



# **Le Morte d'Arthur: The Book of King Arthur and of his Noble Knights of the Round Table (Volume 1)**

*Sir Thomas Malory*

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The most famous English-language compilation of Arthurian legends ever issued.

First published in 1485, it was one of the last major books to be published in Britain before the introduction of the printing press by William Caxton.

Le Morte d'Arthur was also one of the first books to be published by Caxton, who also acted as editor for the work.

The storyline, drawn partly from older Latin, Welsh, French, German, Norse and even Dutch epics, takes place in Britain and France during the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

King Arthur, a legendary Celtic warrior-king, serves as a symbol for the final defeat of Rome, and also the emergence of the Medieval Courtly culture. Other events in the narrative take place in Rome and the Tigris-Euphrates river basin.

Originally titled *The hoole booke of kyng Arthur & of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table*, the author divided the text into eight books, each dealing with a particular theme.

Caxton broke these up further into twenty-one books. The themes and books are:

Book I: The birth and rise of Arthur: "From the Marriage of King Uther unto King Arthur that Reigned after Him and Did Many Battles" (Caxton I–IV).

Book II: King Arthur's war against the Romans: "The Noble Tale Between King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor of Rome" (Caxton V).

Book III: The book of Lancelot: "The Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lac" (Caxton VI).

Book IV: The book of Gareth (brother of Gawain): "The Tale of Sir Gareth" (Caxton VII).

Book V: Tristan and Isolde: "The First and Second Book of Sir Tristrams de Lyons" (Caxton VIII-XII).

Book VI: The Quest for the Holy Grail: "The Noble Tale of the Sangreal" (Caxton XIII-XVII).

Book VII: The affair between Lancelot and Guinevere: "Sir Launcelot and Queen Gwynevere" (Caxton XVIII-XIX).

Book VIII: The breaking of the Knights of the Round Table and the death of Arthur: "Le Morte D'Arthur" (Caxton XX-XXI).

This Volume I of *Le Morte d'Arthur* contains Caxton's original introduction to the work, in which he explains how he came into possession of the manuscript and his reasons for editing the work.

Caxton's Books I-IX are contained in Volume I.

Volume II contains Books X-XXI.

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