Answer Key: Reading Questions: “Le Morte de Arthur”

1. What time of year is it?
   
   Trinity Sunday (8th Sunday after Easter) so late Spring/Early Summer

2. How does the story begin?
   
   Arthur is having a nightmare- he is on his throne which over turns and drops him into a pit of dragons and snakes that tear him apart.

3. Describe Arthur’s reaction to his dream.
   
   He is upset and shaken- screams out and his knights come into his chambers to wake him up. He falls back asleep and Sir Gawain comes to him in his dreams and tells him to postpone his meeting with Mordred for a month and a day.

4. Is Sir Gawain alive or dead? How do you know?
   
   He is dead- he says that God has sent him from Heaven one last time to warn Arthur.

5. What is the warning that Gawain gives Arthur- be specific!
   
   Gawain warns Arthur NOT to fight Mordred the next day or he will lose and die (and so will all of his men). He says to send someone to ask for a treaty for a month because Sir Lancelot and his other nights will have returned and can kill Mordred and defeat his army. He tells him to offer Mordred whatever he wants to make it happen.

6. How does Arthur react to the warning?
   
   When he wakes up he immediately does as Gawain has directed. He sends Sir Bedivere and Sir Lucan and 2 bishops to Mordred.

7. Who is Arthur about to do battle with? What is their relationship?
   
   Mordred- Arthur’s illegitimate son with Morgan Le Fey

8. What is the agreement that Lucan and Bedivere bring back to Arthur? Why is this significant?
   
   Mordred agrees to the bargain- he wants Kent and Cornwall now and all of England when Arthur dies. This is significant because this is what Mordred should have according to birth right or if he was recognized as Arthur’s true son.

9. Why must they meet BEFORE either side will agree to the arrangements?
   
   Neither side believes the other. They EACH want to make sure that this is legitimate. Arthur tells his men that if anything happens to him- kill Mordred and Mordred tells his men that if any sword is drawn to attack.
10. How many men are to meet for each side?

14

11. How is the treaty broken?

When they meet, a knight disturb a bush and an adder (snake) came out and bit the knight on the foot. When he felt the sting of the bite, the knight pulled his sword to slay the snake- not intending to hurt anyone other than the snake- both sides thought that this was a sign of betrayal and called for the battle to begin.

12. How many men does Mordred bring to battle Arthur?

100,000

13. How does the initial battle end? Who wins, according to Lucan?

Everyone is dead EXCEPT Bedivere, Lucan and Arthur AND Mordred. Lucan says that Arthur has won since he has 3 men alive and Mordred only has 1-himself. He says that Arthur is avenged and to walk away- to remember Gawain’s warning and advice.

14. What is Arthur’s reaction? What is Bedivere’s reaction?

Arthur can’t do it! He says it doesn’t matter if he will live or die- he wants Mordred dead by his own hands. Bedivere says “God Speed” which is basically wishing him well and hoping that God will watch over him.

15. What happens between Mordred and Arthur- describe their final battle.

Arthur grabs his spear and runs toward Mordred. Mordred draws his sword and runs towards Arthur. Arthur spears Mordred beneath his shield and almost completely through his body. Mordred knows he is dead so pulls himself closer to Arthur by grabbing the spear. When he is close enough, he strikes Arthur across his head with his sword. The blow was so strong that it pierced his helmet and his skull-down to his brain. Mordred then dies after the blow.

16. What happened to Sir Lucan?

Sir Lucan tried to help Arthur but as he lifted Arthur, his guts fell out and his heart burst.

17. What does Arthur ask Bedivere to do?

He asks Bedivere to take Excalibur and throw it in the lake and then come back and tell him what he saw.


No- He told Arthur he saw waves. Arthur knew he was lying because he didn’t tell him about seeing the Lady of the Lake. He did this twice.
19. How does Arthur know that Bedivere is lying to him?

He didn’t mention the Lady of the Lake

20. What happens to Excalibur?

As Bedivere threw the sword into the lake, a hand came out and grabbed the sword, shook it 3 times and then took it into the lake.

21. Who is the hermit?

The Bishop of Canterbury

22. Who are the 3 queens?

Morgan Le Fey, the Queen of North Wales and the Queen of the Wastelands

23. What happens to Bedivere?

He agrees to stay with the hermit for the rest of his life and pray for Arthur

24. What is believed to be written on the tomb?

“Hic Iacet Arthurus, Rex Quandam, Rexque Futuris”
Here lies Arthur, who was once king and king will be again.
Here lies Arthur, once and future king.

25. What happens to Guenevere?

She goes to a nunnery/ becomes a nun.

For Discussion:

1. Describe how this is or is not a Romance Narrative.