**Notes – from Le Morte D’Arthur (The Siege of Benwick, The Day of Destiny)**

**- Sir Thomas Malory**

These two passages from our new text are the final two sections of Le Morte D’Arthur. From them, we learn more about the importance of the Code of Chivalry as well as the actual death of King Arthur and the return of the Sword of Kings, **Excalibur**, to the Lady of The Lake.

“The Siege of Benwick”

ll. 4-6 – **conflict** – Arthur and Launcelot’s battle stems from the affair between Launcelot and Gwynevere, Arthur’s wife and queen.

ll. 14-23 – Launcelot refuses to go out and confront Arthur’s forces because, according to the Code of Chivalry, he still owes allegiance to Arthur.

ll. 52-54 – again, the Code – out of respect, Launcelot must wait until Arthur actually endangers the city before he can honorably engage him.

ll. 97-100 – strength influenced by some enchantment or magical spell is a common theme in the Medieval romance.

ll. 123-125 – **plot** – that Gawain would still return to challenge Launcelot again, despite being so severely injured the first time, is a measure of his desire for revenge – remember that Launcelot killed two of Gawain’s brothers in his rescue of the imprisoned Gwynevere.

ll. 147-148 – Launcelot’s refusal to kill Gawain when he has fallen is another example of the Code – it would be dishonorable.

**“The Day of Destiny”**

II. 161-165 - Gwynevere’s actions illustrate the Chivalric Code in that, despite Mordred’s overtures, she remains loyal to Arthur.

II. 169-180 - **theme** - the conflict between Mordred and the Archbishop of Canterbury is one that will be revisited often in history - the frequent conflict between **worldly** power and **religious** power - the Church and the Crown were often at odds!

II. 210-239 - Gawain’s dying requests in the letter to Sir Launcelot illustrate his **nobility** - he has admitted that he was “moved by the spirit of revenge and spite” and that his selfishness has weakened Arthur’s kingdom.

II. 338-359 - there may be some religious significance to Bedivere’s needing *three* trips before he is able to return Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake - the number three figures prominently in Biblical stories such as the temptation of Christ and Simon Peter’s betrayal of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I. 373 - “Avalon” parallels other places in myth and legend such as Valhalla in Scandinavian myth and Elysium Fields in Greek myth.

II. 406-407 - as with many legends, the Latin phrase at the end of the story suggests that the hero will one day return.