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The Legend of King Arthur

The legend of King Arthur first developed during the Middle Ages. Historians debate whether a real King Arthur ever existed. There might have been a real King Arthur, but the legends built around him, the kingdom of Camelot, and the Knights of the Round Table, are just that—stories.

Legends are stories that have special meaning or significance to the culture from which they originated. The legend of King Arthur was first created in England, but many French romance writers also added to the legends over the years.

According to legend, Arthur became king when he pulled a sword out of a stone. However, a magician named Merlin had previously enchanted the sword. Merlin declared that whoever could pull it out of the stone would be king. Many strong men tried and failed, but Arthur, a young boy at the time, easily removed the sword from the stone. Merlin him crowned king immediately.

King Arthur lived and ruled in a castle named Camelot. The famous round table where the Knights of the Round Table met is also located there. No one knows exactly where Camelot really was, but in all of the legends it is located somewhere in Great Britain. Oddly, Camelot is not included in the earliest King Arthur legends. It wasn't until French romance writers started adding to the legends of King Arthur that Camelot was mentioned.

The Round Table was a wedding present for King Arthur when he married Guinevere. King Arthur used the table as a meeting place to promote fairness and equality among his knights. Since the table was round, all who sat at it were seen as equals. The Knights of the Round Table were the best knights in King Arthur's kingdom. They were known for their brave fighting and chivalry, or nobility and heroism.

There are many characters associated with the legend of King Arthur:

King Arthur – The King of Camelot and one of the Knights of the Round Table. He married Guinevere and went on to reign over a large and prosperous kingdom.

Guinevere – The wife of King Arthur. In later stories, she also falls in love with one of the Knights of the Round Table, Lancelot.



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Lancelot – One of the most well-known Knights of the Round Table. He was King Arthur's right-hand man. In later versions of the legends, he falls in love with King Arthur's wife, Guinevere.

Excalibur – The name of King Arthur's sword

Merlin – A magician who enchanted the sword that Arthur pulled out of the stone. It is because of Merlin that Arthur became king. Once Arthur was king, Merlin became his advisor.

The legends of King Arthur may have originated in medieval England, but their popularity has endured. Many modern novels, picture books, and movies, including the Disney movie *The Sword and the Stone*, have been inspired by the original legends. Even today, visitors of Disney theme parks can try their hand at pulling a sword from the famous stone.

Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. Legends are stories that have significance for the cultures in which they originate. What significance do you think the legends of King Arthur had for medieval England?
2. How is Merlin responsible for making Arthur king?
3. Infer how seating the knights at a round table promoted equality within their group.
4. Explain the relationship between King Arthur, Guinevere, and Sir Lancelot.