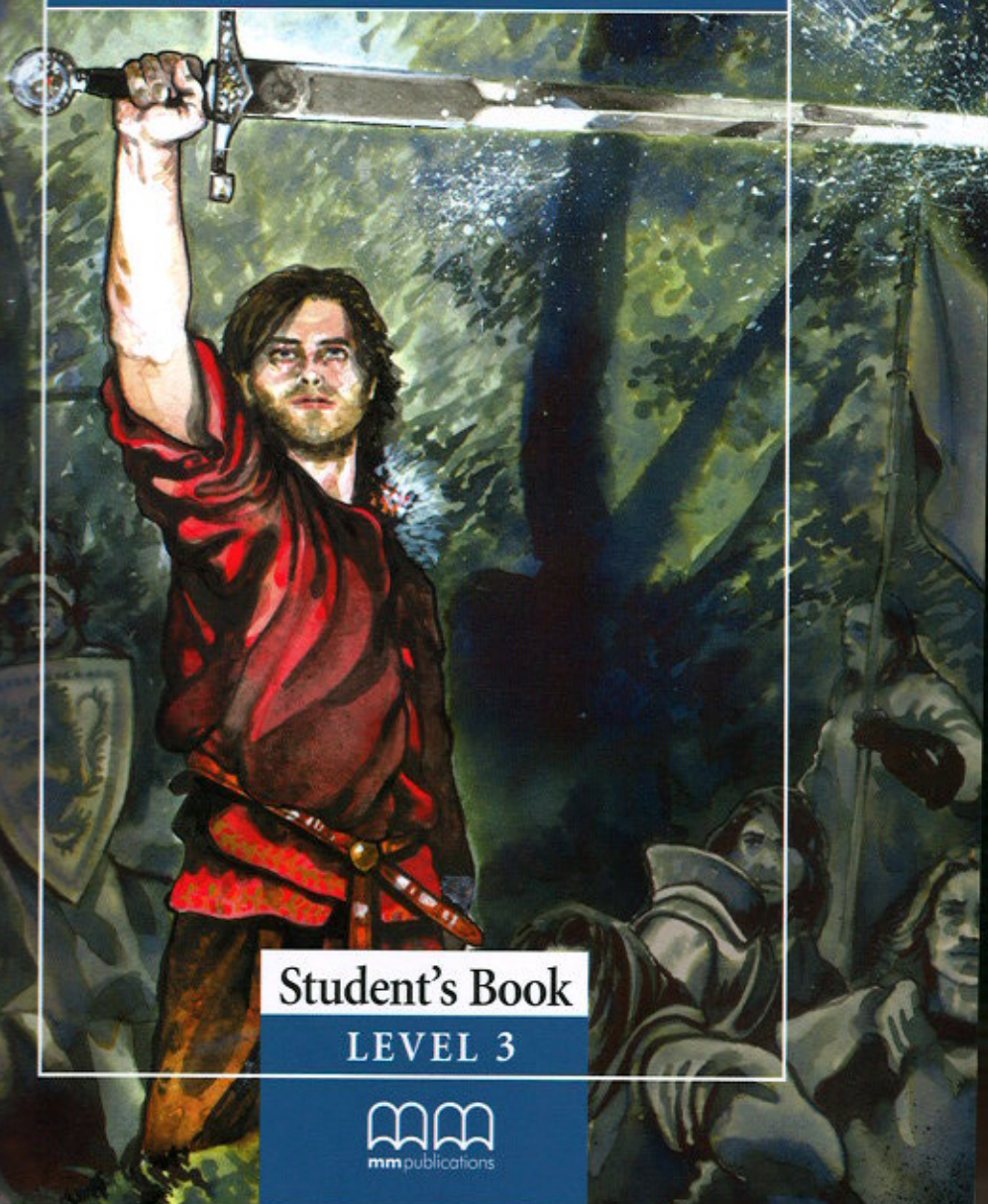


GRADED READERS

EXCALIBUR



Student's Book

LEVEL 3


mm publications

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CHAPTER 1

THIS IS A STORY OF LOVE AND HATE, FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE, war and peace. And some magic.

It all began a long time ago, when Britain was split by war. Many knights fought each other because each of them wanted to be king. They wanted to rule the whole country.

At that time Uther was king. He was very strong and brave. He was hard to fight because he had no fear. Uther had a great sword: Excalibur. It was silver and gold with shining jewels on its handle. The Lady of the Lake had given it to him to do good deeds.

"If you are a good king, this sword will help you win battles," she had told Uther.

One of the men who wanted to rule the country was Lord Cornwall. For many days Uther fought Lord Cornwall and his knights. In a battle one day, he was ready to kill Lord Cornwall when he decided to be kind.

"Alright, Lord Cornwall," he said, "I will give you some land. From here until Land's End you can be lord and take care of the people and the country."

"Hooray!" shouted Lord Cornwall and his men.

That night there was a great feast to celebrate Uther and Cornwall's agreement. There was lots of food and drink. There was also music. Lord Cornwall told his wife Igraine to dance for his guests. Igraine was a beautiful woman and danced well. When Uther saw her, he thought she was wonderful. He wanted to make her his wife.

"I must have her," he said to one of his knights.

"Are you crazy? You must stay friends with Cornwall," answered the knight.

The feast ended and Uther left. But he could not stop thinking of Igraine. He dreamt of her and finally could not bear his pain. He called Merlin, who was a very powerful wizard, and begged him to help.

"Merlin, I need to see Igraine. I love her and want her!" said Uther.

"But she has a husband. What can I do?" asked Merlin.

"Make her love me!" cried Uther.



Merlin thought of a trick called the Dragon's Breath.

"I will make a thick mist, so that you look like Lord Cornwall. When Igraine sees you, she will think you are her husband."

Merlin said a magic spell and he closed his eyes. Slowly a thick mist appeared and Uther could not see very well.

"Now you must go," said Merlin. "But I do not like using my powers like this, so you must give me something in return."

"Anything you ask. I will give you anything!" said Uther.

"You will give me any child that you and Igraine have," said Merlin.

"Of course I will. Now let me go! What do I do?" asked Uther impatiently.

"Go when the mist is thick. Wait until Lord Cornwall has left and go to Igraine. She will love you," answered Merlin.

Uther rode his horse into the mist until he came to Cornwall's castle.

"Welcome, Lord Cornwall!" said the knights.

Uther said nothing. He ran to Igraine's bedroom.

"I am here, my love!" he said.

Igraine saw her husband and took him into her bedroom.

Nobody noticed Igraine's daughter, Morgan, behind the door. She had woken up because of a dream. She had dreamt that her father was killed in battle. She was six years old and had special magic powers. She saw her mother with Uther and couldn't understand.

The next morning Uther left. Igraine believed that he was her husband, Lord Cornwall. Suddenly, she heard some knights shouting and crying.

"What's wrong?" Igraine asked a knight.

"Cornwall is dead!" shouted the knight. "He was killed in battle last night!"

"But he was here!" said Igraine. She couldn't understand.

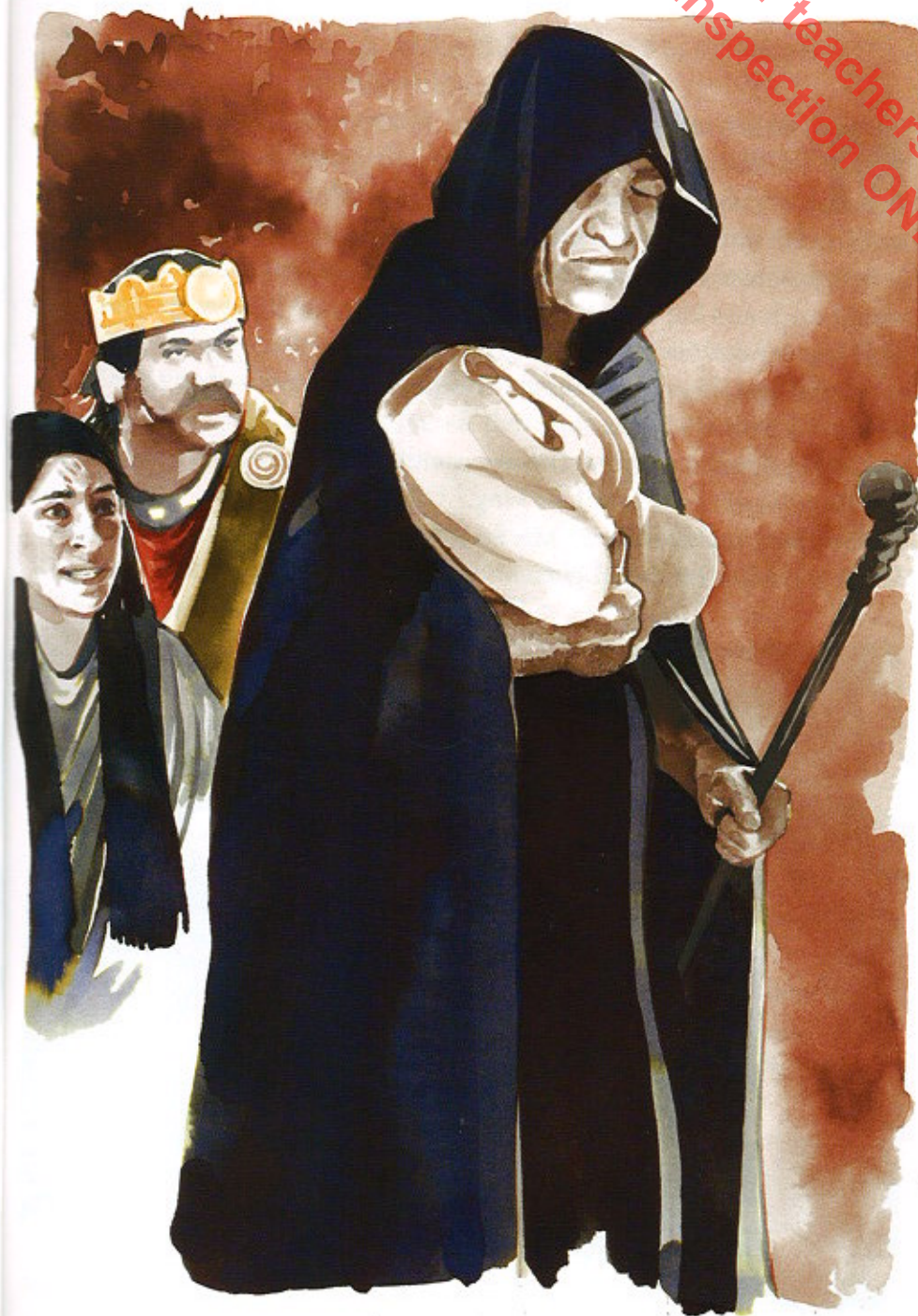
Nine months later Igraine had a baby boy. He was strong and beautiful. Uther came to visit and saw his son. He told Igraine what had happened and asked her to marry him now that Cornwall was dead. Before Igraine could answer, Merlin appeared.

"Give me the baby!" he cried.

"No!" shouted Igraine and Uther.

"Remember your promise!" said Merlin. He grabbed the baby and ran out of the castle.

Igraine cried and screamed but Merlin took the baby away.



CHAPTER 2

MERLIN RAN THROUGH THE FOREST WITH THE BABY AND Uther chased him. It was very dark and Uther did not see some enemy knights, who were hiding behind the trees and were ready to kill him. They chased him and tried to catch him. Uther ran until he was exhausted and could run no more. He realised the enemy knights would catch and kill him. He didn't want to give up his sword.

"Help me one last time, Merlin!" he shouted to the wizard.

Merlin said, "Let Excalibur stay in the stone and whoever takes it out will be the next king."

Uther put his sword into the stone and it remained there.

"Promise me my son will be king," Uther said to Merlin.

"You have my word," said Merlin as he moved away. Two minutes later, Uther was killed by the knights.



Merlin ran away, carrying the baby. He whispered to the baby boy, "You will be the next king, my little Arthur."

Merlin found an old friend of his, Sir Hector, and gave him the baby. He told him to look after baby Arthur and to treat him like his son. Sir Hector was very happy and brought up Arthur with his other son, Kay.

When Arthur was sixteen years old, Kay entered a friendly competition to see who was the best knight. There were many knights and they had to fight each other with swords.

They were competing in the forest near the stone with the sword in it. While waiting for their turn to fight, many of the knights were trying to take the sword out of the stone so that they could become king. The knights were big and strong but they couldn't do it. Excalibur was stuck in the stone.

Arthur was very busy helping Kay get ready and he did not see the other knights or the sword in the stone. Suddenly, Kay realised that he didn't have his sword and it was time to fight.

"Arthur, where is Kay's sword? Hurry!" said Sir Hector.

Arthur ran to find Kay's sword, but he couldn't find it! He then saw the sword in the stone and he pulled it out!

"How did you do that?" shouted a knight.

Everyone ran to see what was happening.

"What have you done? Put the sword back into the stone and do it again! We want to see!" they shouted.

Arthur did as they said. He put the sword back into the stone and he pulled it out again!

"Long live the king!" shouted some knights and began to cheer. Other knights were upset.

"He cannot be king. He is too young," they said.

"Who are you?" asked a knight.

Sir Hector came forward and he said, "He is my son, Arthur!"

Suddenly there was a great wind and a light and Merlin appeared. "My dear, Sir Hector," he said. "You and I know he is not your son. I gave him to you as a baby and you have brought him up well. But I must tell you he is the son of King Uther, a great, strong fighter, and so Arthur will be king!"