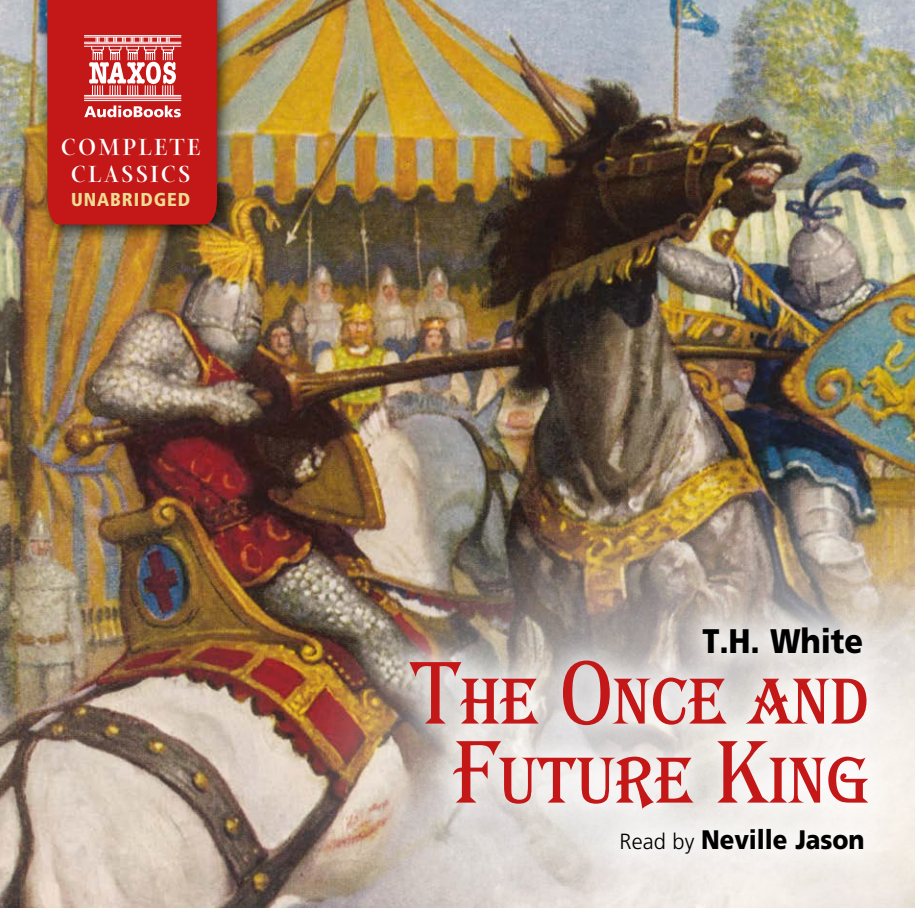




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T.H. White

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Read by **Neville Jason**

1	THE SWORD IN THE STONE	0:31
2	Chapter 1	6:13
3	So it was decided.	7:28
4	The Mews was one of the most important parts of the castle...	6:42
5	Chapter 2	5:52
6	The night fell still...	5:36
7	There was a clearing in the forest...	6:45
8	The Wart went over to the tree...	6:31
9	Chapter 3	6:30
10	Merlyn had a long white beard...	6:44
11	The Wart was so startled...	7:00
12	The vanity-glass vanished...	7:17
13	Chapter 4	7:35
14	Chapter 5	6:24
15	People in those days had rather different ideas...	6:09
16	They crossed the courtyard...	6:45
17	The Wart was on an even keel now...	5:15
18	Mrs Roach held out a languid fin...	5:08
19	The Wart looked, and at first saw nothing...	6:40
20	Chapter 6	6:09

21	Kay was frightened by this...	6:28
22	The gore-crow hastened to obey...	6:58
23	The Wart knew he was probably going to be killed...	6:35
24	Instantly Mother Mim was framed in the lighted doorway...	6:40
25	It ought perhaps to be explained...	7:57
26	Chapter 7	6:36
27	The day was cooler than it had been...	7:04
28	While this incantation was going on...	5:27
29	Sir Grummore Grummursum was cantering up...	6:39
30	With a blood-curdling beat of iron hoofs...	7:38
31	King Pellinore hurriedly sat on his victim's chest...	6:58
32	Chapter 8	6:08
33	'What a shame that they should be kept prisoners...'	6:11
34	The darkness became watered with light...	6:40
35	All the hawks...	6:31
36	'Life is blood...'	7:26
37	Chapter 9	5:58
38	There seemed to be no sensible reply to this.	5:30
39	The Wart was still staring at his tutor's chair...	6:16
40	Chapter 10	7:03

41	They went to the man cautiously...	7:02
42	At the moment he was lying on his back...	5:24
43	The Wart thought it was time to ask...	6:27
44	Chapter 11	6:04
45	After the staff lecture...	5:37
46	It was about compline...	6:12
47	They were close to the castle...	5:45
48	Chapter 12	6:39
49	The Wart did not know quite how to put it...	6:46
50	She waved her apron at the sergeant...	7:20
51	Chapter 13	5:50
52	Some people say that snakes are deaf...	6:49
53	'I know some history' said the Wart...	5:10
54	He was timid, ruminant and harmless...	7:14
55	Once upon a time...	8:01
56	Chapter 14	4:56
57	This is what the letter said...	6:05
58	Another thing was the riot...	5:11
59	Chapter 15	5:45
60	William Twyti was called for...	6:46

61	Chapter 16	5:55
62	He weighed between ten and twenty score...	7:03
63	Wart had lost the panicky feeling...	7:45
64	In a small bushment the grim boar stood at bay...	6:01
65	So King Pellinore was bent over the dead beast...	5:55
66	Chapter 17	5:32
67	'Another thing I like about them,' said the Wart	5:54
68	'Well, you know quite well,' said Merlyn...	5:28
69	Chapter 18	5:47
70	'Do you like it?' asked the owl...	6:23
71	It was a long and terrible journey...	4:43
72	People don't think of trees as alive...	8:01
73	The Wart watched...	8:10
74	Chapter 19	5:40
75	Being invisible is not so pleasant as it sounds...	6:19
76	They had become interested in this discussion...	7:44
77	'I think that was a very good wreath...'	7:59
78	There was a distant noise...	7:43
79	Chapter 20	5:23
80	The education of any civilized gentleman...	6:39

81	Chapter 21	5:13
82	The call sounded from far away...	5:34
83	'I don't want to hear it any more...'	5:27
84	With these words...	6:41
85	The old gentleman scratched about...	7:14
86	Chapter 22	7:26
87	King Pellinore closed his eyes tight...	6:49
88	Chapter 23	6:12
89	When he got to the inn it was closed.	6:26
90	A snake slipping easily along the coping...	6:05
91	Chapter 24	6:06
92	THE WITCH IN THE WOOD	0:22
93	Chapter 1	6:18
94	When King Uther Pendragon learned...	5:40
95	Queen Morgause of Lothian and Orkney...	5:56
96	Chapter 2	5:49
97	The magician uncurled his beard...	6:25
98	'Well,' said Merlyn...	5:19
99	Chapter 3	7:05
100	Arthur interrupted him...	6:34

101	Chapter 4	5:23
102	'But supposing,' said Kay...	5:02
103	Chapter 5	5:46
104	'Well, begor, it was a fine state of business...'	8:00
105	It was a strange scene that they presented...	8:45
106	Chapter 6	5:58
107	'Very well. But the funny thing is...'	5:10
108	Chapter 7	7:44
109	They examined the club carefully...	6:30
110	They made him turn the vellum...	6:57
111	She dried her tears at once.	5:21
112	The unicorn's legs stretched out...	5:32
113	Gareth stopped crying...	5:36
114	Chapter 8	5:24
115	'Apropos of this Table,' said Merlyn.	3:42
116	Chapter 9	5:08
117	On the second day...	6:17
118	The Queen had recognized the impossible.	6:22
119	As Gareth came in...	7:05
120	'She's stupid,' said the King.	8:20

121	Well, he thought...	8:16
122	Chapter 10	8:21
123	Chapter 11	7:29
124	With this the unfortunate...	6:20
125	As they drew nearer...	6:49
126	Chapter 12	6:12
127	Arthur began with an atrocity...	4:34
128	The Charges began with the growing day...	8:16
129	Chapter 13	5:45
130	Inside the castle...	4:29
131	Chapter 14	7:33
132	After the marriage came...	8:09
133	THE ILL-MADE KNIGHT	0:16
134	Chapter 1	7:13
135	Chapter 2	6:48
136	Three years may seem a long time...	7:03
137	Chapter 3	6:20
138	The young lady with the plucked eyebrows...	6:16
139	Chapter 4	6:00
140	Lancelot threw his spear...	6:09

141	It was the second half of summer...	6:24
142	Chapter 5	4:32
143	The Roman war was a complicated business...	4:58
144	Chapter 6	4:00
145	Chapter 7	7:40
146	Lancelot was still asleep...	6:38
147	Merry England in Pendragon's time...	6:31
148	When he had got the man to bed...	5:24
149	In the forest of the apple tree...	5:27
150	The riding was the whole thing.	5:58
151	Chapter 8	6:28
152	When the hawk was safely rescued...	7:30
153	Lancelot grew white about the nostrils.	5:35
154	Chapter 9	5:17
155	The King put his head in his hands...	5:17
156	Chapter 10	5:34
157	Chapter 11	5:21
158	The people formed in a procession...	5:58
159	Chapter 12	5:50
160	The butler read the paper.	6:35

161	Chapter 13	8:27
162	Chapter 14	4:57
163	One day my brother asked...	4:53
164	Chapter 15	5:16
165	Chapter 16	7:28
166	Arthur's feelings completed the misery...	7:19
167	Chapter 17	6:21
168	Chapter 18	7:22
169	Chapter 19	6:40
170	'I was coming to that...'	5:49
171	Chapter 20	4:36
172	'He is deaf and dumb,' said the King.	4:20
173	Chapter 21	8:47
174	Chapter 22	5:27
175	It had been arranged...	4:19
176	Chapter 23	8:37
177	Chapter 24	4:46
178	'Lancelot,' she said one morning...	5:59
179	Chapter 25	6:46
180	The world had been expected to end...	8:25

181	Chapter 26	5:24
182	Lancelot looked at him in consternation.	4:30
183	Chapter 27	8:11
184	It is something like idleness...	7:12
185	Chapter 28	5:30
186	'Thing a bit. The man's a vegetarian...'	6:38
187	When Michaelmas was gone and past...	5:29
188	Chapter 29	6:56
189	'Poor Bors. I hope he was not...'	7:11
190	'I had better finish my story,' he said...	3:38
191	Chapter 30	6:09
192	'Perhaps I had better tell you...'	5:04
193	'Percy was so ashamed of himself...'	5:42
194	Chapter 31	7:39
195	Chapter 32	5:52
196	Lancelot considered his cup.	5:58
197	'Well, the lady was not talking to me.'	5:54
198	'I confessed, then,' he said eventually...	5:38
199	Chapter 33	5:18
200	Guenever complained...	5:08

201	Chapter 34	5:59
202	Guenever's central tragedy...	6:29
203	Chapter 35	6:13
204	Chapter 36	6:51
205	Unfortunately there were other people...	4:36
206	Chapter 37	5:51
207	The ill-made knight was not involved...	6:48
208	Chapter 38	8:32
209	Chapter 39	4:51
210	'Lance,' she said before the tournament...	4:50
211	Chapter 40	4:38
212	Chapter 41	4:46
213	A third straw in the wind...	6:02
214	Chapter 42	5:02
215	'How dare you say it was a knight...'	5:31
216	Chapter 43	4:36
217	'What is the matter?' asked Lancelot.	4:25
218	Chapter 44	5:05
219	Chapter 45	8:29
220	Do you think it would be fine...	8:23

221	THE CANDLE IN THE WIND	0:28
222	Chapter 1	5:42
223	Agravaine said: 'Mordred...'	5:49
224	Mordred looked at him.	7:29
225	Chapter 2	6:30
226	Mordred heard his own voice	5:42
227	Chapter 3	7:30
228	Such had been the surprisingly modern civilisation...	7:24
229	As Malory pictures him...	7:22
230	He would have called himself...	7:51
231	Chapter 4	5:58
232	She relented...	6:00
233	But Arthur was the touching one of the three.	5:51
234	'Perhaps you didn't know...'	7:28
235	'Cut the sniveller's head off...'	6:47
236	Chapter 5	7:52
237	Arthur, who had come pattering...	8:21
238	Agravaine entered the conversation...	8:12
239	Chapter 6	8:43
240	Chapter 7	6:02

241	He slid the wooden beam...	5:29
242	The handle which lifted the latch...	6:15
243	He put his shoulder...	6:01
244	Chapter 8	6:23
245	He broke down...	7:03
246	The other turned his back...	7:05
247	They were beginning their unprofessional petition...	7:10
248	Gawaine's enthusiasm had evaporated...	7:04
249	Chapter 9	5:24
250	In the silence...	4:57
251	She left the fireplace...	5:42
252	Chapter 10	8:17
253	His sarcasms were as easy...	5:54
254	It was noticed...	5:41
255	The ill-made knight turned...	5:57
256	'The Queen shall come back to him...'	4:50
257	Chapter 11	6:22
258	Guenever sat for some time...	6:21
259	'They did used to talk...'	6:33
260	People write tragedies...	6:08

261	'What do you want?'	6:47
262	Chapter 12	7:11
263	'He was fond of our mother.'	7:21
264	Chapter 13	6:54
265	'He met Arthur at Dover...'	6:44
266	Chapter 14	6:46
267	The wars of his early days...	6:40
268	The blessing of forgetfulness...	6:43
269	Another worn-out circle...	6:01
270	'Put it like this.'	5:28
271	'You will say to them...'	5:42
272	THE BOOK OF MERLYN: Chapter 1	6:45
273	'There's a description for you.'	7:59
274	Chapter 2	7:12
275	'I am ready,' he said	7:19
276	Chapter 3	5:16
277	In Cornwall they halted...	6:05
278	The combination room had changed...	6:47
279	'The trouble is,' said Archimedes...	4:40
280	The Badger, it may be mentioned...	4:47

281	'Stupid!' cried the magician	5:23
282	Chapter 4	3:02
283	Chapter 5	6:21
284	'You should read Lamb's letter...'	5:51
285	'Go on, if you must.'	5:23
286	Chapter 6	5:10
287	'Perhaps I have painted a dark picture of the humans.'	5:17
288	Chapter 7	7:25
289	The new ant put down its cadaver...	6:43
290	Chapter 8	6:22
291	Chapter 9	6:22
292	Chapter 10	4:38
293	'The ants fight wars.'	4:51
294	Chapter 11	5:00
295	It was true indeed...	5:04
296	Chapter 12	5:31
297	He began to feel an uneasiness in himself.	4:48
298	Chapter 13	5:21
299	When it had sunk in she left him...	5:27
300	Remembering the queen ants...	7:46

301	Chapter 14	6:40
302	One of the peaks of the migration...	5:23
303	Chapter 15	4:15
304	The nest-making enthralled her...	5:04
305	Chapter 16	5:16
306	'Of course the owners of private property...'	6:47
307	'Man might become migratory.'	5:37
308	Chapter 17	5:48
309	Chapter 18	6:21
310	All the beauty of his humans...	6:47
311	Chapter 19	5:58
312	'Sir, there are a great many things...'	6:12
313	'Number 4...'	7:16
314	'The committee has suggested...'	5:21
315	The animals read them out in turn.	6:01
316	'10,000 years from now...'	6:31
317	Chapter 20	7:40
318	'Ipse' says a medieval poem...	6:56
319	Then there are the Irish...	7:36

Total time: 33:02:01

T.H. White

The Once and Future King

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 twenty-one 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 invaluablely 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 Sword in the Stone is a welcome to Gramarye, or Merrie England, or the mythical past of Britain as re-imagined by White. At the castle of the kind and good Sir Ector, set in an enormous clearing of a still more enormous forest, he is discussing with his typically (if anachronistically) clubby friend Sir Grumtor Grummursum what to do with his son Kay and his ward, known as the Wart. Clearly, what they need is a tutor of some sort. And the boys find themselves by chance under the tutelage of one Merlyn, a captivating magician living his life backwards, who realises he has a duty to teach these two well – and one of them in particular.

Through a series of adventures that involve being turned into animals, a hungry witch and a meeting with the real Robin Hood, Merlyn instructs his young charges in the ways of the world, and

with lessons of a broader wisdom, too. But his teachings seem aimed principally at the Wart, something Kay begins to resent – after all, Kay is to become a full and proper knight, and the Wart can only hope to be his squire. But there is good reason for Merlyn concentrating his efforts on the Wart, as they discover when, after hearing of the King's death, they all go to London to a grand tournament. The King had no heir, and a rightful one must be found by testing the mettle of those knights who wish to take on the role. To prove themselves, they must pull a sword from an anvil resting on a stone ...

The Witch in the Wood (also published as *The Queen of Air and Darkness*) is a significant shift in terms of tone away from the first book of the series. It begins by introducing the Orkney faction, as dysfunctional a family as you could imagine, who have deep personal reasons for hating Arthur. The Orkneys are not just enemies; they are Arthur's half-family, the ones on whom Arthur's father performed his own evil, and who are looking for revenge.

White paints them as men destroyed by a mother (Morgause) who was at times too loving, at times completely inattentive, and suggests that much of the emotional immaturity (and bloody viciousness) of her sons is the result of this maternal over-influence.

Meanwhile, Arthur is trying to establish himself as a rightful king against the powerful barons, and also trying to establish something much more lastingly important – the Round Table. For him (thanks to Merlyn's continued education) the idea that force should be the determining factor in ruling his kingdom is out-dated, wrong, perverse. So he seeks to create a new world, where the fighting is done by those who are best at it for the best reasons. It is the beginning of the idea of chivalry, of justice, of respect for all life.

To offset these rather serious themes, White has Sir Grummore, King Pellinore and Sir Palomides continuing their endless comic hunting of the Questing Beast. Pellinore falls in love with a woman who – rather to everyone's

surprise – reciprocates; and they are to become extremely happy parents.

But when Arthur meets Morgause, ignorant that she is his half-sister, he is seduced and makes her pregnant with the child Mordred; who will eventually be the downfall of Arthur and all he stands for.

The Ill-Made Knight is Lancelot's name for himself. Convinced he is ugly, he dedicates himself to becoming the greatest knight in the world; but his achievements are all but destroyed by his overwhelming love for Guinevere – a love that struggles with his love for Arthur, for whom he had felt a powerful affection from his early youth, and his love for God. The focus of the story moves to Camelot, Arthur's court, with its knights and jousts and tournaments; and with his continuing search to find the right way to rule. The quest for the Holy Grail is an attempt to bring a spiritual aspect to the court that had until then found its success only through war and bloodshed. And throughout is the unspoken threat of what Arthur's

adulterous (and incestuous) sin will bring to the court he has worked so hard to create.

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-weary 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.

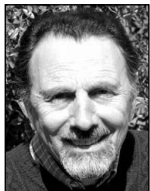
A note on the text

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 Maddening 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.

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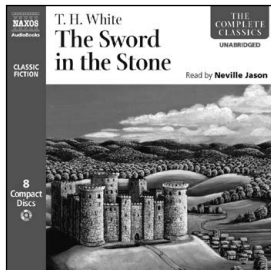
Edited by JD Evans

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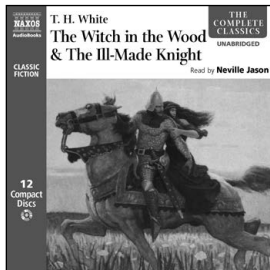
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Cover picture: Lancelot defeats Sir Mador de la Porte / N C Wyeth in *The Boy's King Arthur*
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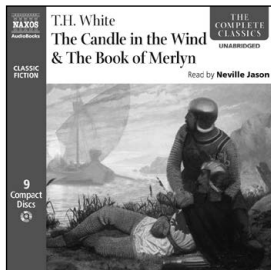
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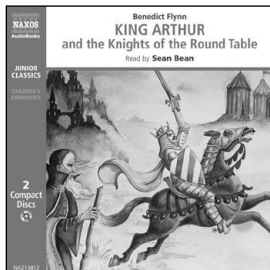
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