Who is a True Knight?

❖ The English word *knight* is derived from the same root as *Knecht*, the German word for servant (Barber 20).

❖ The OED notes that by 1599, a *knight* is considered to be "a military servant or follower (of a king or some other superior)." The term later became associated to one who "devoted to the service of a lady as her attendant, or her champion in war or the tournament"(OED Online).

❖ A knight, as a type of military profession, is frequently contrasted in medieval literature to a clerk, merchant, and in rank to a king. Knights are expected to be brave, courteous, and chivalrous (OED Online).

❖ Although epics such as *Beowulf* and the *Song of Roland* give the first record of knighthood on the continent of Europe, these tales tell of heroic warriors whose preoccupation is centered on power and might.

❖ In Geoffrey of Monmouth's book, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, a link is made to a concept of a nobler and braver knight. Monmouth also incorporates the French term *chivalry*, which is derived from the French *chevalier*, or *horseman*. He combines the concepts of *knighthood* and *chivalry* to represent an institution for defining a superior social status (Barber 20-21).
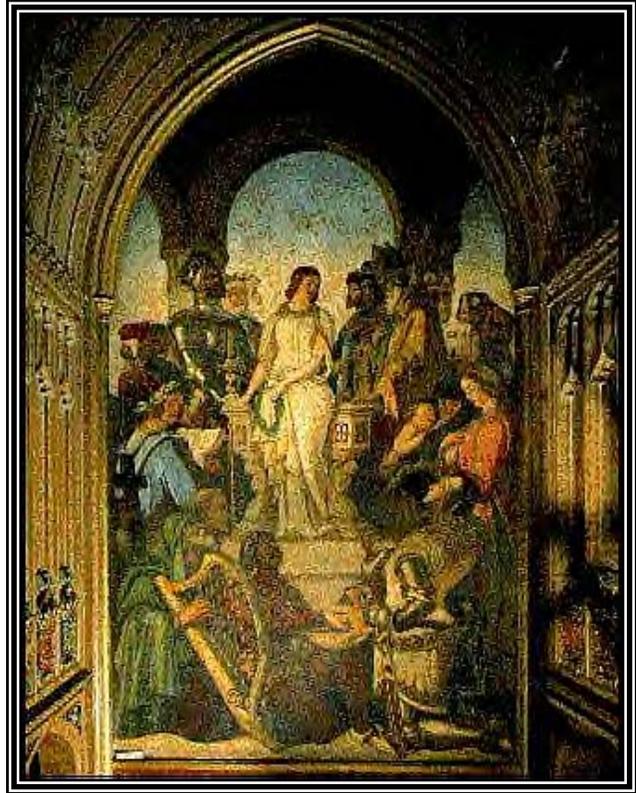
Picture: Daniel Maclise. "The Spirit of Chivalry." Online. Arthurian Art Gallery. 11 July 2002.
<http://www.uidaho.edu/student_orgs/Arthurian_legend/gallery/gallery.html>.

❖ Malory considers the chivalric knighthood to be primarily secular, whereas other versions of the Arthur legend incorporate social status, religious piety, and English history as a means of portraying heroes of chivalry (Brewer 11).

❖ Even though chivalry is historically "bound up with the dominance of the knight in medieval society," the view of knighthood as an institution was symbolized by the ceremony and formalities of girding on a sword, coming of age, and the acknowledgement that a young man is of age "to bear arms" (Barber 19, 22).

❖ In *Le Morte Darthur*, Sir Thomas Malory emphasizes the martial aspects of chivalry; he creates his own idea l of chivalry and knighthood, combining fighting prowess, a

Picture: William Dyce. "Piety: The Knights of the Round Table Departing on the Quest for the Holy Grail." Online. Arthurian Art Gallery 15 July 2002.

<http://www.uidaho.edu/student_orgs/Arthurian_legend/welcome.html>.

reputation for following the code of conduct for knights, and virtue, inspired by love and service to the king as a standard for his greatest exemplar of a knight (Tucker 61-69).

❖ Both secular and spiritual leaders sought to regulate knighthood with a manual of conduct. Although these manuals were written for a secular audience, there are strong religious overtones, similar to the priesthood or kingship. The title of knight also carried privileges, duties, and responsibilities (Barber 22).

❖ Malory establishes oaths of friendship and mutual support within Arthur's realm. In "The Genius of Chivalry," Eugene Vinaver notes that Malory uses "knightly deeds and virtuous living" to describe "the duties of a good Christian" (55-56).

❖ For Malory, chivalry is "the outward and temporal expression of inner and timeless virtue" (Tucker 103).

❖ During the high feast of Pentecost, first beginning after the wedding of Arthur and Guinevere and then every year thereafter, the King establishes an oath for all knights, which most clearly summarizes the purpose for a knight:

> Then the King [. . . establishes] the knights, [. . .gives] them riches and lands; and [. . . charges them never do outrage nor murder, and always flee treason, and to give mercy unto them that [. . . asks] mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen and widows succour; strengthen them in their rights, and never enforce them, upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no love, nor for no worldly goods. (Malory 57)

❖ Malory considers the chivalric ideal of knighthood to be primarily secular. He focuses on the Round Table and the fellowship of knights bound in a common loyalty to King Arthur (Tucker 61-62).

Picture: "Knights of the Round Table." Available Online. 11 July 2002.
<http://www.oldcountrytours.com/graphics/roundtable.jpg>.

Malory's Vision of Knighthood

❖ Beverly Kennedy contends that Malory's technique for developing his character's chivalric identities is, in some ways, similar to the French practice of *entrelacement*, which allows the readers to conceptualize the significance of events through a multiplicity of characters and events:

> Malory achieves the same effect with his 'unlaced,' or, disentangled but parallel, sequences of events. His technique is particularly striking in this first narrative unit because of the repetition of the triple quest pattern within such a brief compass. The very symmetry of the design compels the reader to compare these knights and the way they respond to the adventures which 'happen' to them. (Kennedy 60)

❖ Using a literary ancestry to identify the different types of knights, Kennedy concludes that Malory characterizes three kinds of medieval chivalry, incorporating exemplars "of every conceivable type of knightly excellence to be found in literature" (82-83).

True Knight

Worshipful Knight

Heroic/Warrior Knight

Heroic/Warrior Knight

❖ In *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory shows the feudal aspects of heroic knighthood and concludes, above all, a knight is a warrior. Malory depicts Gawain as a fierce warrior who never entirely follows the code of knighthood and chivalry dictated by King Arthur. Many critics find fault with Malory's presentation of Gawain, since in some tales, Gawain is a barbarous murderer and villain (Lambert 211-213).

❖ During Arthur's campaign to Rome against the emperor, Lucius, Gawain distinguishes himself as Malory's chief exemplar of a heroic knight. Lancelot and Gawain battle together against Lucius, but Gawain is reckless, often endangering his life and the lives of his men. In this way, Malory exemplifies Gawain's feudal virtues and exploits, but often parallels his fighting abilities to Lancelot (Kennedy 102-104).

❖ For the heroic knight, the masculine, strong gaze each knight gives before the fight commences is crucial for Malory's construction of the knightly identity of a warrior in *Morte Darthur* (53, 56-58).

❖ Malory selects Gawain to be the chief example of a heroic knight because, as a warrior and leader of the noble Scots, he is famous, already projected in the English alliterative poem, *Morte Arthure,* and a source of contradiction from the historical French sources for Arthurian legend (83-84).

❖ Malory considers the feudal aspects of heroic knighthood, but he concludes, above all, a knight is a warrior. In *Le Morte Darthur*, Gawain is a fierce warrior who never entirely follows the code of knighthood and chivalry dictated by King Arthur (Archibald 141-142).

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❖ Malory often exemplifies feudal virtues and exploits, but often parallels his fighting abilities to Lancelot (Kennedy 102-104).

❖ Kathleen Kelly explores the role of knightly masculinity, especially within the frame of tournaments and on the battlefield; she concludes that the representation of violence and death in *Morte Darthur* follows the preconceived nature of medieval knights as warriors (53).

❖ The violent battles, told repeatedly, feature bloody bodies—strong, manly bodies covered in armor. For the heroic knight, the masculine, strong gaze each knight gives before the fight begins is also crucial for Malory's construction of the knightly identity of a warrior (Kennedy 56-58).

❖ In "The Death of Arthur," Gawain is mortally wounded after battling with Mordred's troops and is lying in a boat; the wound is made more severe by the reinjury of an old wound from Gawain's vengeful battle with Lancelot. As Arthur comes to Gawain, he tells him, "For now, my nephew Gawain, I will discover me unto you, that in your person and in Sir Lancelot I most . . . [have] my joy and affiance" (Malory 508).
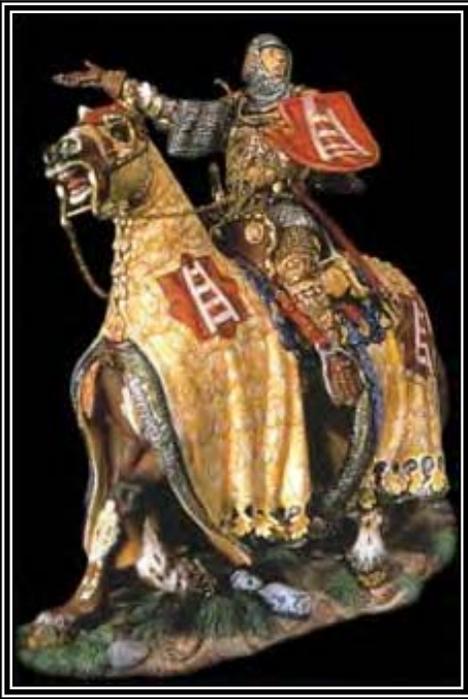
Worshipful Knight

❖ The worshipful knight is skilled in warfare, exhibits courage and honor to his feudal lord, and abides by the knight's code in all situations. A worshipful knight follows "the noble way of the world" (Kennedy 148).

❖ The most important concern of a worshipful knight is to "win worship" and make sure his skill and courage is known (Kennedy 148).

❖ Malory's main example of a worshipful knight is Sir Tristram, for whom he devotes over a hundred pages in "The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyonesse" in *Le Morte Darthur*. When Sir Tristram meets King Arthur, he is greeted in front of the entire court by Arthur, who says, "Welcome [. . .] for one of the best knights and the gentlest of the world, and the man of most worship [. . .] ye are welcome in this court (Malory 231).

❖ Malory often compares and contrasts the virtues of Tristram to Lancelot, but Tristram clearly does not have the rank or position in Arthur's court that Lancelot has achieved. Whereas King Arthur knights Lancelot, King Mark knights Tristram (Malory 174-175).

❖ Lancelot, like Tristram, enters competitions for worship, especially to make himself worthy of Guinevere's love (Malory 158, 162).

❖ Using the moral and religious standards of true knighthood as a guide, worshipful knights are sometimes proud or lecherous; wholly committing their lives to seek worship and the love of women (Kennedy 103).

❖ Malory seems to make connections between Lancelot and Tristram, as well as Galahad and Percival, so the characteristics of knighthood will emerge by the comparisons and contrasts of their actions.

Picture: George Frederick Watts. "Sir Percival." Available Online. 15 July 2002. <www.napfenyes.hu/text/ kepek_parszifal.html>.

❖ Galahad, Bors, and Percival complete the Grail Quest together until Sir Galahad is taken up to heaven by angels. Then, Sir Percival goes to a hermitage, becomes a monk, takes up "religious clothing," and begins to live a "full holy life" while Bors returns to Camelot (Malory 401).

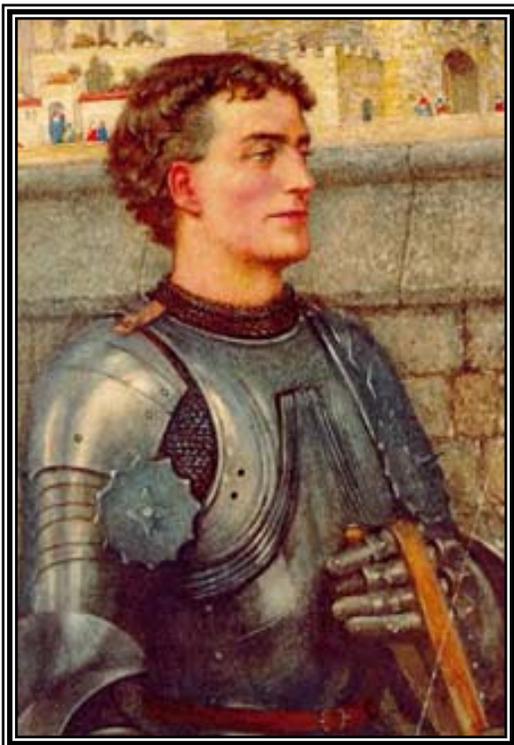Picture: "Sir Galahad Praying." Available Online. 11 July 2002. <www.accd.edu/sac/english/bailey/medieval>.

❖ True knighthood, as described by Beverly Kennedy, is Malory's most ethical and complex type of knight because incorporated into the true knight typology are all three aspects of a code of chivalry (98). These elements include feudal chivalry, courtly love, and religious piety.

❖ Malory's true knight is described in Ramon Lull's *Book of the Order of Chivalry* as the religious-feudal ideal of a knight. A true knight is considered a good soldier, an ideal statesman, a devout Christian, and either celibate or faithful to his "lady" (Kennedy 98-99).

❖ Although Galahad, Percival, and Gareth are often mentioned as candidates for a true knight, Lancelot is Malory's true knight exemplar. Malory characterizes Lancelot as a pious, penitent, and virtuous man in "The Tale of Lancelot" (Kennedy 119).

❖ Lancelot is of noble birth, the son of King Ban of Benoic from western France. Soon after he reaches Arthur's court, his combative prowess and nobility are recognized (Lacy and Ashe 366).

❖ Lancelot is Malory's hero par excellence. He refuses the advances of the four queens at Castle Chariot and, for a time, is virtuous in all his deeds (Malory 98).

❖ Critics and scholars note that Malory's rearrangement of texts makes explicit what is obscure. By summarizing the French books and adding his creative ideals of knighthood, Malory is able to take the character of Lancelot and transform him into an individual. Near the end of Le Morte Darthur, Lancelot must rescue Guinevere several times from her fiery judgment. Two of these times, Guinevere is accused of adultery with Lancelot, but there are over nine references that indicate Lancelot's devotion to Guinevere (Brewer 17).

❖ Above all, Malory presents *Le Morte Darthur* as a chivalric romance with human individuals, which are vulnerable in spite of their strengths.

Picture: Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale. "Lancelot." from Idylls of the King. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911. Available Online. 12 July 2002. http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cphome.stm

❖ In "The Tale of Sangrail," Lancelot sees a vision of an old man and angels giving blessings to knights, calling them "good and true" (Malory 347).

❖ Lancelot has more visions than any other knight does in Malory's text (Lambert 45).

❖ Lancelot's devotion to Arthur is emphasized throughout Le Morte Darthur; as Malory continues the French tradition that suggests "arms and love" or "arms and loyalty" go hand in hand (Brewer 16).

Picture: Louis Rhead. "Lancelot Standing upon the Threshold of the Door." <camelot.celtic-twilight.com/ illustrators/rhead32.htm>.

❖ Even after Arthur's death, with the Round Table destroyed and Lancelot dying, Sir Ector still proclaims Lancelot "head of all Christian knights" and repeats his title—a true knight (Malory 525-526).

❖ Professor Vinaver concludes, using the late Middle English version as a reference, that Malory's portrayal of Lancelot with Sir Ector demonstrates that Malory creates his own code of chivalry that is completely his own invention, combining the oath of a knight with Lull's Book of Chivalry to fit every good and true quality of knighthood found in Lancelot (56-60).

❖ Sir Ector says, upon Lancelot's death, that he is Christian and above all earthly knights. Ector also commends Lancelot for being a courteous knight, but yet the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loves a woman. Ector concludes that Lancelot is kind, godly, penitent, and gentle (Malory 525-526).

Typology of Knighthood

as identified by Beverly Kennedy

Type of knight	Characteristics	Knights who embody the qualities
heroic	A warrior—he spends the majority of his life fighting; he has virtues such as "courage, boldness and prowess, which includes both strength and skill in handling weapons (Kennedy 83).	Sir Balin Sir Balan Sir Gawain
worshipful	A heroic knight—extremely loyal to his feudal lord and has "the noble way of the world"; he often combines social and political skills with the skills of a warrior (Kennedy 148).	Sir Bors Sir Gareth Sir Tristram
true	The highest level of knighthood—a knight who embodies the qualities of a heroic and worshipful knight, but has an even higher ethical complexity; he combines the codes of chivalry for feudal, religious, and courtly conduct (Kennedy 99).	Sir Percival Sir Galahad Sir Lancelot

Sources for the chart:

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𝕴𝖔𝖚𝖗 𝕾𝖔𝖚𝖗𝖈𝖊 𝕷𝖎𝖘𝖙: When researching any academic topic, it is very important to make sure your sources are reliable, scholarly, and current. The selected bibliography listed below will be helpful in locating the types of journal articles and books necessary to be an informed reader. It is not all-inclusive, but it is recommended you begin your search with these sources.

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YOUR QUEST

HAS

BEGUN

Instructions: Complete your research in a Word document, using Lydian BT font, and cite all sources and pictures used. Your results will be published in a group document and presented by this class to the Upward Bound student body. SAVE ALL OF YOUR WORK TO A 3.5 FLOPPY disk. Use your text and the books on reserve in the library. Internet sources should only be used to access images and OED definitions.

Your goals:

- ❖ Assimilate reading assignments

- ❖ Locate textual evidence to support your initial claims.

- ❖ Make evaluations based on your scholarly pursuit.

- ❖ Use MLA documentation for all sources.

- ❖ Format documents and images for visual presentations.

- ❖ Possess a better understanding of knighthood and Arthurian legend.

❖ **Define the following terms** using the Oxford English Dictionary (OED): *knight*, *knighthood*, and *chivalry*.

❖ **Construct a chart** listing the three types of knights described by Beverly Kennedy in *Knighthood in The Morte Darthur*. Find examples of knights who embody these characteristics from *Le Morte Darthur*. It might be helpful to define each type of knight before you begin this portion of your project.

❖ **Conduct an internet image search** to find artwork and/or clip art that can be used to illustrate your work on a project board. The project board will be a group activity. As always, document your online sources.

❖ **Find specific examples** of how or what each knight does (or does not do) to achieve this level of knighthood in *Le Morte Darthur.*

❖ **Utilize** one other text on the selected bibliography list and find evidence in the test to strengthen your representation of one knight in each level.

Who's Who

Among

Medieval Knights

True Knight in the Real World	Lancelot
Pure Knight	Galahad
Admirable Knight	Perceval
Loving Knight	Gareth
Most Likely to Succeed	Tristram
Searching Knight	Pellinore
Heroic Knight	Bors
Hot-headed Knight	Gawain
Warrior Knight	Marhalt

Who is your favorite knight and why?

Comments by Upward Bound students after reading Le Morte Darthur.

Lancelot—he tries so hard. He really means to do good and tries so hard to achieve the grail. He wants to be free from his sins and honestly tries to forget about Guinevere. In fact, this seems to be his only fault. Every time he is in trouble, it is because he is thinking of Guinevere instead of being a great knight. Lancelot has supernatural powers and is able to heal Sir Urry. He is most admirable because he loves his king deeply, is brave in battle, and always keeps trying.

Gawain—he is great in a battle and does not seem to be scared of anything. He likes the blood and guts of knighthood. Even though he is hot-headed, he is loyal to his king.

Tristram—he's much like Lancelot. He's handsome, good with a sword, and honorable in all he does. Next to Lancelot, I think he's Malory's favorite. Since he is knighted by King Mark, he does not have the same importance as a knight who has been knighted by Arthur.

Galahad—he doesn't deserve to be the best. He has not lived, loved, or had to prove his loyalty like the other knights. Just because he's born to be the chosen one doesn't mean he has worked or earned it. Galahad does have a pure heart and can fight good, but he is trained, pampered, and privileged. He has special armor that keeps him from getting hurt and just doesn't seem worthy of being the best. He is portrayed as a type of Christ figure and, because of this, he is really not the best representative of chivalry and knighthood.

Gareth—he could have been as good, if not better than Lancelot if he had not fallen in love. Lancelot has trained him and he has great humility and courtesy. Once he gets married, he does not want to fight in tournaments any more and, thus loses his position as a true knight in Arthur's service.

Perceval—he does have a great sister, but he just follows everyone and never gets into any trouble. He does not seem to have the emotion that Lancelot has. He is too much of a follower and not a leader. Perceval is also ineffective because he does not ask questions so that the Fisher King will be healed.

Rate each knight from 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the best.