The Book of Merlyn

Student Study Guide

Suggested 7-Day Reading Schedule for Thanksgiving!

Ch. 1 (7pp.)

Ch. 2 – 4 (31 pp.)

Ch. 5 – 6 (19 pp.)

Ch. 7 – 11 (36 pp.)

Ch. 12 – 15 (31pp.)

Ch. 16 – 18 (24 pp.)

Ch. 19 – 20 (34 pp.)

Questions and Terms in **boldface** need to be prepared by students.

Questions and vocab. with two asterisks (\*\*) will be emphasized in discussion

Ch. 1 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

***Incipit Liber Quintus* - (students should use cognates to figure out what this phrase means)**

\*\**Morte d’Arthur* – Mallory’s 15th century English and French compilation of tales about Arthur, the main source for modern variants of the Arthurian legend.

Wart- the name of Arthur as a child, envisioned by T. H. White in the first book of the series: The Sword in the Stone.

“*Le roi s’advisera*” – French for “the king takes his own advice”

*Homo ferox* – (in context of animal species) Latin for “ferocious Man”

*Ferae naturae* – Latin for “ferocious nature”

Archimedes – Merlyn’s owl

Nimue’s Cave – Nimue was a nymph who bewitched/seduced Merlyn and imprisoned him in a cave for decades.

Ch. 2 – 4 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

Oneirocriticism – dream interpretation

The Round Table – Arthur’s council table, round because it gave no one knight status over the others.

Urchin – hedgehog, a small, bristly mammal which burrows underground

\*\*Hubris – arrogant pride that over-estimate’s one’s own abilities and correctness

\*\*communists + Bolsheviks (slavemaker ants) – **students to identify defining features**

\*\*fascists + Nazis (warfaring ants) – **students to identify defining features**

\*\*anarchists (geese) – **students to identify defining features**

**\*\***socialists ( bees, and some ants) – **students to identify defining features**

\*\*capitalism (no animals) – **students to identify defining features**

**\*\*(Study Focus: What are the specious beliefs of people of the 20th century, according to Merlyn?)**

**\*\* (Study Question: In what sense are animals “political”?)**

“living backwards” – in White’s mythological conception, Merlyn was born in the far future and lives backwards. That is, he gets older and older the further back in time he is encountered, and becomes younger and younger as time progresses towards his birth-century (20th). He can “remember” the future, and knows the recorded past (because he read about it in the future) but often does not know what you just said to him as that hasn’t happened to him yet.

Ch. 5 – 6 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

Mordred – Arthur’s bastard son, who seeks to destroy him and his Round Table; his vicious and obedient troops are known as Thrashers.

Lancelot – Arthurs’ best friend who also had an affair with Queen Guinevere, forcing Arthur to exile him.

**\*\*(Discussion Topic: Assess the validity of Merlyn’s claim that the world proportionally represented by, “one wise man, nine knaves, and ninety fools”.)**

*Homo sapiens* – Latin term for the human species; *Homo* (meaning “same”) has come to signify the genus to which we belong. “*Sapiens*”, meaning “wise”, was used to separate current humans from evolutionary ancestors (*homo habilus, homo heidelbergensis*, etc.)

*Stultus* – Latin for “foolish” or “stupid”

Victoria – British Queen for most of the 19th century and a symbol of British supremacy

Ch. 7 – 11 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

Miss Edith Cavell – British Nurse who helped Allied soldiers escape the Germans in occupied Belgium during WWI. She was arrested and executed by the Germans in 1915 and known for her humanitarian statement, “Patriotism is not enough” which indicated that national identity did not, for her, supercede humanitarian concerns.

**\*\*Understand the roles of the following four principles in the Ant Colony:**

**(A) mindless adulation of pop culture**

**(B) patriotic fervor**

**(C) the demonization of Others**

**(D) reinforcement of the power of Force and Fear**

**\*\*Totalitarian Theory**

**\*\*Egalite Fallacy**

**\*\*(Study Focus: What justifications are the ants given for going to war?)**

Ch. 12 – 15 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

*Joie-de-vivre* – French: the pleasure of living

Widgeon – small ducks

Anseriformes – waterfowl, including ducks, geese, and swans

**\*\*(Discussion Topic: the viability of anarchy)**

Ch. 16 – 18 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

**\*\*(Definition – how does Merlyn define “war”?)**

Rooks – European birds, very similar to crows

Gregarious – sociable, living in groups, friendly

**\*\*(Discussion: What does Merlyn consider to be the “curse of man”?)**

\*\*nationalism – **students to identify defining features**

Communal property – **students to identify defining features**

Huns – a nomadic people of the 5th century who severely damaged the fading power of the Roman Empire; in the 20th century it became a derogatory term for aggressive, military Germans.

\*\*libertarian philosophy – **students to identify defining features**

Armageddon – in Christian prophetic tradition, a great battle which signals the end of the world

False dichotomy – **students to identify defining features**

**\*\*(Discussion: why is hedgehog – the urchin – so angry at the Committee in Ch. 17?)**

*Eppur si mouve* – Italian for, “Nonetheless, it moves.” This phrase is attributed to Galileo, tradition claims he said it under his breath before the Inquisition, just after they made him renounce the heliocentric theory.

\*\***(Discussion: what is Truth?)**

Ch. 19 – 20 Cult. Lit. & Vocabulary

Use of the royal “We” (the majestic plural) – In many European traditions, royalty have used the pronoun “we” to describe themselves as the embodiment of their nation.

\*\***(Study Focus: Arthur poses two questions. What are the questions and what are the proposed answers?)**

**\*\*(Study Focus: What are the offered solutions to the problem of the war and what are the objections to those solutions?)**

Neopallium and corpus striatum – highly developed portions of the human brain which allow for critical thinking

**(Study Question – For Merlyn, what is the relation between war and religion?)**

**(Study Question – what is the meaning of the cryptic “Prophecies of Merlyn”?)**

Orryvoyer – Hedgehogese for the French “Au revoir” – or “Until we meet again…”

μίμηση – English transliteration from the Greek: “Memesis” – imitation

**(Final Question – what happens to Arthur?)**