

Tales of King Arthur

According to legend, King Arthur was a British ruler who lived around 500 AD. There are lots of stories about Arthur, but historians aren't sure whether he really existed or whether he's just a fictional character. This extract is based on a medieval story about how Arthur became king.

"Here's a sword," he said, holding it out to Kay. "I couldn't get yours, but..."

Kay recognized the sword immediately, and before Arthur could finish his sentence he had snatched it from him, tucked it under his own cloak and rushed off to find Sir Ector.

- 5 "Look what I've done," Kay said excitedly, when he found him. "It's the sword from the stone. I pulled it out. I must be the trueborn king."

Sir Ector gave Kay a quizzical look.

- 10 "Well, if you can do it once, you can do it again, and this time you'll have an audience," he said calmly. He insisted that they all ride straight back to the cathedral, even though he knew that meant they would miss the tournament. And every time Arthur opened his mouth to try to tell Ector what had really happened, Kay silenced him with a menacing glare. Back at the cathedral, Ector marched them straight to the stone.

"Now, put the sword back exactly where you found it, Kay," he said. Kay jumped up onto the stone and tried to thrust the sword into it, but failed miserably.

- 15 "It's strange that you could pull it out, but you can't put it back," said Ector. Kay climbed down, shamefaced.

"Now tell me where you really got it," said Ector.

"From Arthur," admitted Kay, not daring to look his father in the eye.

"And where did you get it from?" Ector asked patiently, turning to Arthur.

- 20 "From the stone, I promise," babbled Arthur. "I tried to get Kay's sword, but the door at the inn was locked, and... I knew he'd be cross, and I saw this sword and I... I didn't want him to miss the tournament, so I took it and I..."

"Calm down, Arthur," said Ector. "Now let's see if you can put it back."

Arthur took the sword from Kay and climbed up onto the stone. The blade slid back in, like a warm knife into butter. Sir Ector then climbed up next to him and tried to pull it out. He failed.

- 25 "Now it's your turn, Kay," he said. Kay jumped up and seized the handle. He pulled and yanked and heaved, but had no more luck than his father. Finally, Arthur, still unable to see what all the fuss was about, climbed up, grabbed the handle and once more effortlessly pulled the sword from the stone. When he looked down, much to his surprise, his father and brother were kneeling in front of him, heads bowed.

- 30 "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Kneeling before our king," Ector replied. "Read the words on the stone, Arthur, and you'll see that there's only one person alive who can pull out this sword, and he's our trueborn king."

1 Why did Kay pretend that he had pulled the sword from the stone?

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☐ 1 mark

2 Do you think Sir Ector believed that Kay had pulled the sword from the stone himself? Explain your answer.

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☐ 2 mark

3 Why do you think Kay couldn't "look his father in the eye" in line 17?

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☐ 2 mark

4 How does the author show that Arthur is babbling in lines 19-21?

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☐ 2 mark

5 Find and copy one simile from lines 22-29.

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☐ 1 mark

6 How do you think Arthur felt when Ector told him he was the "trueborn king" (line 32)? Explain your answer.

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☐ 2 mark

Total
out of 10

Answers

1. E.g. Because he wanted people to think that he was the "trueborn king".
2. E.g. No. Ector made Kay go to the stone with him and try to put the sword back in. This shows that Ector didn't believe Kay and wanted him to prove that he had pulled the sword out himself.
E.g. Because his father knew that he had lied about pulling the sword out of the stone. He was embarrassed that his father had found out, and maybe worried that his father would be angry with him.
E.g. He uses one long sentence with lots of commas in it, which shows that Arthur is talking quickly. He also uses "...", and repeats the phrase "and I", which shows that Arthur is stuttering and repeating himself.
"The blade slid back in, like a warm knife into butter."

Any appropriate answer. E.g. I think he felt confused and surprised. He may also have felt excited about the idea of being king and nervous about how difficult it might be.