



*The Legend of  
King Arthur*

# legend

1.) a story passed down from generation to generation and believed to have a historical basis.





2.) Legends are often based upon real characters or events, but many of the stories about those characters or events are fictitious.



3.) There are many versions of the legend of King Arthur--these stories have been passed down through over **1400** years of English history.



4.) The legend describes the adventures of an early king of Britain and the knights and ladies of his court at Camelot.



5.) The main source today for all the legends about Arthur and his knights is Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, printed in 1485.



6.) It was one of the first books to come from the press of the first English printer, William Caxton.



7.) Although the tales were written in English, the title of the book is French and most of the tales were adapted from the French versions of the originals.





8.) Tales of Arthur were popular in France during the 12th and 13th centuries.



9.) Originally, the Arthurian tales came from **Celtic** sources--from myths of the Irish and British races and from early accounts of the history of Britain.

# Timeline

The legend grew with each retelling to become the story we know today.





a.) Nennius-- a 9th century Welsh priest wrote the first history to mention Arthur.

He tells of a Celtic military commander named Arthur who won 12 battles against the Saxons



This is the original Arthur and it's all we know about him; however, legends about him sprang up, and he became a popular Welsh hero.



b.) Celtic People -- migrated from Britain to France and carried the tales about Arthur to their new neighbors the French and the Normans.



c.) Wandering poets and minstrels spread the tales even farther.



d.) Geoffrey of Monmouth--a 12th century Welsh priest wrote down some of the tales (in Latin) in a book called Historia Regum Britanniae (History of the Kings of Britain).





He wrote of Arthur as a king surrounded by nobles and barons from Western Europe.

He was the first to describe Arthur as a 15-year-old boy king, to mention Merlin, Arthur's marriage to Guinevere, and the betrayal of Arthur by Mordred.



e.) In 1155, a Norman monk, Wace, translated Geoffrey's *Historia* into French, adding and deleting more details.

He was the first to mention the round table.



f.) Layamon--used Wace's poem to write about Arthur in English.

He was the first to do so.



g.) Chre'tien de Troyes--a frenchman who wrote poems based on the Arthurian legends between 1170-1181. He is an important source for the story of the Holy Grail.



h.) Sir Thomas Malory--15<sup>th</sup> century, published the tales in his book, Morte d'Arthur.



i.) Alfred Lord Tennyson--19th century,  
retold the tales in his Idylls of the King.



j.) T.H. White 20th century, Wrote of Arthur in The Once and Future King.



# Elements Common to All Versions of the Arthurian Legend





1. Arthur's natural birth to Uther and Ygraine.



2. His education by the wizard, Merlin.



3. His assumption of the throne after pulling the sword from the stone.



4. The creation of a round table for his knights at his court in Camelot.



5. The adulterous love affair between his wife, Queen Guinevere and the noble Lancelot.



6. The treachery of his nephew/son Mordred.



7. The mortal combat between Arthur and Mordred at the Battle of Camlan.



8. Arthur's translation to the island of Avalon,  
where he was taken to be healed