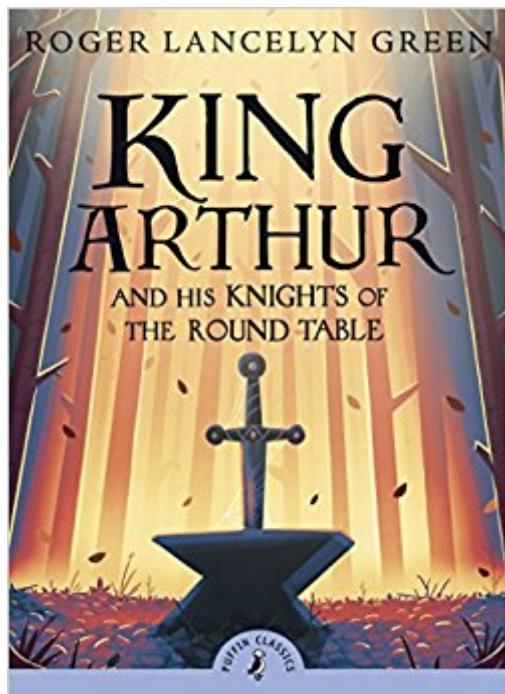


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King Arthur And His Knights Of The Round Table (Puffin Classics)



Synopsis

They're Puffin Classics for a reason, it's because they're the best. Step up to the Round Table and join the knights of the Realm! King Arthur is one of the greatest legends of all time. From the magical moment when Arthur releases the sword in the stone to the quest for the Holy Grail and the final tragedy of the Last Battle, Roger Lancelyn Green brings the enchanting world of King Arthur stunningly to life. One of the greatest legends of all time, with an inspiring introduction by David Almond, award-winning author of *Clay*, *Skellig*, *Kit's Wilderness* and *The Fire-Eaters*.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars Â See all reviews Â (636 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Who hasn't heard of King Arthur and the knights of his Round Table? In this book you meet them all - including the magician Merlin, and the brave knights Sir Launcelot, Sir Gareth, Sir Tristam, Sir Bors, Sir Kay, and Sir Galahad. All the old favorites are included - Arthur drawing the sword out of the stone, Arthur receiving the sword Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake, and Arthur's marriage to Guinevere. But this is just the beginning of excitement - followed by numerous quests and adventures of the knights, including the Quest for the Holy Grail. This book is chock-full of entertaining adventures involving knights in shining armour, damsels in distress, fierce jousting and

sword fights to the death, battles against hoards of enemies and giants, tournaments and miracles. The medieval setting is painted in a rather idealized fashion, limited to the nobility and figures of the court, who embrace all that is beautiful, brave and noble. These virtues are sometimes portrayed rather simplistically, as unknown knights engage in mortal combat, and only after they have virtually killed each other do the introductions begin: "What is your name?" Behind this medieval mayhem is a heightened sense of chivalry more reflective of legend than fact, where knights battle to the death for the sake of a woman - even one they have only just met. But isn't that what the Arthurian legends are all about? Nobody is under the illusion that they are to be taken too seriously. Journeying to Arthur's Camelot is a form of escapism - suspend your sense of disbelief, watch the flashing swords and fearful battles, and enjoy. That's not to say that the Arthurian tales do not reflect any reality. Arthur's world is in many respects a real medieval world. Medieval beliefs in paganism and Christianity are evident throughout. Witchcraft and enchantment is presented as alive and deadly, and conversely the true religion - in this case the beliefs of the medieval Catholic church - is evident throughout as knights commend themselves to God in prayer, thank him for his help, and even repent from their sins. The whole notion of the Holy Grail is of course a very Christian tradition - although a tradition that represents more fiction than fact. And the moral virtues of justice, truth and right for which the honorable knights fight are still noble ideals of virtue today. Arthur's kingdom is presented as a kingdom blessed by the grace of God, a beacon of light symbolizing all that is good and true and right, and a worthy model for kingdoms in today's world because it revolves around timeless virtues. Tales that promote dignity, courtesy, courage, respect for right, respect for female dignity and purity are as ennobling as they are entertaining. How much truth there is behind the Arthurian tales will always be the subject of debate. The fact remains that there is an extensive and confusing body of legend to wade through. In this work, Green has essentially followed Malory's fifteenth century classic "Morte d'Arthur." But unlike most other writers, such as Sir James Knowles, Green has made some significant improvements: 1. Firstly, the traditional Arthurian tales are a confusing mass of legends. But Green consciously weaves all the tales together as part of a single pattern. He needs to take some liberties with legend in order to achieve this, but these alterations are minor, and the end result is a plausible reconstruction with a clear development, revolving around the establishment of Arthur's kingdom, its climax with the successful quest for the Holy Grail, and subsequent downfall. 2. Secondly, most other collections slavishly follow the body of legend inherited by Thomas Malory. Green follows Malory in the main, but has researched the legends carefully for himself, and also incorporates some Arthurian legends not found in Malory. These innovations of Green result in a very readable and successful version of the Arthurian

tales, and yet one that does not significantly sacrifice faithfulness to legend. Those looking for a more historical reflection of the Arthurian tales would do well to turn to a version of Malory, such as that by Sir James Knowles. And those looking for a more developed and extensive modern version where the author has taken liberties beyond the original legends, would enjoy the classic work by Howard Pyle. But as a faithful, plausible and enjoyable introduction to the tales, you can't go wrong with this superb effort by Green. Most readers looking to be introduced to the Arthurian legends need look no further than this collection by Green. It's not as grand as Malory, but it's a better read. There is no end to the accomplishments of sword and sorcery, adventures and quests. To our sorrow, Arthur's kingdom ends in darkness and disgrace, but not before it has shone with a wonderful and memorable light. Along with the tales of Robin Hood, the tales of King Arthur are the most exciting tales that British history has produced. This is the stuff of legend, and it's worth a read.

It's curious to me that this is the best-selling version of the King Arthur story in the kindle store, because it's a singularly flawed collection, well-eclipsed by other variants that are also available for free online; I suspect its popularity is an artifact of the search engine, not the book's own merits. The author, Sir James Knowles, was an architect and friend of Tennyson, best known for founding the Metaphysical Society; this is, therefore, a very Victorian Arthur. In this case, "victorian" means "bowdlerized to the point of inanity." The story of Merlin's enchantment of Uther and Igraine to arrange Arthur's conception is almost completely elided ("When Uther, therefore, was at length happily wedded" -- yep, that's the whole story); Sir Tristram is apparently completely chaste with Iseult (King Mark just doesn't like him for some indiscernible reason) and even when Lancelot and Guinevere are caught together and the entire course of the story turns on adultery, such that bowdlerization was completely impossible, Gawain suggests that "it may well be that Lancelot was in her chamber for no evil." The story of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is simply not included at all. I suppose that kind of bowdlerization might be acceptable in a children's version of the Arthur stories, but this edition isn't good for that either, for two reasons: 1) like many free kindle ebooks, all illustrations have been removed, and 2) it's a kindle edition, and who gives a \$250 ebook reader to a child too young to read a story with adultery in it? There are other problems also. The King of Gaul (Sir Bors) is an ally for the first third and last third of the book, but in the middle, Gaul has a different king, Flollo, and Arthur conquers Gaul six ways from Sunday (mostly as a stopover in his conquest of Rome); timelines don't add up; so on, so forth. I didn't feel the author did a good job of telling the Arthur legends, in any particular. In short, this is a bad version of the King Arthur story and the general reader would be better off not wasting time on it. I'm sure people are going to say "hey, it's

an early victorian version, don't hold it to such high standards," but there's no reason for a modern reader to read these, any more than there's reason to read Sir Thomas Bowdler's "Family Shakespeare". For more "historical" versions of the Arthur legend, either of this versions' main source materials -- Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain or Sir Thomas Malory's Morte D'Arthur -- are superior reads (though I'll admit you'd want to skim Monmouth heavily). My own personal favorite, Howard Pyle's three-book version of the Arthur story ("The Story of King Arthur and His Knights," "The Story of the Champions of the Round Table," and "The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur") is similarly available for free online in the public domain, can be found with excellent illustrations by Pyle himself, is written in a fashion suitable for children and adults, and does a far better job of capturing the romance of the Arthur legends. But whatever version you pick, this one is a poor place to start. It does have some strengths -- chiefly an encyclopedic compilation of at least some version of almost every PG Arthur-related tale -- but the author's victorian mores seem to have twisted far too many of the stories into unrecognizability. Not recommended.

I have loved the tales of Camelot since I was quite small. Due to this, several friends have asked me where they should begin. Over and over again, I recommend Green. His work is not majestic like Malory, but much easier to read and follow, especially for a neophyte. Children love it, as do adults; this book gives the basic nobility of the tales, giving a good clue as to why they've been so popular for so long. Green also includes several tales of Sir Gawain, so he is not the near-felon he seems in several late medieval texts. The book is charming, moving, sad, happy, and everything else you could wish from Camelot. If you haven't read of Arthur before, begin here; if you want to remember why you loved these tales to begin with, read Green. He provides more than you would ever expect.

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