

## *The Faerie Queene Study Guide for Book One.*

**Redcrosse Knight** the knight (sometimes called the "patron") of Holiness, one of the virtues Spenser represents allegorically in his poem. He is identified also as St. George, and thus as the patron saint of England. Book One of *The Faerie Queene* is primarily his story--the story of his efforts to exemplify holiness.

**Una** is "his" lady. He is supposed to be going with her to rescue her parents and her people from a terrible dragon.

### **Redcrosse Knight's foes are:**

**Errour**--a serpent/dragon, half reptile, half woman; her coils enwrap and confuse Redcrosse and he can only defeat her by adding "faith to his force".

**Archimago**--an evil magician who stands for the deception of the Roman church;

**Duessa**--the false temptress he accompanies when he is misled.

**SansFoy**--a Saracen knight, who illustrates "Faithlessness" and is thus Redcrosse Knight's opposite.

**SansJoy**--another Saracen.

**SansLoy**--Lawlessness, the final Saracen.

**Lucifera**--who stands as the leader of the seven deadly sins.

**Orgoglio**--a giant, who may represent willful rebellion from God

**Despayre**--who stands for despair, the loss of hope (which is a virtue necessary for salvation).

The **Dragon**--who may represent Satan, the serpent/dragon of the Bible's Revelation, etc.

### **Along the way, Redcrosse and Una receive help from:**

**Arthur**--the overall hero of the big romance; he intercedes here to help free Redcrosse.

The House of **Holinesse**--where many allegorical figures help "heal" Redcrosse's injured spirit.

**Satyrane**--a wild man, who saves Una from SansLoy. He stands for the natural goodness of human nature.

### **Synopsis of the narrative**

#### **Proem--**

Sets up the poem, invokes the muse, pays homage to Queen Elizabeth who will be figured in the Fairy Queen.

#### **Canto One--**

The main heroes introduced. Redcrosse's armor. The fight with Error--defeated by faith and RC's disgust. Archimago deceives RC and Una. Sends a false dream (through the gates of Ivory--a classical allusion) and uses magic to create a false Una.

#### **Canto Two--**

Eventually, RC abandons Una because he thinks she is wanton. Una tries to follow him but can't catch him. Archimago pretends to be Redcrosse. Meanwhile Redcrosse fights SansFoy, takes charge of Fidessa (really Duessa) and takes the shield of faithless SansFoy, and hears the story of Fradubio, who suffers (transformed to a tree, similar to events in Dante and other predecessors) for having loved Duessa.

#### **Canto Three—**

Wandering Una is approached by a Lion—perhaps representing righteous power—which protects her for a time. Passing through the home of Coreca and Abessa (Catholic figures) and as Kirkrapine (the looter of churches) is killed, Una and her lion meet Archimago disguised as Redcrosse. Meeting SansLoy, who seeks to avenge SansFoy's death, defeats Archimago, slays the lion, and captures Una.

#### **Canto Four—**

Duessa leads Redcrosse to the House of Pride (notice its problems). They meet the queen, Lucifera and witness a parade of the deadly sins. SansJoy wants to avenge his brother's death on Redcrosse as well. They prepare for a joust.