***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: Study Guide Questions**

**Is Honor worth dying for?** Medieval knights were expected to follow a code of chivalry that represented a combination of Christian and military ideals, including faith, modesty, loyalty, courtesy, bravery, and honor. Perhaps the most important virtue for a knight in the age of chivalry was what is called “**trawthe**” which meant a knight should not only be faithful in keeping his word but in keeping his vows taken at the ceremony of knighthood. The characteristics of a medieval romance include: idealized or larger-than-life characters, a hero who faces a challenge or test, exotic settings and supernatural/magical elements, and hidden or mistaken identity.

**Lines 1-58:**

1. What details in lines 1-23 make the Green Knight a larger-than-life figure?

2. In lines 37-45, how does the Green Knight’s greeting appeal to King Arthur’s sense of honor?

**Lines 59-94:**

3. What is the Green Knight’s attitude as he presents his challenge to the knights?

4. What motives or emotions may lie beneath the surface of the Green Knight’s cordial exterior?

5. Why does the Green Knight taunt Arthur and his knights in lines 88-94?

**Lines 120-134:**

6. According to Gawain, why should he take King Arthur’s place?

7. What details in Gawain’s response show his obedience to the rules of chivalry?

8. Gawain’s self-description in lines 131-134 seems falsely modest. Would a modern-day hero describe himself in this way? Why or why not?

**Lines 160-180:**

9. Reread the Green Knight’s parting words in lines 172-180. Is Gawain’s sense of honor so extreme that it becomes foolishly self-destructive?

10. Which characteristics of medieval romance are reflected in lines 161-174?

**Lines 190-208:**

11. State two reasons why the lady might be trying to seduce Gawain.

12. What might Gawain gain by giving in to this temptation? What might he gain by resisting?

13. “Gleaming gold” (line 205), “glistening green” (line 84) and “Tied around her fair tunic” (line 204) are examples of what literary element? This literary element is used throughout the poem to create a rhythmic or “musical” effect.

**Lines 209-275:**

14. In lines 209-217, what does Gawain’s refusal of gifts suggest about his character?

15. Reread lines 227-236. Why is Gawain distressed when he learns about the sash’s magical powers? What reason or reasons would Gawain have for accepting the gift of the sash? In what way would accepting the sash be dishonest?

16. In lines 247-260, is it a lack of honor that makes Gawain flinch? Why or why not?

17. Reread lines 271-275. Why does the Green Knight stop his axe from falling a second time?

18. What is ironic about Sir Gawain’s acceptance of the sash from the lady of the castle? What happens to Gawain when the Green Knight swings his ax the third time?

19. Why is Gawain happy after he is cut by the blade? How does Gawain’s behavior in this scene help define what it means to be a hero?

**Lines 324-339:**

20. Why did the Green Knight cut Gawain on the third stroke after feinting twice?

21. Did Gawain really fail the Green Knight by not revealing the secret of the green sash? If so, how severe a failure was it? Was the punishment proportionate to the failure?

**Lines 340-392:**

22. Paraphrase lines 357-365. What ideals of chivalry does Gawain believe he has betrayed?

23. Reread lines 366-392. What judgment does the Green Knight pass on Gawain? How does Gawain react? What is the resolution? What is the resolution that results from this final scene?

Name:

Date:

Period:

*from* Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

**Text Analysis**

**Medieval Romance**

A medieval romance is a narrative that involves heroic deeds, idealized love, exotic settings, and supernatural events. Many of the best-known romances celebrate King Arthur and his knights.

Directions:  Record an example of each characteristic of medieval romance listed in the chart.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Characteristics of Medieval Romance | Example |
| idealized or larger-than-life characters |  |
| hero who faces a challenge or test |  |
| exotic settings and supernatural or magical elements |  |
| hidden or mistaken identity |  |