

Background for Monty Python and the Holy Grail

- **Canterbury Tales (1387)**
 - By Geoffrey Chaucer
- **The Legend of King Arthur**
 - Mostly by Geoffrey of Monmouth
 - The History of the Kings of Britain (1136)
- **Reign of King Arthur**
 - c 499 to c 533
 - Battle of Badon (Badr) c. 500 Anglos vs Saxons

The Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer (1333-1400)

Canterbury Tales (1387)

- Collection of 24 stories
- **Method of stringing together shorter tales to become a full novel**
- Pilgrims meet at an inn on the road to Canterbury
- Each tells a tale
- Chaucer is a fellow pilgrim; tells two tales
- Sampler of the times, as pilgrimage runs across class lines, wealth lines, education lines, etc.
- Chaucer also narrates dialog at the inn between the tales



The Tales (1)

- General Prologue
- The Knight's Tale
- The Miller's Tale
- The Reeve's Tale
- The Cook's Tale
- The Man of Law's Tale
- The Wife of Bath's Tale
- The Friar's Tale
- The Summoner's Tale



The Tales (2)

- The Clerk's Tale
- The Merchant's Tale
- The Squire's Tale
- The Franklin's Tale
- The Physician's Tale
- The Pardoner's Tale
- The Shipman's Tale
- The Prioress's Tale
- Sir Thopas' Tale,
- The Tale of Melibee,
- The Monk's Tale,
- The Nun's Priest's Tale
- The Second Nun's Tale,
- The Canon's Yeoman's Tale
- The Manciple's Tale
- The Parson's Tale

Canterbury Tales Motifs

- Canterbury Tales



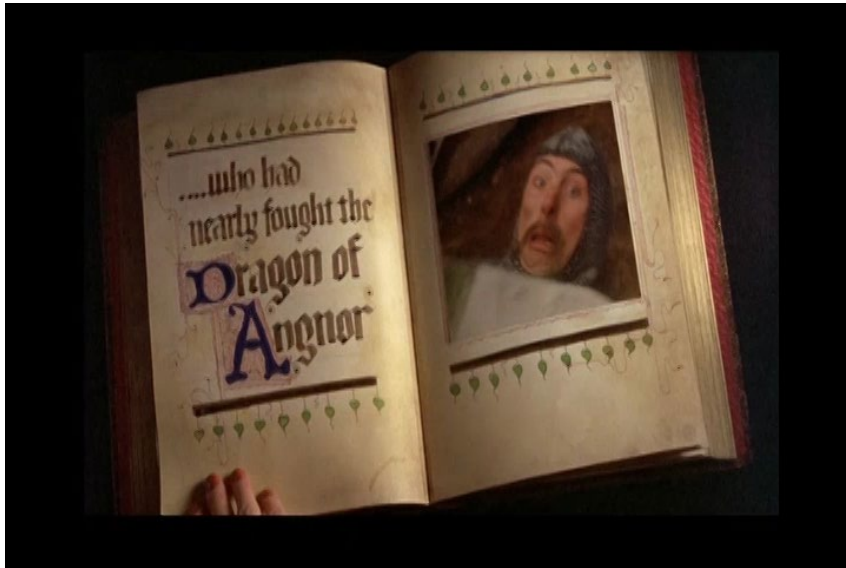
- Monty Python



Tales of the Grail Seekers



Tales of the Grail Seekers



The Arthurian Legend

- Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1095-c.1155)
 - The History of the Kings of Britain (1136)
 - His sources:
 - Folklore
 - Annales Cambriae (mid-10th century)
 - Historia Brittonum (c.828)
 - Writings of Gildas the Wise (c. 500-c.570)
 - His own imagination



The Arthurian Legend

- **King Arthur (c.<499-c.533)**
 - Son of Uther Pendragon
 - Pen = Chief
 - Dragon = mighty warrior
- Reputed to have battled
 - against the Saxon invasion
 - Battle of Badon (c.500)
 - and to have battled many other worldly creatures
- Reputed to have been mortally wounded while killing Mordred, and died in Avalon
- Wife Gwenhwyfar from Glastonbury



Arthurian Side Stories

- **Guinevere and Lancelot**
 - Not part of original tale
 - Probably evolved from Tristan and Iseult romance legend (c. 1200)



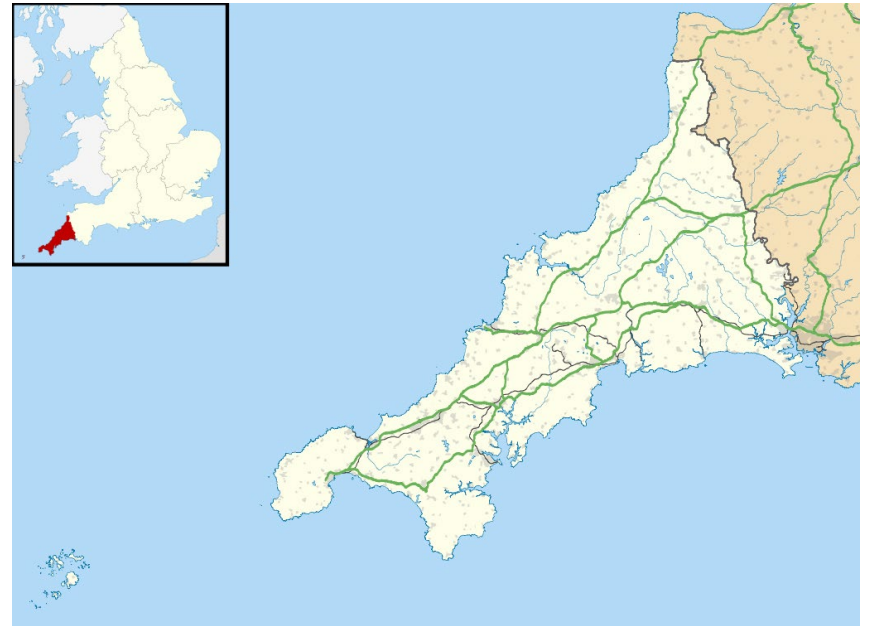
Arthurian Side Stories

- **Camelot**
 - Probably was the Tintagel Castle at the southwestern tip of Wales.
 - Created when the Romans saw the area as a source of tin.



Arthurian Side Stories

- **Camelot/Tintagel Castle**
- Alleged birthplace of Arthur Pendragon



Arthurian Side Stories

- Tintagel Castle Today
- Narrow footbridge entrance
 - Possible “Bridge of Death”?



- North Wall

Arthurian Side Stories: Holy Grail

- **Perceval, the Story of the Grail**
 - (1180s to 1190s)
- **Author: Chretien de Troyes**
(1130-1190s)
 - The quest of knights Perceval and Gawain for the Holy Grail,
 - which might have been a serving dish instead of a goblet
 - Sir Gawain is Arthur's nephew
 - Perceval was returning from King Arthur's court when he saw it.
- **Legend of the Fisher King**
- Perceval comes across the Fisher King
 - fishing in a boat on a river,
 - who invites him to stay at his castle.
- Fisher King is so injured, he can only fish
 - May be derived from Bran the Blessed of Celtic mythology
- Only the grail can heal him, but it must be asked the right question
- Correct question is "Whom does the Grail serve?"