

THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND



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KING ARTHUR

- Historical basis not demonstrated.
- Greatest national myth in English.
- Around the year 500 there may have been a real Arthur in the south-west of England.

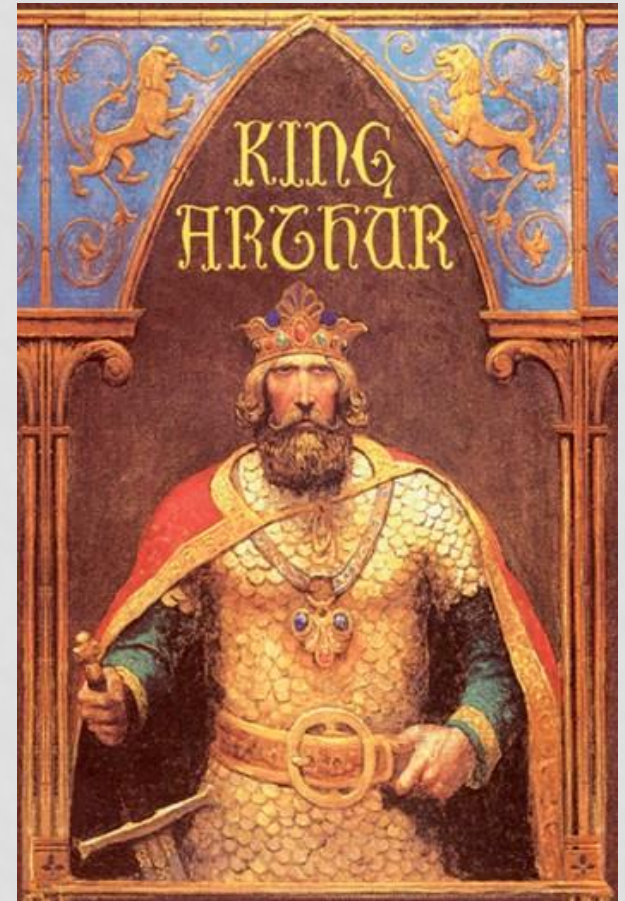


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THE EVOLUTION OF THE STORY

- The story begins around the year 700 in the spoken tradition in Wales.
- Different characters and stories begin to appear (Merlin, Lancelot, Guinevere, the sword Excalibur stuck in the stone, etc.)
- 1st complete written account:
Geoffrey Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1130s). Written in Latin.
 - Arthur, Uter Pendragon's son, becomes king at the age of 15. With his sword Excalibur conquers several lands, like Scotland or Iceland. Marries Guinevere. His nephew, Mordred, betrays him and in a final battle King Arthur is mortally wounded and taken to the mystical island of Avalon. Merlin is described as a prophet.



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THE EVOLUTION OF THE STORY

- 1155: **Robert Wace** extends the story in ***Le Roman de Brut***. Written in French. The Round Table is introduced.
- Wace's work is extended by **Layamon**. First version in Middle English.
- 1170-1190: The legend develops in France by means of a series of narratives that dealt with individual knights. **Chrétien de Troyes** introduces the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere.



Image: [Wikipedia](#)

THE EVOLUTION OF THE STORY

- Late 12th century – 13th century: The myth is christianised. **Robert de Boron** introduced the Holy Grail as the chalice used at the Last Supper by Christ. The quest for the Holy Grail represents the search for a mystic union with God.
- 15th century: **Sir Thomas Malory** unifies the legend using the French and the English versions in ***Le Morte d'Arthur***. It is the best and most complete version. Printed by Caxton in 1485.