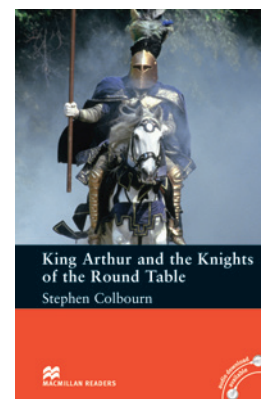


## King Arthur

## BEFORE YOU READ

**1 Look at the cover of the book and read the descriptions. Which do you think is the correct description?**

- a This is the true story of how a young man called Arthur became King of Britain in the 14th century.
- b The stories of King Arthur are more than a thousand years old. They are stories; they are not history.
- c King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table is a traditional poem about the adventures of a knight.



## WHILE YOU READ

**2** 3.39 **Read the extract from *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. Was your answer to Exercise 1 correct?**

For fifteen summers and winters, there was no king in the south and the people suffered because there was no order in the land. Then, one night, Merlin the Magician came secretly to Winchester. He went to Winchester Cathedral – the great church in the town – and spoke to the Archbishop.

‘Tell all the people to come to the Cathedral on Sunday,’ he said.

On Sunday, the knights and the people of Winchester came to the cathedral.

They prayed for peace and a good king. And while they were praying, they heard a sound like music outside the cathedral.

The people went outside. In the field by the church, they saw a large stone. The stone was half as big as a man. A bright, metal sword was standing in the stone.

The people could see only the handle of the sword.

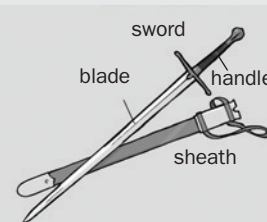
The archbishop looked at the stone and the sword.

Words were written on the stone in gold letters:

THE MAN WHO PULLS  
THIS SWORD FROM THE  
STONE IS THE TRUE KING OF ALL BRITAIN.

Then one by one, the men tried to pull the sword from the stone. All the knights of Winchester tried, but they all failed. The sword did not move.

‘The true king is not here today,’ said the archbishop. ‘I will send messages through all the lands of Britain. Soon, everyone will know about this sword. Anyone who wants to pull the sword out of the stone must come here at Christmas. On New Year’s Day, we will have a contest. We will see who can draw the sword from the stone.’

**HOW TO**

recognise and understand similes



See page 30.

All the knights of Britain came to gather at Winchester. They put their tents in the fields near the cathedral. It was winter and very cold so the men lit fires to keep warm.

Sir Ector was an old, brave and honest knight. He came to Winchester with his two sons – Kay and Arthur. The three men rode their horses towards the cathedral. It was New Year’s Day and they were going to the gathering of the knights.

Kay was eighteen years old and ready to become a knight. But only a king can give a man this title. And there was no king in the land.

Arthur was nearly sixteen years old. He did not look like his brother, Kay. Kay was dark-haired. But Arthur had fair hair, which was almost the colour of gold.

Arthur was taller and stronger than his older brother. Kay stopped his horse. Then he put his hand on his

sheath and felt for his sword. But the sheath was empty. ‘I have forgotten my sword,’ he said to Arthur. ‘I helped father to put on his armour but I forgot to put my own sword in my sheath.’

‘I will ride back to our tent,’ said Arthur. ‘The knights are gathering near the cathedral. Go there. I will fetch your sword and bring it to you.’

‘Ride quickly,’ said Kay.

So Arthur rode his horse back across the field. Then, in the middle of the field, he saw the stone and the sword. The bright sunshine shone on the sword.

‘No-one is using this sword,’ Arthur thought. ‘I will borrow it for my brother Kay.’ Then the young man pulled the sword from the stone and took it to his brother.

Arthur did not know why the sword was in the stone.

## King Arthur

But Kay knew about the sword and the other knights knew too. They all gathered around Kay and Arthur.

'Who gave you this sword?' asked a knight. 'What are you doing with it?'

'Arthur, this sword does not belong to you,' said Sir Ector. 'Put the sword back in the stone. The sword belongs to the true king.'

All the knights watched as Arthur put the sword back into the stone.

'Kay,' said Sir Ector. 'Draw the sword from the stone.' So Kay put his hand around the handle of the sword and pulled. But the sword did not move. Then all the other knights tried to pull the sword out of the stone, but it did not move.

'Arthur,' said Sir Ector. 'Draw the sword from the stone.'

Arthur put his hand on the sword and drew the sword from the stone easily. Then he raised the sword above his head and the metal flashed brightly in the sunlight. Everyone could see that Arthur held the sword.

Sir Ector got off his horse. He drew his own sword from its sheath and knelt down on the ground. He lowered his head and held the handle of a sword towards Arthur.

'Arthur,' said Ector. 'You are the true king of all the land and I am your servant.'

Arthur was astonished. 'Father, put your sword away,' he said.

'Arthur. You must know the truth,' said Sir Ector. 'I am not your father. Merlin the magician brought you to me more than fifteen summers ago when you were only a few days old. 'Take this child into your home,' Merlin told me. 'The boy's name is Arthur. Take care of him. Arthur and Kay will be brothers.'

When they heard these words, everyone knelt down. Arthur was astonished and could not speak.

Three months passed. At the beginning of spring, Arthur was crowned king in Winchester Cathedral. When the Archbishop put the crown on his head, all the people shouted, 'LONG LIVE THE KING!'

## AFTER YOU READ

**3 Copy the organiser. Then make notes about the characters, places and objects that appear in the extract. Use the notes to retell the story in your own words.**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_


Characters

Places

Objects

**4 Write the answers to the questions in your own words.**

- 1 In what ways are Arthur and Kay different?
- 2 Why does Sir Ector tell Arthur to put the sword back in the stone?
- 3 Which part of the story does the picture show?

**5  3.40 Listen to an audio extract of one of the most famous parts of the legend. Who gives Arthur the sword and what must he do with it one day?**

**6 Read about *King Arthur* and answer the questions.**

Many of the characters and events from the *King Arthur* stories have been used in other books, plays, video games, TV series and films. In *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, Gandalf the Wizard is based on Merlin the Magician. In the *Star Wars* films, the Jedi Knights are based on the Knights of the Round Table.

- 1 Can you think of other examples in which similar characters and events from *King Arthur* have been used?
- 2 The people and events in legends often change over time. Why?
- 3 Which myths and legends are associated with your country? In what ways are they similar or different to King Arthur?

## HOW TO

take notes

See page 10.

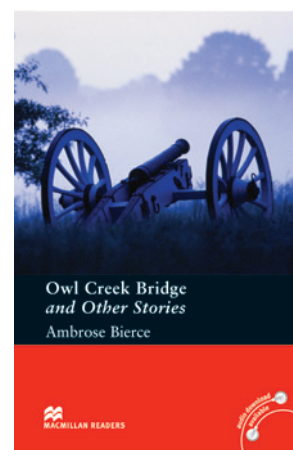


## An Adventure at Brownville

## BEFORE YOU READ

- 1  3.41 Read about the author of *Owl Creek Bridge and Other Stories*. What do you think his short story *An Adventure at Brownville* might be about?

Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce was an American journalist and writer. When the American Civil War began in 1861, he became an officer in the Union Army. His stories about the American Civil War made him famous. Bierce admired the American writer, Edgar Allan Poe. He liked Poe's stories about ghosts, horror and mystery. Many of Bierce's own stories are about strange mysteries and ghosts.



## WHILE YOU READ

- 2  3.42 Read the extract from *An Adventure at Brownville* and check your answer to Exercise 1.

There was only one school in Brownville and I was the only teacher. Brownville was a small town and had few young people, but many visitors stayed there in the summer.

Brownville has some of the finest views in the state of California. The town lies between hills that are covered in beautiful, colourful trees. In the hills, the air is fresh and clear. Many visitors came to Brownville to improve their health. They walked on the hills and breathed the good, clean air.

I saw many of these visitors because I lived in a boarding house. In summer, the house was full of guests and I talked to most of them. I ate breakfast and supper in the boarding house and spent the rest of the day at the school.

The school was not far away. It was on the other side of a hill. The distance by road was about one and a half miles, but I knew a shorter way. I could walk over the top of the hill in fifteen minutes. There was a path that ran through the forest on the hill.

I came back along this forest path late one evening. It was the last day of term. Tomorrow, the students' vacations would begin. I had stayed late at the school because I had been writing reports.

Suddenly I heard voices. One was a woman's voice, and she sounded angry. The second voice belonged to a man. It was a deep and musical voice — the

voice of a singer. I could not see who was speaking, but I could hear the words clearly.

'Don't threaten me!' the man said. 'You can do nothing. Don't try to change anything, or you will both suffer.'

'What do you mean?' said the woman's voice angrily. It was a cultivated voice — she spoke clearly and well. 'Do you mean that you'll murder us?'

It was almost dark now, but suddenly I saw the two people among the trees. They were standing on the path. The man was tall and slim. He seemed to be wearing black clothes. But there were too many shadows and I could not see clearly.

The woman wore a pale grey dress. They did not see me.

As I watched, the woman knelt on the ground in front of the man. She held her hands together in front of her face. Was she begging for the man's help? Or was she praying that he would not hurt her? I did not like this scene. There was trouble here. I stepped behind a large tree.

When I looked at the path again, the man and woman had disappeared. I walked on until I saw the light of the lamps shining from the windows of the boarding house. The scene of the man and the woman in the forest stayed in my mind. It had made me feel unhappy and uncomfortable.

I saw some new guests at breakfast the next morning. A young woman sat at a table opposite mine, but she was not the woman who I had seen last night.

Then a younger lady entered the dining room. The two young women looked very similar. And they were both extremely pretty.

When the second young lady spoke, I recognised her voice immediately. I had heard it in the forest. The two ladies were sisters. I guessed that they were about 18 and 20 years old.

I finished my coffee and left the dining room quickly. I did not see the tall, slim man, but I heard him. He was in the garden of the boarding house. As I had guessed, he was a singer. He was practising his singing. He was singing 'La donna é mobile' — a song from Verdi's opera, *Rigoletto*.

The singer had a very good, strong voice. Maybe it was too good. Why was he in a simple boarding house in Brownville and singing in this way? I walked away quickly.

## HOW TO



infer meaning when you read

See page 62.

## An Adventure at Brownville

When I returned to the boarding house later, I saw the elder sister. She was standing in the garden with the singer. He was dressed in black clothes. His back was turned towards me, so I could not see his face.

The singer was talking easily to the young woman. I guessed that they knew each other well. When I came into the garden, he stopped talking and turned around. He looked straight at my face.

The man was not young. I guessed that he was about 50 years old. His face was extremely handsome. His hair was thick and black – as black as the clothes that he wore. And the clothes were

very fine. They were smart, fashionable and well made. They looked expensive. He could not have bought clothes like these in Brownville. I have seen pictures of opera houses in the fashionable cities of Europe. This man reminded me of the men in those pictures.

The man looked at me as if he knew the thoughts in my head. Did he know what I was *thinking*? The expression on his face was not angry or frightening. But I suddenly felt afraid. Why? I could not explain it. I only knew that I was afraid of this dark and handsome man. He was dangerous. I did not like him.

## AFTER YOU READ

### 3 a Copy the organiser. Then make notes for the three different scenes in the extract.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3
Time of day:	Time of day:	Time of day:
Location:	Location:	Location:
Events:	Events:	Events:
Key sentence:	Key sentence:	Key sentence:

### b Use your notes to help you write a short summary of the extract.

### 4 Write the answers to the questions in your own words.

- How would you describe Brownville?
- The narrator says that maybe the singer's voice is 'too good'. What does he mean?
- Why does the narrator feel unhappy and uncomfortable at the end of the extract?

### 5 a Look at the illustration from the book. What do you think happens next?

**b**  **3.43** Listen to the next part of the story and check your answer to 5a. Why did the girls come to Brownville?

### 6 Read the five tips for writing a short story and answer the questions.

- Describe the setting quickly. ☐
- Make sure the reader can identify with the narrator or a character. ☐
- Describe the events of your story quickly. ☐
- Create conflict and include exciting or frightening situations. ☐
- Build your story to a climax. ☐

- Which of the tips are covered in *An Adventure at Brownville*? Tick (✓) them.
- What are the main differences between writing a short story and a novel?
- What do you think happens in the rest of the story? Would you like to read more to find out?

### HOW TO

make notes for a summary

See page 74.

