“On a great festival such as this [King Arthur] would eat no meat till he had heard some strange tale of adventure, of the deeds of princes, or feats of arms, some great wonder which he might listen to and believe.”

—Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Connecting to the Story
In Anglo-Saxon England, knights such as Sir Gawain were expected to uphold the highest standards of honor. As you read the selection, think about how you define honor.

Building Background
The author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is unknown to us, but scholars have pieced together clues to the poet’s identity. Because of the dialect in which *Sir Gawain* is written, scholars have concluded that it was composed in northwest England about 1370. The poet’s sophisticated technique and his knowledge of French and Latin point to an educated man who was familiar with the ways of the aristocracy.

Some writers have characterized Sir Gawain as a ruthless, bloodthirsty warrior; others have emphasized his nobility and courage. The tale of the Green Knight represents the latter category, because in it Sir Gawain is shown to possess the ideal traits of a knight at the Round Table: strength, skill, courage, humility, courtesy, and loyalty.

Setting Purposes for Reading

**Big Idea**  
The World of Romance  
*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is set in an imaginary medieval world of enchanted castles and perilous quests. Read to learn about the challenges Sir Gawain faces in a test of honor.

**Literary Element**  
Archetype
An archetype is a character type, a setting, an image, or a story pattern that appears frequently in literature across many cultures. Read to see how many archetypes you can identify.


When you read, stop periodically to check your comprehension, or understanding, of the story. To get the most from your reading, you should be able to recall and summarize key ideas, characters, and events.

**Reading Tip: Taking Notes**  
As you read, jot down notes on important characters and events. Use a chart similar to the one below to get started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character or Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sir Gawain accepts a challenge from the Green Knight</td>
<td>Gawain is risking his life and his honor for the king.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vocabulary**

- **copiously** (kö’se əs lē) adv. plentifully; p. 175
  The seashells were scattered copiously around the beach after they had been washed in at high tide.

- **intrepid** (in trep’id) adj. fearless; courageous; p. 177
  The intrepid woman dashed back into the burning house to save the family dog.

- **dauntless** (dönt’lís) adj. daring; not easily discouraged; p. 186
  Dauntless despite the loss of his supplies, the explorer pressed forward.

- **blithe** (blīth) adj. carefree; lighthearted; p. 187
  I wish we could be children again, when we were naively blithe.

**Vocabulary Tip: Synonyms**  
Words that have the same or nearly the same meaning are called synonyms. Synonyms are always the same part of speech.

**OBJECTIVES**
In studying this selection, you will focus on the following:

- analyzing archetypes and conflict
- reviewing and summarizing to monitor comprehension
Splendid that knight errant stood in a splay of green,
And green, too, was the mane of his mighty destrier;
Fair fanning tresses enveloped the fighting man’s shoulders,
And over his breast hung a beard as big as a bush;
The beard and the huge mane burgeoning forth from his head
Were clipped off clean in a straight line over his elbows,
And the upper half of each arm was hidden underneath
As if covered by a king’s chaperon, closed round the neck.
The mane of the marvelous horse was much the same,
Well crisped and combed and carefully pranked with knots,
Threads of gold interwoven with the glorious green,
Now a thread of hair, now another thread of gold;
The tail of the horse and the forelock were tricked the same way,
And both were bound up with a band of brilliant green
Adorned with glittering jewels the length of the dock,
Then caught up tight with a thong in a criss-cross knot
Where many a bell tinkled brightly, all burnished gold.
So monstrous a mount, so mighty a man in the saddle
Was never once encountered on all this earth
till then;
His eyes, like lightning, flashed,
And it seemed to many a man,
That any man who clashed
With him would not long stand.
Yes, garbed all in green was the gallant rider,
   And the hair of his head was the same hue as his horse,
   And floated finely like a fan round his shoulders;
   And a great bushy beard on his breast flowing down,
   With the heavy hair hanging from his head,
   Was shorn below the shoulder, sheared right round,
   So that half his arms were under the encircling hair,
Covered as by a king’s cape, that closes at the neck.
The mane of that mighty horse, much like the beard,
10 Well crisped and combed, was copiously plaited
With twists of twining gold, twinkling in the green,
First a green gossamer, a golden one next.
His flowing tail and forelock followed suit,
And both were bound with bands of bright green,
15 Ornamented to the end with exquisite stones,
While a thong running through them threaded on high
Many bright golden bells, burnished and ringing.
Such a horse, such a horseman, in the whole wide world
Was never seen or observed by those assembled before,
20 Not one.
Lightning like he seemed
And swift to strike and stun.
His dreadful blows, men deemed,
Once dealt, meant death was done.

Yet hauberk° and helmet had he none,
Nor plastron° nor plate-armor proper to combat,
Nor shield for shoving, nor sharp spear for lunging;
But he held a holly cluster° in one hand, holly
That is greenest when groves are gaunt and bare,
30 And an axe in his other hand, huge and monstrous,
A hideous helmet-smasher for anyone to tell of;
The head of that axe was an ell-rod° long.
Of green hammered gold and steel was the socket,
And the blade was burnished bright, with a broad edge,
35 Acutely honed° for cutting, as keenest razors are.
The grim man gripped it by its great strong handle,
Which was wound with iron all the way to the end,
And graven° in green with graceful designs.
A cord curved round it, was caught at the head,

Then hitched to the haft° at intervals in loops,
With costly tassels attached thereto in plenty
On bosses° of bright green embroidered richly.
In he rode, and up the hall, this man,
Driving towards the high dais,° dreading no danger.
40 He gave no one a greeting, but glared over all.
His opening utterance was, “Who and where
Is the governor of this gathering? Gladly would I
Behold him with my eyes and have speech with him.”

Big Idea  The World of Romance  How can you tell from the description in lines 1–20 that the “gallant rider” is a knight?

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>copiously</td>
<td>adv. plentifully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 hauberk (hō’ bark’): a long shirt of chain mail worn as armor.
26 plastron: a metal breastplate worn under a hauberk.
28 holly cluster: Holly represents good luck and shows that the knight comes in peace.
32 ell-rod: almost four feet.
35 honed: sharpened.
38 graven: carved.
40 haft: handle.
42 bosses: raised decorations.
44 dais (dā’ as): raised platform.
He frowned;
50 Took note of every knight
   As he ramped and rode around;
   Then stopped to study who might
   Be the noble most renowned.

The assembled folk stared, long scanning the fellow,
55 For all men marveled what it might mean
   That a horseman and his horse should have such a color
   As to grow green as grass, and greener yet, it seemed,
   More gaudily glowing than green enamel on gold.
   Those standing studied him and sidled towards him
60 With all the world’s wonder as to what he would do.
   For astonishing sights they had seen, but such a one never;
   Therefore a phantom from Fairyland the folk there deemed him.
   So even the doughty  were daunted  and dared not reply,
   All sitting stock-still, astounded by his voice.
65 Throughout the high hall was a hush like death;
   Suddenly as if all had slipped into sleep, their voices were
   At rest;
       Hushed not wholly for fear,
       But some at honor’s behest;
69   But let him whom all revere
70 Greet that gruesome guest.

For Arthur sensed an exploit before the high dais,
   And accorded him courteous greeting, no craven  he,
   Saying to him, “Sir knight, you are certainly welcome.
I am head of this house;  Arthur is my name.
   Please deign to dismount and dwell with us
   Till you impart your purpose, at a proper time.”
   “May he that sits in heaven help me,” said the knight,
   “But my intention was not to tarry in this turreted hall.
   But as your reputation, royal sir, is raised up so high,
   And your castle and cavaliers  are accounted the best,
   The mightiest of mail-clad men in mounted fighting,
   The most warlike, the worthiest the world has bred,
   Most valiant to vie with in virile contests,
   And as chivalry is shown here, so I am assured,
   At this time, I tell you, that has attracted me here.  
   By this branch that I bear, you may be certain
   That I proceed in peace, no peril seeking;
   For had I fared forth in fighting gear,
   My hauberk and helmet, both at home now,
   My shield and sharp spear, all shining bright,
   And other weapons to wield, I would have brought;

King Arthur and the knights of the
Round Table.

63 doughty (dou’ti); courageous, valiant. daunted: fearful.
69 behest: command.
73 craven: coward.
75 this house: Arthur’s court at Camelot.
81 cavaliers: knights.
However, as I wish for no war here, I wear soft clothes.
But if you are as bold as brave men affirm,
95 You will gladly grant me the good sport I demand
By right.”

Then Arthur answer gave:
“If you, most noble knight,
Unarmored combat crave,
100 We’ll fail you not in fight.”

“No, it is not combat I crave, for come to that,
On this bench only beardless boys are sitting.
If I were hasped° in armor on a high steed,
No man among you could match me, your might being meagre.
105 So I crave in this court a Christmas game,
For it is Yuletide and New Year, and young men abound here.
If any in this household is so hardy in spirit,
Of such mettlesome° mind and so madly rash
As to strike a strong blow in return for another,
110 I shall offer to him this fine axe freely;
This axe, which is heavy enough, to handle as he please.
And I shall bide the first blow, as bare as I sit here.
If some intrepid man is tempted to try what I suggest,
Let him leap towards me and lay hold of this weapon,
Acquiring clear possession of it, no claim from me ensuing.
Then shall I stand up to his stroke, quite still on this floor—
So long as I shall have leave to launch a return blow
Unchecked.
Yet he shall have a year
And a day’s reprieve," I direct.
Now hasten and let me hear
Who answers, to what effect.”

“By heaven,” then said Arthur, “what you ask is foolish,
But as you firmly seek folly, find it you shall.
125 No good man here is aghast at your great words.
Hand me your axe now, for heaven’s sake,
And I shall bestow the boon° you bid us give.”

He sprang towards him swiftly, seized it from his hand,

Vocabulary

intrepid (in trep’ id) adj. fearless; courageous
And fiercely the other fellow footed the floor.

130 Now Arthur had his axe, and holding it by the haft
Swung it about sternly, as if to strike with it.
The strong man stood before him, stretched to his full height,
Higher than any in the hall by a head and more.
Stern of face he stood there, stroking his beard,

135 Turning down his tunic in a tranquil manner,
Less unmanned° and dismayed by the mighty strokes
Than if a banqueter at the bench had brought him a drink
Of wine.
Then Gawain at Guinevere’s side
140 Bowd and spoke his design:
“Before all, King, confide
This fight to me. May it be mine.”

“If you would, worthy lord,” said Gawain to the King,
“Bid me stir from this seat and stand beside you,
Allowing me without lese-majesty° to leave the table,
And if my liege lady° were not displeased thereby,
I should come there to counsel you before this court of nobles.
For it appears unmeet° to me, as manners go,
When your hall hears uttered such a haughty request,

150 Though you gladly agree, for you to grant it yourself,
When on the benches about you many such bold men sit,
Under heaven, I hold, the highest-mettled,
There being no braver knights when battle is joined.
I am the weakest, the most wanting in wisdom, I know,
And my life, if lost, would be least missed, truly
Only through your being my uncle, am I to be valued;
No bounty but your blood in my body do I know.
And since this affair is too foolish to fall to you,
And I first asked it of you, make it over to me;

155 And if I fail to speak fittingly, let this full court judge
Without blame.”
Then wisely they whispered of it,
And after, all said the same:
That the crowned King should be quit,
And Gawain given the game.

“By God,” said the Green Knight, “Sir Gawain, I rejoice
That I shall have from your hand what I have asked for here.
And you have gladly gone over, in good discourse,°
The covenant° I requested of the King in full,

160 Except that you shall assent, swearing in truth,

degree

136 unmanned: deprived of courage, strength, or vigor.
145 lese-majesty (lez’ ma’ ja stē): offense; literally, injured majesty.
146 liege lady: Guinevere, Arthur’s queen.
148 unmeet: improper.

168 discourse: speech.
169 covenant: binding agreement.
To seek me yourself, in such place as you think
To find me under the firmament, and fetch your payment
For what you deal me today before this dignified gathering.”
“How shall I hunt for you? How find your home?”

175 Said Gawain, “By God that made me, I go in ignorance;
Nor, knight, do I know your name or your court.
But instruct me truly thereof, and tell me your name,
And I shall wear out my wits to find my way there;
Here is my oath on it, in absolute honor!”

180 “That is enough this New Year, no more is needed,”
Said the gallant in green to Gawain the courteous,
“To tell you the truth, when I have taken the blow
After you have duly dealt it, I shall directly inform you
About my house and my home and my own name.

185 Then you may keep your covenant, and call on me,
And if I waft you no words, then well may you prosper,
Stay long in your own land and look for no further
Trial.
   Now grip your weapon grim;
   Let us see your fighting style.”
   “Gladly,” said Gawain to him,
   Stroking the steel the while.

On the ground the Green Knight graciously stood,
With head slightly slanting to expose the flesh.

195 His long and lovely locks he laid over his crown,
Baring the naked neck for the business now due.
Gawain gripped his axe and gathered it on high,
Advanced the left foot before him on the ground,
And slashed swiftly down on the exposed part,

200 So that the sharp blade sheared through, shattering the bones,
Sank deep in the sleek flesh, split it in two,
And the scintillating steel struck the ground.
The fair head fell from the neck, struck the floor,
And people spurned it as it rolled around.

205 Blood spurted from the body, bright against the green.
Yet the fellow did not fall, nor falter one whit,
But stoutly sprang forward on legs still sturdy,
Roughly reached out among the ranks of nobles,
Seized his splendid head and straightway lifted it.

210 Then he strode to his steed, snatched the bridle,
Stepped into the stirrup and swung aloft,

**Viewing the Art:** How does the artist’s depiction of the Green Knight compare with your impressions of him?
Holding his head in his hand by the hair.
He settled himself in the saddle as steadily
As if nothing had happened to him, though he had
No head.
He twisted his trunk about,
That gruesome body that bled;
He caused much dread and doubt
By the time his say was said.

For he held the head in his hand upright,
Pointed the face at the fairest in fame° on the dais;
And it lifted its eyelids and looked glaringly,
And menacingly said with its mouth as you may now hear:
“Be prepared to perform what you promised, Gawain;
Seek faithfully till you find me, my fine fellow,
According to your oath in this hall in these knights' hearing.
Go to the Green Chapel without gainsaying to get
Such a stroke as you have struck. Strictly you deserve
That due redemption on the day of New Year.
As the Knight of the Green Chapel I am known to many;
Therefore if you ask for me, I shall be found.
So come, or else be called coward accordingly!”
Then he savagely swerved, sawing at the reins,
Rushed out at the hall door, his head in his hand,
And the flint-struck fire flew up from the hooves.
What place he departed to no person there knew,
Nor could any account be given of the country he had come from.

What then?
At the Green Knight Gawain and King
Grinned and laughed again;
But plainly approved the thing
As a marvel in the world of men.

As the end of the next year approaches, Sir Gawain sets out on his horse Gringolet to seek the Green Knight. After fruitless searching and many adventures, he arrives at a castle whose lord, Bercilak, can direct him to the Green Chapel nearby. Gawain is invited to stay until his appointment. The lord proposes a game: he will give Gawain the winnings of his hunt each day in return for whatever Gawain has won while staying in his castle. For two days, while the lord is hunting, the lady of the castle attempts to seduce Gawain, but Gawain nobly rejects her advances. He accepts only a kiss each day which he exchanges with the lord in return for his hunting spoils. On the third day, Gawain continues to resist the lady, but she presses him to accept one small gift by which to remember her.
She proffered him a rich ring wrought in red gold,
With a sparkling stone set conspicuously in it,
Which beamed as brilliantly as the bright sun;
You may well believe its worth was wonderfully great.
But the courteous man declined it and quickly said,
“Before God, gracious lady, no giving just now!
Not having anything to offer, I shall accept nothing.”

She offered it him urgently and he refused again,
Fast affirming his refusal on his faith as a knight.
Put out by this repulse, she presently said,
“If you reject my ring as too rich in value,
Doubtless you would be less deeply indebted to me
If I gave you my girdle, a less gainful gift.”
She swiftly slipped off the cincture of her gown
Which went round her waist under the wonderful mantle,
A girdle of green silk with a golden hem,
Embroidered only at the edges, with hand-stitched ornament.

And she pleaded with the prince in a pleasant manner
To take it notwithstanding its trifling worth;
But he told her that he could touch no treasure at all,
Not gold nor any gift, till God gave him grace
To pursue to success the search he was bound on.

“And therefore I beg you not to be displeased:
Press no more your purpose, for I promise it never
Can be.
I owe you a hundredfold
For grace you have granted me;
And ever through hot and cold
I shall stay your devotee.”
“Do you say ‘no’ to this silk?” then said the beauty,
“Because it is simple in itself? And so it seems.
Lo! It is little indeed, and so less worth your esteem.

But one who was aware of the worth twined in it
Would appraise its properties as more precious perhaps,
For the man that binds his body with this belt of green,
As long as he laps it closely about him,
No hero under heaven can hack him to pieces,
For he cannot be killed by any cunning on earth.”

Then the prince pondered, and it appeared to him
A precious gem to protect him in the peril appointed him
When he gained the Green Chapel to be given checkmate:
It would be a splendid stratagem to escape being slain.

Then he allowed her to solicit him and let her speak.
She pressed the belt upon him with potent words
And having got his agreement, she gave it him gladly,
Beseeming him for her sake to conceal it always,
And hide it from her husband with all diligence.

That never should another know of it, the noble swore
Outright.

Then often his thanks gave he
With all his heart and might,
And thrice by then had she
Kissed the constant knight.

The time comes for Gawain to keep his appointment with the Green Knight. He dresses carefully, wrapping the green sash around his waist, and sets off with a guide, who leaves him as they near the Green Chapel.

Then he gave the spur to Gringolet and galloped down the path,
Thrust through a thicket there by a bank,
And rode down the rough slope right into the ravine.
Then he searched about, but it seemed savage and wild,
And no sign did he see of any sort of building;
But on both sides banks, beetling and steep,
And great crooked crags, cruelly jagged;
The bristling barbs of rock seemed to brush the sky.
Then he held in his horse, halted there,
Scanned on every side in search of the chapel.
He saw no such thing anywhere, which seemed remarkable,
Save, hard by in the open, a hillock of sorts,
A smooth-surfaced barrow on a slope beside a stream
Which flowed forth fast there in its course,
Foaming and frothing as if feverishly boiling.
The knight, urging his horse, pressed onwards to the mound,
Dismounted manfully and made fast to a lime-tree

Literary Element  Archetype Why might the lady be considered a literary archetype?

Archetype

checkmate: total defeat, which is inescapable and indefensible.
stratagem: a clever, underhanded scheme.
solicit: persuade.
beetling: overhanging.
barrow: a mound of earth, often over a grave.
The reins, hooking them round a rough branch;  
Then he went to the barrow, which he walked round, inspecting,  
Wondering what in the world it might be.  
It had a hole in each end and on either side,  
And was overgrown with grass in great patches.  
All hollow it was within, only an old cavern  
Or the crevice of an ancient crag: he could not explain it  

“O God, is the Chapel Green  
This mound?” said the noble knight.  
“At such might Satan be seen  
Saying matins at midnight.”

“Now certainly the place is deserted,” said Gawain,  
“It is a hideous oratory, all overgrown,  
And well graced for the gallant garbed in green  
To deal out his devotions in the Devil’s fashion.  
Now I feel in my five wits, it is the Fiend himself  
That has tricked me into this tryst, to destroy me here.  
This is a chapel of mischance—checkmate to it!
It is the most evil holy place I ever entered."
With his high helmet on his head, and holding his lance,
He roamed up to the roof of that rough dwelling.

Then from that height he heard, from a hard rock
On the bank beyond the brook, a barbarous noise.
What! It clattered amid the cliffs fit to cleave° them apart,
As if a great scythe° were being ground on a grindstone there.
What! It whirled and it whetted like water in a mill.

By God!" then said Gawain, "that is going on,
I suppose, as a salute to myself, to greet me
Hard by.
God’s will be warranted:
‘Alas!’ is a craven cry.
No din shall make me dread
Although today I die."

Then the courteous knight called out clamorously,
“Who holds sway here and has an assignation° with me?
For the good knight Gawain is on the ground here.
If anyone there wants anything, wend your way hither fast,
And further your needs either now, or not at all.”
“Bide there!” said one on the bank above his head,
“And you shall swiftly receive what I once swore to give you.”
Yet for a time he continued his tumult° of scraping,
Turning away as he whetted° before he would descend.
Then he thrust himself round a thick crag through a hole,
Whirling round a wedge of rock with a frightful weapon,
A Danish axe duly honed for dealing the blow,
With a broad biting edge, bow-bent along the handle,
Ground on a grindstone, a great four-foot blade—
No less, by that love-lace gleaming so brightly!
And the gallant in green was garbed as at first,
His looks and limbs the same, his locks and beard;
Save that steadily on his feet he strode on the ground,
Setting the handle to the stony earth and stalking beside it.
He would not wade through the water when he came to it,
But vaulted over on his axe, then with huge strides
Advanced violently and fiercely along the field’s width
On the snow.
Sir Gawain went to greet
The knight, not bowing low.
The man said, “Sir so sweet,
You honor the trysts you owe.”

“Gawain,” said the green knight, “may God guard you!

Reading Strategy
Monitoring Comprehension
What is happening here, and what is its effect on the story?

337 cleave: split.
338 scythe (s¯ /iundottedth): a tool used for mowing or reaping, consisting of a long curved blade and a long bent handle.
340 rueful: mournful.
349 assignation: an appointment for a meeting.
355 tumult (t¯o¯o¯məlt): a noisy commotion; disturbance.
356 whetted: sharpened.
You are welcome to my dwelling, I warrant you,
And you have timed your travel here as a true man ought.
You know plainly the pact we pledged between us:
This time a twelvemonth ago you took your portion,
And now at this New Year I should nimbly requite you.
And we are on our own here in this valley
With no seconds to sunder us, spar as we will.
Take your helmet off your head, and have your payment here.
And offer no more argument or action than I did
When you whirled off my head with one stroke.”
“No,” said Gawain, “by God who gave me a soul,
The grievous gash to come I grudge you not at all;
Strike but the one stroke and I shall stand still
And offer you no hindrance; you may act freely,
I swear.”
Head bent, Sir Gawain bowed,
And showed the bright flesh bare.
He behaved as if uncowed,
Being loth to display his care.

Then the gallant in green quickly got ready,
Heaved his horrid weapon on high to hit Gawain,
With all the brute force in his body bearing it aloft,
Swinging savagely enough to strike him dead.
Had it driven down as direly as he aimed,
The daring dauntless man would have died from the blow.
But Gawain glanced up at the grim axe beside him
As it came shooting through the shivering air to shatter him,
And his shoulders shrank slightly from the sharp edge.
The other suddenly stayed the descending axe,
And then reproved the prince with many proud words:
“You are not Gawain,” said the gallant, “whose greatness is such
That by hill or hollow no army ever frightened him;
For now you flinch for fear before you feel harm.
I never did know that knight to be a coward.
I neither flinched nor fled when you let fly your blow,
Nor offered any quibble in the house of King Arthur.
My head flew to my feet, but flee I did not.
Yet you quail cravenly though unscathed so far.
So I am bound to be called the better man
Therefore.”
Said Gawain, “Not again
Shall I flinch as I did before;
But if my head pitch to the plain,
It’s off for evermore.

“But be brisk, man, by your faith, and bring me to the point;
Deal me my destiny and do it out of hand,
For I shall stand your stroke, not starting at all
Till your axe has hit me. Here is my oath on it.”
“Have at you then!” said the other, heaving up his axe,
Behaving as angrily as if he were mad.
He menaced him mightily, but made no contact,
Smartly withholding his hand without hurting him.
Gawain waited unswerving, with not a wavering limb,
But stood still as a stone or the stump of a tree
Gripping the rocky ground with a hundred grappling roots.
Then again the green knight began to gird:
“So now you have a whole heart I must hit you.
May the high knighthood which Arthur conferred
Preserve you and save your neck, if so it avail you!”
Then said Gawain, storming with sudden rage,
“Thrash on, you thrustful fellow, you threaten too much.
It seems your spirit is struck with self-dread.”
“Forsooth,” the other said, “You speak so fiercely
I will no longer lengthen matters by delaying your business,
I vow.”
He stood astride to smite,
Lips pouting, puckered brow.
No wonder he lacked delight
Who expected no help now.

Up went the axe at once and hurtled down straight
At the naked neck with its knife-like edge.
Though it swung down savagely, slight was the wound,
A mere snick on the side, so that the skin was broken.
Through the fair fat to the flesh fell the blade,
And over his shoulders the shimmering blood shot to the ground.
When Sir Gawain saw his gore glinting on the snow,
He leapt feet close together a spear’s length away,
Hurriedly heaved his helmet on to his head,
And shrugging his shoulders, shot his shield to the front,
Swung out his bright sword and said fiercely,
(For never had the knight since being nursed by his mother
Been so buoyantly happy, so blithe in this world)
“Cease your blows, sir, strike me no more.
I have sustained a stroke here unresistingly,
And if you offer any more I shall earnestly reply.
Resisting, rest assured, with the most rancorous
Despite.°
The single stroke is wrought
To which we pledged our plight°
In high King Arthur’s court:
Enough now, therefore, knight!”

The bold man stood back and bent over his axe,
Putting the haft to earth, and leaning on the head.
He gazed at Sir Gawain on the ground before him,
Considering the spirited and stout way he stood,
Audacious° in arms; his heart warmed to him.
Then he gave utterance gladly in his great voice,
With resounding speech saying to the knight,
“Bold man, do not be so bloodily resolute.
No one here has offered you evil discourteously,
Contrary to the covenant made at the King’s court.
I promised a stroke, which you received: consider yourself paid.
I cancel all other obligations of whatever kind.
If I had been more active, perhaps I could
Have made you suffer by striking a savager stroke.
First in foolery I made a feint° at striking,
Not rending° you with a riving cut—and right I was,
On account of the first night’s covenant we accorded;
For you truthfully kept your trust in troth with me,
Giving me your gains, as a good man should.
The further feinted blow was for the following day,
When you kissed my comely wife, and the kisses came to me:
For those two things, harmlessly I thrust twice at you
Feinted blows.

Truth for truth’s the word;
No need for dread, God knows.
From your failure at the third
The tap you took arose.

“For that braided belt you wear belongs to me.
I am well aware that my own wife gave it you.
Your conduct and your kissings are completely known to me,
And the wooing by my wife—my work set it on.
I instructed her to try you, and you truly seem
To be the most perfect paladin° ever to pace the earth.

As the pearl to the white pea in precious worth,
So in good faith is Gawain to other gay knights.

---

Imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire.

---

461–462 rancorous Despite: bitter ill will or malice.
464 plight: promise.
471 Audacious: daring; bold.
474 resolute: determined.
481 feint (fánt): here, a deceptive action designed to draw attention away from one’s real purpose.
482 rending: tearing apart.
499 paladin: a model of chivalry.
But here your faith failed you, you flagged\(^a\) somewhat, sir,
Yet it was not for a well-wrought thing, nor for wooing either,
But for love of your life, which is less blameworthy.”

The other strong man stood considering this a while,
So filled with fury that his flesh trembled,
And the blood from his breast burst forth in his face
As he shrank for shame at what the chevalier\(^b\) spoke of.
The first words the fair knight could frame were:

“Curses on both cowardice and covetousness!
Their vice and villainy are virtue’s undoing,”
Then he took the knot, with a twist twitched it loose,
And fiercely flung the fair girdle to the knight.
“Lo! There is the false thing, foul fortune befall it!
I was craven about our encounter, and cowardice taught me
To accord with covetousness and corrupt my nature
And the liberal and loyalty belonging to chivalry.
Now I am faulty and false and found fearful always.
In the train of treachery and untruth go woe
And shame.
    I acknowledge, knight, how ill
    I behaved, and take the blame.
    Award what penance you will:
    Henceforth I’ll shun ill-fame.”

Then the other lord laughed and politely said,
“In my view you have made amends for your misdemeanor;
You have confessed your faults fully with fair acknowledgment,
And plainly done penance at the point of my axe.
You are absolved\(^c\) of your sin and as stainless now
As if you had never fallen in fault since first you were born.
As for the gold-hemmed girdle, I give it you, sir,
Seeing it is as green as my gown. Sir Gawain, you may
Think about this trial when you throng in company
With paragons\(^c\) of princes, for it is a perfect token,
At knightly gatherings, of the great adventure at the Green Chapel.
You shall come back to my castle this cold New Year,
And we shall revel\(^d\) away the rest of this rich feast;
    Let us go.”
    Thus urging him, the lord
Said, “You and my wife, I know
We shall bring to clear accord,
Though she was your fierce foe.”

---

\(^a\) flagged: grew weak.

\(^b\) chevalier: knight.

\(^c\) absolved: forgiven.

\(^c\) paragons: models of perfection.

\(^d\) revel: make merry.
RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY

Respond
1. Were you surprised by the Green Knight’s actions at the end of the story? Why or why not?

Recall and Interpret
2. (a) In your own words, state the challenge that the Green Knight offers the members of the Round Table. (b) Do you think the Green Knight is meant to be viewed as evil? Use evidence from the text to support your opinion.

3. (a) Why does Sir Gawain consider himself the knight best qualified to accept the Green Knight’s challenge? (b) Why do you think King Arthur allows Sir Gawain to take up the challenge?

4. (a) Why does Sir Gawain refuse the lady’s gift of a gold ring but accept her green silk girdle? (b) In the final line of the selection, the Green Knight claims that his wife was Sir Gawain’s “fierce foe.” In what ways might the lady be considered Sir Gawain’s foe?

Analyze and Evaluate
5. (a) During the incident at the Green Chapel, what reasons does the Green Knight give for the three blows of the axe? (b) What was Sir Gawain’s real test? Did he pass? Explain.

6. (a) Compare the two translations of the opening section of the poem on pages 173–175. How are they both similar and different? (b) Which of these translations do you prefer? Why?

7. (a) How realistic is the character of Sir Gawain? (b) Explain why the author may have developed his character the way he did.

Connect
8. Big Idea The World of Romance Do you think Sir Gawain is a hero, both by today’s standards and by the expectations of knightly behavior in Sir Gawain’s time? Why or why not?

A Knight’s Armor
In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, many of the characters wear elaborate armor to protect themselves in battle. Early knights wore simple hauberks (ho’ bark”), knee-length suits of chain mail. Mail was a netting made of interlocking metal rings; a single suit might contain 200,000 rings. Mail armor was both flexible and strong, but it was also heavy, weighing about thirty pounds, and it offered little protection from some weapons, such as the longbow. During the 1300s and 1400s, armor improved. New types of furnaces allowed metalsmiths to create lightweight yet strong steel plates.

Group Activity What were the advantages and disadvantages of armor as it changed over time? Discuss this question with your classmates. Refer to the image and captions on the right and cite evidence from the selection to support your answers.
Literary Element: Archetype

An archetype represents a pattern that has recurred in literature throughout time. Because the audience is already familiar with what archetypes represent, they often evoke a strong response from the reader.

1. What archetypes are present in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*?
2. In what ways are archetypes used to further the plot of the poem?

Review: Conflict

As you learned on page 23, conflict is the central struggle between two opposing forces in a story or drama. An external conflict exists when a character struggles against some outside force. Many stories, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, feature conflict between the protagonist, or central character, and the antagonist, a person or force that opposes the protagonist. An antagonist may try to prevent the protagonist from doing something or may simply have beliefs that contradict those of the protagonist.

Partner Activity Meet with another classmate to discuss the conflicts in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. With your partner, create a web diagram like the one below. Fill in the diagram, listing each antagonist and conflict Sir Gawain must face throughout the story.

Reading Strategy: Monitoring Comprehension

When reading challenging material, you will need to reread the text to gain a better understanding of it. You should be able to summarize important ideas after your first reading so that you can pay closer attention to supporting details in your second reading.

1. Summarize the conflicts in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and how each is ultimately resolved.
2. Imagine that you saw the Green Knight in King Arthur’s court. How would you describe his initial appearance? Include as many details from the text as possible.

Vocabulary Practice

Practice with Synonyms Match each vocabulary word below with its synonym. Use a dictionary if you need help.

1. intrepid  a. carefree
2. copious  b. unflinching
3. dauntless  c. bold
4. blithe  d. profuse

Academic Vocabulary

Here are two words from the vocabulary list on page R82.

*achieve* (ə chēv′) v. to accomplish; to complete a goal

*version* (vur′ zhan) n. an account that varies from the original

Practice and Apply

1. What does the Green Knight’s test *achieve*?
2. Which *version* of the *Sir Gawain* translation do you consider more effective and why?
Writing About Literature

Analyze Sound Devices  Alliteration is a literary sound device in which a writer repeats an initial consonant sound in order to create a desired effect. Alliteration is often used to emphasize certain words or to create a musical quality. The author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* makes extensive use of alliteration throughout the text, as evidenced in the first lines of the poem:

“Yes, garbed all in green was the gallant rider,
And the hair of his head was the same hue as his horse,
And floated finely like a fan round his shoulders . . .”

In a brief essay, analyze the overall effect achieved by the author’s use of alliteration. Consider why the author might want to emphasize certain words. Before you begin writing, select additional passages from *Sir Gawain* that make use of alliteration. Read the passages aloud, making an effort to emphasize the repeated consonant sounds. Note how the effect of the poem is heightened when it is read orally in this manner. Use a chart like the one below to compile your notes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Alliteration</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lines 217–218</td>
<td>body, bled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dread, doubt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After completing your draft, meet with a peer reviewer to evaluate each other’s work and to suggest revisions. Then proofread your draft for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Internet Connection

Use the Internet to learn more about King Arthur, the knights of the Round Table, and the world of Camelot. Trace the origins of the Arthurian legend and determine for yourself just how “real” a figure Arthur was. You may also wish to find tales that do not depict Sir Gawain as the humble and noble soul of the Green Knight tale.

Language and Style of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Using Action Verbs  In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, both transitive and intransitive action verbs contribute to translator Brian Stone’s style. A transitive verb is a verb that has a receiver of the action, a word or words that answer the question what? or whom? of the action verb. In the active voice, that word or words are called an object. An intransitive verb is a verb that has no receiver of the action, or object.

“Those standing studied him and sidled towards him / With all the world’s wonder as to what he would do.”

In this sentence, the action verb studied is transitive, because it is followed by the object him, which answers the question whom? The action verb sidled is intransitive; that is, what follows it does not answer the question whom? or what?

Notice some of Stone’s most effective verb choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitive Verb/Object</th>
<th>Intransitive Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>twisted/[the] trunk</td>
<td>dwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caused/dread and doubt</td>
<td>spurted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity  Scan pages 174–189 to locate examples of action verbs that create suspense and move the story forward. In a chart of your own, list transitive verbs and their objects in one column and intransitive verbs in a second column.

Revising Check

Action Verbs  Action verbs can increase the effectiveness of your writing. With a partner, review your essay on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Revise your writing by varying your choice of transitive and intransitive action verbs.

Web Activities  For eFlashcards, Selection Quick Checks, and other Web activities, go to www.glencoe.com.
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Informational Text

Building Background
Barbara Tuchman was one of the foremost historians of the twentieth century. She was twice awarded the Pulitzer Prize, first for The Guns of August, a compelling history of the first month of fighting during World War I, and then again for Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–1945, which describes Chinese-American relations before and during World War II. In this excerpt from A Distant Mirror, a brilliant survey of the plague-and-war-ridden fourteenth century, Tuchman discusses the development and effects of chivalry on medieval European society.

Set a Purpose for Reading
Read to learn how the historical realities of chivalry and knighthood differ from the descriptions of them in medieval romances.

Reading Strategy
Analyzing Historical Context
Analyzing historical context involves gathering background information and exploring the social forces that influenced the writing of a literary work. As you read, take notes on the historical context for Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Use a two-column chart like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Work</th>
<th>Historical Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World of Gawain</td>
<td>World of the fourteenth century</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chivalry was a moral system, governing the whole of noble life. It developed at the same time as the great crusades of the 12th century as a code intended to fuse the religious and martial spirits and somehow bring the fighting man into accord with Christian theory. A moral gloss was needed that would allow the Church to tolerate the warriors in good conscience and the warriors to pursue their own values in spiritual comfort. With the help of Benedictine thinkers, a code evolved that put the knight’s sword arm in the service, theoretically, of justice, right, piety, the Church, the widow, the orphan, and the oppressed.

Chivalry could not be contained by the Church, and bursting through the pious veils, it developed its own principles. Prowess, that combination of courage, strength, and skill that made a chevalier preux, was the prime essential. Honor and loyalty, together with courtesy—meaning the kind of behavior that has since come to be called “chivalrous”—were the ideals, and so-called courtly love the presiding genius. Designed to make the knight more polite and to

1. Benedictine thinkers refers to monks of the Order of Saint Benedict.
2. Chevalier is French for “knight.” Preux means “valiant” in French.
3. Here, genius means “guiding principle.”
lift the tone of society, courtly love required its disciple to be in a chronically amorous condition, on the theory that he would thus be rendered more courteous, gay, and gallant, and society in consequence more joyous.

Prowess was not mere talk, for the function of physical violence required real stamina. To fight on horseback or foot wearing 55 pounds of plate armor, to crash in collision with an opponent at full gallop while holding horizontal an eighteen-foot lance half the length of an average telephone pole, to give and receive blows with sword or battle-ax that could cleave a skull or slice off a limb at a stroke, to spend half of life in the saddle through all weathers and for days at a time, was not a weakling’s work. Hardship and fear were part of it. “Knights who are at the wars... are forever swallowing their fear,” wrote the companion and biographer of Don Pero Niño, the “Unconquered Knight” of the late 14th century. “They expose themselves to every peril; they give up their bodies to the adventure of life in death. Moldy bread or biscuit, meat cooked or uncooked; today enough to eat and tomorrow nothing, little or no wine, water from a pond or a butt, bad quarters, the shelter of a tent or branches, a bad bed, poor sleep with their armor still on their backs, burdened with iron, the enemy an arrow-shot off. ‘Ware! Who goes there? To arms! To arms!’ With the first drowsiness, an alarm; at dawn, the trumpet. ‘To horse! To horse! Muster! Muster!’ As lookouts, as sentinels, keeping watch by day and by night, fighting without cover, as foragers, as scouts, guard after guard, duty after duty. ‘Here they come! Here! They are so many—No, not as many as that—This way—that—Come this side—Press them there—News! News! They come back hurt, they have prisoners—no, they bring none back. Let us go! Let us go! Give no ground! On!’ Such is their calling.”

Horrid wounds were part of the calling. In one combat Don Pero Niño was struck by an arrow that “knit together his gorget and his neck,” but he fought on against the enemy on the bridge. “Several lance stumps were still in his shield and it was that which hindered him most.” A bolt from a crossbow “pierced his nostrils most painfully whereat he was dazed, but his daze lasted but a little time.” He pressed forward, receiving many sword blows on head and shoulders which “sometimes hit the bolt embedded in his nose making him suffer great pain.” When weariness on both sides brought the battle to an end, Pero Niño’s

4. Amorous means “to be in love.”
5. Here, rendered means “made.”
6. Cleave means “to cut” or “to slash.”
shield “was tattered and all in pieces; his sword blade was toothed like a saw and dyed with blood . . . his armor was broken in several places by lance-heads of which some had entered the flesh and drawn blood, although the coat was of great strength.” Prowess was not easily bought.

In the performance of his function, the knight must be prepared, as John of Salisbury wrote, “to shed your blood for your brethren”—he meant brethren in the universal sense—“and, if needs must, to lay down your life.” Many were thus prepared, though perhaps more from sheer love of battle than concern for a cause. Blind King John of Bohemia met death in that way. He loved fighting for its own sake, not caring whether the conflict was important.

As an ally of Philip VI, at the head of 500 knights, the sightless King fought the English through Picardy, always rash and in the avant-garde. At Crécy he asked his knights to lead him deeper into the battle so that he might strike further blows with his sword. Twelve of them tied their horses’ reins together and, with the King at their head, advanced into the thick of the fight, “so far as never to return.” His body was found next day among his knights, all slain with their horses still tied together.

Fighting filled the noble’s need of something to do, a way to exert himself. It was his substitute for work. His leisure time was spent chiefly in hunting, otherwise in games of chess, backgammon, and dice, in songs, dances, pageants, and other entertainments. Long winter evenings were occupied listening to the recital of interminable verse epics. The sword offered the workless noble an activity with a purpose, one that could bring him honor, status, and, if he was lucky, gain.

12. John of Salisbury (1115–1180) was a writer, historian, secretary to two archbishops of Canterbury, and the Bishop of Chartres.
13. King John of Bohemia (1296–1346) was a popular heroic figure who ruled from 1311 until his death at the Battle of Crécy in France.
14. Philip VI (1293–1350) was king of France from 1328 until his death.
15. Picardy is a region of northern France.
16. Interminable means “never-ending.”

RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY

Respond
1. How have your ideas about knights and chivalry changed as a result of reading this excerpt?

Recall and Interpret
2. How does this excerpt define chivalry?
3. (a) According to Tuchman, why did chivalry develop? (b) Why do you think chivalry eventually took on a life of its own and burst “through [its] pious veils”?
4. (a) Why did Blind King John fight so many battles? (b) What does this suggest to you about chivalry?

Analyze and Evaluate
5. (a) What assertions does Tuchman make about the life of a knight? (b) How does she support these assertions?

6. Overall, do you think the author has a positive or a negative view of chivalry? Cite specific examples to support your opinion.

7. (a) Compare and contrast this passage’s depiction of chivalry and knighthood with the depiction of them in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. (b) Which depiction seems more accurate?

Connect
8. The portrayal of chivalry and knighthood in medieval tales is often not accurate. Despite this, do you think that these myths and legends are important? Explain.

OBJECTIVES
- Read to enhance understanding of history and British culture.
- Analyze the influences of historical context that shape elements of a literary work.
- Connect a literary work, including character, plot, and setting, to the historical context.
Le Morte d’Arthur

MEET SIR THOMAS MALORY

“Syr Thomas Maleore, knyght” reads the name of the author on the first printing of Le Morte d’Arthur in 1485. That simple listing tells everything that is definitely known about the author, for there was more than one Thomas Malory. Most evidence suggests, however, that the writer was the hot-blooded Thomas Malory who represented Warwickshire in Parliament in 1445 and spent much of his later life in jail.

Knighthood and Prison Malory lived in troubled times. Though his family held land and was well respected, he found himself supporting the wrong side—the Lancasters—during the Wars of the Roses, a bloody, drawn-out conflict to determine which family would rule England. That conflict pitted the House of Lancaster, whose symbol was a red rose, against the House of York, whose symbol was a white rose. A long list of crimes was attributed to Malory, from extortion and attempted murder to cattle rustling. In one notorious incident, he escaped from prison by swimming across a moat and then attacked a nearby abbey that he believed was holding possessions stolen from him. Malory’s behavior outraged King Edward IV, who specifically excluded him from four general pardons for criminals, issued between 1468 and 1470.

“Le Morte d’Arthur Malory was in jail when he composed the great English prose work that related the heroic adventures of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. The narrative is a reworking of English, French, and Latin tales. Malory translated and organized the diverse body of Arthurian romance that had developed in England and France since Anglo-Saxon times. In the process, he created the first prose masterpiece in English.

Malory died in jail and was buried in the Chapel of St. Francis at Grey Friars. After his death, his manuscript was published by William Caxton, the man who introduced the printing press to England. Caxton gave the work its famous title, Le Morte d’Arthur, which is French for “The Death of Arthur.” Caxton’s title highlighted the story’s tragic end.

Never before had a work of English prose matched the elegance and force of English verse. Through the centuries, Le Morte d’Arthur has influenced the imaginations of many writers. As American novelist and satirist Mark Twain said, “From time to time I dipped into old Sir Thomas Malory’s enchanting book, and fed at its rich feast of prodigies and adventures, breathed in the fragrance of its obsolete names, and dreamed again.”

Sir Thomas Malory was born about 1405 and died in 1471.
Connecting to the Story
What would it be like to foresee the future? In this selection, King Arthur has a dream that reveals the future to him. Do you think dreams can foretell the future?

Building Background
Was there a real King Arthur? Historical documents, as well as archaeological remains from Cadbury Castle in England, hint that in the early 500s a Celtic chieftain named Arthur fought against the invading Germanic tribes. A vast oral literature developed around Arthur and by the time the stories were written down, truth and fiction had been forever entwined.

In Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, King Arthur creates the brotherhood of the Round Table, an assembly of knights including Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, Arthur’s nephew, who pledge loyalty to Arthur and to the code of chivalry. As the selection begins, Arthur prepares for battle against his illegitimate son, Mordred, who has raised an army against him.

Setting Purposes for Reading
**Big Idea**  The World of Romance
In his writing, Malory sought to recapture the Arthurian romantic ideals. As you read, consider the ideals that King Arthur and his knights represent.

**Literary Element**  Legend
A legend is a tale that is based on history and handed down from one generation to the next. Usually, a legend celebrates the heroic qualities of a national or cultural leader. As you read, notice the characteristic qualities of a legend in this story.


**Vocabulary**
- **doleful** (dō’fəl) adj. sad; p. 201 The wind in the trees made a doleful sound.
- **peril** (per’əl) n. risk of injury, loss, or destruction; p. 201 Police officers face great perils in chasing hit-and-run drivers.
- **jeopardy** (jep’ər dē) n. danger; p. 203 The fire in the warehouse put nearby buildings in jeopardy.
- **brandish** (bran’dish) v. to shake or swing threateningly, as a weapon; p. 203 Pretending he was a knight, the boy brandished a plastic sword.

**Vocabulary Tip: Analogies** Analogies are comparisons based on relationships between ideas. To complete an analogy, determine the relationship between the ideas represented by the first pair of words. Then apply that relationship to the second pair.

Interactive Literary Elements Handbook  To review or learn more about the literary elements, go to www.glencoe.com.
Upon Trinity Sunday\(^1\) at night King Arthur dreamed a wonderful dream, and that was this: it seemed that he saw upon a platform a chair and the chair was fastened to a wheel; thereupon King Arthur sat in the richest cloth of gold that might be made. And the king thought that under him, far from him, was hideous deep black water; therein were all manner of serpents and worms and wild beasts, foul and horrible. Suddenly the king thought the wheel turned upside-down and he fell among the serpents, and every beast caught him by a limb. The king cried out as he lay in his bed and slept, “Help, help!”

Then knights, squires,\(^2\) and yeomen\(^3\) awakened the king, and he was so dazed that he knew not where he was. He stayed awake until it was nigh day and then he fell to slumbering again, not sleeping but not thoroughly awake. Then it seemed to the king that Sir Gawain actually came unto him with a number of fair ladies.

When King Arthur saw him he cried, “Welcome, my sister’s son; I thought that ye were dead. And now that I see thee alive, much am I beholden unto almighty Jesus. Ah, fair nephew, what are these ladies that have come hither with you?”

“Sir,” said Sir Gawain, “all those are ladies for whom I have fought when I was a living man. And all these are those whom I did battle for in righteous quarrels; at their devout prayer, because I did battle for them righteously, God hath given them the grace to bring me hither unto you. Thus God hath given me leave to warn you away from your death: for if ye fight to-morn with Sir Mordred, as ye have both agreed, doubt ye not that ye shall be slain, and the most part of your people on both sides. Through the great grace and goodness that almighty Jesus hath unto you, and through pity for you and many other good men who would be slain there, God in His special grace hath sent me to you to give you warning that in no wise\(^4\) should ye do battle to-morn; but ye should make a treaty for a month. And make this offer generously to-morn so as to

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1. *Trinity Sunday* is the eighth Sunday after Easter.
2. *Squires* assisted knights.
3. *Yeomen* were attendants to nobles.
4. Here, *wise* means “way.”
assure the delay, for within a month Sir Lancelot shall come with all his noble knights and rescue you worshipfully and slay Sir Mordred and all who ever will hold with him.”

Then Sir Gawain and all the ladies vanished; at once the king called upon his knights, squires, and yeoman and charged them quickly to fetch his noble lords and wise bishops unto him. When they had come the king told them of his vision and what Sir Gawain had said to him: that if he fought on the morn, he would be slain. Then the king commanded and charged Sir Lucan le Butler, his brother Sir Bedivere, and two bishops to make a treaty in any way for a month with Sir Mordred: “And spare not; offer him lands and goods, as much as ye think best.”

They departed and came to Sir Mordred, where he had a grim host\(^5\) of a hundred thousand men. There they entreated Sir Mordred a long time, and at the last it was agreed for Sir Mordred to have Cornwall and Kent during King Arthur’s days and all England after the king’s days.

Then they agreed that King Arthur and Sir Mordred should meet between their two hosts, and that each of them should bring fourteen persons with him. They came back with this word to King Arthur.

Then he said, “I am glad that this is done.” So he went into the field.

When King Arthur prepared to depart for the meeting in the field he warned all his host that if they should see any sword drawn, “see that ye come on fiercely and slay that traitor Sir Mordred, for I in no wise trust him.”

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5. Here, host means “army.”
In like wise Sir Mordred warned his host: “If ye see any sword drawn, see that ye come on fiercely and then slay all who stand before you, for in no way will I trust in this treaty; I know well that my father wishes to be avenged upon me.”

So they met for their appointment and were thoroughly agreed and accorded; wine was fetched and they drank together. Just then an adder came out of a little heath-bush and stung a knight on the foot. When the knight felt the sting, he looked down and saw the adder; at once he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought to cause no harm. But when the hosts on both sides saw that sword drawn, they blew trumpets and horns and shouted grimly, and the two hosts rushed toward each other.

Then King Arthur mounted his horse and said, “Alas, this unhappy day!” So he rode to join his party, and Sir Mordred did in like wise. And never since was there seen a more doleful battle in any Christian land, for there was great rushing and riding, thrusting and striking, and many a grim word was spoken by each side, and many a deadly stroke was dealt. But King Arthur rode steadily throughout the army of Sir Mordred many times and did full nobly, as a noble king should; never at any time did he weaken. And Sir Mordred did his duty that day and put himself in great peril. Thus they fought all the long day, and no knight ever stinted till he was laid to the cold earth. So they fought on till it was near night, and by that time there were a hundred thousand who lay dead upon the ground.

Then King Arthur was madly wroth out of measure, when he saw that so many of his people were slain. When the king looked about him he was aware that of all his host and of all his good knights no more were left alive but two: one was Sir Lucan le Butler, and the other his brother Sir Bedivere; and they were both sorely wounded.

“Jesus, mercy!” said the king. “Where are all my noble knights? Alas, that ever I should see this doleful day! For now I have come to my end. But would to God that I knew where that traitor Sir Mordred, who hath caused all this mischief, is.”

Then King Arthur looked about and saw where Sir Mordred stood leaning upon his sword among a great heap of dead men. “Now give me my spear,” said King Arthur to Sir Lucan, “for yonder I have spied the traitor who hath wrought all this woe.”

“Sir, let him be,” said Sir Lucan, “for he brings ill fortune. And if ye can pass through this unlucky day, ye shall be right well revenged upon him. Good lord, remember your night’s dream and what the spirit of Sir Gawain told you last night. God in His great goodness hath preserved you so far. Therefore for God’s sake, my lord, leave off now; for, blessed be God, ye have won the field: here we three are alive, but with Sir Mordred no one is alive. Therefore if ye leave off now, this wicked day of destiny is over.”

“Now betide me death, betide me life,” said the king, “now that I see him yonder alone, he shall never escape my hands! For I shall never have him at better avail.”

“God speed you well!” said Sir Bedivere.

Then the king got his spear in both his hands and ran toward Sir Mordred, crying, “Traitor, now has thy death-day come!”

When Sir Mordred heard King Arthur he ran toward him with his sword drawn in his hand. Then King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield with a thrust of his spear on through the body more than a fathom. When Sir Mordred felt that he had his death-wound, he thrust himself with all his might up to the handguard of King Arthur’s spear; and right so, holding his sword in both his hands, he smote his father King Arthur upon the side of the head so that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain-pan. Therewith Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth; and the noble King Arthur fell to the
earth and there he swooned often, and Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere lifted him up each time. So they led him, weak between them, to a little chapel not far from the sea, and when the king was there he seemed reasonably comfortable.

Then they heard people cry out in the field.

“Now go thou, Sir Lucan,” said the king, “and let me know what that noise in the field betokens.”

So Sir Lucan departed slowly, for he was grievously wounded in many places; as he went he saw and noticed by the moonlight how plunderers and robbers had come into the field to plunder and to rob many a full noble knight of brooches and beads, of many a good ring, and of many a rich jewel. And whoever was not fully dead, the robbers slew them for their armor and their riches. When Sir Lucan understood this work, he came back to the king as quickly as he could and told him all that he had heard and seen.

“Therefore, by my counsel,” said Sir Lucan, “it is best that we bring you to some town.”

“I would it could be so,” said the king, “but I cannot stand, my head aches so. Ah, Sir Lancelot, this day have I sorely missed thee! And alas, that ever I was against thee! For now I have my death, whereof Sir Gawain warned me in my dream.”

Then Sir Lucan took up the king on one side and Sir Bedivere did so on the other side, and in the lifting the king swooned. Also with the lifting, Sir Lucan fell into a swoon and part of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight’s heart burst. When the king awoke he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth, and how part of his guts lay at his feet.

“Alas,” said the king, “this is to me a full heavy sight to see this noble duke die so for my sake; for he wished to help me, he who had more need of help than I. Alas, he would not complain, his heart was so set upon helping me. Now Jesus have mercy upon his soul!”

Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother.

“Leave this mourning and weeping,” said the king, “for all this will not avail me. For wit thou well, if I might live myself the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore, but my time passeth on fast. Therefore take thou here Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water's side; when thou comest there, I charge thee to throw my sword into that water and come again and tell me what thou saw there.”

“My lord,” said Sir Bedivere, “your command shall be done, and quickly I shall bring you word back.”

So Sir Bedivere departed. And along the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft were all of precious stones. Then he said to himself, “If I throw this rich sword into the water, thereof shall never come good, but only harm and loss.” Then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree, and as soon as he might he came again unto the king and said that he had been at the water and had thrown the sword into the water.

“What saw thou there?” said the king.

“Sir,” he said, “I saw nothing but waves and winds.”

“That is untruly said by thee,” said the king. “Therefore go thou quickly again and do my command. As thou art dear to me, spare not but throw it in.”

Then Sir Bedivere returned again and took the sword in his hand, and again he thought it a sin and a shame to throw away that noble sword. So once more he hid the sword and returned again and told the king that he had been at the water and done his command.

“What saw thou there?” said the king.


13. The expression wit thou well means “heed what I say.”

Reading Strategy Activating Prior Knowledge Why is Excalibur so important to King Arthur?
“Sir,” he said, “I saw nothing but waves and winds.”

“Ah, traitor untrue,” said King Arthur, “now hast thou betrayed me twice! Who would have thought that thou who hast been to me so lief and dear and thou who art called a noble knight would betray me for the richness of this sword? But now go again quickly; thy long tarrying puttest me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And unless thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee again I shall slay thee with my own hands; for thou would for my rich sword see me dead.”

Then Sir Bedivere departed and went to the sword and quickly took it up and went to the water’s side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilt; then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might. And there came an arm and a hand above the water which caught it and shook and brandished it thrice and then vanished with the sword into the water. So Sir Bedivere came back to the king and told him what he saw.

“Alas,” said the king, “help me hence, for I fear that I have tarried over-long.”

Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back and so went with him to the water’s side. When they reached there they saw a little barge which waited fast by the bank with many fair
ladies in it. Among them all was a queen, and they all had black hoods; they all wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur.

“Now put me into that barge,” said the king.

Sir Bedivere did so gently, and three queens received him there with great mourning and put him down; in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. Then that queen said, “Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold.”

So they rowed from the land and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, “Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now that ye go from me and leave me here alone among my enemies?”

“Comfort thyself,” said the king, “and do as well as thou may, for in me is no more trust to trust in. I must go into the Vale of Avalon 18 to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear nevermore of me, pray for my soul!”

But ever the queens and ladies wept and shrieked, so that it was a pity to hear. As soon as Sir Bedivere had lost sight of the barge, he wept and wailed and then took to the forest and walked all night. And in the morning he was aware of a chapel and a hermitage 19 between two ancient woods.

Then Sir Bedivere was glad, and thither he went. When he came into the chapel he saw where a hermit lay grovelling on all fours fast 20 by a tomb that was newly made. When the hermit saw Sir Bedivere he knew him at once, for he was the Bishop of Canterbury whom Sir Mordred recently put to flight.

“Sir,” said Sir Bedivere, “what man is interred 21 there whom you pray so earnestly for?”

“Fair son,” said the hermit, “I know not truly but by deeming. 22 But this night at midnight a number of ladies came here and brought hither a dead corpse and prayed me to bury him. And here they offered a hundred tapers 23 and they gave me a thousand besants.” 24

“Alas,” said Sir Bedivere, “that was my lord King Arthur who here lieth buried in this chapel.” Then Sir Bedivere swooned and when he awoke he prayed the hermit that he might remain with him always, there to live with fasting and prayers. “For hence I will never go,” said Sir Bedivere, “of my own will. But all the days of my life I will be here to pray for my lord Arthur.”

“Ye are welcome to me here,” said the hermit, “for I know you better than ye think I do. Ye are Sir Bedivere the Bold, and the full noble duke Sir Lucan le Butler was your brother.”

Then Sir Bedivere told the hermit all, as ye have heard before, and he remained with the hermit who was earlier the Bishop of Canterbury. There he put on poor clothes and served the hermit full humbly in fasting and in prayers.

Thus, concerning Arthur I find no more written in books which are authorized. Nor did I ever hear or read more with true certainty concerning his death. . . .

Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but was taken by the will of our Lord Jesus into another place. And men say that he shall come again and shall win the Holy Cross. Yet I will not say that it shall be so; rather, I would say that here in this world he changed his form of life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this line:

HERE LIES ARTHUR,
THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING.

23. Tapers are candles.
24. Besants are gold coins.

Big Idea The World of Romance What chivalric ideals does Bedivere’s decision reflect?

Literary Element Legend Why does the writer conclude the story with this statement?
RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY

Respond
1. What are your impressions of King Arthur and the decisions that he makes? Explain.

Recall and Interpret
2. (a) Summarize the content of Arthur’s dreams. (b) What might the overturned chair symbolize? What might the serpents represent?
3. (a) What accident triggers the battle between the two armies? (b) What part does Arthur and Mordred’s mutual distrust play in triggering the battle?
4. (a) What does Arthur ask Sir Bedivere to do with his sword, Excalibur? (b) What do Bedivere’s actions regarding Excalibur reveal about his character?

Analyze and Evaluate
5. (a) What motivates Arthur to fight Mordred to the death? (b) In your opinion, is Arthur’s decision wise? Why or why not?
6. (a) How would you describe the mood of this selection? Does it change as the story progresses? Explain. (b) What details does Malory use to achieve this mood?
7. Evaluate Malory’s use of dialogue. How does it help develop the characters? How does it help move the narrative along?

Connect
8. **Big Idea**  The World of Romance  In the literature of medieval Europe, King Arthur came to represent the ideal of chivalry. In what ways does he embody this ideal?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

**Literary Element**  Legend

A **legend** is different from a myth in that a legend has fewer supernatural elements and more historical truth than a myth does. Because legends are stories of the people, they are often expressions of the spirit, values, or character of the culture that creates them.

1. Find examples in the selection that contribute to the perception of King Arthur as a legendary hero. Explain your choices.
2. In your opinion, why has the legend of King Arthur endured?

**Review: Archetype**

As you learned on page 172, an **archetype** is a character type, a setting, an image, or a story pattern that occurs frequently in literature across many cultures.

**Partner Activity**  Meet with another classmate to identify and discuss archetypal elements in this selection. Working with your partner, list these archetypes and the emotional responses they evoke in a chart like the one below.
**Reading Strategy**

**Activating Prior Knowledge**

To read effectively, you must activate your prior knowledge of people, places, history, languages, and literature. For example, while reading *Le Morte d'Arthur*, you might recall other portrayals of King Arthur and his knights in movies, art, fiction, or poetry. Drawing upon this prior knowledge can help you identify the qualities that distinguish Malory's story.

1. What prior knowledge about King Arthur did you bring to your reading of this story?
2. What makes Malory's portrayal of King Arthur different from other portrayals of him?

**Vocabulary Practice**

**Practice with Analogies** Choose the pair of words that best completes each analogy below. Use a dictionary if you need help.

1. safety : jeopardy ::
   a. peace : harmony
   b. affection : regard
   c. joy : sorrow
2. whimper : doleful ::
   a. crash : accidental
   b. shriek : distant
   c. laugh : amused
3. danger : peril ::
   a. fear : cowardice
   b. weakness : frailty
   c. luck : diligence
4. sword : brandish ::
   a. pencil : write
   b. student : teach
   c. marathon : sprint

**Academic Vocabulary**

Here is a word from the vocabulary list on page R82.

**proceed** (prə sēd′) v. to go forward; to continue

**Practice and Apply**

How does Sir Bedivere proceed after King Arthur commands him to throw Excalibur into the water?

**Writing About Literature**

**Evaluate Contemporary Relevance** The modern American novelist John Steinbeck suggested that movie and television westerns bear similarities to the world of King Arthur, especially their heroes and villains. In what ways do you think Arthurian legends are relevant to the modern world? Write a brief essay in which you evaluate the contemporary relevance of these legends. Use examples from *Le Morte d'Arthur* to support your position. As you draft, follow the writing plan shown below.

- **Introduction**
  - general statement about Arthurian legends

- **Body Paragraph(s)**
  - specific statement of your position
  - strong reason
  - stronger reason
  - strongest reason

- **Conclusion**
  - restatement of your position
  - a final thought about the Arthurian legends

After you complete your draft, meet with a peer reviewer to evaluate each other's work and to suggest revisions. Then proofread and edit your draft for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**Interdisciplinary Activity: Psychology**

There is an ancient belief that dreams can predict the future, as King Arthur thought in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Using library and Internet resources, find out more about dream analysis, including archetypes common to many people's dreams. In an oral report, present your findings to the rest of your class.

**Web Activities** For eFlashcards, Selection Quick Checks, and other Web activities, go to www.glencoe.com.
Determining the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words

“Welcome, my sister’s son; I thought that ye were dead. And now that I see thee alive, much am I beholden unto almighty Jesus.”
—Sir Thomas Malory, from Le Morte d’Arthur

Connecting to Literature Sometimes an unfamiliar word’s context, or the words that surround that word, can provide clues to the word’s meaning. For example, in the line above, you can infer the meaning of beholden from its context. Because Arthur is happy that his nephew is alive, you can infer that Arthur feels indebted or grateful to Jesus for saving Gawain.

Types of Context Clues

- The context can provide an example of the word. The boy took the teacher’s remark literally. When she said, “We’ll take the bull by the horns,” he looked around for a bull.

- A contrast implies that an unfamiliar word is the opposite of a familiar one. It is difficult to use literal language to talk about being in love; people tend to talk about love by using figurative language and imagery.

- A restatement of the word in context rewords it in a more familiar way. In poetry, a literal style seems out of place; however, in an essay, a matter-of-fact style is appropriate.

- An unfamiliar word may be used as a synonym for another term. Nancy was so literal that she thought every comment I made was exact.

Exercise

For each item below, use context clues to determine the meaning of the underlined word. Identify which type of context clue you used.

1. Sir Gawain was sent to Arthur to quickly warn him of the portending danger of the next day’s battle.
   a. impeding   b. bold   c. horrifying   d. pleasant

2. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Le Morte d’Arthur are indigenous English writings because they were written in England.
   a. rich   b. native   c. rare   d. fictitious

3. In Le Morte d’Arthur, Malory shaped a loose group of Arthurian legends into a single, homogeneous narrative.
   a. unexpected   b. complicated   c. multiple   d. unified

Vocabulary Terms

Context clues are the words and phrases surrounding an unfamiliar word that can provide hints about the word’s meaning.

Test-Taking Tip

To use context clues in a test-taking situation, underline words and phrases surrounding the unfamiliar word. Use these words as context clues to define the unfamiliar word.

Reading Handbook

For more about context clues, see Reading Handbook, p. R20.

eFlashcards

For eFlashcards and other vocabulary activities, go to www.glencoe.com.
The Ballad Tradition

“O I fear ye are poisoned, Lord Randall, my son!
O I fear ye are poisoned, my handsome young man!”
“O yes, I am poisoned; Mother, make my bed soon,
For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain would lie doon.”

—from “Lord Randall”

Six centuries ago, most people in the British Isles were unable to read or write. For entertainment, they relied upon traveling minstrels and local storytellers. These musicians and poets created folk ballads, or rhymed verse that is recited or sung, out of local stories and tall tales. During the Middle Ages, balladeers often resembled today’s journalists; many ballads recounted actual events. Similar to the American Blues, folk ballads contain common tropes and characteristics. The typical ballad usually deals with one of the following topics:

- murder and acts of revenge
- tragic accidents and sudden disasters
- heroic deeds and quests for honor
- jealous sweethearts and unrequited love

For example, the stanza from “Lord Randall,” quoted above, tells of a young man poisoned by his sweetheart.

The Ballad’s Influence

Most of the English and Scottish ballads we know today date from after the fifteenth century. The authors of these ballads are unknown. In fact, a given ballad may exist in any number of versions, because of the memories and personal tastes of the many different people who passed it on from generation to generation. Ballads were first collected and published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most notably by Thomas Percy in Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765) and Sir Walter Scott in Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802–1803). Samuel Coleridge, John Keats, and other Romantic poets were inspired by such collections of folk and medieval literature. These authors began to write literary ballads, or ballads that are written in imitation of folk ballads and have a known author.

Robin Hood—Ballad Hero

One of the most enduringly popular and widespread ballad themes is that of the noble outlaw. Robin Hood, the legendary bandit of Sherwood Forest who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor, became the hero of a cycle of ballads. The earliest of the surviving Robin Hood ballads date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the same tradition, recent ballads have immortalized the American outlaw Jesse James as a modern Robin Hood.

“Then bold Robin Hood drew forth bugle horn,
And he blew it both loud and shrill,
And direct thereupon he espied Little John
Come running a-down the hill.”

—“Robin Hood and the Tanner”
Characteristics of the Folk Ballad

English and Scottish ballads share many characteristics:

- **Dramatization of a single incident.** The story begins abruptly, often in the middle of the action. Little attention is paid to characterization, background exposition, or description.
- **Little reflection or expression of sentiment.** Ballads focus on telling a story rather than what people thought or felt about the events.
- **Dialogue or questions and answers that further the story.** Typically, the tales are told through the speech of the characters rather than by a first-person narrator.
- **A strong, simple beat and an uncomplicated rhyme scheme or pattern.** The literary ballad differs from the folk ballad; it has a set metrical pattern and rhyme scheme. Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (pp. 805–826) is an example.
- **Use of refrain, repeated regularly throughout the ballad, often at the end of a stanza to emphasize ideas and add to the musical quality of the verse.** Ballads often employ incremental repetition, in which a line is repeated with small but significant changes as the poem approaches its climax. For an example, see “Sir Patrick Spens” (page 211), lines 33 and 37.
- **Use of a burden, or a complete lyrical stanza that is repeated after a narrative stanza.** Some ballads use a burden rather than a refrain. A burden is like a modern chorus. It allowed listeners to join in and gave singers time to remember verses.

- **The tendency to suggest rather than directly state.** Although sparsely told, ballads often contain sharp psychological portraits and much folk wisdom.
- **Stories that are often based on actual events.** These incidents—shipwrecks, murders, accidental deaths—might make headlines today.

The best of the folk ballads are among the most haunting narrative poems in British literature. They are still popular today, particularly among Irish folk singers. In the twentieth century, musical artists such as Bob Dylan and B. B. King employed variations of this storied lyrical form. The universal themes and compelling rhythms and rhymes of ballads continue to inspire and entertain.

**RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY**

1. Given the content of most ballads, what conclusions might you draw about the people who created them and the people who enjoyed them?

2. Why do you think musicians and poets continue to write and perform ballads?

3. (a) Who was the audience for most of the early folk ballads? (b) Why do you think Robin Hood became the hero of many of these ballads?

**OBJECTIVES**

- Analyze ballads.
- Connect literature to historical context.
Connecting to the Poems

Think about some of your favorite popular songs. As you read the ballads that follow, consider what makes certain songs memorable and why they appeal to many people.

Building Background

During medieval times, English and Scottish popular ballads were passed down orally and communally, from generation to generation and from region to region. Ballads were often sung to the accompaniment of a lute, rebec (rē’ bek), or other stringed instrument.

All three of the ballads you are about to read are Scottish.

• “Sir Patrick Spens” tells the story of sailors sent on an ill-fated voyage. It may be based on actual events from the thirteenth century.
• “Bonny Barbara Allan” tells a familiar, tragic story of disappointment in love.
• “Get Up and Bar the Door” is a comic ballad about married life—a favorite target of medieval humor.

Setting Purposes for Reading

Big Idea  The World of Romance
As you read, notice how these ballads romanticize heroic and tragic stories of the period.

Literary Element  Ballad Stanza
The ballad stanza is a quatrain, or four-line stanza. The first and third lines have four stressed syllables; the second and fourth lines have three. Only the second and fourth lines rhyme, and repetition of part or full lines is common. As you read these ballads, notice how each stanza follows or diverges from the ballad stanza form.

• See Literary Terms Handbook, p. R2.

Vocabulary

dwell (dwel) v. to live as a resident; p. 213

foremost (för’ mōst’) adj. ahead of all others or in the first position; p. 216 As the foremost authority in his field, he was the obvious choice for department chair.

Vocabulary Tip: Analogies An analogy is a comparison demonstrated in terms of a relationship between a pair of words.

Objectives

In studying these selections, you will focus on the following:

- analyzing literary periods
- analyzing ballad stanzas
- responding to characters
Sir Patrick Spens

The king sits in Dumferling town,
Drinking the blude-red wine:
“O where will I get guid sailor,
To sail this ship of mine?”

Up and spake an eldern knight
Sat at the king’s right knee:
“Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That sails upon the sea.”

The king has written a braid letter,
And signed it wi’ his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick read,
A loud laugh laughed he;
The next line that Sir Patrick read,
A tear blinded his ee.

1. *Dumferling* is a town in Scotland—the site of a favorite home of Scottish kings.
2. *Braid* means “broad; emphatic.”
“O wha³ is this has done this deed,
This ill deed done to me,
To send me out this time o’ the year,
To sail upon the sea!

Make haste, make haste, my merry men all,
Our guid ship sails the morn:”
“O say na sac,⁴ my master dear,
For I fear a deadly storm.

“Late late yestreen I saw the new moon,
Wi’ the auld moon in her arm,⁵
And I fear, I fear, my dear master,
That we will come to harm.”

O our Scots nobles were right laith⁶
To weet⁷ their cork-heeled shoone;⁸
But long owre⁹ a’ the play were played,
Their hats they swam aboon.¹⁰

O long, long may their ladies sit,
Wi’ their fans into their hand,
Or eir they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

O long, long may the ladies stand
Wi’ their gold kems¹¹ in their hair,
Waiting for their ain dear lords,
For they’ll see them na mair.

Half o’er, half o’er to Aberdour,¹²
It’s fifty fathoms deep,
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet.

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3. Wha means “who.”
4. Na sce means “not so.”
5. The new moon . . . arm describes a bright crescent moon with the rest of the moon shining faintly.
6. Laith means “loath” or “unwilling.”
7. Weet means “wet.”
8. Shoone are shoes.
9. Owre means “before.”
10. Aboon means “above.”
11. Kems are combs.
12. Aberdour is a small town on the Scottish coast.
It was in and about the Martinmas\(^1\) time,
When the green leaves were a falling,
That Sir John Graeme, in the West Country,
Fell in love with Barbara Allan.

5 He sent his men down through the town,
   To the place where she was \textit{dwelling}:
   “O haste and come to my master dear,
       Gin\(^2\) ye be Barbara Allan.”

O hooly,\(^3\) hooly rose she up,
10 To the place where he was lying,

---

1. \textit{Martinmas} (St. Martin’s Day) is celebrated on November 11.
2. \textit{Gin} means “if.”
3. \textit{Hooly} means “slowly.”

\textbf{Literary Element} \textbf{Ballad Stanza} Does this quatrain follow the typical rhyme scheme of the ballad stanza? How might singing or reciting the ballad contribute to the rhyme in a way that simply seeing it on the page might not?

\textbf{Vocabulary}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{dwell} (dwel) v. to live as a resident
\end{itemize}
And when she drew the curtain by,
   "Young man, I think you're dying."

"O it's I'm sick, and very, very sick,
   And 'tis a' for Barbara Allan."

"O the better for me ye's never be,
   Though your heart's blood were a spilling.

"O dinna ye mind, young man," said she,
   "When ye was in the tavern a drinking,
   That ye made the healths gae round and round,
   And slighted Barbara Allan?"

He turned his face unto the wall,
   And death was with him dealing:
   "Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all,
   And be kind to Barbara Allan."

And slowly, slowly raise she up,
   And slowly, slowly left him,
   And sighing said, she could not stay,
   Since death of life had reft him.

She had not gane a mile but twa
   When she heard the dead-bell ringing,
   And every jow that the dead-bell geid,
   It cry'd, "Woe to Barbara Allan!"

"O mother, mother, make my bed!
   O make it saft and narrow!
   Since my love died for me today,
   I'll die for him tomorrow."

---

4. Ye's means "you shall."
5. Dinna ye mind means "don't you remember."
6. Healths gae means "toasts go."
7. Reft means "deprived."
8. Gane means "gone."
9. Twa means "two."
10. A dead-bell is a church bell rung when someone dies.
11. Jow means "stroke."
12. Geid means "gave."

**Reading Strategy** Responding to Characters Knowing that Graeme slighted Barbara Allan publicly, how might you respond to his character after these last words?

**Big Idea** The World of Romance How does Barbara Allan's final action reflect the attitudes toward romantic love that were popular during medieval times?
It fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our goodwife got puddings\(^1\) to make,
And she’s boiled them in the pan.

The wind sae cauld blew south and north
And blew into the floor;
Quoth our goodman to our goodwife,
“Gae out and bar the door.”

“My hand is in my hussyfskap,\(^2\)
Goodman, as ye may see;
An it should nae\(^3\) be barred this hundred year,
It s’ no be barred for me.”

They made a paction\(^4\) tween them twa,
They made it firm and sure,
That the first word whaeer\(^5\) should speak
Should rise and bar the door.

Then by there came two gentlemen,
At twelve o’clock at night,
And they could neither see house nor hall,
Nor coal nor candle-light.

---

1. Puddings are sausages.
2. Hussyfskap means “household chores.”
3. [An . . . nae] means “if it should not.”
4. A paction is an agreement.
5. Whaeer means “whoever.”
“Now whether is this a rich man’s house,
Or whether is it a poor?”
But neer a word wad ane o’ them speak,
For barring of the door.

25  And first they\(^6\) ate the white puddings,
    And then they ate the black;
Tho muckle\(^7\) thought the goodwife to hersel,
    Yet neer a word she spake.

Then said the one unto the other,
30  “Here, man, tak ye my knife;
    Do ye tak aff the auld man’s beard,
    And I’ll kiss the goodwife.”

“But there’s nae water in the house,
    And what shall we do then?”
35  “What ails ye at the pudding-broo\(^8\)
    That boils into the pan?”

O up then started our goodman,
    An angry man was he:
“Will ye kiss my wife before my een
    And scad\(^9\) me wi’ pudding-bree?”\(^10\)

Then up and started our goodwife,
Gied three skips on the floor:
“Goodman, you’ve spoken the foremost word,
    Get up and bar the door!”

---
6. \textit{They} refers to the two gentlemen.
7. \textit{Muckle} means “a great deal.”
8. \textit{[What ails . . . broo]} means “What’s wrong with using the pudding broth?”
9. \textit{Scad} means “scald.”
10. \textit{Bree} means “broth.”

---

**Literary Element**  **Ballad Stanza**  How does this quatrains maintain or diverge from the traditional ballad stanza form?

**Big Idea**  **The World of Romance**  How are the ideals of heroism, chivalry, and romantic love portrayed in this ballad?

**Reading Strategy**  **Responding to Characters**  What is your response to the wife’s comment?

**Vocabulary**
foremost  (fôr’ môst’)  adj. ahead of all others or in the first position
RESPONDING AND THINKING CRITICALLY

Respond
1. Which ballad did you like best, and what in particular impressed you about that ballad?

Recall and Interpret
2. (a) Contrast the two settings mentioned in the ballad “Sir Patrick Spens.” Where is the king? Where is Sir Patrick? (b) How does the contrast help define the two characters?
3. (a) What does Barbara Allan ask her mother to do for her? (b) What does her request suggest about her true feelings for John Graeme?
4. (a) In “Get Up and Bar the Door,” what excuse does the wife give to her husband for not barring the door herself? (b) Is this her real reason? Explain.

Analyze and Evaluate
5. Do you think Sir Patrick did the right thing? Support your answer with details from the ballad.
6. How might “Bonny Barbara Allan” have been more or less effective if the writer had included the characters’ thoughts and emotions?
7. What techniques does the writer use to create the humorous tone in “Get Up and Bar the Door”? Support your answer with details from the poem.

Connect
8. Big Idea  The World of Romance How is marriage in “Get Up and Bar the Door” shown to be at odds with the ideals of the medieval period?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Litertary Element  Ballad Stanza
Repetition of lines, phrases, and words is common in ballads. Such repetition is often used to emphasize a particular tone or theme or to maintain the rhythm of the ballad within or between stanzas.
1. In “Sir Patrick Spens,” how does the repetition in the fourth stanza contribute to the emotional effect of the ballad?
2. (a) How is the expression “bar the door” expressed throughout “Get Up and Bar the Door”? (b) What effect does this imprecise repetition have on the poem?

Writing About Literature

Analyze Genre Elements  Each ballad is a narrative poem that tells a story—often one based on actual events. Refer to page 209 to help you recall the other distinguishing features of ballads. Paraphrase in prose form one of the three ballads you read. Then write a brief essay to explain what the ballad gains or loses by being paraphrased.

READING AND VOCABULARY

Reading Strategy  Responding to Characters
A dynamic character grows and changes, whereas a static character remains basically unchanged, even though things happen to him or her.
1. In “Sir Patrick Spens,” decide whether the king and Sir Patrick are dynamic characters or static ones. How can you tell?
2. Are the husband and wife in “Get Up and Bar the Door” dynamic characters or static ones? How do you know?

Vocabulary  Practice
Practice with Analogies  Complete each analogy below.
1. resident : dwell :: architect :
   a. design  c. building
   b. build  d. architecture
2. foremost : paramount :: peak :
   a. climb  c. nadir
   b. valley  d. pinnacle

Web Activities  For eFlashcards, Selection Quick Checks, and other Web activities, go to www.glencoe.com.
Descriptive Essay

Describing a Character

“He had his son with him, a fine young Squire,
A lover and a cadet, a lad of fire
With locks as curly as if they had been pressed.
He was some twenty years of age, I guessed.”

—Geoffrey Chaucer, from The Canterbury Tales

Connecting to Literature  Throughout The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer describes each pilgrim’s most distinguishing characteristics—in the process both revealing the pilgrim’s character and creating a vivid, lasting impression. Similarly, when writing a descriptive essay about a character, you choose details that will make the person you are describing believable and memorable to your audience. To write a successful essay, follow the goals and strategies of descriptive essay writing.

Rubric: Features of Descriptive Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To identify and describe a real or fictional character</td>
<td>✓ Focus on the distinguishing characteristics of a character to make him or her memorable to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To use descriptive details</td>
<td>✓ Vividly describe the character’s physical features. Use sensory details and figurative language to enhance your description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To elaborate on the character’s qualities</td>
<td>✓ Describe the character’s thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. Use anecdotes and dialogue to bring the character to life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a lasting impression for an audience</td>
<td>✓ Organize your essay in a clear, effective order. Include only important details that contribute to the dominant impression.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment

Write a vivid descriptive essay about a person (real or fictional) in which you make that person memorable to others. As you move through the stages of the writing process, keep your audience and purpose in mind.

Audience: peers, classmates, and teacher
Purpose: to create a vivid and memorable impression of your character

Analyzing a Professional Model

In the following selection, Booker Prize–winning author Penelope Lively describes her grandmother and the woman’s seemingly steadfast convictions despite changing times. As you read the following passage, notice how Lively uses vivid details and controls the reader’s impression of her subject. Pay close attention to the comments in the margin; they point out features that you might want to include in your own descriptive essay.

From *A House Unlocked* by Penelope Lively

When I summon up the late 1940s, the vision is a profoundly confusing one. There is a sense in which I am still there, a lumpen teenager, gripped by the roller-coaster emotions of that turbulent period in life. I am too tall, too tongue-tied, my hair is frizzy, my legs unshapely. I wear glasses and, down here in Somerset, where such things matter, I am no good on a horse. On the other hand, Golsoncott is the safe haven, the calm security from which I can mull over my own deficiencies, take stock of a perplexing world and undergo the slow metamorphosis into adult life.

All the while, my grandmother is an abiding presence—brisk, merry, unshakeable in her convictions. On public occasions, I take shelter behind her rock-solid confidence in the society with which she is familiar. She knows what to say when and to whom, she is never stuck for a comment or an opinion, she is deft about such stultifying embarrassments as how to locate the lavatory in an unfamiliar environment. I was devoted to her, and still am. But I was beginning to question her assumptions: about religion, about social structure. We argued—good-humoredly. For my part,
I was increasingly less certain that she was right about everything, though that in no way diminished my regard for her; she saw me as a normally disaffected schoolgirl who would come round to a proper outlook in due course.

In my head, my grandmother is always aged around seventy. Her grey hair is set in neat rolls and confined within an invisible net. She wears a tweed skirt, a blouse and cardigan in winter, linen dresses in summer. Lisle stockings, always. A large hessian apron is tied round her waist for gardening, its pockets bristling with secateurs, raffia, pruning knife. When I hugged her I could feel the carapace of her corset, never discarded, even in the hottest weather. For the evening, she changed into a long red velveteen housecoat, worn with a rope of ivory beads. Her presence seemed to animate the house. When she was out, the whole place went very still; when she was at home, her brisk step rang on the stairs and along the passages, you heard her humming and singing, you heard her laughter. She could share a joke, and had a sense of the ridiculous. But there was an implacable code of conduct, and minefields on all sides. Good manners were considered paramount—the decent consideration of each towards all. Excessive behavior or bad language brought instant disapproval: once, a young woman visitor, inflamed by sherry, tossed a cushion across the Golsoncott drawing-room to a friend, and was never invited to the house again. My grandmother became tight-lipped at any sexual inference. On another occasion, when she was in her eighties, we had to leave a concert in the interval because a couple in the row in front had been kissing. Sheltered from the tabloid press, and listening only to BBC Home Service and Third Programme, she was immune to much of the changing climate of the fifties, let alone the sixties. But occasionally the licence of the times filtered through to her; her condemnation was absolute and unrelenting. Skimpy clothing on women was a particular affront. The miniskirt made public outings an ordeal. But then, bizarrely, she rounded on the ankle-length skirts and coats of the seventies: “Ridiculous! Why go back to all that clutter!”
Prewriting

Gather Ideas  As you ponder subjects to write about, think of people who have made a significant impression on you or your life. Or, if you prefer, create a fictional character that would leave your audience with a lasting impression.

Choose a Subject  Use the following criteria to help you choose a memorable character to describe.

► Choose a familiar subject  It is easier to write vividly about a subject you know or remember well. Think about someone who has influenced you directly. If you are making up a character, fully imagine the physical traits, attitudes, behaviors, and speech that you will need to make that character believable.

► Choose a meaningful subject  Choose a character who is meaningful to you personally. Consider what specifically makes that character memorable to you and how to leave your audience with a similar impression.

► Choose a complex subject or a new approach  To hold your readers’ interest, choose a subject who is unusual or multifaceted and will give you something fresh to describe. Try to choose a character that may not be obviously important to you (or one that might be important but for unexpected reasons). For example, an eccentric neighbor from your childhood may have made a strong impression on you or your life.

Organize Details  Visualize the character you have chosen, concentrating on his or her most striking characteristics. To organize your description, arrange the important details in a graphic organizer like the one shown below.

Make an Impression  Before you begin drafting, clarify the overall impression you want to create for your audience. What makes the character special to you? This unique perspective is the point of your description. The overall impression you want to create will help you decide which details to include and which to omit.

Talk About Your Ideas  To help develop a natural writing voice and a conversational tone, describe your character aloud to a partner. Check to ensure that your partner’s impression of your character matches the one you want to convey, and note which details you should add or delete.
Drafting

Bring Your Character to Life  Using your plan as a guide, begin drafting your descriptive essay. Refer often to the notes you made earlier but feel free to add new ideas that come to you as you write. Occasionally look back at your unfinished draft and check to be sure that the details you include contribute to the overall impression you want to give your readers.

Analyzing a Workshop Model

Here is a final draft of a descriptive essay. Read the essay and answer the questions in the margin. Use the answers to these questions to guide you as you write.

Gruff Grandpa Bob

Standing about six feet tall in cowboy boots, wearing a faded bandana below his bronzed, weathered face, my grandpa Bob looks as if he belongs outdoors. His clothes always seem faintly dusty, even right after they have been washed, and his hair is bleached and wild from decades in the sun and wind. When he steps inside, the smell of hay and damp soil rises from his clothes like steam.

He likes to keep his coat on and his walking stick near, just in case he has to go outside quickly, and he never sits down unless he’s eating—sometimes not even then. As my grandpa himself would admit, he gets along better with animals than most people. Most people tend to keep their distance from him.

He has lived in Montana for much of his life, making house calls as the local veterinarian. I’ve seen him at work, stomping into a stranger’s house or barn with hardly a “hello,” often rushing ahead in pursuit of the suffering animal. One offended woman kicked him out of her house for his rudeness. Grandpa, though, wouldn’t leave without helping her sick dog. He paced for half an hour on the woman’s porch; finally she let him in. “What’s more important,” he said frankly, “making small talk with someone or healing her poor dog?” Although he usually makes people nervous, their pets relax in his presence. I’ve seen spooked horses calmed with a few of his firm words or his careful touch. Even stray cats allow him to check behind their ears for fleas.

When they see him on the street, people approach him to thank him—sometimes years later—for coming out after midnight to set a horse’s leg or to perform emergency surgery on a dog. He reddens and looks down at the sidewalk with his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his faded jeans. “All right, then,”
he says, nodding shyly. “All right.” Then he makes a dash for his truck.

He tried to retire when he turned sixty-five, but people kept calling him. My grandma wanted him to have more time for himself, but I think she knew it wouldn’t last. “Oh, just go,” she would tell him. “You’ll drive yourself crazy moping around here.”

My grandparents have been married for forty-five years, although I’ve rarely caught them having a typical conversation together. My grandma does most of the talking, but Grandpa never seems to grow tired of her company. Even though he inevitably grumbles under his breath every time Grandma tells him to take off his muddy boots when he comes inside (and she does tell him, every time), you can tell by the way he looks at her and listens to her that he respects her completely. If she’s happy, he’ll shoot her a wink when he thinks no one’s looking; if she’s upset, he’ll reach across the table and softly enclose her tiny, shaking hand between his own callused palms.

In his quiet way, Grandpa is a supportive father. He gives my dad and his brothers a hand—whether it’s as someone to listen to their troubles or just someone to help paint the garage. Despite his gruff reputation, he’s also a great grandpa. Unlike most adults, he isn’t afraid to run around the fields and play with his grandchildren or let us watch him work on an animal he’s treating. He knows how to keep a secret and can get me to talk about a problem that I want to discuss but don’t have the nerve to bring up.

Now that he’s in his seventies, he’s traded in his walking stick for a cane. Most of the townspeople are used to him by now, but the new ones are often a little shocked when they first meet him. “People spend their whole lives talking without saying anything,” he once told me. “They might accomplish something worthwhile if they just listened to someone else for a minute.” I couldn’t agree more.
Revising

Peer Review Once you complete your draft, exchange papers with a partner. Have your partner note any areas that could use more vivid details, dialogue, or other elaboration. Then have your partner tell his or her impression of your subject. If the impression is not what you intended, discuss ways to clarify your description.

Use the rubric below to help you evaluate and strengthen your essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric: Writing an Effective Descriptive Essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Do you describe a meaningful character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Do you describe a complex subject or present a fresh perspective on a common subject?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Do you use descriptive details to show the character’s appearance, attitudes, and behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Do you elaborate on the character’s qualities, including sensory details, dialogue, figurative language, and anecdotes to bring your character to life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Do you leave your readers with a clear and memorable impression?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Lesson

Elaborating with Descriptive Details

After you delete unimportant or distracting details from your essay, focus on elaborating with details to help make your character seem as real to your audience as he or she is to you. Think of sensory details—such as sounds, smells, and textures—to enhance physical descriptions. Describe actions and gestures that reveal personality and emotion. For example, instead of saying that someone is anxious, show the character pacing or fidgeting. Use dialogue and anecdotes to develop your character further, as in the example below.

Draft: He gets embarrassed and doesn’t say much.

Revision: He reddens and looks down at the sidewalk with his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his faded jeans. “All right, then,” he says, nodding shyly. “All right.” Then he makes a dash for his truck.

1: Describe gestures that reveal emotion.
2: Use dialogue to reveal attitudes and personality.
3: Describe actions that show the character’s thoughts.
Editing and Proofreading

Get It Right When you have completed the final draft of your essay, proofread it for errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling. Refer to the Language Handbook, pages R46–R60, as a guide.

Focus Lesson

Using Semicolons

One use of a semicolon (;) is to join main clauses. In this construction, a semicolon can always take the place of a period. Often semicolons are used instead of periods to connect short, choppy sentences, particularly when the sentences are parallel in construction. Like conjunctions, semicolons can also be used to correct comma splices. Use semicolons sparingly to add variety to your writing.

Problem: Comma splice

If she’s happy, he’ll shoot her a wink when he thinks no one’s looking, if she’s upset, he’ll reach across the table and softly enclose her tiny, shaking hand between his own callused palms.

Solution: To avoid a comma splice, join two main clauses with a semicolon.

If she’s happy, he’ll shoot her a wink when he thinks no one’s looking; if she’s upset, he’ll reach across the table and softly enclose her tiny, shaking hand between his own callused palms.

Problem: Short, choppy sentences

He paced for half an hour on the woman’s porch. Finally she let him in.

Solution: Connect short, choppy sentences with a semicolon.

He paced for half an hour on the woman’s porch; finally she let him in.

Presenting

Finishing Touches Before handing in your revised descriptive essay, be sure that it is typed or neatly handwritten and that you turn in the correct, revised version. Check to see that you have followed your teacher’s general guidelines, including length, spacing, font size, and margin requirements. After you turn in your final draft, consider sharing your description with your subject or with people who know him or her.

Writer’s Portfolio

Place a clean copy of your descriptive essay in your portfolio to review later.
Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Workshop

Photo-Essay

Presenting a Photo-Essay

“He had his son with him, a fine young Squire, a lover and cadet, a lad of fire with locks as curly as if they had been pressed.”

—Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales

Connecting to Literature In “The Prologue” to The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer describes his characters in great detail. As one critic comments, “Not a whisper, not a wart, is omitted.” Artists have since used Chaucer’s description to create images of what the Squire or the Knight may have looked like, as seen in the images on this page.

You can also use images to describe or represent a person. In a photo-essay, an artist combines photographs, images, and artifacts to represent a person or time in history. The images in a photo-essay should show the audience why the person represented is interesting and noteworthy.

Assignment Plan and deliver a photo-essay about someone you admire.

Finding the Right Image

Photo-essays often include other kinds of images besides photographs. You can also use drawings, illustrations, or visuals such as posters or collages.

Assignment

Plan and deliver a photo-essay about someone you admire.
Planning Your Presentation

Think about what it is you want to convey about the person you are presenting to the audience. Then consider what images can best communicate that message. Just like a written essay, a photo-essay needs to have a main idea. Ask yourself: Why is this person interesting to me? Your presentation should show how the person you are presenting has influenced history, society, or your life. You can brainstorm ideas for appropriate images by making a list or chart.

Follow these guidelines when presenting an art essay or photo-essay.

- Research your subject well and present a clear main idea.
- Support your ideas with well-chosen images, examples, stories, and anecdotes.
- Decide how you will showcase your work. Will you use an easel, sheets of poster board, a slide projector, or a computer presentation? How will you organize your images?

Creating Meaning in Visual Media

The pictures you choose to include in your photo-essay need to convey emotion and feeling to the audience. Your images should be unusual and visually striking in order to stand out among everyday images. In addition, consider whether your images would convey your main idea more effectively if some were manipulated. For example, you might want to enlarge an important image, crop an image to focus on a part of it, or create a montage, that is, an image made up of several different images, to present several aspects of your subject at once.

Techniques for Delivering a Photo-Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Techniques</th>
<th>Nonverbal Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volume</strong> Speak loudly and slowly enough so that your audience can understand the background information you provide.</td>
<td><strong>Eye Contact</strong> Make frequent eye contact with the audience; however, you should also look at the photographs or art to draw attention to important details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pace</strong> Allow the audience enough time to view and react to each piece of your essay before moving on to the next photograph.</td>
<td><strong>Gestures</strong> Use gestures to emphasize ideas in your essay when appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone</strong> Define any terms your audience may be unfamiliar with; describe any places your audience may not have visited.</td>
<td><strong>Display</strong> Show your images prominently enough so that your entire audience can see them clearly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rehearsing
You do not need to memorize your presentation of a photo-essay. However, you should practice and familiarize yourself with what you intend to say so that you will feel comfortable when presenting.

OBJECTIVES
- Connect visual media to personal experience.
- Speak effectively to explain and justify ideas to peers.
**For Independent Reading**

**Before the Advent of Christianity in Britain, there were no books. The first books were produced in monasteries where Anglo-Saxon monks copied religious texts written in Latin onto vellum, a fine parchment made from the skin of a calf. Printing did not come to England until 1476, when William Caxton set up a wooden printing press in a shop near Westminster Abbey. Even with this advance, few people of the time could read. They could listen, however, and traveling minstrels and members of the clergy created a great body of oral literature in order to teach and entertain. Much of this literature was eventually written down.**

**Anglo-Saxon Riddles**

We know about Old English riddles today due to their inclusion in the Exeter Book (shown above), which Leofric, the first bishop of Exeter, willed to the library of Exeter Cathedral in southwestern England before his death in 1072. The book contains thirty-one poems and ninety-five riddles. Try to guess the answer to the following riddle. (A *lay* is a short poem meant to be sung.)

A moth ate words; a marvelous event
I thought it when I heard about that wonder,
A worm had swallowed some man’s lay, a thief
In darkness had consumed the mighty saying
With its foundation firm. The thief was not
One whit the wiser when he ate those words.

Anglo-Saxon riddles can be quite clever as evidenced by the answer to the one above—a bookworm.

**Heroic Poems**

Old English poetry often is about brave deeds, allegiance to a military leader, and accounts of victories or, sometimes, defeats. “The Battle of Maldon” is one such poem, inspired by a battle between invading Danes and English defenders in 991. The beginning and ending of the poem no longer exist, but enough remains for readers to visualize what happened during that battle in southeastern England. The English army, led by Byrnoth, lost the battle. Byrnoth was killed, and his most faithful men fought on until they, too, were killed. Some soldiers fled the battle, however, and are condemned by the unknown poet.
When William Caxton began printing in 1476, many forms of English existed and there was no standardized spelling. The following anecdote expresses Caxton’s frustration over the various words being used for eggs.

“. . . Sheffelde, a mercer, cam in-to an hows and axed for mete; and sppecyally he axyed after eggys; and the good wyf answerd, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the merchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde haue hadde ‘egges’ and she vnderstode hym not. And theene at laste another sayd that he wolde haue ‘eyren’ then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, ‘egges’ or ‘eyren’?”

—William Caxton

From the Glencoe Literature Library

Beowulf

This powerful Anglo-Saxon epic follows Beowulf, the greatest of the Geat warriors through various adventures including his battle with Grendel, Grendel’s mother, and his final encounter with a dragon before his death.

The Canterbury Tales

In The Canterbury Tales, a group of men and women meet at an inn to begin a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury. The inn’s host suggests that they while away their time on the long journey by telling stories. Chaucer presents an array of colorful characters who vary widely in social standing, occupation, morality, and wit. The pilgrims come to life through the narrator’s vivid descriptions and through the tales they tell.
Carefully read the following passage. Use context clues to help you define any words with which you are unfamiliar. Pay close attention to cause-and-effect relationships, the conflicts described, and the tone. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

From *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by the Venerable Bede

From that time, the south part of Britain, destitute of armed soldiers, of martial stores, and of all its active youth, which had been led away by the rashness of the tyrants, never to return . . . suffered many years under two very savage foreign nations, the Scots from the west, and the Picts from the north. We call these foreign nations, not on account of their being seated out of Britain, but because they were remote from that part of it which was possessed by the Britons . . .

On account of the irruption of these nations, the Britons sent messengers to Rome with letters in mournful manner . . . An armed legion was immediately sent them, which, arriving in the island, and engaging the enemy, slew a great multitude of them, drove the rest out of the territories of their allies, and having delivered them from their cruel oppressors, advised them to build a wall between the two seas across the island, that it might secure them, and keep off the enemy; and thus they returned home with great triumph . . .

But the former enemies, when they perceived that the Roman soldiers were gone, immediately coming by sea, broke into the borders, trampled and overran all places, and like men mowing ripe corn, bore down all before them. Hereupon messengers are again sent to Rome, imploring aid . . . A legion is accordingly sent again, and, arriving unexpectedly in autumn, made great slaughter of the enemy . . . Then the Romans declared to the Britons, that they could not for the future undertake such troublesome expeditions for their sake, advising them rather to handle their weapons like men, and undertake themselves the charge of engaging their enemies, who would not prove too powerful for them, unless they were deterred by cowardice; and, thinking that it might be some help to the allies, whom they were forced to abandon, they built a strong stone wall from sea to sea . . . This famous wall, which is still to be seen, was built at the public and private expense, the Britons also lending their assistance. It is eight feet in breadth, and twelve in height, in a straight line from east to west, as is still visible to beholders . . .

After their departure, the Scots and Picts, understanding that they had declared they would come no more, speedily returned, and growing more confident than they had been before, occupied all the northern and farthest part of the island, as far as the wall . . . At last, the Britons, forsaking their cities and wall, took to flight and were dispersed. The enemy pursued, and the slaughter was greater than
on any former occasion; for the wretched natives were torn in pieces by their enemies, as lambs are torn by wild beasts. Thus, being expelled their dwellings and possessions, they saved themselves from starvation, by robbing and plundering one another, adding to the calamities occasioned by foreigners... till the whole country was left destitute of food, except such as could be procured in the chase.

1. According to Bede, what caused the lack of an active youth in Britain?
   A. The youth had gone to sea.
   B. The youth had been killed in battles with the Scots and Picts.
   C. The people were destitute.
   D. The people were afraid to fight.
   E. Tyrants took them away.

2. For what reason does Bede claim that the Scots and Picts were “foreign nations”?
   A. They lived in a remote part of the island.
   B. They were invaders.
   C. They were from outside Britain.
   D. They were not Christian.
   E. They were Nordic raiders.

3. Which of the following was an immediate effect of the first invasion of Britain described in the passage?
   A. The Picts and Scots were slaughtered.
   B. The Britons sent messengers to Rome.
   C. The Romans abandoned the Britons.
   D. The Romans were forced to flee.
   E. A defensive wall was built to defend the Britons.

4. According to the context, what does the word *slew*, in line 8, mean?
   A. chased
   B. killed
   C. overran
   D. frightened
   E. removed

5. According to Bede, what caused the Scots and Picts to return?
   A. The defensive wall was never built.
   B. The Britons were unable to defend themselves.
   C. There were too few resources in their own countries.
   D. They realized that the Romans had departed.
   E. They wished to join the Romans.

6. According to the context, what does the word *imploring*, in line 14, mean?
   A. refusing
   B. expecting
   C. issuing
   D. begging
   E. remembering

7. According to the context, what does the word *deterred*, in line 19, mean?
   A. frightened
   B. ashamed
   C. restrained
   D. amused
   E. reassured

8. Why did the Scots and Picts become “more confident than they had been before”?
   A. They had overcome Roman defenses.
   B. They knew that the Romans would not return.
   C. They had captured the northernmost part of the island.
   D. The Britons had abandoned their cities.
   E. The Britons had demonstrated their inability to fight.

9. To what does Bede compare the Scots and Picts?
   A. Britons
   B. Romans
   C. wild beasts
   D. lambs
   E. the natives

10. According to Bede, how did some Britons save themselves?
    A. They joined the Scots and Picts.
    B. They robbed other Britons.
    C. They fled to Rome.
    D. They defeated the invaders.
    E. They built a defensive wall.
11. From the context, what do you conclude that the word *calamities*, in line 30, means?
   A. wars
   B. friendships
   C. illnesses
   D. deaths
   E. disasters

12. Which group or individual is the main protagonist in this passage?
   A. the Romans
   B. the Picts
   C. the Scots
   D. the Britons
   E. Bede

13. Which of the following best describes the main external conflict represented in this passage?
   A. man against man
   B. man against nature
   C. man against society
   D. man against fate
   E. man against the divine

14. What is the overall tone of this passage?
   A. angry
   B. ironic
   C. authoritative
   D. skeptical
   E. sarcastic

15. From this selection, what do you conclude the author’s main purpose was?
   A. to inform
   B. to persuade
   C. to instruct
   D. to entertain
   E. to tell a story

Unit Assessment To prepare for the Unit test, go to www.glencoe.com.
Vocabulary Skills: Sentence Completion

For each item in the Vocabulary Skills section, choose the word or words that best complete the sentence.

1. Both the aristocracy and the peasantry faced great _____ during the Medieval period.
   A. composure
   B. adversity
   C. respite
   D. arrogance
   E. adversary

2. The _____ Viking raiders were known throughout Europe for their unmerciful violence.
   A. solicitous
   B. discreet
   C. infamous
   D. forged
   E. writhing

3. During England’s Anglo-Saxon period, seafaring was filled with _____ and misery.
   A. reckoning
   B. instigation
   C. prevarication
   D. shroud
   E. peril

4. Knights during the Medieval period were expected to be gallant and to _____ to attain the chivalrous ideal.
   A. blanch
   B. aspire
   C. slander
   D. dwell
   E. divulge

5. Anglo-Saxon poetry is filled with _____ imagery that conveys the themes of loss and misery.
   A. doleful
   B. estimable
   C. blithe
   D. intrepid
   E. frivolous

6. The clergy and the nobility were required at various times to _____ the unwieldy power of the monarch.
   A. perceive
   B. brandish
   C. concede
   D. restrain
   E. flourish

7. The two _____ causes of death during the 1300s were war and the bubonic plague.
   A. dauntless
   B. diligent
   C. disdainful
   D. discreet
   E. foremost

8. Intense _____ culminated in the brutal Hundred Years’ War.
   A. rancor
   B. jeopardy
   C. lament
   D. composure
   E. arrogance

9. The power of the church _____ during the Medieval period like at no other time.
   A. expounded
   B. admonished
   C. flourished
   D. divulged
   E. slandered

10. Those who _____ in Europe’s monasteries dedicated their lives to work and prayer.
    A. dispersed
    B. dwelled
    C. blanched
    D. perceived
    E. brandished
Grammar and Writing Skills: Paragraph Improvement

Read carefully through the opening paragraphs from the first draft of a student's descriptive essay. Pay close attention to the writer's use of verb tense, commas, and pronouns. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions below.

(1) My father is one of the most amazing men I have ever met. (2) He's a big guy. (3) At over six feet tall, with big suntanned hands that look like baseball mitts, and dark green eyes, dad cuts an impressive figure. (4) He was a fisherman, a painter, and (perhaps most important of all) the person who saved my little brother's life.

(5) When I was fifteen, my father, my brother John, and I are all on an extended fishing trip in the boundary waters, near the Canadian border. (6) It's a wonderful part of the world, lush and clean. (7) We had planned to be gone for a little over two weeks, camping, fishing, canoeing, and trying with little luck to stay dry. (8) “What's the weather going to be like this time of year?” (9) I asked, as we loaded up the van. (10) “Cold, and probably rainy,” Dad replied he wasn't lying.

(11) For the first five days there was a constant drizzle, the temperature never climbed above 50 degrees. (12) Then, on the sixth day, rain started lashing down and thunder could be heard at a distance. (13) The wind picked up. (14) The temperature dropped considerably. (15) As the weather rolls in, we huddled in our canoe, trying to catch that night's dinner. (16) None of us had expected this, it arrived so suddenly.

1. Which of the following is the best revision of sentence 2?
   A. He was a big guy.
   B. My father and I are big guys.
   C. We are big guys.
   D. He's a big guy.
   E. He's that big of a guy.

2. Which of the following is the best revision of sentence 4?
   A. He was a fisherman, a painter; and (perhaps most important of all) the person who saved my little brother's life.
   B. He is a fisherman, a painter, and (perhaps most important of all) the person who saved my little brother's life.
   C. He was a fisherman, and a painter.
   D. He was a fisherman, and a painter, and (perhaps most important of all) the person who saved my little brother's life.
   E. We were fishermen, painters, and people who saved my little brother's life.

3. Which of the following is the best revision of sentence 5?
   A. When I was fifteen, my father, my brother John, and me are all on an extended fishing trip in the boundary waters, near the Canadian border.
   B. When I was fifteen, my father, my brother John, and I are all on an extended fishing trip.
   C. When I was fifteen, my father, my brother John, and me are all on an extended fishing trip.
   D. My father, my brother John, and I are all on an extended fishing trip in the boundary waters, near the Canadian border.
   E. When I was fifteen, my father, my brother John, and I were all on an extended fishing trip in the boundary waters, near the Canadian border.
4. Which of the following is the best revision of sentence 6?
   A. It's a wonderful part of the world, lush and clean.
   B. Its a wonderful part of the world; lush and clean.
   C. It was a wonderful part of the world, lush and clean.
   D. Its a wonderful part of the world.
   E. A wonderful part of the world, its lush and clean.

5. Which of following is the best revision of sentence 10?
   A. “Cold, and probably rainy,” Dad replied, he wasn’t lying.
   B. “Cold, and probably rainy.”
   C. “Cold, and probably rainy,” Dad replied. He wasn’t lying.
   D. Cold, and probably rainy, Dad replied and he wasn’t lying.
   E. My dad replied, and he wasn’t lying.

6. Which of the following errors appears in sentence 11?
   A. run-on sentence
   B. misplaced modifier
   C. fragment
   D. incorrect verb tense
   E. incorrect parallelism

7. To improve sentence fluency, which of the following sentences in the third paragraph might be enhanced by combining them with a semicolon?
   A. 11 and 12
   B. 12 and 13
   C. 13 and 14
   D. 14 and 15
   E. 15 and 16

8. Which of the following is the best revision of sentence 15?
   A. As the weather rolls in, we huddled in our canoe.
   B. The weather rolled in, we huddled in our canoe.
   C. The weather rolls in. We huddled in our canoe. We tried to catch that night’s dinner.
   D. We huddled in our canoe, trying to catch that night’s dinner.
   E. As the weather rolled in, we huddled in our canoe, trying to catch that night’s dinner.

9. Which of the following is the best revision of sentence 16?
   A. None of us expected this, it arrived suddenly.
   B. None of us had expected this, it had arrived so suddenly.
   C. None of us had expected this, it was arriving so suddenly.
   D. None of us had expected this; it arrived so suddenly.
   E. None of us had expected this.

10. While writing the concluding paragraphs of this draft, what information should the writer include?
    A. a description of how the father saved John’s life
    B. a description of the types of fish that can be caught in the boundary waters
    C. a description of John’s appearance
    D. a statement on the importance of family relationships
    E. further description of the father’s appearance

Essay

Write a descriptive essay in which you explore the character of a person who has had an important influence on your life. How did you first come to know this person? In what ways has he or she influenced you? As you write, keep in mind that your essay will be checked for ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation.