

EXPLORING SYMBOLISM IN THOMAS MALORY'S LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

Otamurodova Moxichexrabonu Otamurod kizi

Research Scholar, 1st-year Master's Student Asia International
University, Bukhara, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT: This article explores the major symbolic elements in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, one of the most influential works of medieval Arthurian literature. The study examines key symbols such as the Sword in the Stone, Excalibur, the Holy Grail, the Round Table, and Camelot, highlighting their moral, spiritual, and political significance. Symbolism in Malory's work illustrates the ideals of chivalry, divine guidance, human weakness, and the eventual decline of Arthur's kingdom.

KEYWORDS: *Le Morte d'Arthur*, symbolism, medieval literature, Malory, Arthurian legend, chivalry, Grail, Camelot

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) is a foundational text in Arthurian literature, combining heroic adventure, Christian moral lessons, and political allegory. One of the most prominent literary features of the text is its rich use of symbolism, which serves to shape character development, convey moral and spiritual themes, and reflect the political ideals of the time.

This article aims to analyze the central symbolic elements in the text, illustrating how they reinforce the themes of chivalry, kingship, and moral struggle while foreshadowing the collapse of Camelot. The Sword in the Stone represents legitimacy, divine selection, and the principle that true kingship is granted by God, not inherited through lineage alone. Arthur's ability to pull the sword signifies moral purity and divine favor, emphasizing the spiritual dimension of leadership. Critics interpret this act as a symbolic affirmation of divine authority rather than a mere display of physical strength.

Excalibur, given to Arthur by the Lady of the Lake, symbolizes authority, martial strength, and the responsibilities of kingship. Its scabbard carries deeper meaning, representing restraint, wisdom, and divine protection. Losing the scabbard foreshadows Arthur's downfall, signifying the weakening of spiritual guidance and moral protection around the king. The Holy Grail symbolizes divine grace, spiritual enlightenment, and moral perfection. Galahad, the purest knight, successfully completes the Grail quest, while Lancelot fails due to his human flaws. The Grail episode underscores the tension between earthly chivalric ideals and spiritual aspiration, highlighting the moral and spiritual challenges of knighthood.

The Round Table represents unity, equality, and fellowship among Arthur's knights. Its circular shape symbolizes fairness but also the vulnerability of ideal institutions, which can be destroyed by betrayal, pride, and moral failure. The collapse of the Round Table fellowship illustrates the fragility of even the most noble human structures. Camelot functions as a symbolic utopia, representing harmony, justice, and the highest ideals of chivalric culture. Its eventual fall signifies the temporary nature of ideal societies and reflects historical concerns about political instability in late medieval England.

The love affair between Lancelot and Queen Guinevere symbolizes the tension between personal desire and social duty. Their relationship destabilizes the Round Table and Camelot, highlighting human weakness and moral compromise. This serves as a symbolic reminder of the consequences of failing to uphold ethical and chivalric codes. Symbolism in *Le Morte d'Arthur* allows Malory to explore both the ideals and fragility of chivalric culture. Objects, places, and relationships in the narrative represent moral values, divine guidance, and spiritual challenges. At the same time, they emphasize the inevitable decline of Arthur's kingdom due to human imperfection, betrayal, and moral failure.

CONCLUSION

The symbolic elements in *Le Morte d'Arthur* are central to understanding the text's thematic and moral depth. Excalibur, the Holy Grail, the Round Table, Camelot, and the Sword in the Stone illustrate key principles of kingship, chivalric morality, and spiritual aspiration. Through these symbols, Malory portrays the rise and fall of Camelot, making the work both a heroic romance and a profound commentary on moral and political ideals.

REFERENCES

1. Brewer, D. S. *Malory's Arthur: The English Morte Darthur*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Vinaver, Eugène. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Oxford University Press.
3. Lynch, Andrew. *Malory's Grail Quest: Spirituality and Symbolism*. *Medieval Studies Journal*.
4. Hodges, Kenneth. "Symbol and Structure in *Le Morte d'Arthur*." *Arthuriana Journal*.
5. Field, Rosalind. *Romance and History in Malory's Arthurian World*.