

KING ARTHUR

AND HIS KNIGHTS



as told by JIM WEISS

A COMPANION READER

With a Dramatization by CHRIS BAUER • Illustrated by REBECCA SORGE

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Contents



Preface	5
Special Note to Parents	6
Special Note to Readers About <i>King Arthur and His Knights</i>	6

Part I: The Story

The Story of Sir Bedivere	11
Uther Pendragon and the Birth of Arthur	15
The Sword in the Stone	19
The King Finds Excalibur	25
Camelot, the Round Table, and Guinevere	31
Sir Lancelot's Adventures	35
Percival's Journey	43
Percival Meets Two Ladies	49
Sir Percival and the Knights	57
Merlin's Magic	65

Part II: The Play

Introduction and Instructions	73
Dramatization	81



Preface

This illustrated Companion Reader is an exact transcript of Jim Weiss's award-winning storytelling performance, *King Arthur and His Knights*.

For decades, Jim Weiss has entertained his many listeners with gripping plots, vivid characters, and beautiful words. But his performances are much more than mere entertainment. Jim's stories build language skills by filling young minds with wonderful vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and rich images.

Now, our Companion Readers bring these language-learning benefits to a new level. Language, both written and oral, is most easily and thoroughly learned when *heard*, *read*, and *spoken*.

Listen to the Jim Weiss performance on CD or MP3. (See **welltrainedmind.com** for a full listing and instantly downloadable digital versions of Jim Weiss's audio stories!)

Read along with the performance. The first half of this book is a word-for-word transcript of Jim Weiss's performance. Students can improve their reading fluency, vocabulary, and their understanding of punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar by following along as Jim performs these words. Even students who are not reading at the level represented in this book can be moved forward in reading competency by reading along as Jim speaks the words.

Note: To help you follow along with the audio performance, we've placed Track Numbers into the text wherever a new track begins on the CD or MP3 recording. They look like this:



Say the words. The final element in language learning is to speak great words and sentences out loud. These wonderful stories have been transformed into a fun-to-perform dramatic version for a small group of young actors. The play can be memorized or read from the script; either way, students will begin to gain confidence in their own language use and in their ability to speak in front of others.

Special Note To Parents

The first edition of *King Arthur and His Knights*, produced by Greathall Productions in 1990, has been replaced by a **remastered second edition** from Well-Trained Mind Press (2017). This second edition has a new introduction and conclusion and greatly improved sound quality. It has been newly divided into ten tracks for ease of listening. Finally, one line at the end of Track 6, originally placed there by Jim to allow young listeners to remove and turn over the original cassette tape, has been removed.

This Companion Reader follows the audio of the Second Edition recording. If you have the first edition recording, contact us at support@welltrainedmind.com to find out how to acquire the second edition.

Special Note To Readers About *King Arthur And His Knights*

The narrator (speaker) of this story is an elderly knight of the Round Table. Sometimes, he is remembering the past, when he was young. Sometimes, he is talking about the present, in which is old. And most

of the time, he is telling his own story—but sometimes, he tells the story of what someone *else* said.

When you are reading, you will sometimes see explanations about when the scene is taking place, or who is speaking, in *brackets* like these:

[These are brackets.]

Brackets are used to show that something has been added to the original.

If you're following along with Jim Weiss's performance, you won't hear Jim say the words inside the brackets. Those words are only there to keep you from getting confused.

PART ONE THE STORY



the story of SIR BEDIVERE



*Well-Trained Mind Press presents
Jim Weiss's recording of King
Arthur and His Knights, written
and performed by Jim Weiss:*

[Sir Bedivere begins to tell his story.]

here, come in here.
That's better. Away from all that noise. And I think I need to sit down by the fire. These old bones cannot stand the cold. Ah, yes, and you sit down too now.

Well, you asked me to tell you the tale, and I'm glad that you did, for I am the last one who can tell it as it really happened. I am Sir Bedivere, last living knight of the Round Table, and I am he who was first made knight by the king.



You must understand, when I say the king, I do not mean these *little* kings that you have nowadays. For me, there is only one king. The great king who was, and who will be again if Merlin spoke the truth.

I mean King Arthur.

Yes, I knew him. I knew him from the time we were boys together. All the way, until the end. My hair was not always as white as the snow that blankets the ground around this castle. I knew him, and Merlin, and the beautiful queen, and Lancelot, and all the other noble knights. And I will tell you, for I remember . . . it seems . . .

It seems as though it were only yesterday, not so long ago.



PART TWO THE PLAY



King Arthur And his Knights

The Play

dramatized by Chris Bauer

after the original performance by Jim Weiss

You are about to put on a play called “King Arthur and His Knights.” It is based on Jim Weiss’s version of the story. But you don’t have to do it in exactly the same way it was read! The fun of plays is that the same story can be told in many different ways. You get to bring your own imagination and tell this story your own way.

Below you will find some suggestions about how to put the play on, but they are *only* suggestions. You should use your imagination and add your own ideas to this play, whenever you think it would make it more fun for you to perform or for your audience to watch!

This is a long play! It is written as two acts with an intermission. If you prefer, you can perform one or more scenes from the play that stand alone, such as Arthur’s receiving Excalibur, or the scenes about Percival.

Cast

The “Cast” refers to the actors who are in the play. If you have a lot of actors in your Cast, each actor can play one character. If you don’t have as many actors, one actor can play several characters. Usually if

an actor is playing several characters, they are characters who don't have as much to do in the play.

Depending on who you have as actors and who wants to play which part, you can do "gender-blind" casting. This means that boys can play girls' parts and girls can play boys' parts. A lot of theaters do this when they have a role that was written specifically for a man or woman, but one is not available.

There are several times when a crowd of knights, townsfolk, and ladies of the court are on stage. Whoever isn't already on stage should jump in and be these characters whenever they are needed in crowd scenes.

There are old and young versions of Sir Bedivere. These roles can most easily be played by different people. But if they are played by the same person, make sure that the actor acts much older when he is narrating, as opposed to when he is one of the knights in the story. Strategies that can make you seem older include: moving more slowly, hunching over, changing your voice, and even using makeup, if you have it!

If two actors play Bedivere, the actor playing Old Bedivere will be on stage the entire time. When other things are happening and he is not talking, he should just watch quietly.

List of Characters

Old Bedivere

Young Bedivere

Merlin

King Uther Pendragon

Sir Kay

Sir Ector
King Arthur
Sir Lancelot
Sir Turquine
Sir Gareth
Sir Percival
Sir Uwaine
Sir Boengard
Sir Lamorak
Sir Gawain
Lady of the Lake
Queen Guinevere
Yvette
Percival's Mother
Lady
Knights/Townsfolk/Ladies of the Court

Costumes and Props

You should try to find some clothes that look like they could be from medieval times in England, because that is when the story is set. You can do some research in books or on the internet to see what people dressed like back then.

You can use armor, too. If you have any plastic toy armor and swords, you can use those—or you can make breastplates and shields out of cardboard. Your imagination is the limit!

“Props” are anything the characters use. These are the props you will need:

1. Swords (plastic, wood, or even just sticks).

2. Excalibur (Excalibur should be a sword that has something to set it apart from the other swords. It is special. Whether this means you get the best looking, shiniest plastic one, or you cover your stick in tin foil, make sure Excalibur looks different from the other swords you are using).
3. Armor (plastic, or cardboard covered with tin foil cover).
4. Sword in stone (one of the swords should be sticking out of a cardboard box with “Whosoever pulleth this sword from this stone is rightwise King of All England” written on it).
5. Stick armor for Percival (you can make this by winding sticks together, or even just gluing sticks to cardboard).
6. Percival’s father’s ring (any ring will do).
7. Gold ring (any ring will do, or even a little piece of foil like a candy wrapper twisted into a ring—as long as it’s gold in color).
8. Wine cup (should look fancy).

Any props or costumes you don’t have, you can just mime. Miming is when you move your hands like you’re holding or using something, but there’s actually nothing there. For example, you might not have armor, but you can pretend to put on armor, or pretend to have a sword.

In fact, pretending you have swords might be safer.

Stage Fighting

There are a lot of sword fights in this play.

When you are doing a sword fight, you must plan it out very carefully before you do it. Rehearse it over and over, and figure out each

swing of the sword and when it's going to happen. You CANNOT make it up as you go along, because that is how people get hurt.

Also, when you do the sword fights, you should do them in slow motion.

There is also a scene where Sir Kay slaps one of the ladies in waiting. To do this is very easy; whoever is playing Sir Kay should pretend to slap her with his right hand, making sure he does not actually hit her, and actually slap his left hand which he holds up and then quickly puts back down. She should act like she has just been slapped. This is called a “nap.” If you search the internet for the terms “stage fighting nap,” you will find much more information about how to use “naps” to create realistic stage fights.

If you don't think you can do this without actually slapping someone by accident, Sir Kay can just shake her (gently!) instead.

Set

The “set” of a play is where it takes place, its “setting.”

This play takes place in and around Camelot. You can do it anywhere in your house. If you want to, you can try to make your house look like the inside of Camelot!

For the parts where the characters are outside, the audience will have to use their imagination. You can also bring potted plants or a branch or two on stage to indicate that the characters are outdoors—and then take them away when the scenes move back indoors.

Sound

All sounds can be made by the actors who are not on stage right now! There should be somewhere out of sight that the actors can be when they are not on stage. In the theater this is called being “Backstage.” Backstage should be in a place where the audience can hear, but not see, the actors.

The Play

When you perform the play, you will see each character’s name followed by a colon, like this:

SIR LANCELOT:

After the colon will be some words. These are the character’s lines. When you play that character, you say whatever comes after the colon. So if you saw this:

SIR LANCELOT: Release that man!

And you were playing Sir Lancelot, you would say “Release that man!”

If you see more than one character’s name, like this:

SIR KAY and SIR ECTOR:

It means both characters say the line at the same time.

One more thing; if you see something in parentheses after the name, it’s an instruction that tells you how the line should be read. For example:

KING ARTHUR: (Angrily)

That means that whatever he says, he should say ANGRILY!

If you want to memorize your lines and perform it that way, that's great! If you want to read them off the paper, that's great too!

Staging

There are some theater terms you should know.

The most important ones are "Stage Left," "Stage Right," and "Center Stage." If the play says a character should stand Stage Left, it means that if you are playing that character and you are standing and facing your audience, you should be to the left of the stage. The reason it's called Stage Left is that for the audience, who is facing you, it's on the right! It can be a little confusing, but just remember, when you are facing the audience, Stage Left is *your* left and Stage Right is *your* right.

Center Stage means, very simply, that you move to the center of the stage.

It's also important to remember that you don't have to be on an actual stage to use these terms. If you're doing a play in your living room, you can still say you are Stage Left or Stage Right or Center Stage, depending on where you stand in the space you are using to perform.

Another term you should know is "Stage Directions." In the play, you will see some sentences in parentheses. These are your Stage Directions. They tell you where the characters should be standing, and sometimes what they should be doing.

Finally, you will see some Stage Directions that say “Lights Up” or “Lights Down.” This means, simply, that you turn the lights on or off to begin and end your play.

Intermission

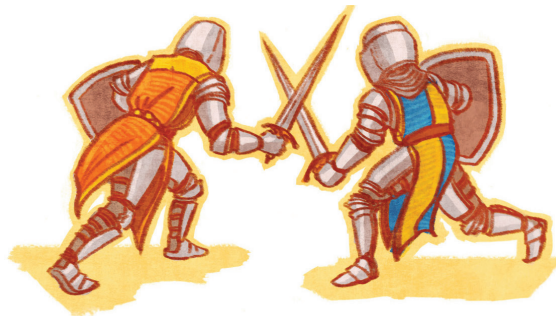
This play is long, and the first half ends with a sword fight, so it has an intermission. This is where all the actors leave the stage and take a moment to drink some water and rest. It also gives the audience time to go to the bathroom. It should be about five or ten minutes long.

When it is almost time for the second half of the play, someone should flash the lights in the room to let the audience know it is almost time to start the second half.

One Last Thing

Remember, the most important part of this play is that you have fun! If you don’t have all the props, or if somebody stands someplace different from what the instructions say, or if you decide you want to change everything and do it your own way, all those things are not only fine, they can be wonderful.

Mistakes in theater can be the most fun part of the whole show as long as you just keep going along and enjoying yourself.



King Arthur and his Knights

(Lights Up on the Old Bedivere, standing Center Stage. As he talks, he moves to Stage Right and sits down.)

OLD BEDIVERE: Come in here, away from the noise. Sit down! Well, you asked me to tell you the tale, and I'm glad that you did, for I am the last one who can tell it as it really happened. I am Sir Bedivere, last living Knight of the Round Table, and I am he who was first made knight by the king. You must understand, when I say the king I do not mean these *little* kings that you have nowadays. For me, there is only one king. The great king who was, and who will be again if Merlin spoke the truth. I mean King Arthur. Yes, I knew him. I knew him from the time we were boys together. All the way until the end. My hair was not always as white as the snow that blankets the ground around this castle. I knew him, and Merlin, and the beautiful queen, and Lancelot, and all the other noble knights. And I will tell you, for I remember . . . it seems . . . it seems as though it were only yesterday, not so long ago.

(Merlin and King Uther Pendragon enter and stand Center Stage.)

MERLIN: Your child has been born?

KING UTHUR PENDRAGON: Just now I have received word.

MERLIN: This child must be protected, Your Majesty, for if he can grow up to rule, he will be the greatest king that England has ever seen.

(Merlin and Uther Pendragon exit.)

OLD BEDIVERE: So, with the permission of King Uther Pendragon, Merlin took the baby to a faraway place of safety where he would be raised in secret by a loyal knight, Sir Ector. And the name of this baby was Arthur. Now the knight Sir Ector already had a son, named Kay. Kay and Arthur grew up thinking that they were truly brothers. They never knew the secret of Arthur's birth. And I knew them all, for good Sir Ector was my uncle.

It was at that time that our old castle teacher left us, and a week later, far to the south in the city of Londonium, the wise man Merlin reappeared. He made a great magic, and in the middle of an empty square in the city there appeared a huge stone.

(Merlin enters, dramatically, with the Sword in the Stone, puts it Center Stage, exits.)

OLD BEDIVERE: Well, many tried to draw the sword forth, but no one could do it.

(Many knights enter and try to pull the sword out of the stone, but each one leaves, defeated.)

OLD BEDIVERE: And then Merlin declared that there would be a great tournament to be held in the spring, and afterwards he promised that the true king would show himself.

(Sir Kay, Sir Ector, Young Bedivere, and Arthur enter and stand Stage Left.)

SIR KAY: Just think, father, all the greatest champions on one field! Please, let me be a part of it!

SIR ECTOR: Oh, very well. Arthur, Bedivere, you will come with us too, to serve as Kay's squires.

YOUNG BEDIVERE and ARTHUR: Hurrah!

(As Old Bedivere speaks, Arthur, Sir Kay, Young Bedivere, and Sir Ector make a circle of the stage and end up back on Stage Left.)

OLD BEDIVERE: And so it came about. We all went; Kay as knight, and I as his squire, and I can't say who was more excited. Kay was inspired. He fought in the very thick of things with spear and sword.

(Sir Ector exits. Sir Kay fights with several knights at Center Stage, in front of the Sword in the Stone. He knocks down two knights, but the third one breaks his sword or knocks it away. *NOTE: Remember to do the fights SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY.* Sir Kay returns to Stage Left.)

SIR KAY: Arthur! Run back to our inn and get me another sword! Hurry!

(Arthur begins running in circles around the stage. Sir Kay remains Stage Left. The other knights exit. Arthur pauses, sees the Sword in the Stone, and then steps up to it and pulls it free. He runs back to Stage Left.)

ARTHUR: Here Kay, I've brought you a sword.

SIR KAY: (Angrily) Well, it certainly took you long . . .