Name _____ Date _____

The Sword in the Stone

Myth or legend · 4th–5th grade

Long ago, England had no king. The great lords argued and fought, each one wanting the crown for himself, and the people suffered. The wise wizard Merlin knew the land needed a true king, so he used his magic to set a challenge.

In a churchyard in London, a huge stone appeared. A shining sword was stuck deep inside it, and golden letters on the stone said: Whoever pulls this sword from this stone is the rightful king of all England.

One by one, the strongest knights tried. They pulled until their faces turned red, but the sword did not move even a hair. So a great tournament was planned for New Year's Day, hoping the right person would come.

Among the crowd was a young knight named Sir Kay and his younger brother, Arthur, who served as his helper. On the way to the tournament, Kay realized he had left his sword at the inn. "Arthur, go back and get it, quickly!" But the inn was locked, because everyone had gone to the tournament.

Arthur did not want his brother to go without a sword. Passing the churchyard, he saw a sword sticking out of a stone. Without reading the words, he took hold of the handle and pulled. The sword slid out as easily as a spoon from honey.

When Kay saw the sword, his eyes grew wide. For a moment, he claimed that he had pulled it out himself. But when their father asked him to swear it was true, Kay admitted the truth: "Arthur gave it to me."

The lords didn't believe that a boy could be king. They put the sword back and tried again and again. Only Arthur could pull it free. At last, the people knelt before him. Arthur promised to rule with fairness and to protect the weak, and he became the most famous king in English legend.

Questions

1. Why did England need a king?

2. What did the words on the stone say?

3. Why did Arthur pull out the sword?

4. What did Kay do when his father asked him to swear?

5. Why is Arthur a good choice for king?

6. Why do you think the sword came out only for Arthur?

7. Kay lied at first, then told the truth. What made him change?

The lesson in my own words

Answer Key

1. The lords were fighting and the people suffered.
2. Whoever pulls out the sword is the rightful king.
3. To give his brother a sword for the tournament.
4. He told the truth.
5. He was helpful and humble, not hungry for power.
6. Answers will vary.
7. Answers will vary.

Lesson: True greatness comes from honesty and service, not from wanting power.