

# Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Literary Response Journal Prompts

Select one of the assignments below. Complete that assignment per the directions. This document will be placed on the class website so that you may click on the hyperlinks to access the mentioned resources.

## 1. The Man (or whatever gender you select) of Magnet Code of Conduct

One of the most lasting and memorable aspects of the Arthurian legends is the Code of Chivalry developed to bring "civilization" to England. The ideals described in the Code were emphasized by the oaths and vows that were sworn in the Knighthood ceremonies of the Middle Ages. These sacred oaths of combat were combined with the ideals of chivalry and with strict rules of etiquette and conduct. The ideals of a Code of Chivalry were publicized in the poems, ballads, writings, and other literary works of Knights authors. The wandering minstrels of the Middle Ages sang these ballads and were expected to memorize the words of long poems describing the valour and the code of chivalry followed by the Medieval knights. The Dark Age myths of Arthurian Legends featuring King Arthur, Camelot and the Knights of the Round Table further strengthen the idea of a Knights Code of Chivalry. The Arthurian legend revolves around the Code of Chivalry which was adhered to by the Knights of the Round Table - Honor, Honesty, Valor and Loyalty.

Taking the rules of conduct of Arthur's code into consideration, along with the later Codes of Chivalry below, your job is to draft a "Man of Magnet Code of Conduct": Identify ten guidelines that you think ought to guide the conduct of men of Magnet. And then write a brief explanation (a baby paragraph) on each guideline explaining how you think it is applicable in today's society and in today's school.

You're striving to identify ideals that young men should live up to. Ideals are standards of perfection or excellence taken as a model for imitation. As with any code of conduct, men's behavior will often times fall short of these ideals, but that is no reason not to strive for the ideals.

In summary, your LRJ entry should do the following:

- list ten guidelines that make up your Man of Magnet Code of Conduct
- each guideline should be based somehow on a guideline or directive of a previous Code of Chivalry
- for each guideline write a brief paragraph explaining how that guideline can be followed in everyday life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, either specifically at Magnet or in society in general.

Your response should be at least 10 paragraphs (Small paragraphs of only a few sentences are fine if they cover the topic.)-- typed, double-spaced, Arial/Times New Roman, one-inch margins. It must have your MLA heading at the top and must be printed (not emailed). It must include MLA citations of all resources used (if any used other than the lists provided within this document) at the end of your document.

### The Ten Commandments of the Code of Chivalry

From *Chivalry* by Leon Gautier

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thou shalt believe all that the Church teaches, and shalt observe all its directions.</li><li>• Thou shalt defend the Church.</li><li>• Thou shalt respect all weaknesses, and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.</li><li>• Thou shalt love the country in the which thou wast born.</li><li>• Thou shalt not recoil before thine enemy.</li><li>• Thou shalt make war against the Infidel without cessation, and without mercy.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thou shalt perform scrupulously thy feudal duties, if they be not contrary to the laws of God.</li><li>• Thou shalt never lie, and shall remain faithful to thy pledged word.</li><li>• Thou shalt be generous, and give largess to everyone.</li><li>• Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the Right and the Good against Injustice and Evil.</li></ul> |
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### The Knights Code of Chivalry

From *The Song of Roland*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To fear God and His Church</li><li>• To serve the liege lord in valour and faith</li><li>• To protect the weak &amp; defenceless</li><li>• To give succour to widows &amp; orphans</li><li>• To refrain from the wanton giving of offence</li><li>• To live by honour and for glory</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To despise pecuniary reward</li><li>• To fight for the welfare of all</li><li>• To obey those placed in authority</li><li>• To guard the honour of fellow knights</li><li>• To eschew unfairness, meanness and deceit</li><li>• To keep faith</li><li>• At all times to speak the truth</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To persevere to the end in any enterprise begun</li><li>• To respect the honour of women</li><li>• Never to refuse a challenge from an equal</li><li>• Never to turn the back upon a foe</li></ul> |
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### The Code of Chivalry

From *The Rifts: England Supplement*

- Live to serve King and Country.
- Live to defend Crown and Country and all it holds dear.
- Live one's life so that it is worthy of respect and honor.
- Live for freedom, justice and all that is good.
- Never attack an unarmed foe.
- Never use a weapon on an opponent not equal to the attack.
- Never attack from behind.
- Avoid lying to your fellow man.
- Avoid cheating.
- Avoid torture.
- Obey the law of king, country, and chivalry.

- Administer justice.
- Protect the innocent.
- Exhibit self-control.
- Show respect to authority.
- Respect women.
- Exhibit Courage in word and deed.
- Defend the weak and innocent.
- Destroy evil in all of its monstrous forms.
- Crush the monsters that steal our land and rob our people.
- Fight with honor.
- Avenge the wronged.
- Never abandon a friend, ally, or noble cause.
- Fight for the ideals of king, country, and chivalry.

- Die with valor.
- Always keep one's word of honor.
- Always maintain one's principles.
- Never betray a confidence or comrade.
- Avoid deception.
- Respect life and freedom.
- Die with honor.
- Exhibit manners.
- Be polite and attentive.
- Be respectful of host, women, and honor.
- Loyalty to country, King, honor, freedom, and the code of chivalry

## 2. Beheading – the Original Capital Punishment

Although the Green Knight instigates a beheading game, beheading itself is a form of capital punishment. In fact, beheading is the original form of capital punishment – “capital” refers to “head.” It was favored in a number of ancient and medieval societies (including in England) because it was cheap and practical. Read through the information presented at [Capital Punishment UK](#), especially the information pertaining to Britain. Then write a response – do not quote or copy! – to your discoveries. Your response should address a number of these questions. Where was it used? What crimes warranted beheading? What types of beheading were used? Who carries out the beheadings? What special skills does this person require to be successful? Why was beheading seen as a dignified way to be put to death in ancient Rome? What was the alternative capital punishment in Rome during those times? What famous historical figures were known to use beheading as a punishment in Britain? Who were some famous Britons who were beheaded? Why did they receive the death sentence? Is beheading used as a form of capital punishment by any governments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How are those countries perceived? Why do you suppose Muslim terrorists sometimes use beheading against captives?

Your response should be at least TWO pages-- typed, double-spaced, Arial/Times New Roman, one-inch margins. It must have your MLA heading at the top and must be printed (not emailed). It must include MLA citations of all resources used at the end of the document.

## 3. Chivalry

The code of conduct of the medieval knight is known as chivalry. Such conduct required the knight to swear loyalty to his lord or lady and to exhibit the [knightly virtues](#) of courage, justice, mercy, generosity, faith, nobility, and hope. From Batman to Buffy the Vampire Slayer to Harry Potter, many characters in contemporary movies, television shows, and books embody the knightly virtues on many levels. Read [this article which defines the knightly virtues](#) in contemporary terms and then compose a character study of a favorite character (from any contemporary book, movie, or TV show) as seen through the seven knightly virtues. Your reader response essay should describe what the chosen character does throughout the course of the movie/story that indicates how he or she demonstrates at least three of these virtues. The essay should describe the sacrifices the character makes in order to remain true to these ideals, and how the knightly virtues are central to the conflict of the storyline.

Your response should be at least TWO pages-- typed, double-spaced, Arial/Times New Roman, one-inch margins. It must have your MLA heading at the top and must be printed (not emailed). It must include MLA citations of all resources used at the end of the document.

## 4. Romance – A Fiction

Medieval romances relate fantastic stories of knights, their heroics, and their devotion to their king and their ladies. Imagine an adventure that one of King Arthur's knights might undertake. Write a short romance about the adventure. As you shape the main character, remember that a knight must function within the Code of Chivalry. Vivid descriptions of characters, locations, and objects make romances enjoyable to read. So, be as descriptive as possible as you tell either the whole tale or write one particular scene. Have a brief look through this [informative website on King Arthur's knights](#) – and choose one of them as your protagonist.

Your response should be at least THREE pages-- typed, double-spaced, Arial/Times New Roman, one-inch margins. It must have your MLA heading at the top and must be printed (not emailed).