

The Sword in the Stone

A legend from Britain

Recommended Key Stage: KS2

Synopsis

When the King of Britain, Uther Pendragon dies, no one is there to take the throne. Then, a mysterious sword appears in a stone, and it is believed that whoever pulls the sword from the stone will be the next King. Every knight tries to pull the sword, but none are successful, until a little boy called Arthur effortlessly pulls the sword out, with no knowledge of what this means, and is crowned the rightful King of Britain.

Part 1: Share the Story

Share the audio of **The Two Swords of Arthur**, told by **Tristan Jackson-Pate** from The Story Museum website, or tell the story yourself.

Top storytelling tips:

- Learn the story beforehand so that you can be expressive and maintain eye contact with the students.
- Use actions and sound effects and encourage the students to join in.

Find one or two moments in the story to stop and ask the students to predict what is going to happen next, or how they would feel if they were the characters.

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

KS2 Questions

- What do you think of the story? What parts did you like? Was there anything you didn't like?
- How do you think it would feel to try to pull the sword out?
- Why do you think Merlin made this challenge as proof of the next King?
- Would you like to be royalty? What would your first rule be?
- What qualities do you think a King needs?
- How do you think Arthur felt when he realised what he had done?
- What would it be like being a King when you are still a child?
- What advice would you give to Arthur?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Summarise the story Retell the story of The Sword in the Stone as a storyboard or comic strip. Can you retell the whole story in only 9 boxes? Plan what you will put in each box before you draw or write so that you don't run out of space! Think about how you will summarise the story, keeping only the most important details. Use words and pictures to tell your story and think carefully about the emotions of each character. How would Arthur be feeling when he realises what he has done? How would the other knights feel? Retell the story to somebody else using only your storyboard or challenge them to tell the story.	Conscience Alley Divide the class into 2 groups. One group represents Arthur saying yes to being King, the other represents him saying no. Groups discuss and prepare reasons to support their side of the argument. The two groups form two lines, facing each other, forming an 'alley.' One student plays the part of Arthur. They walk slowly down the alley. As they pass, each student speaks, trying to convince Arthur. For example: - Say 'yes' team: 'You will be able to help others if you are King.' - Say 'no' team: 'You are too young and might fail.' When Arthur reaches the end of the alley, they can say which argument was more persuasive.
Phone call Retell the story in pairs. Pretend you are on the phone together and one person is telling the story of The Sword in the Stone as if they are a character in the story. This will be conversational, so might sound like: 'You won't believe what happened today! So, I was lugging all of Kay's weapons, as usual, when I suddenly realised...' The other person on the phone can 'react' and ask questions, such as: - What happened next? - How did you feel? - What did you think about that? If working in pairs, swap over when instructed, if working in a group, the adult might 'hang up' and call on another child to tell the story until it is finished. The child could act as another character in the story to get their point of view.	If the mirror could talk Children to get into groups of 5. 4 of the children should sit down on chairs or on the carpet in a square shape. Each of these children will act as a mirror. The fifth person will take on the role of a character, and step inside the square of mirrors. They could take on the role of Arthur and step into the square at the moment when he becomes King. Arthur will look at each 'mirror', and as he does, they should each give him a piece of advice, or a pep talk to help him move on in his story. For example: one mirror might say 'you are born to be King, you'll know what to do.' And another might say: 'you have Merlin to guide you. Why don't you ask him for help?' This is a way for children to practice empathising and being helpful, while also getting inside the mind of the character.

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
Character presentations Write about Arthur's day from his point of view – this could be in the form of diary entries. Use these as starting points for each entry: • In the morning, Arthur wakes up as usual, and helps his brother get ready for the tournament • Maybe he notices all the hubbub among the other knights • When he realises he has forgotten Kay's sword and has to go and find it • When he retrieves the sword As an extra challenge – write about the day from a different character's point of view. This could be Kay, Merlin, or another Knight. Does this change the way we view the story? What would the different characters choose to write about?	Innovate the story What If...? Make a change to the story and present your new legend in groups, pairs or independently. Think carefully about which part you'd like to change; here are some ideas to get you started: • What if Arthur hadn't pulled the sword out? • What if Merlin had designed a different challenge? • What if Arthur had known he should be King? • What if the other knights had challenged Arthur? • What if one of the other knights was able to pull out the sword as well? Present your new legend as a written story, or a performance with a narrator and actors.
Decide Arthur's next adventure King Arthur has many stories and has inspired many others! Come up with a sequel to this story, describing what happens next to King Arthur and his friends. This can be shared as a written story, a comic strip or a performance with a narrator and actors.	

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories

The Lady of The Lake

Sir Gaiwan and the Green Knight

The Sleeping King

The Birth of Taliesin (a character associated with Arthurian Legend)

Wider Curriculum Links

PSHE

- Responsibilities and roles within a community
- Self-esteem, empathy with others and discussing feelings