

T. H. White brought the Arthurian legend into the twentieth century with his **The Once and Future King** on which the Broadway musical **Camelot** and its film adaptation were based. White mixes history with boyhood - happy hawking, jousting, humor, and magic. He introduces Sir Thomas Mallory, author of the medieval **Morte d'Arthur**, as a youthful page. The character Arthur, soon to die, admonishes the boy not to fight in a final battle with Mordred but to ride to Warwickshire where he should think of himself as a messenger of the Round Table and spread its message down through the years to people like you and me.

Put it like this (Arthur says to him). There was a king once, called King Arthur. That is me. When he came to the throne of England, he found that all the kings and barons were fighting against each other like madmen . . . They did a lot of bad things, because they lived by force. Now this king had an idea, and the idea was that force ought to be used, if it were used at all, on behalf of justice, not on its own account. Follow this, young boy. He thought that if he could get his barons fighting for truth, and to help weak people, and to redress wrongs, then their fighting might not be such a bad thing as once it used to be. So he gathered together all the true and kindly people that he knew, and he dressed them in armour, and he made them knights, and taught them his idea, and set them down, at a Round Table. And King Arthur loved his Table with all his heart. He was prouder of it than he was of his own dear wife, and for many years his new knights went about killing ogres, and rescuing damsels and saving poor prisoners, and trying to set the world to rights. That was the King's idea.

