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experience!



# THE LEGEND OF KING ARTHUR

## TEACHING PACK



These resources have been developed as part of Oddsocks Productions' 2015/16 tour of *The Legend of King Arthur*.

Full tour dates can be found online at [www.oddsocks.co.uk/theatre/box-office](http://www.oddsocks.co.uk/theatre/box-office)

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## Synopsis of Oddsocks adaptation of *The Legend of King Arthur*

The earliest major written evidence for King Arthur is in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin work *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain) in 1138. In Oddsocks' adaptation we meet Arthur as a baby, when his father (King Uther) fails to look after the child and Merlin, a wizard, takes Arthur to live with another family, Sir Ector and his son, Kay. Arthur grows up in the care of Sir Ector and under Merlin's guidance. We meet Morgan le Fey, a witch who hates Merlin and wishes to see Arthur fail. When King Uther dies the country begins to unravel as there is no heir. Merlin creates a test - a sword set in a stone, which declares that whoever can pull the sword is the rightful heir to the throne. Arthur succeeds in doing so and is crowned King of England. Morgan le Fey sets about trying to trick Arthur by shape shifting and tempting him.

Arthur is waiting by a lake under the instruction of Merlin. Whilst waiting, Arthur meets Guinevere who is out in the forest hunting wild boar. During their meeting a magical and mysterious woman appears out of a lake clutching a sword. The sword named 'Excalibur' is given to Arthur and he is instructed that it shall protect him, as long as he remembers to wear the sheath. If he doesn't wear the sheath, he isn't protected.

Arthur returns to his newly built castle and sets about gathering Knights to assist him in ruling the Kingdom. He decides to create a "Triangle Table" so that he may sit at the head of the table and he is above all the other Knights. He holds a tournament to test strength and courage. A mysterious visitor arrives to the tournament to fight Sir Shoutalot and wins - it is Guinevere dressed as a boy. Arthur decides upon his Knights (Sir Shoutalot, Sir Dubious, Sir Winkalot and Guinevere)

Arthur faces a number of tests including fighting a ferocious Dragon. He is also tricked into lusting after Morgause (his half sister) after Morgan Le Fey places a spell on him. Merlin is also wounded by the evil Morgan Le Fey and to help him Arthur must go and collect the Elixir of Life which is guarded by a bear. He succeeds and Merlin's health is restored. Guinevere and Arthur have fallen in love but neither of them declares it until the final scene. Everything is resolved as Guinevere suggests a "Round Table" so that they are all equal and Arthur and Guinevere are set to be married. We finally discover that Morgause has given birth to a child, Arthur's son, and that the story is yet to fully unfold.

## Character List

King Arthur	Merlin
Morgan le Fey	King Uther
Guinevere	Igraine
Morgause	Sir Shoutalot
Sir Dubious	Sir Winkalot
Kay	Sir Ector
3 Musicians	A Dragon
A Bear	A Peasant
A Builder	

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## EXERCISE ONE - King Arthur's Court

This game looks at status and hierarchy within the play and creating drama and tension onstage.

One student takes on the role of *King Arthur*. The rest of the group are the subjects in King Arthur's kingdom. The exercise begins as an improvised scene as King Arthur walks around the Kingdom and meets his/her subjects. Ask the group to think about how they respond to the King (do they like him/her? Do they want to please?) After a few minutes of improvisation, ask the student to create 2 rules for the Kingdom. Examples might be "I don't want anyone to speak to me" or "I don't want anyone to be within a metre of me", if the King believes someone is disobeying then they can be exiled (sent to sit at the side) Replay the exercise and see how this has changed the status in the room. Ask the group to think about their own status - are they rich/poor, high status/low status?

Replay the exercise with a number of different students taking on the role of *King Arthur*.

Ideas for development:

- Create still images of the scene at certain moments in the improvisation.
- Use thought-tracking to help develop character and encourage students to think about what they are thinking during the exercise
- Give each member of the group a status number (1 is low status and 10 is high status) think about how this changes the dynamic in the group

## EXERCISE TWO - Still Images

Ask students in small groups of 5/6 to create still images of the following scenes:

- Pulling the sword from the stone
- The tournament when Guinevere is dressed a boy and fights with Sir Shoutalot
- Fighting the Dragon/preparing to fight the Dragon
- The wedding of King Arthur and Guinevere

Ask them to consider the following factors when creating their still images:

- Where are the audience? - Make sure that your staging is clear and that it communicates the story you are sharing
- Dynamic staging - how can you make it exciting for an audience? Use levels, active facial expression, what can you do to tell us the story in an interesting way?
- Which moment *specifically* are we showing?
- Where is the focus in the scene? Who are we looking at specifically or is it a whole picture? How can we make the audience focus on what we want them to focus on?

## EXERCISE THREE - Topic Questions

These are questions for discussion which can be in small groups, the whole class or written individually.

- *Who learns the biggest lesson in the story and why?*
- *Which character do you dislike the most and why? Why do we dislike them? Think about the way they speak and act.*
- *Which is the most exciting part of the story and why? Think about what devices are used to tell the story e.g comedy, stage-fights, costume, sound effects, music, light etc*
- *In what ways did the actors set the scene? E.g script, light, costume*
- *Do you think there is a clear story arc? Can you tell the story in less than 5 sentences?*
- *What impact did the live music have?*

## EXERCISE FOUR - Character building

An exercise which lots of professional actors do is to write their own monologues, diary entries and backstories for their character. It helps them to develop their character and make decisions so their character is more fully-rounded when onstage. Write a backstory or a monologue for the following characters at the following moments.

**King Arthur** - Write a backstory about his early childhood or a diary entry/monologue written on the day he pulls the sword from the stone.

**Guinevere** - Write a backstory about her life before we meet her in the play or a diary entry on the day she wins the tournament against Sir Shoutalot.

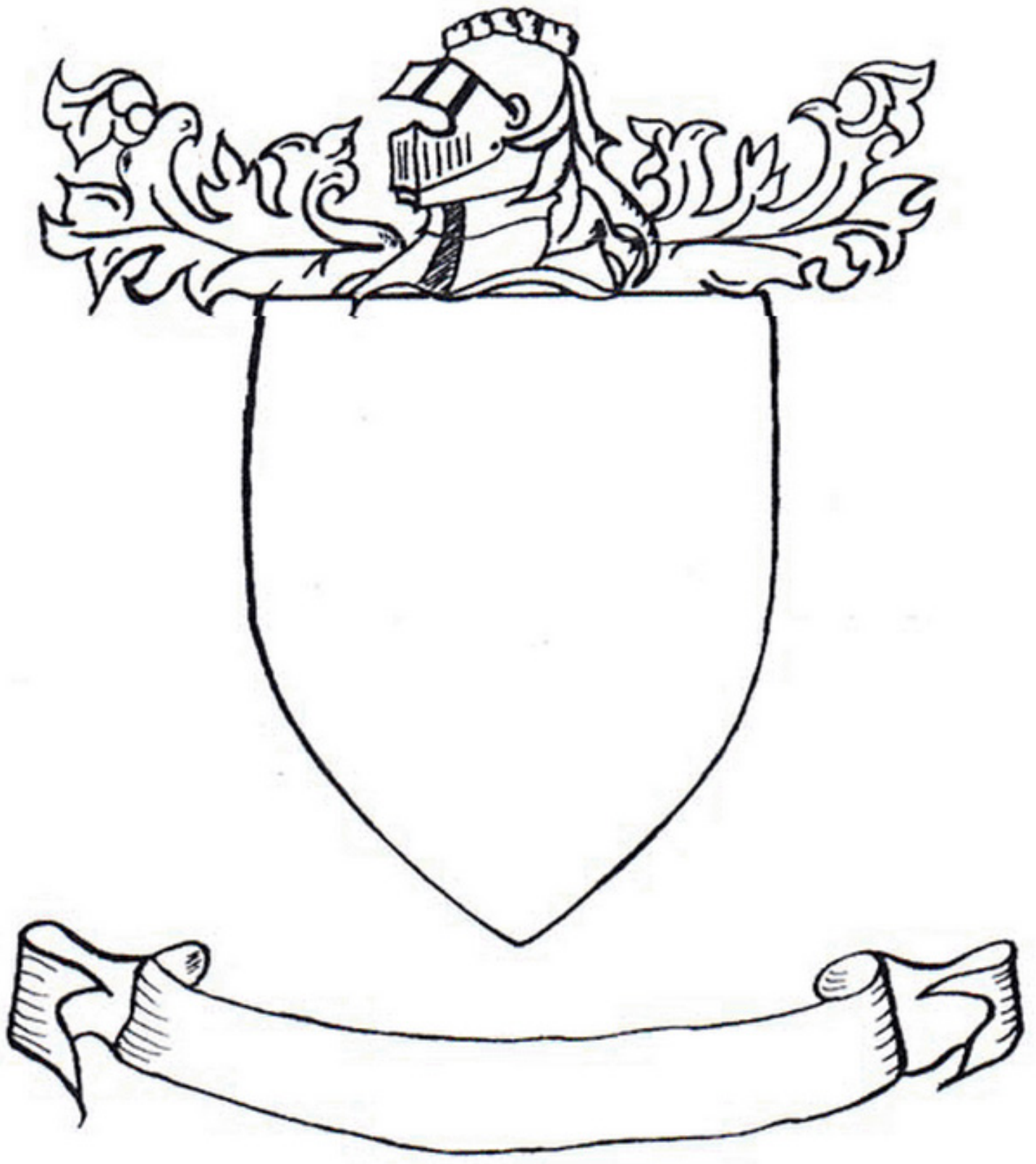
**Merlin** - Write a backstory about his childhood and understanding of magic or a diary entry/monologue on the day that he takes baby Arthur to live with Sir Ector.

**Morgan Le Fey** - Write a backstory about her childhood and understanding of magic or a diary entry/monologue about when she finds out that Arthur will be King.

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### EXERCISE FIVE - Design your own Coat of Arms



Think about what you want your coat of arms to represent. A coat of arms showed the identity and character of the wearer. For example, the colour blue represented truth and loyalty and a lion showed you had courage. Think about what you want you want to represent. On the next page are the meanings of popular signs, symbols and colours.

## COAT OF ARMS - MEANINGS

OBJECT/COLOUR/SIGN/SYMBOL	Meaning
Gold	Generosity and elevation of the mind
Silver/White	Peace and sincerity
Red	Warrior and military strength
Blue	Truth and loyalty
Green	Hope, joy and loyalty in love
Black	Constancy or grief
Purple	Royal majesty and justice
Orange	Worthy ambition
Apples/Berries/Grapes	Peace
Bay leaves	Poetry
Oak Tree	Great strength and age
Red rose	Grace and beauty
White rose	Love and faith
Bear	Strength and cunning
Boar	Bravery
Dolphin	Swiftness and charity
Dove	Love constancy and peace, the Holy Spirit
Eagle	Noble nature, strength, bravery and just
Elephant	Great strength, wit, happiness, royalty
Fish	A true, generous mind, virtuous
Hawk	Someone who doesn't stop until they've achieved their goal
Lamb	Gentleness and patience
Lion/Tiger	Courage and valour
Dragon	Defendant of treasure
Mermaid	Eloquence
Phoenix	Symbol of resurrection
Unicorn	Extreme courage and virtue
Angel	Dignity and glory
Anchor	Hope
Feathers	Obedience and serenity
Shell	Traveller and adventurer
Sword/Dagger/Dart	Justice and military honour

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## DRAMA GAMES

### Game 1 - Character Chairs

This game is also known as 'Fruit Salad'. All the group sits in a circle on chairs, one person without a chair stands in the middle of the circle. Everyone is given a character's name (equal numbers approximately of each character) e.g Merlin/Arthur/Guinevere. The student in the centre of the circle shouts a character's name and all of the students with that name swap places. Another student will be left without a chair and they call out another name etc. The aim of the game is to find another seat, without going back to the seat you have just left. There is also an option to call the phrase "round table" where all of the students swap places.

### Game 2 - Moving images

In small groups, create the image of a dragon. Everyone must have a part in the dragon and the dragon must be able to move around the room with everyone involved and forming part of the creature.

### Game 3 - Prisoner

An odd number of participants is needed. Put chairs in a circle. Ask participants to get into pairs, one person sitting on a chair and their partner standing behind them. One person will be left standing behind an empty chair. Discard all other chairs not being used. Those sitting down are the 'prisoners', those standing behind them are the 'guards'. Any guard with an empty prison, i.e. no prisoner sitting in front of them, must try to fill it by calling the name of one of the prisoners seated. That prisoner then tries to escape to the new prison by making a mad dash for the empty chair in front of the guard who has just called his or her name. The guard standing behind the prisoner trying to escape must try and stop this by tapping the prisoner lightly on the shoulder or back. If the guard manages to tap his or her prisoner before he/she escapes, then the prisoner remains, if, however, the guard misses, then the prisoner is free to go to the new prison. There will now be a new guard with an empty prison and he or she must call out the name of a prisoner sitting down - it can be the same one but, preferably, someone new - to try and fill the empty prison in front of them. Guards must stand at all times a little way behind their prisons, with their hands behind their backs. Prisoners must sit firmly on their chairs and not perch on the edge! The game should continue until it builds up a bit of speed and everyone has had a 'turn' and then swap the children over, to give new guards and prisoners a go.