

Background - Arthurian Legends

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According to legend, the boy Arthur became king of England by performing a feat that others in the kingdom could not-pulling a sword from an iron anvil where it had been placed. Historically, it is believed that this legend can be traced to about 500 AD. Some believe it may be based in fact. Like the heroes of Greek myth, this act sets Arthur above his peers and makes him worthy to become King. After years of education directed by the magician Merlin, King Arthur builds the golden city of Camelot, uniting England under his protection and gathering the best knights within the kingdom to join him as members of the Round Table. A round table was chosen so that no knight would feel superior or inferior. It is interesting to note that to this day, international conference tables, while not round, are often "U" shaped and each segment is of equal length and serves the same purpose as the round table of Arthur.

These knights lived according to a code of behavior called the chivalric code-which emphasized heroic qualities like loyalty, courage, personal honor and the defense of those who cannot defend themselves. The most famous of those knights was Sir Launcelot (also commonly spelled 'Lancelot'). He was Arthur's closest friend and the most skillful fighter of all the knights. The story used in this lesson is a modern retelling of the original and is taken from Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, "The Death of Arthur." Keith Baines was the translator.



In Your Journals Include the Following Elements:

1. While reading the text, recall your definitions of philanthropy and advocacy for the common good, making note in your journal of examples.
2. Use the following chart to compare and contrast the myth you read in the Greek tradition to this British classic tale of King Arthur.

	Three Similarities	Three Differences
Greek Myth		
King Arthur		

