

Legends are anonymous traditional stories about the past. Some legends include strange events that take place in exotic settings. Medieval writers sometimes added romance to legends through vivid descriptions, plot twists, and descriptions of characters' reactions and motives. Some legends, inspired by real events and people, such as King Arthur and his knights, often feature:

- **Heroic figures** and **memorable deeds**
- **Quests**, or searches for something important, **contests**, and **tests**
- **Patterns**, such as events repeated three times

A Read each item. Write *legend* if it is a legend. Write *no legend* if it is not. If it is a legend, circle the words that describe one test or contest.

1. _____ Arthur didn't move. He did not want the two men to hear him. It was enough that he could see them, hear them talking through the paper-thin door. The sweat began to roll down his forehead—a telltale sign. He felt around for his cell phone in his jacket pocket. Carefully, quietly, he began to dial 911.
2. _____ "Therefore I ask in this court but a Christmas jest, for that it is Yule-tide, and New Year, and there are here many fain for sport. If any one in this hall holds himself so hardy, so bold both of blood and brain, as to dare strike me one stroke for another, I will give him as a gift this axe, which is heavy enough, in sooth, to handle as he may list, and I will abide the first blow, unarmed as I sit. If any knight be so bold as to prove my words let him come swiftly to me here, and take this weapon, I quit claim to it, he may keep it as his own, and I will abide his stroke, firm on the floor. Then shalt thou give me the right to deal him another, the respite of a year and a day shall he have. Now haste, and let see whether any here dare say aught."

B Circle the letter of the best answer.

What makes legends different from other stories about famous people?

- A. Legends tell the true story of modern-day heroes.
- B. Legends are written by famous people about someone in the past.
- C. Legends tell the story of heroes and memorable deeds from the past.
- D. Legends never include romantic elements as part of the story.

A For each question, write the word that tells whether it describes a

- deed
- contest
- pattern
- quest

1. _____ The hero must climb a mountain and sail a treacherous sea to win the heart of a lady.
2. _____ The hero managed to knock the opposing jousting off his horse with his lance.
3. _____ The hero must search for clues in a well, a cave, and in a raging river.
4. _____ The hero saves the village by chasing away an ogre.

B What elements typical of legends does this excerpt from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* show? Write them on the line.

For he was clad all in green, with a straight coat, and a mantle above; all decked and lined with fur was the cloth and the hood that was thrown back from his locks and lay on his shoulders. Hose had he of the same green, and spurs of bright gold with silken fastenings richly worked; and all his vesture was verily green. Around his waist and his saddle were bands with fair stones set upon silken work, 'twere too long to tell of all the trifles that were embroidered thereon—birds and insects in gay gauds of green and gold. All the trappings of his steed were of metal of like enamel, even the stirrups that he stood in stained of the same, and stirrups and saddle-bow alike gleamed and shone with green stones. Even the steed on which he rode was of the same hue, a green horse, great and strong, and hard to hold, with brodered bridle, meet for the rider.