The Legend of King Arthur

King Arthur is traditionally accepted as a historic person. He is thought to have been an ancient British war commander and, maybe in the early 12th century, a king. Since the eighteenth century, there has been much debate about the reality of Arthur's existence. Most historians believe that Arthur's story is composed of mythology, folklore and literary invention, and most modern historians do not think that he was a real person.

According to the legend, Arthur was a champion of the Britons at a time of great strife and turmoil. Out of the chaos of a dark age, he forged a magnificent kingdom, bringing order and peace to Britain. His famous knights of the round table acted as guardians of the realm, establishing a reputation as the very epitome of medieval chivalry. When Arthur supposedly died in battle, the age of chivalry which he had championed also came to an end. The legend tells us that Arthur had been Britain's greatest champion and protector.

The Story/Legend of King Arthur

When Arthur was a baby, his father, King Uther, died. The great wizard Merlin, a trusted friend of the king, took the child away to care for him. Consequently, nobody knew where the true heir was. Years later, a mighty sword appeared, stuck fast in an anvil upon a stone in the forest. It had these words written on it:

Whoso pulleth out this sword from this stone is the true-born King of all Britain

Many strong knights tried to remove the sword, but despite their strength and determination, they all failed. Arthur, who was just a humble squire, also tried to pull it out. When he tried, it slipped gracefully from the stone. He was immediately proclaimed king of Britain. This sword was known as the "Sword in the Stone", but later Arthur would find an even more famous sword.

Excalibur and the Lady of the Lake

During a battle, Arthur's sword broke. Merlin later took Arthur to a mysterious lake. When Arthur arrived at the edge of the lake, a mysterious figure, robed in silver light, slowly rose from the surface of the water. She was the "Lady of the Lake". As she rose, she held a magnificent sword, whose name was "Excalibur". This was no ordinary sword. It was beautiful and indestructible. Its sheath protected Arthur from dying. As long as he wore it by his side, he could not die. The Lady of the Lake gave Excalibur to Arthur with one condition – that it be returned to her one day. Arthur accepted, and with Excalibur by his side, he became the greatest king Britain had ever known.

Camelot and the Round Table

Arthur settled in a town called Camelot. There he gathered the bravest knights in the land, and he called them the "Knights of the Round Table". The table was round so that no knight would sit at the "head." All were equal, bound by courage, loyalty, and honour. Among the knights were:

- **Sir Lancelot**, the bravest and most skilled knight.
- **Sir Galahad**, the purest of heart and most noble knight.
- **Sir Gawain**, who was very brave but also quick-tempered.
- **Sir Percival**, who was thoughtful and sincere.

And at Arthur's side stood his beautiful queen, Guinevere. For many years, Camelot was a place of peace and happiness. In Arthur's world, true strength meant bravery, chivalry, justice and honesty.

The Black Knight

During Arthur's reign, many mysterious knights roamed the land. Among them was the feared Black Knight. He was a fierce warrior who wore black armor and who challenged other knights to fights, but he never revealed his name.

Lancelot and Guinevere

Sir Lancelot was the finest knight of them all. He defeated giants, rescued maidens, and never lost a duel. But even the bravest knight can make mistakes. Lancelot and Queen Guinevere grew very fond of each other. Though they tried to hide their feelings, whispers spread through Camelot. Love, when it breaks trust, can wound deeper than any sword. When their secret love was discovered, the Round Table began to crack. Knights argued. Friendships broke. Arthur's heart ached, for he loved them both, Lancelot as his greatest knight and Guinevere as his queen. Lancelot decided to flee, and Guinevere was banished from the land. The harmony of Camelot was never the same again.

The Quest for the Holy Grail

One day, a holy vision appeared in Camelot – it was a shining image of the Holy Grail, the cup said to have been used at the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. The knights swore that they would seek and find it. Many of them travelled the whole country looking for it, but it couldn't be found. The Holy Grail could not be won by strength alone, it required purity of heart. Among all the knights, only one was worthy – Sir Galahad, the son of Lancelot. He was gentle, humble, and devoted to God.

After many travels, Galahad came to a distant, sacred city called Sarras. There, inside a holy chapel, the Grail was revealed to him, shining with divine light. He did not seize it like a prize, he knelt before it. He witnessed the Grail's miracle, described as a vision of heaven itself. He then asked God for one final gift – that he leave the earthly world in spiritual joy. At that moment, God granted his wish and Galahad peacefully died – not in battle, not in sorrow, but in sublime happiness. It is said that angels carried his soul to heaven. After this, the Grail disappeared from the world and it was never seen again. The other knights returned to Camelot, all a little quieter, wiser, and saddened by the loss of their beloved friend.

The Fall of Camelot

Many years later, Arthur heard that Lancelot was in France, so he went there to fight him in a duel to the death. But before Arthur could find Lancelot, he heard that his son, Mordred, had betrayed him and tried to take the throne for himself. So he returned to Britain and vowed to kill Mordred in battle.

The battle took place at Camlann. It was fierce and tragic. Knights who had once feasted together now fought against each other. During the battle, Arthur struck down Mordred with a mighty blow and killed him. But during the fight, Mordred had fatally wounded Arthur. As the king lay dying, he told one of his last loyal knights, Sir Bedivere, to take him to the lake and throw Excalibur back into the water. At first, the knight hesitated, as the sword was so beautiful. But after some time, he agreed to do it.

So, Sir Bedivere and Arthur travelled to the mysterious lake and Bedivere threw Excalibur far into the water. As soon as the sword was thrown, he witnessed a marvel. A white arm rose from the lake, caught the sword as it fell and took it beneath the surface. Arthur was satisfied and at peace. He died at the lakeside.

The knights of the Round Table were completely destroyed, and the age of Camelot was over. After Arthur's death, Guinevere entered a convent and became a nun, dedicating the rest of her life to repentance and prayer. Lancelot learned of Arthur's death and was filled with grief, not only because he had lost his king, but because he knew that his love for Guinevere had helped bring about the kingdom's ruin.

Lancelot visited Guinevere one last time. Their meeting was solemn and restrained. There was no romance, only sorrow and acceptance. Guinevere told him that they must live apart and devote themselves to God. He agreed. It was the last time that they saw each other. Lancelot then became a monk and joined a monastery. Camelot's greatest knight had chosen humility over honour.

He lived simply in the monastery until his death many years later. When he died, his former colleagues buried him with honour. He was laid to rest near the graves of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, who were finally reunited in death.