

The Legend of King Arthur



Before we start.....

It is in legends and myths that we learn about heroes. Now, I have a couple of questions for you:

The story of King Arthur is legendary, of course, but it is also based on some true episodes.



What defines a hero?

What is the function of heroes in a society?





Heroes **embody** the **values** of societies. In a way, they help build societies through those values, such as:

- Courage
- Sacrifice
- Honesty
- Trust
- Loyalty

How? Through a process of identification. Everybody, after all, would like to be a hero.

Societies have always needed somebody who gave good examples of morality and behaviour, Heroes had this function.





If I called both
Totti and
Immobile
«heroes», would I
be in the wrong?



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King Arthur



- Arthur, a Celtic king born of deceit and adultery, grew to become one of the most famous rulers of Britain.
- He was a warrior, a knight and a king who killed giants, witches and monsters and led a band of heroes on many daring adventures.
- He is known for his Knights of the Round Table and for UNITING the peoples of his land.
- His story is painted on the halls of the British Parliament.



The Origin

- The legend possibly originated either in **Wales** or in those parts of northern Britain inhabited by **Brythonic-speaking Celts**.



History or Legend?

- On the *Annales Cambriae* of the late 10th century a historical Arthur led Welsh resistance to the West Saxon advance from the middle Thames

strength

- The 9th-century *Historic Brittonum* records 12 battles fought by Arthur against the Saxons, culminating in a victory at Mons Badonicus (516 a.d.).

National
identity



Camelot

- **Camelot, in Arthurian legend, the seat of King Arthur's court. It is variously identified with Caerleon, Monmouthshire, in Wales, and, in England, with the following:**
 1. **Queen Camel, Somerset;**
 2. **the little town of Camelford, Cornwall;**
 3. **Winchester, Hampshire;**
 4. **Cadbury Castle, South Cadbury, Somerset.**



King Arthur's Round Table



- King Arthur had a round table so that none of his barons, when seated at it, could claim precedence over the others.
- This provided the knights of Arthur's court with a name and a collective personality.
- The fellowship of the Round Table, in fact, became comparable to, and in many respects the prototype of the many great orders of chivalry that were founded in Europe during the later Middle Ages.

equality

Loyalty



Merlin

- **Merlin**, enchanter and wise man in Arthurian legend and romance of the Middle Ages, linked with personages in ancient Celtic mythology (especially with Myrddin in Welsh tradition).



Hence, he
was a.....?



THE STORY

Many hundreds of years ago, King Uther of the Britons had a son called Arthur. Because of the many wars with the Saxons, Uther gave his son to Merlin so that he could be raised in safety. When King Uther died, nobody knew that he had a son. Therefore, there was much arguing about who should be the next High King of the Britons.

At this time, a mysterious stone appeared in London. A sword was sticking out of the stone with a message on it. The message said that whoever pulled the sword out of the stone was the **rightful** High King of the Britons. No one, however, could pull the sword from the stone.



Aged fifteen, Arthur came to visit London. When he saw the stone, he approached it and pulled the sword out easily! Soon after, Arthur was crowned High King of Britain. Merlin, his father's old wizard, helped him rule.

Hence, we understand that Arthur was destined to be king, God chosen. From here the origin of the concept of the Divine Right of kings as chosen by God and not by men.

Merlin took Arthur to see the Lady of the Lake who gave Arthur a sword named 'Excalibur'. With the help of Excalibur, and his loyal knights, Arthur was able to defeat his enemies and Britain became a peaceful land.

Arthur married a beautiful princess called Guinevere. Arthur and Guinevere were given a large round table, which Arthur used to meet with his bravest and best knights. These knights were known as 'Knights of the Round Table' and were adventurous and brave. The bravest knight of all was Sir Lancelot.

Sir Lancelot and Guinevere fell in love and would meet secretly, away from the palace



courage

Loyalty and
friendship



When Arthur discovered this, Sir Lancelot and Guinevere escaped to Brittany. Arthur chased them, leaving Mordred (one of his knights) in charge of his kingdom while he was gone. Arthur found and killed Sir Lancelot and imprisoned Guinevere.

While Arthur was away, Mordred declared himself High King and built his own army. Arthur returned and his army battled with Mordred's. Arthur finally killed Mordred with his sword, Excalibur.

Unfortunately, Arthur himself was badly wounded. He knew he would die very soon, so he gave Excalibur to his knight, Sir Bedivere, and told him to return it to the Lady in the Lake.

Sir Bedivere did not throw Excalibur into the lake and hid it instead.



When he returned to Arthur, he told him that he had thrown it into the lake. Arthur did not believe him and told him again to return Excalibur to the lake. As Sir Bedivere threw Excalibur, he was amazed to see a hand emerge from the water to catch the sword. It was the hand of the Lady of the Lake. When he returned to Arthur, he told him what he had seen. Arthur knew then that Excalibur had been returned to the Lady of the Lake.

Arthur was laid in a boat and he drifted off on the lake to the magical Isle of Avalon. Here, he hopes to be cured of his wounds so that he might return to lead his people again. For this reason, Arthur is called "the once and future king."

According to legend, he is awaiting the call of the Britons, ready to return in their time of greatest need.

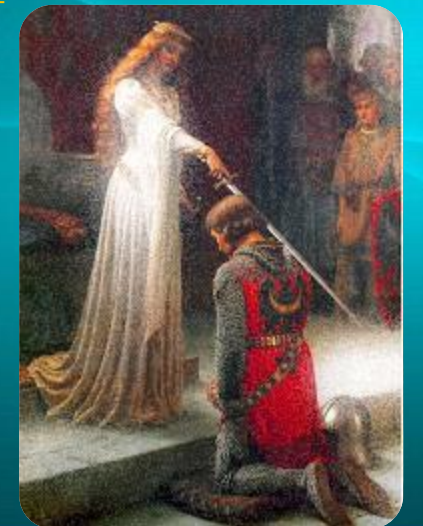


Arthurian Legends

- Arthurian legend is the body of stories and medieval romances, which is centered on the legendary King Arthur.

MAIN STORIES:

1. Arthur's birth,
2. the adventures of his knights,
3. the adulterous love between his knight Sir Lancelot and his queen, Guinevere,
4. the quest for the Holy Grail
5. the dissolution of the knightly fellowship,
6. the death of Arthur
7. the destruction of his kingdom.



Geoffrey of Monmouth

- **European fame came through** Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie* (1135–38), celebrating a glorious and triumphant king who defeated a Roman army in eastern France but was mortally wounded in battle during a rebellion at home led by his nephew Mordred.
- **Some features of Geoffrey's story were marvelous fabrications, and certain features of the Celtic stories were adapted to suit feudal times.**
- **The concept of Arthur as a world conqueror was clearly inspired by legends surrounding great leaders such as Alexander the Great and Charlemagne.**

