

Connect to Literature

Sir Gawain and the Green

1. What Do You Think?

What is your reaction to this romance?

Comprehension Check

- 2 What challenge does the Green Knight present to Arthur and his knights?
- 3 Why does the Green Knight raise his ax three times over Gawain's neck?

Think Critically

4. In your own words, state the challenge that the Green Knight offers to the members of the Round Table.
5. Why does Gawain refuse the lady's gold ring? Why does he accept the sash?

- 6 Why do you think Gawain requests to take up the Green Knight's challenge?

THINK ABOUT

- the Green Knight's behavior
- the response of the other knights
- the code of chivalry

- 7 In your opinion, how well does Gawain fulfill the Green Knight's challenge? Use details from the poem to support your opinion.

- 8 Think about the way in which the Green Knight tests Gawain's virtues at the castle. Do you think the test is fair? Why or why not?

ROMANCE Set in a faraway time and place, a **romance** involves noble heroes who perform daring deeds according to a strict code of honor. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, for example, the noble Gawain accepts the Green Knight's deadly challenge to uphold the honor of Arthur's court. Like other medieval romances, the story is filled with extraordinary events and fantastic scenes, including this description of the Green Knight just before he addresses Sir Gawain:

*He held his head by the hair, high,
in his hand;
And the stranger sat there as
steadily in his saddle
As a man entirely unbarmed,
although he was headless. . . .*

- 12 Below are some conventions of Medieval Romances. For each one give an example of how the convention was found in Gawain.

- a. Medieval romances convey a sense of the supernatural.
- b. Medieval romances give a glamorous portrayal of castle life.
- c. Chivalric ideals—bravery, honor, courtesy, fairness to enemies, respect for women—guide the characters.
- d. Medieval romances are imbued with adventure.

Extend Interpretations

- 9 **What If?** What might have happened if Gawain had refused to accept the sash? Explain your answer.

- 10 **Comparing Texts** Compare and contrast Gawain and Beowulf. In your opinion, who is the more honorable **character**?

- 11 **Connect to Life** King Arthur and his knights were judged by their conduct, specifically by how well they followed the code of chivalry. Do you think today's leaders are judged by a specific code of conduct? If so, what is it?

- 13 **REVIEW CONFLICT** A **conflict** is a struggle between opposing forces that moves a plot forward. What would you say are the key conflicts in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*? Note whether they are **external** or **internal**.