

Reading Questions: *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT* Fitts 1-2

Be sure to note line numbers for your answers.

1. When Arthur is first introduced, how is he described? What vow has Arthur made to himself out of pride? How does this interfere with the guest's dinner?

2. When the poet describes the strange intruder, what traits and descriptive details does he note as unusual about this weird knight? Is there anything significant about the order in which he notices them? Explain.

The poet also lists some of the things the knight is *not* carrying or wearing. Why might the narrator do this?

Later we see the color of his eyes. What are they and why?

3. What is the Green Knight pretending to be uncertain about? Why is that obviously strange, given the arrangement of the feast? Why is that an insult to King Arthur?

4. Describe the terms of the game the Green Knight offers to play. What purpose does the Green Knight's appear to have?

5. In what ways is Arthur rising to the game challenge a really bad idea politically when it comes to the welfare of Camelot?

6. Note Gawain's requests and his language in lines 341-60. He asks permission to play the game instead, and he asks permission to get up and leave the table, and he asks permission to stand by the king (if such an action does not displease Gwenevere). What do these requests and his diction reveal about Gawain's character? How is this a foil or contrast for the Green Knight's behavior at the party?

7. What does Sir Gawain want to know about the Green Knight before he strikes the blow? What does his question reveal about Sir Gawain's understanding of the Green Knight's powers, which contrasts with King Arthur's understanding?

8. What is the reaction of the courtiers to the Green Knight's severed head? Explain how this might be so.

9. What do the following details reveal about the culture of the Round Table?

What the Green Knight says will happen if Sir Gawain does not show up.

What Arthur tells Queen Gwenevere when she looks horrified at what just happened.

What Arthur asks Gawain to do with the ax-blade he has won.

10. What is the poet suggesting by his description of the seasons and of time in the beginning of Fit II?

What is the role of color in Sir Gawain's preparations as he sets out from Camelot?

What emblem or design appears on the front of Gawain's shield? What does this symbolize?

In what wayS does the court react to Sir Gawain's departure? Sir Gawain?

11. What hardships does Gawain endure on his quest?

12. How do the circumstances of the castle on Christmas day reflect the scene at King Arthur's court a year earlier?