

# Gareth and Lynette

## 1. ABOUT WORDS AND WORD ORIGINS

## 2. VOCABULARY AND EXERCISES

### Exercise 1.3

1. marauder
2. hover
3. scamper
4. doughty
5. redress
6. cleave
7. vouch for
8. disdainful
9. flit
10. relinquish

## 3. READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

When completing questions that involve vocabulary, students may be tempted to give a definition that they know rather than using one that fits the context of the sentence. Students should always go back to the passage in and insert words that fit.

1. b
2. a
3. e
4. c
5. b
6. a
7. c
8. d
9. e
10. d

## 1. QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. How is Gareth characterized or portrayed in Tennyson's work? Find specific narrative and descriptive passages to support your answer. How does this depiction support the plot and theme?

*Presented as a strong, independent and eager young man, Gareth endures the scorn of Lynette to serve the king. In the beginning of the story, Gareth is imagining himself in a heroic role, which is typical of adolescent boys. He perseveres in humility*

*and loyalty to his king, and it is through his humility and willingness to fight against evil that he is able to approach boy-knight dressed up in the garb of death and defeat him.*

2. How is Gareth's mother characterized in the work? Is she typical of mothers in the way they treat their sons? How does her concern and love for Gareth prevent him from doing great things?

*Gareth's mother is characterized as doting on her youngest boy, Gareth. She has forbidden her little boy to go to Arthur's court because she is lonely and desires his companionship. She also fears that he may injure himself in the court games and urges him to "follow the deer." However, her reluctance to let him go prevents Gareth from doing the greatest service than any baron or baron's son can do in the kingdom and that is to serve Arthur. Considering the fact that Arthur is a Christ figure, teachers may point out the allegorical significance of this situation.*

3. Explain the "Fame" and "Shame" allegory that Gareth tells his mother in the beginning of the story. What exactly is Fame and Shame as it is personified? (Often we think of fame in a negative light—as achieving celebrity status—, but that is not what is suggested in the poem.)

*In the Anglo-Saxon epic "Beowulf," fame and boasting of one's merit are not the same thing as celebrity and being conceited; rather, it is a show of strength, confidence and heroism. In Tennyson's work as well, Fame is achieved not by looking pretty at the movies and having one's picture taken in the tabloids; it is achieved only by sacrificing one's life and fortune for a higher cause.*

4. Explain Gareth's exclamation at the beginning of the story: "I have become a man, and a man's work must I do. Follow the deer? No. I will follow the Christ, the King. I will live pure, speak true, right wrong, and follow the King. Why else was I born?" What do the words tell about Gareth and why he wants to go to Arthur's court?

*The words indicate Gareth's high ideas and that he is old enough to put away his "toys," as it were and take on the responsibilities of adulthood.*

5. Finally Gareth's mother gives into her son's request and allows him to leave home to serve at Arthur's court. What are the conditions that she sets up? Why does she set up those conditions, and what significance do the conditions have on the story's theme?

*The mother will allow Gareth to go to Arthur's court if he agrees to work as a kitchen scullion for one year. The*

6. Idealism is a way of looking at the world. An idealist says, "I can make this world a better place by doing great things," even though there is nothing that may encourage that thought. An idealist sees the world as it should be and does not flinch from striving for that perfection. How does Gareth show his idealism in this story? What great things does Gareth achieve through his idealism? What works against his goals?

*Gareth shows his idealism in his decisions to do great things for the king and his willingness to persevere to accomplish them despite the challenges and naysayer around him. Because of his idealism, he is able to defeat the all three knights leading to the castle and even the allegorical youngest brother named death.*

7. The poem "Gareth and Lynette" was originally published with a larger group of poems in a work titled *Idylls of the King*. The grand theme that ties all of the poems together involves the idealism of the Christian church and the forces, such as skepticism and evil intent, that attack those ideals. *Idylls of the King* is somewhat allegorical, as is the individual poem "Gareth and Lynette." In all of the poems that make up the larger work, Arthur represents Christ, his adulterous wife Guinevere represents the church, and the various men and women who want to destroy Camelot represent the lurking evil, demonic and human, that want to see the church and its influence destroyed. Attempt to interpret "Gareth and Lynette" as an allegory. What do the various rogue knights represent? What is the theme of the allegory?

*The rogue knights represent the adversities that we face in the course of our lives, and the last knight Death is our final adversary. The plot suggests that if we persevere in humility and faith, we do not need to fear death.*