Your Full Name

Ms. Woodliff

English III - #

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King Arthur: Death, Burial, and Reappearance. Introduction and Conclusion

Many legends have evolved from the life of the famous King Arthur of England. Because so much of the history forms a variety of stories, Arthur’s life is difficult to understand. Many questions are still asked about the events of Arthur’s death and the mysteries of his burial and future reappearance.

There are several stories about the death of King Arthur. Sir Thomas Malory claims that Arthur had a premonition of his death the night before a battle. In the dream, Arthur saw under him “a hideous deep black water” full of serpents and dragons (2). During the actual battle when Arthur was killed, a knight drew his sword after seeing a snake in the grass. A battle ensued, and Arthur was mortally wounded (3). A Latin version of Arthur’s death claims that a boy threw a poisoned spear and hit Arthur. Arthur killed the child who threw the spear, but the kind succumbed to his wound (1 35).

The true burial place of King Arthur is even more mysterious than his death. He and his wife, Guinevere, are believed to be buried between two pyramids in the Glastonbury cemetery (4). A coffin was found there that held a woman’s bones with “a golden tress of hair” still intact. A coffin was found next to this one; on it was a lead cross with the inscription “Here lies the famous King Arthur buried in the isle of Avalon” (1 132). The bones inside this coffin are said to have been of enormous size. A poet wrote “when the graves are opened, they shall marvel at the great size of the bones” (1 134).

Legends exist of Arthur still living and planning on returning to England. Richard Barber writes that Arthur is “the sleeping warrior who will one day reappear as leader” when a spell is cast to call him forth (1 128). T.H. White, author of *The Once and Future King*, believed that Arthur is with his “learned friends” in the Combination Room of the College of Life (4 192), thinking of the best way to help the human species. White hopes that Arthur will return when the world needs him and is ready to listen to reason (4 193).

So much has been written about King Arthur that it is hard to determine the truth about his death, burial, and reappearances. When all the legends about Arthur come together, many questions are posed for historians. No doubt though, everyone can develop their own ideas of Arthur’s life and death.

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