, whether as templates or finished examples. Taking a look at what other people have made with cardboard will give you inspiration.
-Note the difference between one-handed, two-handed, and one-and-a-half-handed swords. Swords were originally designed with weight considered. Due to how much lighter cardboard is than metal, you'll be able to play around with potentially bigger sizes than if you were smithing a real



3. Design and Draw Your Sword Outline

Once you've chosen a sword design, it's time to carve out the outline. Using a marker, draw out the sword on a piece of cardboard, using the exact dimensions you'd like your sword to be. Whether it's a small dagger-type blade or a major two-handed affair, all of this will be decided in the outline you draw. Remember to include a guardrail if your design suggests it, and leave enough room on the hilt to comfortably fit your hands.

Swords all end with a pointed tip, so work that into your design as well.

Put your hand (clenched into a fist) up against the cardboard to see approximately how much space you'll need for your hilt.

You should play around with some conceptual designs on paper before setting don to trace one out for real. A well-thought out design will be a lot more fun to use.

CARDBOARD SWORD CONT.

4. Cut Out Your Sword

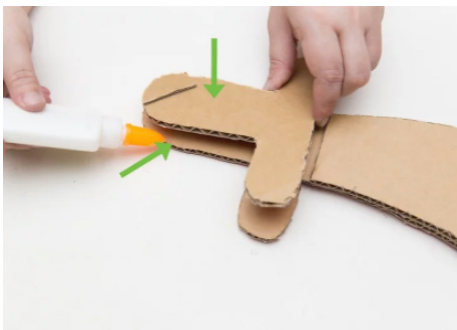
Once the outline is in place, take a pair of scissors and cut it out. Try to be smooth with your cuts, as a roughly-hewn sword will look sloppy. Depending on the type of cardboard you're using, an exacto-knife may be used as well, although you're better off using construction scissors if the cardboard is corrugated.



5. Reinforce Your Sword

You could technically leave your sword as an outline if you wanted, but it will soon risk breaking if you ever put it to use. Bolstering a sword with a second layer of cardboard is recommended for the sake of duelling. Put your sword cutout on a bigger piece of cardboard and trace it out. From there, cut out the tracing to make a second half. Glue the two pieces together, and cut off any excess sections that stick out from the blade outline.

- For the best stability, you can add a wooden or plastic rod to the blade section, and glue the cardboard pieces on either side of and around it. This will keep the blade from bending if it's hit too hard.



6. Bolster the Hilt

A sword hilt will be the part of the sword you hold when you're wielding it, so comfort should be taken into consideration as much as the look. It may be worth it to glue a third layer of cardboard on the hilt area if you think you'll need the added grip. You should verify that your hilt has enough space for your hand to grip it comfortably.

If there's still not enough space, you can cut into the guard of the sword.

-If you need more hilt space and your sword does not have a guard area, you can cut into some of the blade itself. In the majority of cases where extra hilt space is needed, it'll be an inch or two at max. You shouldn't have to worry about starting a new sword from scratch if there are some issues with your current design.

POST SHOW

DISCUSSION

1. What challenge does the audience discover at the beginning of the tale?
2. Only certain men will have the chance to try to pull the sword from the stone at the tournament. Who will be allowed to try this feat?
3. List the sequence of events that leads Arthur to the sword in the stone.
4. What does Sir Ector reveal to Arthur?
5. How would Arthur feel about having this information kept from him for so many years?
6. What thoughts might be going through Arthur's mind as he considers his destiny?
7. How might Arthur's upbringing as a commoner affect how he views becoming a king?
8. How and why do the nobles change their opinion of Arthur?



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T H E A T R E

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

QUESTIONS? CONTACT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, JESSIE KISOR

jessie@bct123.org

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