LEGENDS OF KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE
500 A.D. When the Roman Empire fell in Britain, there was probably a British general who resisted the invading hordes of barbarians. Legends of this general evolved into tales of a king who ruled during this turbulent time.
Throughout the Anglo-Saxon time period, legends of Arthur remained alive.

But it wasn’t until knights and chivalry came to Britain that the stories took their most famous form.

1066 A.D.—William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy, crossed the English Channel and conquered Britain.

This ended the Anglo-Saxon time period in Britain and marked the beginning of the Medieval Age.
The Battle of Hastings
1066 A.D.
THE NORMAN INVASION
1066

Several new ideas were brought into Britain

**Stonework:** William forced lords to build their castles out of stone

**Feudalism:** Instituted the system of Feudalism (High king, lord, knights, peasants)

**Chivalry:** Knights were mounted warriors who operated by a strict code of conduct, subjecting themselves to the king and the church

**The French Language**
Feudalism

Under this system the King divided up his land among his lords for them to operate. In turn they owed him their loyalty and the use of their knights.

These lords granted lands to knights, who in turn had to fight for the lords.

Peasants lived in squalid huts on the lands of the lords and knights, working the land in order to keep part of the crop for themselves.
CASTLES

Feudalism caused the lords to prosper, and soon there were over 500 stone castles in England.

Most castles came with the newest defenses:

- Drawbridge
- Portcullis
- Arrow Loops
- Moat
- Machicolations = overhangs through which projectiles could be dropped or boiling liquids poured
- Dungeons and Oubliettes (or deep pits filled with adders and toads)
Defending the Castle

Siege: Surrounding your enemy’s castle, attempting to starve them out or fight your way in.

Sieges were much more common than large battles. Some castles kept a year’s worth of food and supplies on hand in case of a siege.

For a siege to be withstood the castle well had to stay active. One siege ended very quickly after the well dried up and the castle-dwellers resorted to drinking the blood of their horses and each other’s urine.

Castle Weaknesses:
- Siege towers
- Filling the moat
- Trebuchet attack
- Grappling up the wall
- Sneaking up the latrine
LE MORTE D’ARTHUR
(The Death of Arthur)

The most famous version of the King Arthur legends

Set the stories firmly in the medieval time period

Combined many of the previous legends into one long version of the life of Arthur

Written in 1485 by Sir Thomas Malory, an actual knight

Malory wrote Le Morte D’Arthur in prison, while serving time for charges of rape and theft
ARTHUR

King of Britain

Founder of the Round Table

Wielder of Excalibur

His reign meant a period of justice and peace for Britain

Described as a medieval Christian king
MERLIN

Prophet and magician

Born without a father

Sired by a devil

Arthur’s mentor from the time he was crowned king to his union with Guinevere

Symbolizes the old pagan past of Britain
EXCALIBUR
King Arthur’s sword
Given to him by the Lady of the Lake
Symbolizes his right to rule
GUINEVERE

Wife of King Arthur and Queen of Britain

The Round Table came as part of her dowry
LANCELOT

King Arthur’s best knight

Raised by the Lady of the Lake in her magical underwater palace

Example of the ultimate knight, the epitome of chivalry
MORGAN le FAY

Le Fay means “of the faeries”

King Arthur’s half-sister

Evil sorceress

Constantly tries to usurp Arthur and defeat his knights
MORDRED

King Arthur’s illegitimate son

Becomes his father’s enemy
CAMELOT

Arthur’s castle and capital city

Home of the Round Table

Symbolizes the ideal society based on the concepts of chivalry

It is a fictional city, but it has been identified with the ruins of Cadbury Castle in Somerset, England.
Shield discovered at Cadbury Hill