

Sir gawain and the green knight

Literature



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From the very beginning of the poem, the reader notices the strong genre of romance underlying the work in Fitt 1. It begins with the legends explaining the history of famous battles and legendary heroes " and when this Britain was built by this brave noble, Here bold men bred, in battle exulting." This chivalry of the court is evident in the dinner itself " Jousted in jollity these gentle knights." The feast shows the wonders of the court and the men who are part of it, thus playing on the reader's idea of romance and chivalry. The dressing of Guinevere is described in abundant detail; a clear image is drawn into the reader's minds of her " splendid silks at the sides" and " Brilliantly embroidered with the best gems." The entire description adds to the romance vein running throughout the poem. Also stated are the brave tales of adventures of " momentous marvel that he might believe." Thus, in the very opening, the reader is given an opulent feast, men desiring adventure and bravado coupled with women dressed in lavish detail: all perfect elements of an Arthurian romance. Chivalry is a strong undertone in Fitt 2. It portrays Sir Gawain as " Like purified gold, Sir Gawain was known for his goodness." This comparison to gold draws images of alchemy which use gold as a symbol of divinity. Another aspect is the readiness with which Gawain is ready to undertake his challenge with the Green Knight. Despite knowing the dangers lying in his way, he continues with moral idealism. Not only does Gawain accept the challenge out of a sense of chivalric duty to Arthur but continues to fulfill his part of the challenge with the same sense of chivalry, living up to the Knight's opinion that Arthur's men are " The most warlike, the worthiest the world has bred." In Fitt 3, Gawain is seen overcome by the passion of lust. He is torn between her lady's appeal to his sense of chivalry and his sense of chivalry to Christianity. However, the poet shows chivalry to <https://assignbuster.com/sir-gawain-and-the-green-knight/>

prevail as Christian righteousness protects Gawain from " But the danger might have been great / Had Mary not watched her knight!" The end shows that the poet has no aim to recreate the idea of romance and chivalry, in fact choosing to question it. Gawain's disillusionment is evident in the play and is further emphasized on his return and his lack of conviction in chivalry and the reveling of Arthur's court.

Jane Austen's work is an example of contemporary romance and chivalry that exists. Using a modern style, Austen's heroines in books like " Persuasion" were strong and independent creatures who needed their own wit and intelligence to survive rather than the pursuit of their male counterparts. Chivalry was just as strong an element in contemporary literature and a rich vein in Austen's work.

The poem draws on the idea of strong English chivalry rooted in Arthurian romance and best understood by an audience who knows the underlying meanings behind this concept (Larrington).