



Sir Gawain

Gawain is one of a select number of Round Table Knights to be referred to as "the greatest" of the knights. He is generally said to be the nephew of King Arthur. His parents were Lot of Orkney and Morgause. Upon the death of Lot, he became the head of the Orkney clan, which includes his brothers Agravain, Gaheris, and Gareth, and his half-brother Mordred.

He is often portrayed as a formidable but brash knight, fiercely loyal to his king and family. In the writings in which he appears, Gawain is a friend to young knights, a defender of the poor, and a romantic ladies' man. In the English tradition, however, it is common for Gawain to be the principal hero, displaying highest courtesy and chivalry, as he is in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (written around 1400) and the other Arthurian tales, such as Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*.



The accidental death of Sir Gawain's brothers at Sir Lancelot's hands caused Gawain, one of the mightiest warriors of the court, to become the bitter enemy of his once greatest friend. He was mortally wounded in a fight with Lancelot who, it is said, lay for two nights weeping at Gawain's tomb. Just before his death, Gawain allegedly repented of his bitterness towards Lancelot and forgave him.

Below is an excerpt of the original text of *Sir Gawain in the Green Knight* in Middle English alongside a modern translation:

siben þe sege and þe assaut watȝ sesed at troye
þe borȝ brittened and brent to brondez and askez
þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroȝt
watȝ tried for his tricherie þe trewest on erþe

After the siege and the assault of Troy,
When the city was burned to ashes,
The knight who therein wrought treason
Was tried for his treachery and was found to be the truest on earth.

The Knights of the Round Table

Everyone has heard of the Knights of the Round Table, but many people are not familiar with any of the Noble Knights, except for maybe Sir Lancelot. The major ideals of the Knights were the love of God, men, and noble deeds. The Knights were men of courage, honor, dignity, courtesy, and nobleness. They protected ladies and damsels, honored and fought for kings, and undertook dangerous quests. The following is the charge given to the Knights by King Arthur:

God make you a good man and fail not of beauty. The Round Table was founded in patience, humility, and meekness. Thou art never to do outrageousness, nor murder, and always to flee treason, by no means to be cruel, and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentle women succour. Also, to take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law nor for no world's goods.

Thous shouldst be for all ladies and fight for their quarrels, and ever be courteous and never refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy, for a knight that is courteous and kind and gentle has favor in every place. Thou shouldst never hold a lady or gentle woman against her will.

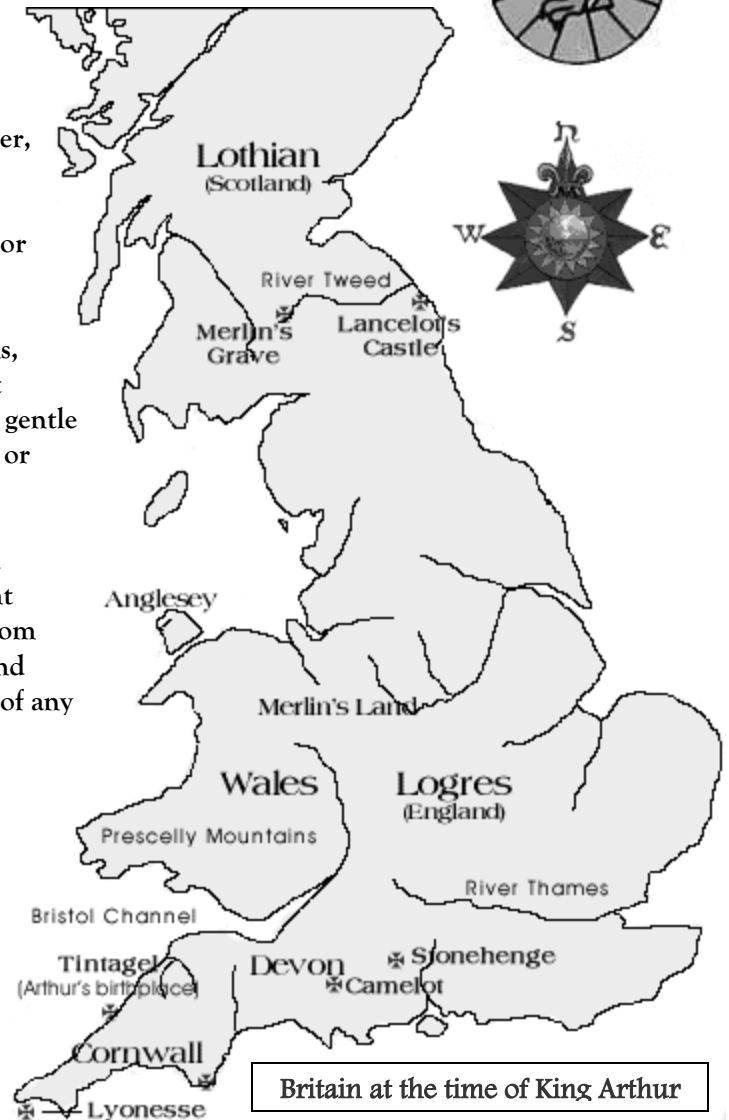
Thou must keep thy word to all and not be feeble of good believeth and faith. Right must be defended against might and distress must be protected. Thou must know good from evil and the vain glory of the world, because great pride and bobauce maketh great sorrow. Should anyone require ye of any quest so that it is not to thy shame, thou shouldst fulfil the desire.

Ever it is a worshipful knights deed to help another worshipful knight when he seeth him a great danger, for ever a worshipful man should loath to see a worshipful man shamed, for it is only he that is of no worship and who faireth with cowardice that shall never show gentleness or no manner of goodness where he seeth a man in any danger, but always a good man will do another man as he would have done to himself.

It should never be said that a small brother has injured or slain another brother. Thou shouldst not fail in these things: charity, abstinence and truth. No knight shall win worship but if he be of worship himself and of good living and that loveth God and dreadeth God then else he geteth no worship here be ever so hardly.

An envious knight shall never win worship for and envious man wants to win worship he shall be dishonoured twice therefore without any, and for this cause all men of worship hate an envious man and will show him no favour.

Do not, nor slay not, anything that will in any way dishonour the fair name of Christian knighthood for only by stainless and honourable lives and not by prowess and courage shall the final goal be reached. Therefore be a good knight and so I pray to God so ye may be, and if ye be of prowess and of worthiness then ye shall be a Knight of the Table Round.



Name: _____

Please use complete sentences; respond on this page!

Date: _____

Period: _____

Sir Gawain and "the Knights of the Round Table"

article questions

1. *What are some of the things that the Knights stood for? List at least 4 things.*
2. *How is the character of Gawain depicted in the annals of Arthurian legend? List at least 4 traits.*
3. *Pick a quote from Arthur's charge to the Knights. Copy it down, highlight it, and explain its significance to the mission of the Knights as a whole.*
4. *When was Sir Gawain and the Green Knight written (approximately)?*
5. *According to legend, what caused Gawain to fight his former friend, Lancelot?*
6. *Looking at both the original and translated texts of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, find the original Middle English versions of our modern words: "earth", "treachery", and "treason". Write the original forms alongside the modern forms:*