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The Educational Role of Supernatural Characters in Arthurian Romance

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Poster Presentation 24

THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF SUPERNATURAL
CHARACTERS IN ARTHURIAN ROMANCE

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Early medieval tales of Arthurian romance typically contain numerous otherworldly or magical characters. The continual reappearance of these supernatural creatures suggests that their inclusion is more than just an accidental plot twist. In the absence of a highly educated and well read audience, medieval authors were forced to include aspects of the supernatural into their fictional works in order keep their readers interest. The magic creatures in Arthurian literature provide an element of spectacle that could well explain the popularity of these same stories to modern audiences. The sources examined in this project include Marie de France's "Bisclavret," Chrétien de Troye's *Yvain*, and the epic poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

In this paper, an attempt is made to prove the educational significance of these mythical creatures. Not only do they serve to educate the reader as to the author's intended moral, but the supernatural element tends to have a profound effect on the story's "normal" characters as well. In order for the hero of any given medieval romance tale to emerge victorious, he must find some kind of enlightenment along the way. More often than not, this revelation is made possible only through an encounter with a supernatural character.