

NAXOS
AudioBooks

T. H. White

The Candle in the Wind & The Book of Merlyn

THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS

UNABRIDGED

CLASSIC
FICTION

Read by **Neville Jason**



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1	THE CANDLE IN THE WIND	0:28
2	Chapter 1	5:42
3	Agravaine said: 'Mordred...'	5:49
4	Mordred looked at him.	7:29
5	Chapter 2	6:30
6	Mordred heard his own voice	5:42
7	Chapter 3	7:30
8	Such had been the surprisingly modern civilisation...	7:24
9	As Malory pictures him...	7:22
10	He would have called himself...	7:51
11	Chapter 4	5:58
12	She relented...	6:00
13	But Arthur was the touching one of the three.	5:51
14	'Perhaps you didn't know...'	7:28
15	'Cut the sniveller's head off...'	6:47
16	Chapter 5	7:52
17	Arthur, who had come pattering...	8:21
18	Agravaine entered the conversation...	8:12
19	Chapter 6	8:43
20	Chapter 7	6:02

21	He slid the wooden beam...	5:29
22	The handle which lifted the latch...	6:15
23	He put his shoulder...	6:01
24	Chapter 8	6:23
25	He broke down...	7:03
26	The other turned his back...	7:05
27	They were beginning their unprofessional petition	7:10
28	Gawaine's enthusiasm had evaporated...	7:04
29	Chapter 9	5:24
30	In the silence...	4:57
31	She left the fireplace...	5:42
32	Chapter 10	8:17
33	His sarcasms were as easy...	5:54
34	It was noticed...	5:41
35	The ill-made knight turned...	5:57
36	'The Queen shall come back to him...'	4:50
37	Chapter 11	6:22
38	Guenever sat for some time...	6:21
39	'They did used to talk...'	6:33
40	People write tragedies...	6:08

41	'What do you want?'	6:47
42	Chapter 12	7:11
43	'He was fond of our mother.'	7:21
44	Chapter 13	6:54
45	'He met Arthur at Dover...'	6:44
46	Chapter 14	6:46
47	The wars of his early days	6:40
48	The blessing of forgetfulness...	6:43
49	Another worn-out circle...	6:01
50	'Put it like this.'	5:28
51	'You will say to them...'	5:42
52	THE BOOK OF MERLYN: Chapter 1	6:45
53	'There's a description for you.'	7:59
54	Chapter 2	7:12
55	'I am ready,' he said	7:19
56	Chapter 3	5:16
57	In Cornwall they halted...	6:05
58	The combination room had changed...	6:47
59	'The trouble is,' said Archimedes...	4:40
60	The Badger, it may be mentioned...	4:47

61	'Stupid!' cried the magician	5:23
62	Chapter 4	3:02
63	Chapter 5	6:21
64	'You should read Lamb's letter...'	5:51
65	'Go on, if you must"	5:23
66	Chapter 6	5:10
67	'Perhaps I have painted a dark picture of the humans.'	5:17
68	Chapter 7	7:25
69	The new ant put down its cadaver...	6:43
70	Chapter 8	6:22
71	Chapter 9	6:22
72	Chapter 10	4:38
73	'The ants fight wars.'	4:51
74	Chapter 11	5:00
75	It was true indeed...	5:04
76	Chapter 12	5:31
77	He began to feel an uneasiness in himself.	4:48
78	Chapter 13	5:21
79	When it had sunk in she left him...	5:27
80	Remembering the queen ants...	7:46

81	Chapter 14	6:40
82	One of the peaks of the migration...	5:23
83	Chapter 15	4:15
84	The nest-making enthralled her...	5:04
85	Chapter 16	5:16
86	'Of course the owners of private property...'	6:47
87	'Man might become migratory.'	5:37
88	Chapter 17	5:48
89	Chapter 18	6:21
90	All the beauty of his humans...	6:47
91	Chapter 19	5:58
92	'Sir, there are a great many things...'	6:12
93	'Number 4...'	7:16
94	'The committee has suggested...'	5:21
95	The animals read them out in turn.	6:01
96	'10,000 years from now...'	6:31
97	Chapter 20	7:40
98	'Ipse' says a medieval poem...	6:56
99	Then there are the Irish...	7:36

Total time: 10:15:66

T.H. White

The Candle in the Wind & The Book of Merlyn

The Arthurian legends are England's great epic, as full and embedded a part of the cultural heritage as the Greek myths, with the same imaginative hold as Biblical tales or Shakespeare's plays. The stories were originally collected and written by Sir Thomas Malory, and published in 21 books in 1485. These tales of chivalrous knights undertaking brave challenges, of a noble king bringing egalitarianism, honour and decency to a land governed by brutishness and violence, have served as political and personal metaphors ever since. They have inspired poets, playwrights, filmmakers, composers, artists, social commentators, mystics and New Agers of every hue. The search for Arthur's final resting place, the possibility of his reappearance and his

historical authenticity are argued with exactly the same passionate dedication by his followers as those of other faiths. Thomas Hanbury White (1906-1964) was by no means the first person to take the tales and turn them into something else; but few have had such a broad and thriving appeal. *The Sword in the Stone* in particular became a template for a new telling of the iconic tale of the young Arthur finding himself king by innocently pulling Excalibur from its lodging, with Disney turning it into a hugely successful animated film in 1963.

But as with all retellings, White's books are as much about the author and his times as they are about their sources. He was born in India to mismatched parents, whose various

personal traits combined to create a troubled son – his father was an alcoholic, and his mother seems to have imposed such affectionate strictures on him that he was unable to be comfortable with women thereafter. He was a profound naturalist, deeply involved with observing nature, as well as hunting it, shooting it and fishing it; and who served as a teacher after completing his own education at Queen's College, Cambridge. He had already started writing while a student, and continued as a teacher, eventually dedicating himself to it and naturalism from 1936. Often reclusive, he spent the Second World War in Ireland as a conscientious objector. He was also a medievalist, and this mixture of personal insecurity, love of nature, angry concern as war loomed over Europe, and his feeling for the past were all brought together in *The Once and Future King*.

Talking animals, endearing magicians, terrifying witches, broad slapstick, jousts, feasts and splendour are all certainly in place; but these works are by no means fantastical children's

fiction. White was exorcising (perhaps just exercising) some of his personal demons – there is, for example, a deal of cruelty in the books; he was using a kind of reverse anthropomorphism to indicate how man should be more like the animal kingdom – or at least should look to it for examples; and he was giving the old stories a dark and pertinent edge as a global war approached and dictatorship threatened the world. As the story progresses, it moves from being a panegyric over the lost innocence and knowledge of an earlier age, to a reworking of Greek tragedy, and finally to a polemic against man's short-sighted belligerence and doomed political systems.

The first book is ostensibly about how Arthur became King, but most of it sees him being brought up in a rural world that owes much to White's notions of an ideal childhood. Here, the young Arthur learns the ways of animals and the ways of nature; how to be honest and brave; and he gets the opportunity to talk to animals as one of them, thanks to the interventions

of his tutor, the magician Merlyn. The second develops Merlyn's teachings on the issue of Might vs. Right, and sees the invention of the Round Table; but also introduces the theme of the sins of the fathers being visited on their sons. Arthur's birth was the result of vicious and tragic circumstances, and he himself has unwittingly committed incest. The third book is about Lancelot and Guenever – their love for each other despite Lancelot's unattractiveness, Lancelot's attempts to prove himself in the quest for the Holy Grail, and the earliest warnings of the destruction of what Arthur has created. The fourth sees the climax of these various plot-lines, as Arthur's incestuous sin comes to haunt him and his court, and in the process threatens not just the end of his reign, but also the essence of what he and his knights had been striving for – a peaceful nation where justice was valued above force, where the spirit was fed as well as the body, and where Man recognised his place in the natural world, and treated it accordingly. The fifth book is a kind of anti-war dream

sequence (though Merlyn would dispute that) in which Arthur is harangued by his old tutor about the gross failings of humanity, and given a chance to examine different political systems in the thin disguise of observing ants and geese.

White was not just offering a reworking of the Arthurian legend. He clearly had his own deeply personal, as well as broadly social and political, issues to place in the context of a lost world of grace and humanity. What gives these books such depth, however, is not just the plot or the underlying implications of the storylines (strong as they all are); nor is it their place in epic, fantasy or Arthurian legend. It is partly the characters – honest, steadfast Arthur; passionate, self-hating Lancelot; cold, driven Mordred; the outstanding Merlyn, absent-minded, humane and fallible, but always invaluable putting things into perspective. It is partly of course the imaginative strength of the author, bringing such worlds as medieval tournaments, ants' nests, court life, boar hunts or battlefields alive with vivid detail.

It is partly, too, the unashamed brio with which White describes the food of the time, or the intimate features of feathers of a particular bird, or the slightest aspect of hunting, heraldry or armour; or his unapologetic use of terms that were obscure when he wrote them, and have all but disappeared now. White was not condescending to a childish audience, but taking every reader with him into Arthur's more-than-mythical kingdom to see what it stood for, how it failed and what we can still learn from it.

The Candle in the Wind was to be the last book in the series, the one where Arthur is forced to face the consequences of his actions through the evil manipulation of his illegitimate and incestuously-conceived son. Set during the last weeks of his reign, it details the plotting of Arthur's downfall by Mordred, who uses the affair between Lancelot and Guenever, and Arthur's conviction that justice must be even-handed, to bring his father to the point of killing his own wife. It leads to the splintering of the Round Table and civil war, and closes on the eve of the last battle, with the war-

wary old king telling the story of what he has done to a young Thomas Malory.

But White had more to say, and decided that *The Book of Merlyn* had to be added to explore his convictions that many of the world's problems could be resolved by removing national boundaries. His pacifism was a passionate one, and Merlyn becomes its mouthpiece. Using animals as he had done during Arthur's childhood, Merlyn demonstrates the various ways that man can choose to live, decrying as he does so communism, fascism and aspects of capitalism; and concluding that war is the result of aggressive instincts allied to the existence of States with borders to defend. Arthur is refreshed, almost filled with hope again, by what he hears; and hopes for a truce with Mordred's forces. But so delicate is the situation that the slightest misunderstanding could lead to an end of it all.

A note on the text

This version of *The Once and Future King* comprises all five of T. H. White's Arthurian tales published in three sections (*The Sword in the Stone*; *The Witch in the Wood* and *The Ill-Made Knight*; and *The Candle in the Wind* and *The Book of Merlyn*). The first three books were originally published separately between 1938 and 1940; the fourth was added when the first collected version of the stories – titled *The Once and Future King* – was published 1958. But as White's vision of the broader purpose of the story developed, he wanted to add *The Book of Merlyn* to the collection; and also began making other textual changes. However, he was unable to complete this general revision before his death in 1964. His revisions, in their unfinished state, placed some sections of the final book (*The Book of Merlyn*) into *The Sword in the Stone*, cutting some of the original book to accommodate them. However, these sections were not removed from their original place in *The Book of Merlyn*, and as

a result there was substantial repetition.

In this audiobook version, these repetitions have been removed, and Madam Mim, Galapas the giant, the dream of the trees and the dream of the rocks have been reinstated; but Arthur's first meeting with Morgan le Fay (which White introduced to replace a sequence about meeting cannibals) has been kept. This allows *The Book of Merlyn* to have its full weight in the collection; it maintains some of the most memorable and endearing characters from the original first book (*The Sword in the Stone*), but at the same time allows a major character to make her appearance in an earlier section of the book, and thus prefigure her later role.

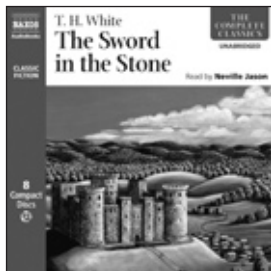
Notes written by Roy McMillan



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films, TV and musicals. He is frequently heard on radio. As well as *Remembrance of Things Past*, he also reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *The Life and Works of Marcel Proust*, *Far from The Madding Crowd*, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and has read the part of Antonio in *The Tempest* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Cover picture: Carrick, *The Death of King Arthur* (1862)
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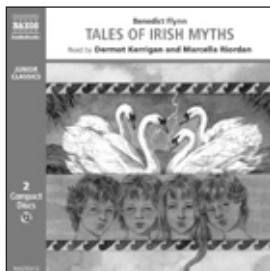
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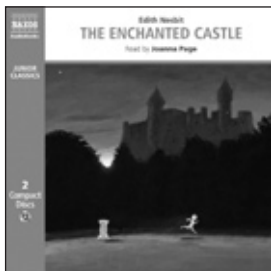
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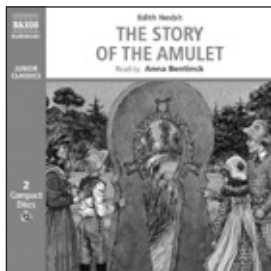
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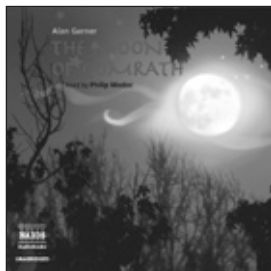
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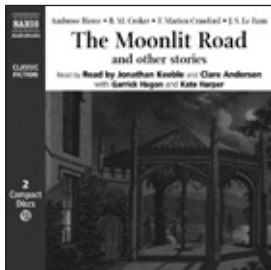
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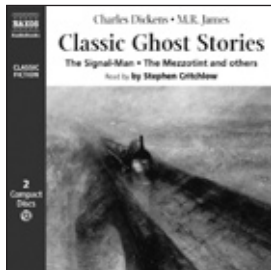
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T. H. White

The Candle in the Wind & The Book of Merlyn

Read by **Neville Jason**

The concluding books in T. H. White's magnificent retelling of the Arthurian legend see the old King facing the final challenge of his reign. Has he the strength to see it off – or will his lifetime's work be destroyed by his own son?

As he contemplates the battle, Arthur is joined by his old friend, Merlyn, who – as unpredictably as ever – shows him that there could yet be cause for cheer if only mankind would learn from its mistakes.

Humane, warmly funny and deeply touching, White concludes his story with a passionate call for peace and a tentative suggestion of hope.

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