CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Arthurian Romances

Chrétien de Troyes · *late 12th century · W. Wistar Comfort, 1914*

The rustic's proverb says that many a thing is despised that is worth much more than is supposed: Comfort's English volume gathers four of Chrétien's romances—Erec et Enide, Cligés, Yvain, and Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart. The unfinished Perceval is not in this book. Quote the romances, not the editor's front matter.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does knightly love and honor look like when a poet tells four different tests of it, and what is missing when the grail romance is not in the book?

"The rustic's proverb says that many a thing is despised that is worth much more than is supposed."

Erec et Enide, the opening

The translation is W. Wistar Comfort (1914). Project Gutenberg #831 and the site EPUB are the same volume of four romances: Erec et Enide, Cligés, Yvain, and Lancelot (the Knight of the Cart). The unfinished Perceval is not included. Quote the romances themselves, beginning at Erec after Comfort's introduction. The Gutenberg file's bibliography must not be quoted or echoed in any public wording. Map the book as four complete romances, and flag that Perceval is absent. Courtly tests of marriage, secrecy, madness, and a shameful cart: older students, not a children's pageant of tidy knights.

KEY CHARACTERS

Erec and Enide
The first couple, whose marriage after glory is the first romance's test.

Cligés
The hero of the second romance in this volume, in this text's spelling.

Yvain
The knight with the lion, who fails a promise and must make a long amends.

Lancelot
The Knight of the Cart, whose public shame is accepted for love.

WORTH MORE THAN IS SUPPOSED

> *"The rustic's proverb says that many a thing is despised that is worth much more than is supposed."*
>
> Erec et Enide, the opening

Grades 9–12

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Rustic's Proverb

EREC ET ENIDE, THE OPENING

Chrétien begins from a proverb: many a despised thing is worth more than is supposed. Erec's adventure and Enide's voice will test a marriage after a first glory.

- The opening sentence is exact in both witnesses, after Comfort's introduction.
- Quote the romance, not the editor's preface.
- Erec and Enide is a marriage tested, not only a first quest.

> *"The rustic's proverb says that many a thing is despised that is worth much more than is supposed."*
>
> Erec et Enide

02

Cligés

THE SECOND ROMANCE

A later courtly tale of love, disguise, and a threatened marriage. The volume's second romance has its own complete arc.

- This book's spelling is Cligés.
- Keep the four romances distinct; do not blend plots.
- Cite from the tale, not from later editorial lists.

03

Yvain

THE THIRD ROMANCE

The knight with the lion: a promise broken, a madness, a long amends. Honor here is a debt that can be failed.

- Yvain's failure and recovery are the moral center.
- The lion is a companion in the amends, not a mascot.
- Teach the broken promise as the poem teaches it.

04

The Knight of the Cart

LANCELOT, THE FOURTH ROMANCE

Here Chrétien begins his book about the Knight of the Cart. The material, he says, is given by the Countess. The hero's shame and his love are the test.

- Lancelot's mounting of the cart is a public shame accepted for love.
- The romance is complete in this volume as Comfort gives it.
- For older students; teach the love and the shame without a cheap gloss.

05

Four Romances, Not Five

THE HOSTED VOLUME

The site EPUB and the Gutenberg text are this Comfort volume. Perceval is not here. Map the four, and say clearly what is missing. Do not quote the editor's front or back matter as Chrétien.

- Translator: W. Wistar Comfort, 1914; PG #831.
- Perceval, Chrétien's unfinished grail romance, is absent.
- A complete four-romance volume, for older students, of courtly tests—not a children's tidy Arthur.

Knightly Tests | Marriage and Honor | A Broken Promise | Love and Shame | Four Romances

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. The translation is W. Wistar Comfort (1914). Project Gutenberg #831 and the site EPUB are the same volume of four romances: Erec et Enide, Cligés, Yvain, and Lancelot (the Knight of the Cart). Chrétien's unfinished Perceval is not in this book. Map the volume as four romances, and flag that Perceval is absent.
2. Quote the romances themselves, beginning at Erec after Comfort's introduction: "The rustic's proverb says that many a thing is despised that is worth much more than is supposed." Do not quote the editor's preface, bibliography, or later lists as the poems. Public wording must be taken from the romances, not from any editorial apparatus.
3. Courtly tests of marriage, secrecy, a failed promise, and a shameful cart: for older students, not a children's pageant of tidy knights.

Quotations are verbatim from the W. Wistar Comfort, 1914, Project Gutenberg #831, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/chretien-arthurian-romances/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.