

## SIR GAWAIN



Sir Gawain was not a bad man. He was a good fighter, brave, strong and kind. But he had many faults, including pride, a hot-temper and jealousy. It was these faults that stood between him and the sight of the Holy Grail.

Gawain was especially jealous of Sir Galahad, because Galahad was already being called the Best Knight in the World – even though he was still only a young man. Gawain decided he was definitely not going questing with Galahad and set off in the opposite direction to look for adventures.

Day after day he rode through the land, but there were no adventures to be found. Nothing happened. He met no one. It was really boring and the worst thing of all was, when he stopped at an abbey, the monks told him about the many brave deeds Sir Galahad was doing. Sir Gawain began to think it might be a good idea to join up with Galahad after all.

‘It wouldn’t change anything even if you did’, one of the monks told him. ‘You wouldn’t be happy in each other’s company for long, because you are angry and jealous and Sir Galahad is not’.

Of course, this just made Gawain angrier than ever. Next morning he set off again, this time in the company of his cousin, Sir Owaine, son of Morgan le Fay, who was having a boring time as well.

The two of them had not ridden far when they came to a castle guarded by seven knights. Because they were so bored, they picked a fight with them, and finished up killing all seven. That night Sir Gawain stopped at a lonely hermitage.

‘I am Sir Gawain, knight of King Arthur, and I am on a Quest for the Holy Grail’, he announced importantly.

‘I would rather know how things stand between you and God’, answered the hermit drily.

But Sir Gawain wasn’t interested in God. Instead he boasted to the hermit about all the fights he had won- including the killing of the seven knights that day. The hermit was not impressed.

‘Sir Galahad unhorsed those seven single-handed,’ he told Gawain. ‘But he didn’t kill them. He had no reason to kill, and neither did you. You must do penance for this wicked deed’.

‘Get lost, said Gawain. Life is difficult enough for us knights without having to do penance’.

After that things went from bad to worse for Gawain. Between Pentecost and Michaelmas he didn’t have a single adventure- and he wasn’t the only one. Some twenty other knights wandered the land, puzzled that there were no robbers for them to chase, or wicked knights for them to challenge. They did not understand that the reason they were not having

these adventures any more was because such things were easy for them; what was much more difficult was to overcome the faults within themselves.

Finally, Gawain found a fight- and then to his horror found that the knight he had killed was no other than his cousin Owaine. He was so sickened by what he had done that he returned to Camelot, wretched and unsuccessful.

**After reading the text answer the following questions.**

- 1. Why was Gawain jealous of Galahad?**
- 2. Why Sir Gawain decide to join him instead of following on his own in the opposite direction?**
- 3. Say two differences between Gawain and Galahad.**
- 4. What did the hermitage think of Gawain killing the seven guards?**
- 5. Why did Gawain come back to Camelot so sad?**

*(Text: Top Ten Arthurian Legends, Margaret Simpson)*



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