

Core D Ancient Lit | *Le Morte d'Arthur* Socratic Discussion

Preparation: Writing the Legal Narrative and Confirmation/Refutation (25 pts)

Step 1: Choose an event from the assigned readings of *Le Morte d'Arthur* in which a character breaks the Code of Chivalry. Use this list as a guide:

Code of Chivalry

To fear God and maintain His Church
To serve King in valor and faith
To protect the weak and defenseless
To give aid (succor) to widows and orphans
To refrain from wantonly giving offence
To live by honor and for glory
To despise monetary reward
To fight for the welfare of all
To obey those placed in authority
To guard the honor of fellow knights
To eschew unfaithfulness, meanness, and deceit
To persevere to the end in any enterprise begun
To respect the honor of women
Never to refuse a challenge from an equal
Never to turn the back upon a foe

Cast of Characters:

(Knight selection begins 4/20 and must be chosen by 5/2. No more than 3 students can argue for/against each character.)

Sir Accolon
King Arthur
Sir Bors
Sir Gawain
Sir Launcelot
Sir Lyonel
Sir Mordred
Sir Pellinore (later King Pellinore)
Sir Torre
A knight of your choosing (**Must be pre-approved!**)

Step 2: Write a legal narrative to communicate the facts of the incident. In your retelling, you should slant the narrative towards your justification or condemnation of the chosen character, as well as compare/contrast the conduct of the character with the chivalric code. Consider how your knight behaved vs. how they should have conducted themselves. Your narrative should avoid being verbs and include at least two direct quotes from the text. Please include in-text citations and a Work(s) Cited page. (See Uther Pendragon example below).

Step 3: Confirm and refute the narrative by providing both context and textual support. “To refute a narrative, you attack the story or a part of the story, alleging that it is improbable, obscure, impossible, and inconsistent. To confirm a narrative, you defend the story, alleging that it is probable, clear, possible, and consistent” (D’Angelo 117). Use the questions below for both the confirmation and refutation sections:

- 1) Is the act probable/improbable?
 - What was the motive?
 - How does the character live his life over the course of the story?
- 2) Is the act clear/obscure?
 - What physical evidence confirms the act?
 - Who witnessed the act?
- 3) Is the act possible/impossible? (Does the act contradict the laws of nature?)
 - Where did the act take place?
 - When did it occur and for how long?
 - Occasion?
 - Did the character hope to succeed?
 - Did the character hope to escape detection?
- 4) Is the act consistent/inconsistent
 - Does any part of the story contradict another part?
 - Is the story logically coherent?

Step 4: Prepare questions to either accuse or defend the other knights discussed in your circle that will best guide and direct the discovery of truth.

- Questions of fact (Did something happen?)
- Questions of definition (Describing/defining what happened)
- Questions of value, quantity, and nature (What was the nature of the event?)
- Questions of jurisdiction (To whom is the character accountable?)

(Steps 2, 3, and 4 are adapted from *Composition in the Classical Tradition* by Frank J. D'Angelo)

In-Class Socratic Discussion Expectations (30 pts)

The class will be divided into participants and active observers (coaches), with each student taking turns as both. The pairs of participants/observers will be chosen by the tutor.

The Participants:

- Must support their opinions with evidence from the text
- May speak at any time during the seminar with respect for the other participants
- May refer to other works the class has read if applicable to the text
- May ask relevant questions of other participants

The Coaches:

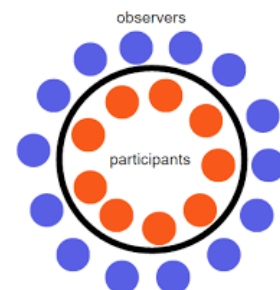
- Must evaluate the participant's performance during the seminar
- Must provide oral and written feedback to the participant after the seminar
- May not speak to their participants during the seminar
- May not speak to other participants or coaches during the seminar

Guidelines:

- ✓ Come prepared with your annotated text and your prep work
- ✓ Be an active listener and speaker. Contribute to the discussion
 - No side discussions
 - No talking over each other: one voice - only one person can speak at one time
 - Monitor your own "air time" (aka don't dominate the discussion)
- ✓ Be respectful (even if you do not agree)
- ✓ Use evidence or examples from your reading
 - You must back up statements with textual evidence (with specific page numbers)
 - Explain your answers - a simple yes or no is not acceptable you must explain
- ✓ Address each other by name and use "I" phrases
 - I agree with _____ because _____
 - I disagree with _____ because _____
- ✓ No raising hands
- ✓ Anyone may ask questions of the group at any time. Talk to the group, not to the teacher

On the day of the Socratic discussion the room will be arranged with an inner and outer circle to promote conversation. You will be assigned a partner. Do not trade names.

As the **participant**, you will sit in the inner circle and confirm or refute the evidence. Each student must participate in the discussion to receive participation points. The **observer** will sit in the outer circle, evaluating your partner's participation through the evaluation form.



Rubric for Expected Participation:

Level A

- Participant offers enough solid analysis, without prompting, and moves the conversation forward
- Participant, through comments, demonstrates a deep knowledge of the text and the question
- Participant has come to the seminar prepared, with notes and a marked/annotated text
- Participant, through comments, shows active listening to other participants
- Participant offers clarification and/or follow-up that extends the conversation
- Participant's remarks often refer to specific parts of the text.

Level B

- Participant offers solid analysis without prompting
- Through comments, participant demonstrates a good knowledge of the text and the question
- Participant has come to the seminar prepared, with notes or a marked/ annotated text
- Participant shows active listening and offers clarification and/or follow up
- Participant relies more upon his or her opinion, and less on the text to drive comments

Level C

- Participant offers some analysis, but needs prompting from the seminar leader
- Through comments, participant demonstrates a general knowledge of the text and question
- Participant is less prepared, with few notes and no marked/annotated text
- Participant is actively listening to others, but does not offer clarification and/or follow-up to others' comments
- Participant relies more upon his or her opinion, and less on the text to drive comments

Level D/F

- Participant offers little-to-no commentary
- Participant comes to the seminar ill-prepared with little understanding of the text and question
- Participant does not listen to others, offers no commentary to further the discussion
- Participant distracts the group by interrupting other speakers or by offering off topic questions and comments

Name

Tutor

Class

Date

Confirmations and Refutations

Narrative: King Uther Pendragon, ruler of Britain, breaks the chivalric code by disguising himself as the Duke of Tintagil to gain sexual favor with Lady Igraine. Having heard of Igraine's beauty, King Uther calls a truce in the long-standing war with Cornwall to meet the lady. He invites the Duke and his wife to his castle under the pretense of celebration. According to Sir Thomas Malory, while feasting King Uther becomes "passionately desirous of Igraine" and thus begged the Lady to "become his paramour" (1). Upon her refusal, Uther grows enraged and sick with envy. To comfort the king, Sir Ulfius and Merlin plot with Pendragon to enable him to "appear before Igraine at Tintagil in the likeness of her husband, the duke" (Malory 2). Igraine, being deceived by King Uther's impersonation, gives herself to him and conceives a son. In doing so, Uther Pendragon fails to respect the honor of Lady Igraine, fails to speak or act in truth, and fails to fear God and maintain the church.

Confirming the Narrative

1. It is highly probable that King Uther acted grievously against Lady Igraine because his manner of life seemed consistent with such selfish and short-sighted motives. For years he senselessly warred against Cornwall, flippantly ending the conflict upon being "told of the beauty of Lady Igraine," and irrationally threatening to fight again when offended by Igraine's refusal of his advances (Malory 1). Beyond this, Uther possessed motive: rage, envy, and passion (1,2).

2. Clearly the assault occurred with so many witness to confirm the deception: Lady Igraine, Pendragon's privy council, guests at the feast, Sir Ulfius, and Merlin. In fact, the duke himself had seen Pendragon ride out from the siege and surely told men battling beside him of the outrage (3).

3. Some may call into question the possibility of such impersonation, but a short survey of Merlin's magic affirms not only the possibility but the capability of his aid in the crime. In fact, knights throughout the land discuss Merlin's shape shifting skills (2,16,17). Add to this that the Duke, away in battle, provided King Uther free access to Tintagil Castle. Continuing, the location of Pendragon's home bares ample opportunity to reach and remain at the castle for the duration of the night (2).

Refuting the Narrative

1. These accusations prove highly improbable as King Uther vowed to uphold the chivalric Code upon being knighted (Note: the generalization without evidence). In fact, the act rests so obscure that no physical evidence or witnesses exist to confirm the occurrences within the walls of Igraine's bedroom. Her husband had died earlier that evening. It reasons that she, in hopes of bringing security to the war torn land, would seek to combine kingdoms bring peace to her land (3).

2. Continuing, the very act of transformation with which Uther stands accused, contradicts the laws of nature. Not only is it impossible for the King to mimic the Duke's appearance, but how unreasonable to assume he could capture the duke's mannerisms in such a way as to deceive the "loyal" Igraine? (1).

3. Take into account also the Uther's likelihood of being detected. The duke, though in battle that night, stayed not at Tintagil, but rather at Terrabyl (2). Surely the castle staff knew this and would have questioned his presence that night.

Questions for other knights

1)

2)

Note: This sample does not adequately answer the confirmation and refutation questions and should not be used as guide to begin your arguments. Be thorough in your answers.

Also, include both in-text citations and a Works Cited page.