

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING: AN INTERPRETERS THEATRE ADAPTATION
AND PRODUCTION FOR A CHILD AUDIENCE

A Thesis

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Christine Kelly

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Approved for the Major Department

Karl C. Breda

Approved for the Graduate Council

Jimmie L. Boyer

272913⁵

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

I. IMPORTANCE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White affirm the importance of Interpreters Theatre for children: "Readers Theatre has proved a delightful way to enrich the cultural life of a child. Wherever it has been tried, the results have been very gratifying."¹ Even though it has been used and acclaimed, very little is known about the reactions of children to specific techniques of this medium. A description of the responses of children to an Interpreters Theatre performance should provide evidence of the relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness of such a medium, and give insight into the success of specific techniques employed by Interpreters Theatre as directed for children.

Further, such a study should point toward new directions for the writers, producers, and directors in Children's Theatre. For example, many writers and directors in the area of Children's Theatre assert that a play for children must contain action. "Show it, don't tell it" has become

¹Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White, Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967), p. 78.

a major premise of Children's Theatre.² Jed H. Davis and Mary Jane L. Watkins, authorities in the field, maintain that the lack of physical action can cause boredom and restlessness:

Certain conditions on stage almost invariably call forth a boredom response. Such "wobble spots" are likely to occur in scenes of exposition without action. Sequences depending entirely upon comprehension of dialogue and denying the language of children--which is basically action--may easily lose attention. Long speeches by a single character and sequences which develop character rather than plot will probably lose the audience. Characters who sit down to talk are not likely to be interesting to children. Long explanations of off-stage action will likewise bore them, since they would much prefer to see what is happening rather than hear about it. Adults will sit quietly and cough, perhaps even shuffle their feet, at boring points in the drama, but children will not be so reserved in their comment.³

Almost all of the above described conditions are found in Interpreters Theatre. Interpreters Theatre requires that plot, character, and action be comprehended through the dialogue. Readers are generally seated throughout a production. There is often very little physical action; Interpreters Theatre relies heavily on the aural experience. Therefore, this medium might easily be overlooked as appropriate or suitable for children.

²Charlotte B. Chorpenning, Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre (Anchorage, Kentucky: The Children's Theatre Press, 1954), p. 56.

³Jed H. Davis and Mary Jane L. Watkins, Children's Theatre: Play Production for the Child Audience (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), pp. 45-46.

Few people, however, would deny that a child is endowed with a wonderful imagination.⁴ A child's love for story-telling certainly reveals this trait. Davis and Watkins admit how willingly a child will respond to literature:

This ability to enter into imaginary situations with little reservation or, indeed, little consciousness of the unreality of it all is characteristic of children from early childhood to adolescence.⁵

Therefore, action need not be limited to movement on stage. A story told in colorful, vivid language may also be filled with action--in the mind's-eye of the audience. For this reason, an Interpreters Theatre production for children should suggest a new approach to the theory of physical action.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the potential of Interpreters Theatre for child audiences as evidenced by an Interpreters Theatre production of an adaptation of T. H. White's The Once and Future King presented to children.⁶

⁴ Winifred Ward, Playmaking with Children, from Kindergarten through Junior High School (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 6.

⁵ Davis and Watkins, op. cit., p. 37.

⁶ T. H. White, The Once and Future King (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), p. 15. All subsequent mention of The Once and Future King is in reference to this book.

This study will also evaluate the effect of specific techniques of Interpreters Theatre in terms of the child audience response.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Oral interpretation is defined here as "the study of literature through the medium of oral performance."⁷ Oral performance includes the performer's response to the literature and his sharing this response with the audience through the vocal and physical techniques of reading aloud.

Interpreters Theatre, an all inclusive term, is known by a variety of names: Chamber Theatre, Readers Theatre, Group Reading, and many others. There are as many definitions of the medium as there are names. However, in order to encourage flexibility and creativity as an approach to producing Interpreters Theatre, this investigator shall not try to define and limit the medium, but to suggest a basis for beginning. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White emphasize this approach:

The possibilities of this medium have not yet been fully realized or exploited. Relatively new on the contemporary scene, Readers Theatre [Interpreters Theatre] is

⁷Wallace A. Bacon, The Art of Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), p. 313.

free for experimentation and open to the use of imaginative techniques for bringing literature to an audience.⁸

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the definition of Interpreters Theatre is the skillful reading from a manuscript by two or more readers using the techniques of oral interpretation with the intention of causing the audience to experience the literature. The use of technical effects--scenery, lighting, and costuming--and the use of physical movement depends wholly upon the literature selected and the judgment of the director in selecting the best way to enhance the literature. It should be stressed, however, that the primary emphasis is upon the literature and the experiencing of that literature.

Children's Theatre, as defined by Davis and Watkins, exists whenever a production of a written script is directed specifically for the child audience. The players may be children or adults, but preferably they are a combination of both--adults in adult roles, children in child roles. . . . Any activity which does not provide the child audience with a true theatre experience is not Children's Theatre.⁹

When referring to children, this investigator intends to include those from the first through the eighth grade in school. An age group within this range, with similar reading interests and abilities, was selected as the audience for this performance.

⁸Coger and White, op. cit., p. 19.

⁹Davis and Watkins, op. cit., p. 18.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are several studies of audience response to Interpreters Theatre, but none relate directly to a child's response to the medium. One thesis, "Production Techniques in Adapting Children's Literature to Chamber Theatre,"¹⁰ deals with adapting and producing a script for children but does not attempt to discuss the response of the children or the possible causes of the responses. Letters from the committee and the children's teacher served as the basis for evaluation. These were quite general and restricted to comments on the overall effectiveness of the production.

A study of audience response, "An Investigation of Audience Response to Prose Literature When Perceived Through Silent Reading, Oral Interpretation, and Reader's Theatre,"¹¹ was directed to high school children. The purpose of the study was to examine the potential of Interpreters Theatre as a teaching method. The testing revealed no significant differences between the three methods as teaching devices. However, the Interpreters Theatre production was cast from

¹⁰ Nanette Donham, "Production Techniques in Adapting Children's Literature to Chamber Theatre," (unpublished Master's thesis, Occidental College, Los Angeles, 1961).

¹¹ Judy Lee Svore, "An Investigation of Audience Response to Prose Literature When Perceived Through Silent Reading, Oral Interpretation, and Reader's Theatre," (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Montana, Missoula, 1965).

high school students and no attempt was made to evaluate the effectiveness of the production or any of its aspects. A more experienced cast may have created a more favorable response to the production. Evaluation of the production may have revealed the cause of the responses, favorable or unfavorable.

Both of the above investigations suggest the need for further study in a related area: What elements of Interpreters Theatre work most effectively for children?

Davis points out potential research areas for the prospective Children's Theatre graduate student. Two of the areas suggested are:

- (1) What factors contribute to periodic loss of attention in a Children's Theatre production? Are these factors principally matters of playwriting, directing, or acting?
- (2) Are the visual or the aural aspects of the production more important in affecting the process of conceptualization?¹²

This study does not attempt to answer directly either of these particular questions but may suggest an approach to the answers. Two of the questions answered in this study are related to Davis' comments: When did the children show signs of inattention? What aspect of the production might have contributed to it--the acting, directing, or the script?

¹²Jed Davis, "Prospectus for Research in Children's Theatre," Educational Theatre Journal, XIII (December, 1961), 276.

V. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to the evaluation of child audiences' responses to an Interpreters Theatre production of an adaptation of T. H. White's The Once and Future King. The effect of specific techniques of Interpreters Theatre employed are analyzed in terms of the child audience response.

The director evaluated the script and the production. The evaluation of audience response was made in terms of the visual and vocal responses of the majority of the children, as perceived on video tape recorded during the performance. No attempt was made to evaluate the responses of the minority. The children's understanding and retention of the performance and the literature adapted were not investigated. The nature of the conclusions is descriptive.

CHAPTER II

SELECTION AND ADAPTATION OF LITERATURE

I. SELECTION OF LITERATURE

The primary requisite for choosing literature to adapt for Interpreters Theatre is that it be good literature. Rather than discuss The Once and Future King by Terence Hanbury White in terms of general criteria for judging good literature, this investigator will attempt to show its value within the discussion below. The discussion includes critical commentary about the author and the book, the subject matter of the book, the suitability of the subject for a child audience, and the justification of the literature as material for an Interpreters Theatre script.

T. H. White had an established reputation as a writer, but he was not well-known or considered successful financially until the publication of The Sword in the Stone.¹ This book and the later Mistress Masham's Repose² are probably his best known works. Following The Sword in the Stone were two other books which were revised in 1957 and then included in the

¹T. H. White, The Sword in the Stone (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939). All subsequent mention of The Sword in the Stone is in reference to this volume.

²T. H. White, Mistress Masham's Repose (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946). All subsequent mention of Mistress Masham's Repose is in reference to this volume.

volume, The Once and Future King. When the second book of that work, The Witch in the Wood,³ appeared, William Rose Benét commented on T. H. White's abilities as a writer:

Mr. White still displays those qualities of scholarship and high fantasy which endeared him to his former readers. He is tangentially, the most expert satirist of things British who has appeared for a long time, just as he is the greatest lover of the great qualities of his fellow-countrymen and their noble land.⁴

Those "qualities of scholarship" guided his choice of topic matter for several other books, notably, The Scandalmonger,⁵ which traces the history of dueling, and the Book of Beasts,⁶ a translation of a Latin Bestiary of the twelfth century. On the other hand, Mistress Masham's Repose and The Elephant and the Kangaroo⁷ are sheer fantasy.⁸ The Once and Future King, based on the legend of King Arthur, is

³T. H. White, The Witch in the Wood (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939). All subsequent mention of The Witch in the Wood is in reference to this volume.

⁴William Rose Benét, "The Wicked Witch Morgause," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXI (November 4, 1939), 7.

⁵T. H. White, The Scandalmonger (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1952). All subsequent mention of The Scandalmonger is in reference to this volume.

⁶T. H. White (tr. and ed.), Book of Beasts (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954).

⁷T. H. White, The Elephant and the Kangaroo (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947).

⁸David Garnett, "Introduction," America, at Last; The American Journal of T. H. White (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 13.

a marvelous combination of these two interests, scholarship and fantasy.

. . . in the early part of The Once and Future King, Tim [T. H. White] is not only weaving a delightfully amusing story of knights errant riding about on absurd quests; he also initiates the reader into all the details of day-to-day life in a Norman castle, he reveals what it is like to fly through the night accompanied by an owl, to swim as a small fish in the moat, to stand sentry all through the night as one of them among the crazy and sadistic falcons.

The test of a writer is to enlarge the experience of his readers. Tim passes this triumphantly.⁹

There is a need for the legend of Arthur, or any legend, as literary experience. As Josette Frank observes, the legend growing out of the dreams and myths of a people, is one of the best expressions of that people:

Down through the ages has come a mighty literature which sprang directly out of the dreams and lives of people. Every culture has had its myths and legends, rooted deep in its traditions, its gropings, its yearnings, and its frustrations.¹⁰

Its appeal is universal; the ideals of legends are shared by almost all peoples. The legend may also provide a deeper understanding of the culture from which it grew. With its emphasis on a national dream, the legend may give insight into the character--religious, economic, and social aspects--of a culture. But of most importance, the legend can make a time in history, its people and beliefs, real and alive.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Josette Frank, Your Child's Reading Today (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 112.

The Once and Future King, based on the familiar and well-beloved legend of King Arthur, can offer one of the best kinds of literary experience. The work in its entirety takes the reader through Arthur's childhood (Book I), into the beginning of his reign, the instigation of the Round Table, and the birth of Arthur's illegitimate son, Mordred (Book II), Sir Lancelot's story and how he came to love the Queen (Book III), and the death of King Arthur and the dissolving of the Round Table (Book IV). Any one of these four books might fulfill the requirements of Interpreters Theatre. However, Books II-IV have more of an adult point of view. Book I is not only appropriate for Interpreters Theatre; it should also have in its wisdom, humor, and unique insight into the legend, a special appeal to children.

When a child yearns to be a hero, and all children do, and he cannot be a hero at age ten or eleven or twelve, the next best thing is to imagine himself in that role through reading of the valiant deeds of heroes.¹¹ Some of the best literature about heroes is the legend:

Powerful and glamorous are the heroes of this literature, from Homer's heroes and the demigods and supermen of Greece and Rome to Beowulf, Charlemagne, and the mythical King Arthur.¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Clara Whitehill Hunt, What Shall We Read to the Children? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), p. 59.

Whenever any discussion of the hero or the legend arises, King Arthur is almost invariably mentioned. Children should be enchanted with T. H. White's story, for its hero is a child--the young Arthur, the Wart.

The Wart, a warm, sympathetic boy, should appeal to all the best instincts of children. He tries faithfully to be kind and honest. He yearns to be a knight, and laments his position as an adopted son which prevents it. However, he continues to strive for his dreams and ideals. He is a character who fits Clara Whitehill Hunt's description of heroes whom all children may imitate:

No more need we fear the effect of fairy tales upon his [a child's] character if we choose those heroes in which the child's sympathies are enlisted for the brave and pure and faithful and friendly, and his contempt is aroused against the coward, the sneak, the lazy, the ugly in character.¹³

Although the book is fiction based on a myth, it is a story about truth--the truth in living life to the fullest and constantly evaluating what is found as true. Experiencing fiction of this kind should have as much impact on a child's character as any morality lesson. All that helped make the Wart, the "once and future king" should guide a child to yield to the best in his own nature.

Didacticism should always remain secondary to the interest in the story, for a morality lesson alone has little

¹³Hunt, op. cit., p. 60.

to attract a child. The Once and Future King should invoke interest and arouse the imagination. The plot traces the education of the Wart. A rather dirty, absent-minded, but wise magician, Merlyn, is his tutor. Merlyn's magic moves characters backwards and forward in time. The wisest of animals, the owl, speaks to the Wart; the powerful Pike, Mr. P., King of the Moat, personifies the terror of power. Merlyn's magic creates most of the action and the lively progression of the story.

There are many other fascinating characters, too, including King Pellinore and Sir Grummore. William Rose Benét, in discussing T. H. White's use of language, character, and episode mentions these two characters:

Nothing such pure poetry as his [Wart's] first view of Sir Pellinore in the wood before the latter turned out to be his own ridiculous self. Nothing so wildly funny as the tilt between Sir Pellinore and Sir Grummore.¹⁴

The humor of character and episode, the wisdom of the theme, and the richness of the experience offered should create a lasting impression for children. David Garnett says of White:

It is this mixture of wisdom and simplicity, together with a delight in the texture of all the things on earth, which makes Tim such an excellent writer, excellent for the boys and girls he loved to teach, excellent for us all.¹⁵

¹⁴Benét, loc. cit.

¹⁵Garnett, op. cit., p. 14.

Not only does the book provide suitable material for children; it also fulfills the necessary requirements of Interpreters Theatre. Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White list these characteristics as being vital: "evocative power, compelling characters, action, enriched language, and wholeness."¹⁶

Evocative power. The strength of the story is the appeal of the young Arthur. White transforms the imaginary character of a legend into a warm and human child, the Wart. Wart's struggle to overcome his position and his feelings of inferiority are the central conflict in the book. The inadequacy Wart feels has been partly bestowed on him by the arrogant Kay, the true son of Wart's adopted family, and the heir to the estate. Merlyn, whose wit and wisdom guide Wart's education, is the Wart's best friend. He, alone, knows the Wart's true identity but is powerless to prevent the boy's suffering. The heroic qualities of the boy help him sustain his hopes and dreams. The compelling story of the boy and the humorous adventures brought about by his tutor's magic powers create a powerful and evocative tale.

Compelling characters. The characters are delightfully magical and human. The mixture is created by the bright,

¹⁶ Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White, Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1967), p. 21.

larger than life quality--the magical powers of Merlyn, the dauntless Wart, the blundering Pellinore--yet each is bound by the awkward humanness that mirrors life. This combination of magic and humanness creates a compelling warmth and empathy for the characters.

Action. The story is based on the episodes of Wart's education. These episodes are interspersed with comments on the growth of the boys, Wart and Kay, and the season affairs of the castle. Each scene contains a great deal of action. Benét praised the book for its richness "in variety of episode and in brilliant shift of attack."¹⁷ In the episodes, Wart is transformed into countless animals to study their habits and philosophies, or Merlyn sends him to a typically twelfth century event--a joust or the rescue of innocents from a wicked witch by Robin Wood [sic]. The resultant action is first-rate drama: exciting, imaginative, and suspenseful. There is also the action of language and humor. T. H. White's prose pictures are vivid and alive. From this action, visual and aural, the interpreter should be able to create a full and exciting experience for the listener.

Enriched language. The twelfth century period and the legend provided T. H. White opportunity for the skillful use of scholarship and fantasy. He fully exploited this

¹⁷Benét, loc. cit.

opportunity in theme, language, and character, and produced a style that is acute, lucid, and enriched. This selection from The Once and Future King illustrates these aspects of his style:

There was a clearing in the forest, a wide sward of moonlit grass, and white rays shone full upon the trunks on the opposite side. These trees were beeches, whose trunks are always more beautiful in a pearly light, and among the beeches there was the smallest movement and a silvery clink. Before the clink there were just the beeches, but immediately afterward there was a knight in full armour, standing still and silent and unearthly among the majestic trunks.¹⁸

All the elements of prose fiction are carefully controlled and developed in the book, creating a language beautifully enriched.

Wholeness. Book I is unified through the chronological growth of the children. The movement of the book is built by the educational sequences and the conflict between Wart and Kay. The theme is the power of kings. Merlyn's education is directed toward an examination of the various kinds of power: "Might is Right,"¹⁹ said Mr. P., King of the Moat. Wart, in contrast, states: "If I were to be made a knight, . . . I should pray to God to let me encounter all the evil in the world in my own person, so that if I conquered there would be

¹⁸T. H. White, The Once and Future King (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), p. 15.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 48.

none left."²⁰ These elements build toward the inevitable crowning of Wart, and give the book its wholeness.

The Once and Future King, Book I, distinctly contains each of the five elements outlined as necessary for an Interpreters Theatre script. In the following discussion on adapting a script for children, further evidence of the validity of the literature may be seen.

II. ADAPTATION OF LITERATURE

Constance D'Arcy MacKay suggests this approach to playwriting for children:

Playwriting for children is governed by the same rules as playwriting for adults. There must be a beginning, a middle and an end. There must be what the Greeks declared was the essence of drama--struggles . . . But each scene, each bit of dialogue, . . . must be built toward a climax.²¹

As stated, the appeal of The Once and Future King is through the Wart and his difficulties. Herein lies the "essence of the drama," Wart's struggles to overcome his position and self-doubt. The selection chosen to be adapted easily provides a clear beginning, middle, and end which can be arranged in climactic order.

Charlotte Chorpenning's Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre contains broad rules encompassing the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

²¹ Constance D'Arcy MacKay, Children's Theatres and Plays (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927), p. 101.

statements of many other writers in Children's Theatre. Miss Chorpenning lists these ten major rules:

Get Clear the Dramatic Line. The Story Must Never Stop. Provide Carry-Over and Pick-Up. The End Must Be Contained in the Beginning. Do Not Underestimate Your Audience. If Much of Your Dialogue Cannot Be Expressed in Voice Cadence, Facial Expression and Action, It Is for Older Children Only. Look Out for Monotony: Rhythms. Easy Identification Essential. Include Your Child Audience in All You Write. Show It, Don't Tell It.²²

Each of these rules will be examined separately in terms of its application to this script.

Get clear the dramatic line. The story line should be clear, and the plot simple to follow. As discussed above, the movement of the book is built on the growth of the boys and the educational episodes. These episodes used in the script were chosen to build toward the climax.

The story must never stop. Each scene contains some plot element or movement toward the total effect. No physical movement or technical aspect of production was included that was not suited to the material. Any distracting or unnecessary business was eliminated.

Provide carry-over and pick-up. Chorpenning discusses carry-over and pick-up in terms of the movement from one act to the next. Some clue or element of suspense needs to be included at the end of one act to carry-over interest to the

²²Charlotte B. Chorpenning, Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre (Anchorage, Kentucky: The Children's Theatre Press, 1954), p. 56.

next. The next act should begin with action or interest scenes to quickly pick-up the audience. Since this production did not include intermission or act breaks, this rule did not necessarily apply. However, because the script is a series of separate episodes, this rule influenced the choice of narration or action which ends and begins each scene.

The end must be contained in the beginning. Some hint of the conflict and eventual denouement should be introduced at the beginning of the play. The initial scene between Wart and Kay served to point up the conflict and suggest an ending. The commonly known legend may have also helped effectively to propel the interest of the audience. In discussing the stories for dramatization with children, Winifred Ward suggests that a "quick and satisfying ending" is necessary:

Regardless of the length of a story or a play, a child's interest drops as soon as he knows how it is coming out. . . . After the climax of a tale, rewards and punishments are administered with dispatch.²³

For this reason, the final chapter in the book after the climax was cut, and a short and simple ending inserted.

Do not underestimate your audience. The material used and the audience to view the production were selected with this rule in mind. Careful consideration of the reading habits and the interests of children provided the most helpful

²³Winifred Ward, Playmaking with Children, from Kindergarten through Junior High School (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 92.

guides. In directing the production, care was taken to avoid any condescension.

If much of your dialogue cannot be expressed in voice cadence, facial expression and action, it is for older children only. This statement is a pertinent comment about using Interpreters Theatre for children. By broadening the word action to its fullest interpretation to mean action that is told--action in language and idea--we have a pre-requisite of any good Interpreters Theatre script. A script can be effective for Interpreters Theatre only if it allows expression in voice cadence, facial expression, and action. Therefore, these elements are always essential. The Interpreters Theatre director must consider the material in terms of plot, language, character, and theme in order to choose the appropriate age group.

Look out for monotony: rhythms. Any director of theatre, Children's Theatre or Interpreters Theatre, should realize the importance of this comment. The episodes in this script were arranged to provide a variety of rhythms--in action, language, and movement. The lines given to each reader were chosen to provide contrasting sounds and rhythms. In rehearsal, the rate and tempo of the readers were evaluated for build and movement within scenes toward an overall effect. However, these potential rhythms were totally dependent upon the adaptation of the script.

Easy identification essential. Chorpenning appended to

this note a warning: "Be careful whom you offer for identification."²⁴ The characters in a play for children should be

worthy of a child's identification. In The Once and Future King, the central character, the Wart, has the ideals and good-heartedness which make him an excellent hero for children. Identification with the Wart is made easy for children by his youth and his humanity. Ward emphasizes the importance of real, human characters. "The minor people are often types, but they are only part of the background for the main characters, who should be . . . individual and three-dimensional."²⁵

All the characters fulfill this requisite.

Include your child audience in all you write. The

selection of the literature was made for its particular appeal to children. The choice of characters, structure of plot, the arrangement of the episodes were made with a child audience in mind. Particularly tense and exciting scenes were backed by quieter scenes to allow opportunities for relaxation. Many lines, some inserted especially for this purpose, were spoken directly to the audience to give the children a greater sense of involvement.

²⁴Chorpenning, loc. cit.

²⁵Ward, loc. cit.

Show it, don't tell it. The kind of showing

Chorpenning mentions differs somewhat from the showing of action in an Interpreters Theatre production. However, it should be noted that Interpreters Theatre does not mean simply reading from scripts. The techniques of the interpreter are very similar to the techniques of the actor. The interpreter is limited in two major ways: he should suggest character rather than assume character, and the action is generally offstage in the mind's-eye of the audience rather than onstage. However, both the interpreter and the actor must show tensiveness, mood, imagery, and action by total bodily involvement and facial expression. The interpreter must indeed show it and cannot rely on telling it. With a demanding child audience this rule is of prime importance.

One other important consideration for a children's show should be discussed--the use of the intermission. Jed Davis states that the intermission should be used with caution:

Intermissions are commonly regarded as trouble spots in Children's Theatre. If intermissions are not carefully arranged and controlled the audience may be completely lost and their attention never fully regained.²⁶

Nor is it always practical for reasons of time and location to usher children in and out of the performance area.

²⁶ Jed H. Davis and Mary Jane L. Watkins, Children's Theatre: Play Production for the Child Audience (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 144.

Therefore, the length of this production was limited to sixty minutes without any intermission or act break.

The basic objective of Interpreters Theatre is to enhance the literary work. Thus, the adaptor for Interpreters Theatre is primarily concerned with the literature. He must be faithful to the original and attempt to keep the style, intent, and purpose of the author intact.

Adaptation of the novel creates a special challenge because of the novel's length, number of episodes, subplots, and number of characters. The adaptor must limit these by careful selection of the vital plot, pertinent characters, and a unifying theme.

The Once and Future King has several subplots which add variety and interest to the story and enhance but do not necessarily extend the main plot. To keep the production short, simple, and clear for the children, the main plot, the story of Wart, was the only one retained.

Only three major characters and five minor characters were included in the adapted script. These seemed to best support and identify the Wart's story and to produce the most interest. Plot lines needed from some of the minor characters eliminated were rewritten and given to a major character. All the characters served to develop theme.

The plot involves the Wart's discovery of his parentage. Merlyn, alone, knows his identity and was

responsible for taking the baby Wart to Sir Ector. Sir Ector adopted the child. The script begins with the firing of Wart's and Kay's tutor. Wart, accidentally, or by Merlyn's magic, finds Merlyn who becomes the new tutor. Merlyn's tutelage is directed toward an examination of different uses of power, to prepare the Wart for becoming the King. The minor characters are introduced in the educational incidents created by Merlyn. The conflict arises from Wart's growing beliefs in the good of power, and his fear (he is still ignorant of his true heritage) that he cannot become a knight in order to use this power. The theme, the use of power by rulers or kings, provides the basic unity of the script.

The scenes [refer to Table I] chosen to tell the story not only support the theme but also provide flow within the script. Some of the scenes create tension and crisis; some are the quieter, intermediary scenes for relaxation and thought. These were arranged in climactic order leading to the final scene in which Wart pulls the sword from the stone.

To tie these scenes together and to provide exposition and description, the narrative passages from the book were used. A few sentences, to cut the length of the passages and to provide flow of the story, were written and inserted by the adaptor. These are as true to the author's style and intent as possible.

A short introduction was written by the adaptor and delivered to the audience by one of the narrators before the

TABLE I
SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- Scene One The characters are introduced. Sir Ector and Sir Grummore have a cheerful discussion about the need for a tutor. It is decided to start a quest.
- Scene Two Wart and Kay go hawking. The hawk is lost. Kay returns to the castle and Wart is alone in the Forest Sauvage [sic].
- Scene Three The Wart meets a startled King Pellinore. He tells Wart about the tribulations of questing for the Questing Beast.
- Scene Four Wart finds Merlyn's cottage and Merlyn. He also meets Merlyn's intelligent friend, an owl. Merlyn tells Wart about Merlyn's second sight. Wart's quest for a tutor is successful.
- Scene Five Wart's education takes him into the moat, in the guise of a fish. He meets the King of the Moat, Mr. P.
- Scene Six Wart and Kay witness an omen of Wart's future during archery practice.
- Scene Seven Merlyn arranges for more practical education of the Wart--a joust between Sir Grummore and King Pellinore.
- Scene Eight An interlude in which the seasonal affairs of the castle and the growth of the boys are related.
- Scene Nine Wart laments to Merlyn his becoming a Squire for Kay. He tells what he would do as a knight.
- Scene Ten King Pellinore relates the death of the King of England and the signs which have appeared. Wart, Ector and Kay go to London. Wart accidentally proves his prowess in pulling swords out of stones, and is crowned King of England.

production began. This direct comment to the audience prepared them for the action of the story and set up the opening passage. The first chapter in the book provided a good method of introducing the characters. A short portion of the final chapter was used to tie the story together and to give the audience a strong and ceremonial conclusion.

In cutting this selection, the adaptor chose the vital plot, pertinent characters, a unifying theme, and then the incidents or scenes within the material to develop these elements. The incidents were arranged in climactic order. Clarity and flow of the story were major considerations. The introduction, and the conclusion were chosen last. However, the adaptor's responsibility to the author, to the child audience and to the techniques of Interpreters Theatre were always primary considerations.

CHAPTER III

PRODUCTION PROCEDURES

I. CASTING THE CHARACTERS

In casting for this production, the director chose cast members who could fulfill the requirements of Interpreters Theatre and the demands of a child audience. In the Readers Theatre Handbook, the following criteria are suggested for casting a production:

The ideal interpreter for Readers Theatre is one who can adapt to the needs and nature of the material, whether it is serious or comic. The reader especially needs a wide vocal and emotional range when he is to play many roles in one script, as is sometimes the case in this medium. The director should, therefore, choose readers who can project variety in vocal quality, thus assuring contrast between successive characters. And, as in casting for any artistic and interpretive endeavor, the reliability of the reader and his enthusiasm for the script are two elements essential for effective rehearsals and performances.¹

These casting requirements are even more important for a child audience. There can not be a more demanding audience. Children are remarkably honest in their reception of a story or a play--whether appreciative or inappreciative. Wide vocal range and variety are essential to project the script with interesting rhythms, a range of sounds, and clearly

¹Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White, Readers Theatre Handbook (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967), pp. 59-60.

understandable ideas, to capture and hold the children's imaginations throughout.

Readers need especially the ability to create "real" people. "Even in a fairy tale the people must seem real and believable."² Children are sensitive to the lack of believability in a characterization and are quick to perceive the false and the insincere.

Because of the demands made on an audience by Interpreters Theatre, a personal, direct sharing will aid greatly in keeping the children alert and involved. The feeling of discovery, a sense of the first time from the readers can create in the children the urge to discover, too. The readers must strive for an energetic and spontaneous performance each time.

With the preceding requirements in mind, this director chose to cast from experienced readers and actors. Three of the cast members had training in interpretation and acting. Two of the members had no formal training in interpretation but extensive training in acting, and one of these, experience with child audiences. Those two members without formal training in interpretation had little trouble adapting to the requirements of Interpreters Theatre.

²Winifred Ward, Playmaking with Children, from Kindergarten through Junior High School (second edition; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 92.

Each cast member had an expressive voice. Together they provided vocal variety and a pleasing choric ensemble. The physical appearances were incidental, but appropriate to the characters. There were four male readers: three were cast in character roles, while one served both as a character and as a narrator. The fifth cast member, a female, read narration and one character. The female voice helped to create variety and balance and to contrast with the heavier male voices.

II. REHEARSAL PROCEDURE

The first day of rehearsal was spent in reading and evaluating the script. This short time was quite helpful to the director and the cast. It provided a common experience toward understanding and enabled the director to hear and discover needed revisions in the script.

Study of the script and initial blocking were completed on the second day. Included in the rehearsals were extensive warm-up exercises for vocal variety, support, projection, and physical relaxation. These exercises were used throughout the rehearsal period and before the performances. They were exceedingly helpful in preparing the readers before performance and in improving vocal techniques.

The second rehearsal period of about eight days [refer to the rehearsal schedule in the appendix] was spent in

working on small units for half-hour sessions. The stage business grew out of these rehearsals; blocking was perfected and set.

The third rehearsal period was used to polish and set characters and business. These later rehearsals included full run-throughs to establish rate, tempo, and a sense of performance. These also helped the director pick out scenes which lacked polish. In the final rehearsals, technical aspects, props, and costumes were included.

An invited audience of students and faculty members came to the final dress rehearsal. This performance gave the readers opportunity to work with an audience and renew energy and enthusiasm in their preparation for a child audience.

III. PROBLEMS DURING REHEARSALS

There were three major problems with the script that challenged the readers and the director. (1) Some of the narrative passages were too long. (2) The transitions between scenes did not effectively provide a unifying thread. (3) In one scene, the dialogue lacked action and movement; and the narration seemed to interrupt the dialogue.

The longer narrative passages were cut to include only the necessary material. This narration was then divided between the two narrators to add vocal variety, rhythms, clarification, and vividness. Some of the narration in which

a narrator described the thoughts or actions of a character in the third person or "indirect discourse" was given to the character described.³ Although the author was describing the character, the focus was close enough to the character to allow suggestion and bodily involvement by the reader. For example, the author or narrator relates this action of King Pellinore: "He wiped his spectacles upon the seat of his trousers. He balanced them on the end of his long nose, just before the visor automatically clapped to." The reader of the character King Pellinore, while retaining the third person, suggested the actions described. During the rehearsal period, the narration and passages of indirect discourse were worked to create the greatest bodily involvement and to project the words and ideas physically and mentally. These techniques were effective in vivifying the narration.

The problem of unity was partially created by the adaptation. The adaptor's job of condensation was done by limiting the episodes and selecting short transitions to bridge the material. As director, it was necessary to give each scene a definite conclusion and each new segment a fresh "pick-up" while retaining story progression. A variety of

³Wallace A. Bacon, The Art of Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), p. 372. "The reporting of a speaker's words indirectly rather than directly, and hence with greater esthetic distance . . . Indirect. He said that he felt sick."

devices worked to assist these transitions. Some movement of the characters helped mark the bridges; a physical and psychological shifting of focus relocated the new scene; a slight pause and a fresh approach to narration also established a new scene; and one transition was made by using music as a bridge.

For the most part, these techniques were effective in providing the necessary bridge or transition. Those transitions that did not work will be discussed in the chapter on evaluations.

Scene five lacked action and flow of story. Merlyn and Wart have been transformed into fish. The narration describes their fish-like movements. This action could not be suggested by the readers, thus short selections of narration were necessary for explanation. This narration tended to interrupt the dialogue and was distracting. The purpose of the scene is to explore the opposite ideas about the use of power as compared to those expressed by the Wart. The scene was therefore necessary to illuminate the theme.

The narration in this scene was cut as much as possible; and the lines were re-arranged between the two narrators. The director then sought to make the action more vivid. One reader had a major portion of the important dialogue. His blocking was directed toward giving him an appropriately sinister quality. The reader began the opening

speeches upstage, speaking directly to the audience. Gradually weaving through the cast and the levels of the platforms, he approached the audience. His last few lines brought him down to the audience level. The fierce nature of the lines directed to the audience, and the growing proximity of the reader to the audience helped convey the power of the ignoble character and emphasized the one line essential to understand the scene, "Might is Right." The scene worked partially, but the reader carrying the major speech, did not consistently block the scene to satisfactorily support the speech with movement and gesture, thus weakening the effect.

IV. TECHNIQUES OF INTERPRETERS THEATRE

To enhance the material, to keep the performance vitally alive, and to offer an examination of the various elements of Interpreters Theatre when used for children, a variety of techniques were included. Most of these are familiar to the Interpreters Theatre director. However, these techniques are basic to the evaluation of the children's responses and are therefore discussed. These techniques include the arrangement of the readers onstage, the division of lines, the exits and entrances, and the focus and movement of the readers. The division of lines is normally considered part of adapting the script. However, its importance in relation to the children's response is great enough to be discussed in this section.

The readers were placed in a semi-circle. The narrators were on either side of the down stage area. The major scenes were played slightly above the narrators and in the center of the circle or stage area. Merlyn generally remained at the apex of the semi-circle and slightly off-center left stage. When the Wart was crowned King Arthur, he moved into this psychologically stronger position. Three levels of the platforms, [refer to Appendix A] arranged in step fashion to cover the playing area, kept all the readers within view of the audience and helped establish character relationships. The playing area was six feet from the front row of the audience in keeping with the intimacy of the performance, and to give the audience a greater sense of participation.

In the division of lines, meaning and clarity, interest, and vocal variety were major factors. The narrators were given the introductory material, and most descriptive passages. Long passages of narration were split between the two narrators. One especially long and obscure passage of description was included not only to set the scene, but also for the interesting rhythms and sounds, and the appeal to the imagination. One narrator read one phrase, the next phrase was read by the second narrator, the third by the first narrator, and so on. Indirect discourse was generally given to the character being described. Direct discourse or dialogue was read by the characters.

Exit and entrance devices varied with the readers. However, none of the readers left the stage area at any time during the performance. Generally, the narrators indicated their absence from a scene by a slight bowing of the head and by their listening attitude. The two readers who read only one major character throughout the script turned side-ways, and looked offstage to indicate an exit. The remaining reader moved from behind one narrator center right to a position within the playing area for an entrance and returned to the original position for his exits. The initial entrance and final exit were made through the audience. One narrator carried a script to symbolize the emphasis on literature.

The focus of the performance was primarily offstage. However, each reader was constantly reminded to show through muscle memory, bodily response, and facial expression what was read. The action described in the indirect discourse read by the character was suggested by the reader in pantomime and gesture to complete and illuminate the telling. The readers were not only projecting the literature, vocally and physically; they were reacting to the dialogue and the narration whenever they were within the scene.

The joust was staged primarily onstage. The action in this scene was as full and broad as possible in order to provide the children with a variety of the experiences of Interpreters Theatre and the evaluators a comparison of

offstage to onstage focus. Further, the director believed onstage focus would provide the fullest experience of the scene. In discussing the use of onstage and offstage focus in *Interpreters Theatre*, Marion L and Marvin D. Kleinau attest to the validity of this approach:

. . . rather than being so concerned in keeping the scene offstage, we should turn our attention to the use of these tools [techniques] of oral performance to free the production to serve best the literature in question.⁴

One smaller section within another scene in which Merlyn describes second sight brought the focus onstage to clarify the dialogue.

Scene six produced a split-focus technique. The narrators described an archery practice of the two boys, while simultaneously the boys pantomimed the action described. The tension created by the visual and the aural focus appropriately heightened the dramatic tension of the scene. Whenever possible, narration and dialogue were directed to the audience in order to involve them in the performance. All of these elements were used to keep the performance as vital, alive, and energetic as possible. The effectiveness of these techniques will be discussed in the chapter on evaluation.

⁴Marion L. Kleinau and Marvin D. Kleinau, "Scene Location in Readers Theatre: Static or Dynamic?," The Speech Teacher, XIV, No. 3 (September, 1965), 193-199, cited in Readers Theatre Handbook (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967), p. 246.

V. TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE PRODUCTION

The technical attributes of a conventional theatre production are a major consideration. In Interpreters Theatre, the audience is asked to supply the setting in their imaginations. To enhance without distracting from this process of communication, the techniques employed should be chosen carefully. To show how Interpreters Theatre can be used with minimal technical effects and still create the desired response, this director chose to keep these elements in their simplest form possible.

The only hand props used were those given Merlyn during his description of second sight, a mirror, brown parcel paper, quills, etc. These were handed to him in a manner as unobtrusive as possible. These props were necessary to help clarify his explanation of his powers.

To indicate a passage of time between two scenes and to prepare the audience for the following narration, a selection from Respighi's Ancient Dances and Airs for Lute, Suites 1, 2, and 3, was used to bridge this one transition between episodes. Other selections from the same music were used at the beginning and the end to help create and sustain the mood.

The staging consisted of three, 16' X 2' levels, consecutively arranged, 12", 18", and 36" from the stage floor. These levels added variety to the stage picture and gave the

readers playing area. The narrators sat on 24" black stools. Another 18" stool was used for Merlyn, upstage, slightly left center. The remaining readers sat on the platforms. Surrounding the playing area were five backing flats covered with black velour. These contained and set off the performance area and hid the camera. Two swords, one shield, two halberds, and red drapery were used to dress the set, to relieve the black background, and to suggest the period of the literature.

Costumes were kept simple for the most part. The female narrator wore a long black skirt and a warm colored blouse. The male readers wore slacks with light shirts. To these basic costumes, however, pieces were added to clarify character. The two boys, Wart and Kay, wore jerkins of bright colors, but Kay, the heir to the manor, had a brighter jerkin with a more formal design. The male narrator who read King Pellinore used horn-rimmed glasses to suggest this character. Both knights in the jousting scene wore chest pieces, helmets, and carried swords for the onstage action. Merlyn wore a long gown with assorted insignias of magicians sewn on it and a tall pointed hat. He carried a "staff of lignum vitae." The female narrator used round clear-rimmed glasses when she read the owl, Archimedes.

The costume pieces were handled as discretely as possible to avoid distracting the audience. No make-up was

used, except for street make-up on the female narrator.

The lighting consisted of ten, 500 watt Fresnels on two light trees directed toward the stage area. The lights helped create mood and clearly illuminated the faces of the readers. The audience was illuminated by four, 500 watt, Olivettes in order to record their responses with the television camera. The stage lighting helped balance the total effect and de-emphasized the audience lighting.

The production was given on the stage at the College Theatre with both audience and the production onstage. This facilitated the use of lighting and camera equipment. By pulling the act curtain and closing off the scene shop, the area provided, 24' X 70', was in keeping with the intimate nature of the performance. Audience seating covered approximately 18' X 32' of the area.

The Department of Education at the college provided the camera equipment. Mr. Jerry Couch, who did the filming, is an Assistant Professor of Education and the head of the television section of that department. His experience in filming children's reactions for use in the student teacher program was invaluable to obtaining the responses of the children.

The key to these technical elements--props, music, platforming, costuming, and lighting--was simplicity. Only those elements which would enhance the literature, clarify characters, or serve a practical purpose were included.

VI. SELECTION OF THE AUDIENCE

In selecting the audience to view this presentation, care was taken to choose an appropriate age group for the subject matter used. Studies of the interests of children were reviewed. Josette Frank, discussing the reading of the maturer child, affirms their interest in legends:

If these are not fairy tales as we define that term, they still meet, for the maturing child, many of the same needs which were served in their earlier years by magic enchantment: the need for more power and more glory, the need to overcome the limitations of human flesh and push back the boundaries of mortality, the need to identify oneself with the deathless and the mighty.⁵

These needs are reflected in a child's reading interests. Story-Telling and Children's Theatre literature provide a guide to the reading of children. Most writers agree with Miss Winifred Ward in this evaluation:

From the years in which children's interest in imaginative literature is high, they come gradually to like realistic stories better. At nine, ten, eleven, the boys clamor for adventure, excitement. They are interested in hero stories, both real and fictitious.

.....

As children reach twelve, thirteen, and fourteen years . . . comes a feeling for idealism and romance. . . . They are more moved at this time by ceremonies and rituals than are either younger or older children. And they respond to finer ideas and emotions in their literature than ever before.⁶

⁵Josette Frank, Your Child's Reading Today (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 113.

⁶Ward, op. cit., pp. 105, 109-110.

The age level of children who would be interested in The Once and Future King was selected by viewing the book in terms of the above criteria. Since The Once and Future King has a hero, adventure, and excitement, as well as idealism, romance, and noble ideas, children from ages nine to fourteen should all appreciate this selection. However, in order to limit the audience and to select a more compatible group, only those within the median age level were chosen. Therefore, for this presentation, the audience was limited to those children eleven-twelve or in the sixth and seventh grades.

To allow the children close proximity to the production and to keep them within camera range, the number of students in the audience was limited to forty. These audience members were chosen from local schools. Three different schools were represented. The first audience contained 15 sixth grade students from Butcher Grade School, and 18 seventh grade students from Roosevelt High School. These two schools are connected with the college's teacher education program. The students enrolled there are primarily children of the faculty and staff of Kansas State Teachers College. One other group attended a second performance. This audience of 38 seventh grade children came from the Sacred Heart Grade School.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE AND THE PERFORMANCE

I. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Two performances of The Once and Future King were presented for children from different schools. During these performances, a television camera recorded the audience's responses and made a sound recording of the performance. The camera was concealed behind the scenery to avoid distraction of the audience.

A thorough evaluation of the videotape of the audience was made. Three of the evaluators did not see the performance or have any knowledge of the audience's background. These three were chosen from diverse but related fields: education, psychology, and English. Dr. Morris L. Bigge, Professor of Educational Psychology at Fresno State College, Fresno, California, made one evaluation. He was at this college as a visiting lecturer. Mrs. Elizabeth Mullenburg, Assistant Professor of Education, Kansas State Teachers College, and Mrs. Susan Haiducek, Lecturer in English, also of Kansas State Teachers College, made the other two evaluations. The fourth audience evaluation was made by the director. The latter evaluation was limited to audience response. The director also made an evaluation of the production. Both

evaluations, audience response and production, are interrelated; the latter evaluation was made to verify and elucidate the other one.

The videotapes of the child audience were viewed with only the camera operator and the evaluators present. The evaluators were instructed to examine the responses of the majority of the audience. The responses were defined:

Favorable Responses

Very Strong	An overt response of pleasure or involvement. Examples: laughter, movement toward the performers, standing, comments on the action.
Strong	Total involvement in the scene, but less active in response. Examples: smile, frown.
Medium Strong	A quiet partial involvement.
Weak	Attention without any involvement, partial attentiveness.

Indeterminate

Impossible to place as favorable or unfavorable.

Unfavorable Responses

Weak	Quiet inattention.
Medium Strong	Inattention with signs of restlessness. Examples: yawns, shifting positions.
Strong	Total lack of interest with restlessness, but not disturbing to others. Examples: reading programs, foot shuffling.
Very Strong	Disturbing, restless behavior. Example: foot tapping, teasing others, talking.

Each evaluator made a separate record. The sound of the performances and lines from the script provided the only guidelines. The evaluators were totally unfamiliar with the

staging of the production. Any responses which occurred during lines not included on the form [refer to Appendix B] were noted and identified by a key word or phrase. The videotapes were evaluated in the order recorded. The evaluations were then compiled and examined.

II. EVALUATION OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE

The four evaluators of audience response who viewed the children on videotape agreed on the general favorable and unfavorable responses of the children. The total responses [refer to Table II] indicate a generally favorable reaction to the performances.

The favorable responses were stronger in the second audience than in the first. The first audience consisted of a mixed group of sixth and seventh graders while the second audience was all seventh graders. The heterogeneous grouping of the first audience may have contributed to the divergent responses. Also, more children in the first audience noticed the camera lens. Since these children attend a teachers' laboratory school and are continually videotaped, this was anticipated. But there was no noticeable effect on the responses of those in the second audience who were aware of the camera. Further, the director believes the initial performance for children lacked the freshness and spontaneity of the second. In the first performance, the readers were

TABLE II

RESULTS OF EVALUATION OF RESPONSES

A. COMBINED RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCES

Total Favorable Responses . . .	618	Total Indeterminate Responses . . .	55
Total Unfavorable Responses . . .	55		

Breakdown of Responses

<u>Favorable Responses</u>		<u>Unfavorable Responses</u>	
Very Strong . . .	89	Indeterminate .55	Weak
Strong	205		Medium Strong . .
Medium Strong . .	225		Strong
Weak	99		Very Strong . . .
			0

B. RESULTS OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE

Total Favorable Responses . . .	302	Total Indeterminate Responses . . .	33
Total Unfavorable Responses . . .	41		

Breakdown of Responses

<u>Favorable Responses</u>		<u>Unfavorable Responses</u>	
Very Strong . . .	35	Indeterminate .33	Weak
Strong	99		Medium Strong . .
Medium Strong . .	121		Strong
Weak	47		Very Strong . . .
			0

C. RESULTS OF THE SECOND PERFORMANCE

Total Favorable Responses . . .	316	Total Indeterminate Responses . . .	22
Total Unfavorable Responses . . .	14		

Breakdown of Responses

<u>Favorable Responses</u>		<u>Unfavorable Responses</u>	
Very Strong . . .	54	Indeterminate .22	Weak
Strong	106		Medium Strong . .
Medium Strong . .	104		Strong
Weak	52		Very Strong . . .
			0

working too obviously for communication. Both performances, though, had a high level of energy; and the desire to communicate and share with the audience may have helped overcome the lack of spontaneity in the first. In order to include all possible differences, one other note should be made. The first audience was given programs of cast and production notes. These were referred to during the performance and tended to distract those in the audience who were involved in the show. The second audience was not given programs until after the performance. This last arrangement seemed most satisfactory for all.

Despite the differences in the degree of involvement, most of the scenes evoked the same type of response from both audiences. From these responses and the performance evaluation, an appraisal of the effectiveness of the techniques used in this production of Interpreters Theatre for children can be made. To clarify the evaluation of the children's responses and the performance, the script was divided into ten scenes. A synopsis of the action of the scenes is included in Table I.¹

These scenes, listed here in order of rating, received the strongest favorable responses from both audiences: seven, three, four, ten, and six. The synopsis of a scene will

¹Vide supra, p. 26.

introduce the discussion of the children's responses and the appraisal of the techniques employed.

Scene seven. Merlyn arranges for more practical education of the Wart--a joust between Sir Grummore and King Pellinore. This scene brought the greatest overt response from both audiences. During the initial dialogue of scene seven, the focus was offstage, then, the joust moved the focus onstage. After the enactment of the joust, the focus returned offstage. The responses indicated no apparent difficulty in accepting the shifting focus. However, the response to the joust was overt, and the response to the calmer scene immediately following was more covert. (The initial dialogue in scene seven, in which the Wart and Merlyn discuss jousting, did not receive a highly favorable response. The problem with this segment was possibly the more adult appeal in the humor. Also, Merlyn, although a colorful character is more subdued and serious in this scene.) The movement in scene seven was quite broad and burlesque. The scene's short dialogue is concise and witty. The characters, King Pellinore and Sir Grummore, are highly colorful and humorous. The broad action of comedy and character seemed to motivate the children's strong responses.

Scene three. The Wart meets a startled King Pellinore. He tells Wart about the tribulations of questing for the Questing Beast. Scene three also received "strong" and "very

strong" responses. The techniques: offstage focus, pantomime, and suggestion of character and action chosen for the scene are quite within the realm of interpretation. The narration, dialogue, and indirect discourse are filled with action vividly projected by the readers.

Scene four. Wart finds Merlyn's cottage and Merlyn. He also meets Merlyn's intelligent friend, an owl. Merlyn tells Wart about second sight. Wart's quest for a tutor is successful. Scene four evoked "strong" and "medium strong" responses. The dialogue contained very little action but a strong appeal to the imagination. The focus was offstage except for the explanation of second sight. The characters, Merlyn and the owl, Archimedes, are fanciful and magical. The opening description of Merlyn by the narrators received the weakest response. The description was apparently too long and involved to retain interest. The following description of Merlyn's cottage, also by the narrators, elicited a "strong" response. Both descriptions are long passages. The first narration was carried primarily by one narrator. The latter narration divided the passage phrase by phrase between the two narrators and built rapidly to the end of the description. This response is particularly worth noting, for the description is somewhat complex and difficult to understand when read aloud. The confusing explanation by Merlyn about his magic prompted "medium strong" responses. Again, the

dialogue is difficult to understand, but the shift to onstage focus and the use of props clarified and helped retain interest. The action incidents with Archimedes received "strong" reactions. The division of lines in the long narration and the subsequent appeal to the imagination, the shift in focus, and the interesting characters evoked the most favorable responses from the children to this scene.

Scene ten. King Pellinore relates the death of the King of England and the signs which have appeared. Wart, Ector and Kay go to London. Wart accidentally proves his prowess in pulling swords out of stones, and is crowned King of England. The responses to this scene were not overt but apparently "strong." A few of the sixth graders in the first audience grew restless before the end of the scene. The length of scene ten, and the quieter dialogue and narration of scene eight and nine preceding it, may have caused this reaction from the younger members of the audience. The climax and the denouement of the script occur in scene ten. Although the focus was offstage, the pantomime performed by the reader of Wart clearly reflected the action described. The readers moved unobtrusively throughout the scene to establish the shifting psychological relationships. The pantomime, movement, and climactic scene all contributed to a strong reaction.

Scene six. Wart and Kay witness an omen of Wart's future during archery practice. The generally "strong" and

"medium strong" favorable responses to scene six should be noted. The scene began quietly with a description of an archery practice. Then the female narrator read the last half of the scene alone. This segment of the scene is a long description of Wart's and Kay's final shot, their salute to the day. The two boys reading Wart and Kay simply pantomimed drawing the bow and watched the flight of the arrows. The audience was silent and seemed engrossed; the evaluators agreed on a "strong" response. The technique was simple, but the narrator's skill and the beauty of the prose description held the audience's attention. The end of the scene was somewhat anticlimactic. The final line was significant to the meaning of the entire scene. By directing the focus onstage for this one line, the director hoped to add to the impact. Instead, the meaning of the line was lost; and the audience's interest diminished. The movement of the reader had placed the emphasis on him, rather than on the line.

Scenes one, two, and eight received similar responses and used similar techniques. Therefore, after a brief comment on each scene, the responses and techniques will be discussed together.

Scene one. The characters are introduced. Sir Ector and Sir Grummore have a cheerful discussion about the need for a tutor. It is decided to start a quest. The introduction to the characters in the scene was vivified by Narrator I

who indicated the character being introduced. The exposition was kept brief, and the scene moved quickly into an active dialogue between Sir Ector and Sir Grummore.

Scene two. Wart and Kay go hawking. The hawk is lost. Kay returns to the castle and Wart is alone in the Forest Sauvage [sic]. Scene two further introduced the major characters, Wart and Kay, and showed the basic conflict.

Scene eight. An interlude in which the seasonal affairs of the castle and the growth of the boys are related. In scene eight, the story has progressed through the physical and psychological growth of the boys into young adults. This scene describes these changes and forecasts the climax and resolution.

The responses to scenes one, two, and eight, were generally "medium strong." The techniques of interpretation used in all three scenes were very similar. The focus was offstage and the action suggested. Except for the exiting of two characters at the ends of scene two and eight, and the opening movement of Narrator I in scene one, the scenes were played in a sitting position. Presumably, the skillful reading by the cast and the importance of these scenes in story progression caused the favorable responses of the children.

As indicated above, discussion of the scenes as wholly favorable and wholly unfavorable is difficult. Those scenes discussed in terms of favorable responses were

generally well received. Scenes five and nine received the weakest responses.

Scene five. Wart's education takes him into the moat, in the guise of a fish. He meets the King of the Moat, Mr. P. The problem with scene five was created by the inability of the readers to suggest the action. This necessitated interjecting narration as explanation of the action. The narration seemed interruptive and prevented the flow of the story. More movement to suggest the fish action described was therefore necessary to progress the story. Further, the blocking and interpretation of the major speech were ineffective. These problems interfered with the creation of a full experience for the audience.

Scene nine. Wart laments to Merlyn his becoming a Squire for Kay. He tells what he would do as a knight. The music bridge into scene eight, and the content of eight created a quiet, relaxed mood. Scene nine, a dialogue between an unhappy Wart and a thoughtful Merlyn, should have elicited a similar but more empathetic response. However, the children's responses were unfavorably "weak" and "medium strong." They seemed restless and eager for more excitement. The music and narration after the joust apparently prepared them for the climax of the performance. The adaptor miscalculated a reasonable length for the quiet scenes following active scenes and did not provide a suitable pick-up scene for a child

audience. Had this scene been included earlier, the revealing insight into Wart's character may have had more impact.

The techniques of Interpreters Theatre employed in this production were generally effective in creating the response intended. Offstage and onstage focus, suggesting movement and action by readers, the division of lines, and the arrangement of readers were all apparently acceptable to the children. The strongest responses were, as predictable, in the scenes with the most action--visual and aural. However, as revealed in the comments on scene six, children will respond to less active scenes when the appeal is to the imagination, and to the child's awareness of beauty.

No one technique of Interpreters Theatre utilized in this production seemed more effective than another. The success of all techniques was dependent on the script and the reader. The techniques worked best when they enhanced the literature--supported theme, character, language, and idea, and were skillfully employed by the reader.

III. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES OF PERFORMANCE

During the rehearsal period, the director constantly evaluated the script in terms of the requirements of Children's Theatre and Interpreters Theatre, noted changes in the adaptation and the progress of the readers, and recorded movement on stage, handling of props, and blocking of the readers in the prompt script.

The two performances of The Once and Future King presented for children helped the readers reach a level of perfection. During these performances, a television camera recorded the audience's responses to the performance and made a sound recording of the performance. The recorded sound of the performance permitted the director to hear any slow or faulty reading. The production notes and the tapes of the audience and performers were then compared. This comparison enabled the director to answer these questions:

1. What aspect or aspects of the staging--visual and aural--might have contributed to the children's responses, favorable or unfavorable?
2. What script elements might have contributed to the children's responses, favorable or unfavorable?
3. What techniques of the readers might have contributed to the children's responses, favorable or unfavorable?

IV. EVALUATION OF THE PERFORMANCE

In evaluating the performance, the director compared production notes with the video tape recording of the sound of the performance and audience response. These three aspects were examined: (1) staging (visual and aural), (2) the script, and (3) the readers. To clarify the evaluation of the performance, see Table I, Synopsis of Scenes.

The techniques employed in staging the production were: reader arrangement, exits and entrances, focus of the readers, and movement. The readers were arranged to establish

character relationships, ensure their visibility by all the audience, and to create pleasant pictorial compositions. In one scene, scene ten, a shift in reader arrangement might have increased the effectiveness of the scene. The arrangement established new character relationships which resulted from this scene. However, it may have added dramatic impact if the audience was momentarily led to assume the character relationship established earlier in the performance would affect the outcome of this scene. The original arrangement created an effective response, but this change might have heightened tension and suspense.

The techniques used for establishing an exit or an entrance of the reader on stage, attitude and positioning of the reader, unobtrusively conveyed the impression intended. One exit created a distraction: after the joust, the knights remained on stage where they removed their costume pieces--helmets and chest plates. Ideally, the readers could exit backstage, remove the costumes, and enter again. The scenery did not allow easy access to the backstage area, and the problem could not be resolved entirely. However, by removing costumes during the music bridge between scenes, only a small portion of the narration was interrupted.

Whenever focus, offstage or onstage, conveyed the language, idea, and character, it seemed appropriate and consistent. It should be stressed however, that shifting of

focus should be used with discretion. At the end of scene six, Kay, whose focus was previously offstage, turned sharply to Wart. Instead of stressing the line, the abrupt change to onstage focus placed emphasis on the reader speaking the line. This weakened the scene and destroyed the concentration of the audience achieved earlier.

Movement--bodily involvement, pantomime, gesture, and blocking--sufficiently enhanced the literature without distracting. There was only one scene in which movement might have been used more suggestively. The episode, scene five, in which Wart and Merlyn are turned into fish, opened with a description of their fish-like movements. During the rehearsal period, the readers attempted to suggest this movement, but it seemed awkward and distracting. With additional rehearsal, the movements to describe the action might have been revealed, for the scene appeared disjointed without them.

The major concern of the director in using these techniques of Interpreters Theatre is to enhance the literature. The director felt the techniques employed in this production were generally effective in fulfilling this requisite.

There were two major problems with the script: transitions or bridge material, and long narrative passages. The transitional material sufficiently linked scenes and created story progression. However, the storyline might have

been more appealing to the children if a character in the script or a story-teller, rather than the narrator, related these transitions more directly and personally to the audience. A character or a story-teller could contribute a unique perspective, offer new insight into the production, and condense narrative passages.

The arrangement of scenes basically provided a rhythm of tense exciting scenes followed by quiet, thoughtful moments. In two sequences, the end of scene eight, and the opening of scene three, the adaptor failed to consider the length of the quiet moments and did not provide "pick-up" scenes rapidly enough. For an adult audience, a more subtle pick-up--a change of attitude, point of view, or mood of the scene--would be effective for retention of interest. But for children, the change should be stronger.

The children lost interest in two intermediary or pick-up scenes in which the content was probably more from an adult point of view. In the opening of scene seven, Merlyn comments on the frivolity of athletics from a twelfth century angle. "Nowadays people seemed to think that you are an educated man if you can knock another man off a horse and the craze for games is the ruin of scholarship." This humor did not appeal to the children. Nor did the irony of Mr. P., in scene five, affect the audience. The aged monarch, miserable with the knowledge of his power and position is suffering

from loneliness; yet he is unable to prevent this power from destroying those who might alleviate his misery. To fully appreciate and enjoy the literature, the children did not need to comprehend the underlying meaning and humor in these scenes. However, the adaptor might have used such sequences more selectively for a child audience and consistently relied on broad humor and clarity of theme to propel the story.

In scene five, a reader's technique interfered with the effect desired. The reader could not consistently project the meaning and intensity of the major speech. The director failed to note the problem in the early rehearsals and the reader established an undesirable pattern of movement and gesture. This weakened, but did not destroy, the purpose of that scene.

The overall performance of the readers was consistent with that sought for in rehearsal. The characterizations and the narration were projected vividly and energetically. The rate and tempo of the performances were effective. Both performances ran the same length of time. Despite the difference in freshness and spontaneity between performances one and two, the director believed the performance and the techniques of the readers were most valuable in obtaining favorable responses.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the potential of Interpreters Theatre for child audience as evidenced by an Interpreters Theatre production of an adaptation of T. H. White's The Once and Future King presented to children. This study also evaluated the effect of specific techniques of Interpreters Theatre in terms of the child audience response.

To fulfill this purpose, the investigator evaluated The Once and Future King in terms of the requirements of Interpreters Theatre and the demands of a child audience, and justified the literature as potentially effective for an Interpreters Theatre presentation to child audiences. The adaptation and production of The Once and Future King were completed with the requirements of Interpreters Theatre and Children's Theatre as primary considerations.

To evaluate the effect of specific techniques of Interpreters Theatre in terms of the child audience response, two performances were given to child audiences. During the performances, the children's reactions and the sound of the performance were recorded on video tape. The director evaluated the effectiveness of the production and the script.

The evaluation of the performance included comments on the effectiveness of the cast, the staging of the production, and the script. The cast was consistent in interpreting the script as directed in rehearsals. The experience and training of the readers helped them to vividly project the scenes, vocally and physically, creating a full and exciting experience.

The staging of the production, with few exceptions, effectively enhanced the literature. The literature provided opportunity to include a variety of techniques.

The script created the greatest problems. The transitional material demanded more from the audience than was necessary. The story line was clear, but the formal quality of the narrated transitions lacked necessary appeal to retain the children's interest. A more personal, direct approach through language and character would have been more effective; for instance, assigning Merlyn or an unrelated story-teller the narration written in a more informal tone. Also, the quiet intermediary scenes between the active scenes were lengthy and in some instances difficult to comprehend by the child audience. Again, this created an unnecessary burden for the young audience.

The literature is effective for children, however. The humor of language and character, the appeal to the imagination and the child's appreciation of beauty prompted many favorable responses.

II. CONCLUSION

The evaluators agreed that the children's responses to the production were generally favorable. These responses would seem to indicate the effectiveness of Interpreters Theatre for children and the acceptance of Interpreters Theatre techniques employed.

The children responded favorably to the unique demands of an Interpreters Theatre script and the techniques utilized: long passages of narration, shifting from offstage to onstage focus, reading from seated positions, arrangement of the readers, and suggesting of character and physical action. The strongest response was to the onstage action in the joust scene. The overt reaction to this scene compared to the more subdued reaction to the scenes with offstage focus might seem to indicate a preference for onstage action. Onstage focus was employed briefly in two other scenes to clarify the literature. The responses to these changes in focus were not overt.

Moreover, the broad, colorful, and humorous nature of the action, characters, and dialogue in the joust would probably receive a similar response if offstage focus had been used. The director believed the onstage focus was functional in serving the literature, adding to the variety of Interpreters Theatre experiences for the children, and in enabling the investigator to examine the child audience's

reaction to this technique. In this instance, judging from the audience's reaction, onstage focus was effective in projecting the action and humor of the scene.

No one technique of Interpreters Theatre consistently received the strongest responses or the weakest responses. The effectiveness of the techniques seems to be totally dependent upon the literature and the reader. When all three, the literature, the technique used, and the reader, functioned well together, the children's responses were favorable. As in all theatre, a good production is contingent upon the quality and potential value of the script, the skill and good judgment of the director, and the expertise of the cast.

For a child audience, the challenge is greater. No audience is as demanding; no audience is more deserving of a worthwhile experience. And the rewards are equal to the demands. The honesty and spontaneity of the child, and the child's willingness to experience fully, not only repay the reader and the director-adaptor, but also help them sharpen their techniques.

The aims of the director of Interpreters Theatre for children should be compatible with the aims for an adult audience. This investigation did not attempt to analyze the retention, understanding, and values derived by the children from the performance; indeed, it would be difficult to examine the values received. However, an Interpreters Theatre

production for children should create a full and enjoyable experience of the literature, arouse the curiosity of the audience thus encouraging them to explore the literature presented, and help the listener discover the enjoyment and values of good literature.

The aims mentioned above suggest the areas of potential research in Interpreters Theatre for child audiences: an examination of the audiences' comprehension of content, aesthetic response, and the derived values of good literature.

Two other potential areas of investigation are suggested by this study. As indicated in the chapter on evaluation, the script and the literature chosen to be adapted created many unsolved problems in the production. An evaluation of child audiences' responses to several Interpreters Theatre productions adapted from a variety of literature would be of value to the potential Interpreters Theatre director and adaptor for children.

The second area is related to the children's responses to the onstage focus of the joust. The difference in the role of an audience when viewing onstage action in a conventional stage production and in viewing an Interpreters Theatre production with offstage focus might influence the nature of the responses. The audience of the presentational Interpreters Theatre production is an active participant. The representational style of conventional theatre places the

audience in the role of non-active viewer. Interpreters Theatre demands more concentration and involvement than a full stage production. A comparison of the responses of children to Interpreters Theatre and to a conventional theatre production should identify the nature of the audiences' response to Interpreters Theatre.

In general, the conclusions of this study indicate the potential of Interpreters Theatre as an effective medium for the child audience. The evidence that children will enjoy and participate in the action of a story "told" in colorful, vivid language and will respond to beauty in descriptive prose should open new vistas for Interpreters Theatre, and possibly, Children's Theatre.

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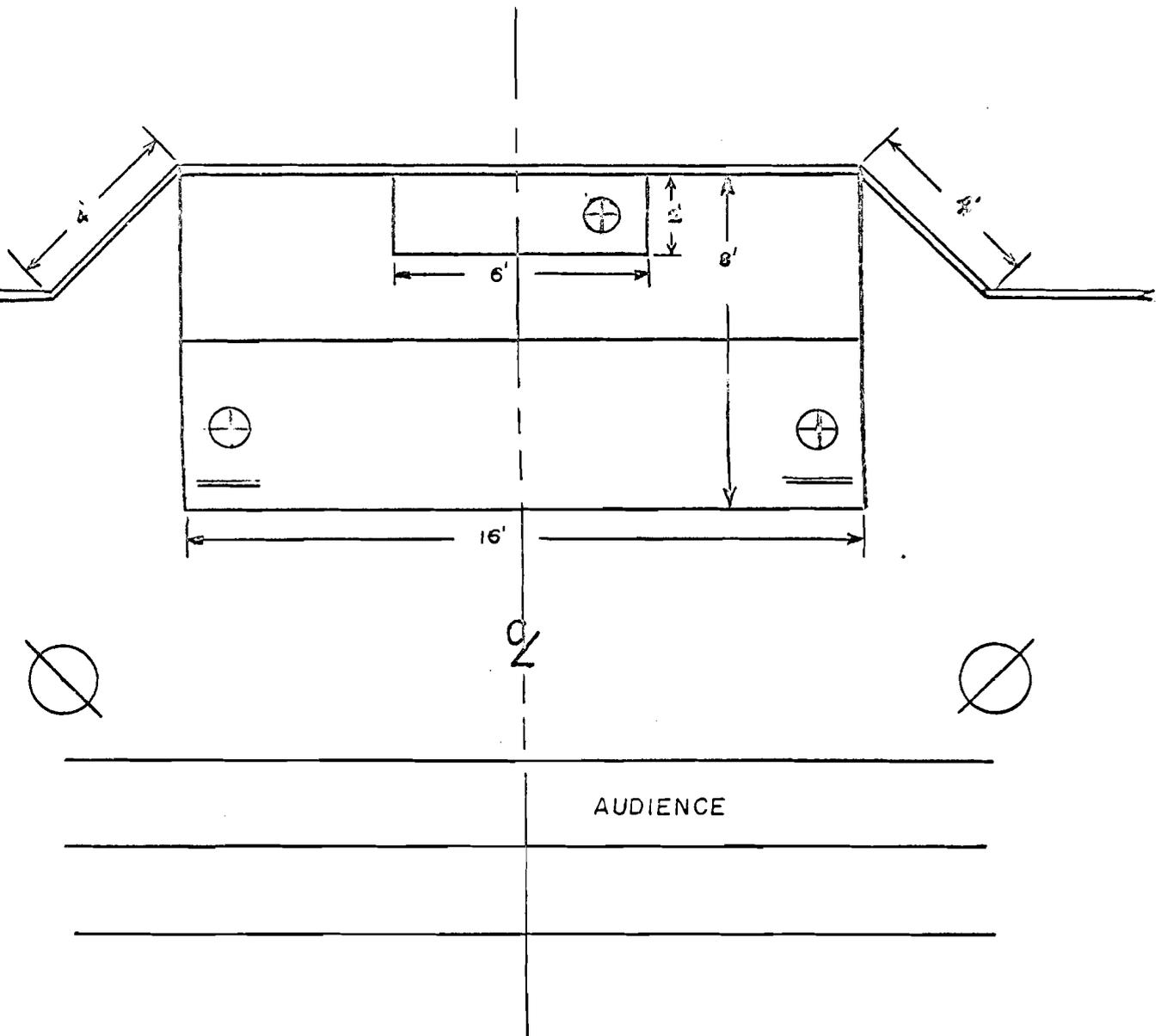
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APPENDIX A

FLOOR PLAN

APPENDIX A. FLOOR PLAN



SCALE = $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'$

○ = 24" STOOL

≡ = READING STAND

⊘ = LIGHT TREE

APPENDIX B
EVALUATION FORM AND EXPLANATION

APPENDIX B. EVALUATION FORM AND EXPLANATION

Lines from the script are quotations of key words and phrases chosen because they mark the beginning or end of a scene within the script. A few additional lines are included because they might elicit an unusual response. These lines may come any time within the scene. The comments within parentheses are descriptions of the scene rather than quotations of the script. They will probably draw one response, only. Use all the lines as guides. It is not necessary to react to them all. The blank spaces between are for those lines you hear, not listed, which create a particular response. You may also use these spaces for comments or questions that arise.

Favorable Responses

"Very Strong"	An overt response of pleasure.
"Strong"	Total involvement in the scene, but less active in response.
"Medium Strong"	A quiet, partial involvement.
"Weak"	Attention without any involvement.
<u>Indeterminate</u>	Impossible to place as favorable or unfavorable.

Unfavorable Responses

"Weak"	Quiet inattention.
"Medium Strong"	Inattention with signs of rest- lessness.

APPENDIX C
REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

APPENDIX C. REHEARSAL SCHEDULE
 AN INTERPRETERS THEATRE ADAPTATION OF
THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Place: Room 201 HU Bldg.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Rehearsal</u>
Nov. 27	Monday 7:00-9:00	Readings
28	Tuesday " "	Blocking
29	Wednesday " "	Detail: Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4
30	Thursday " "	Detail: Scenes 5, 6, 7
Dec. 1	Friday " "	Detail: Scenes 8, 9, 10
4	Monday 7:00-10:00	Detail: Scenes 1, 3, & narra- tion
5	Tuesday " "	Detail: Scenes 2, 4, 5, 9
6	Wednesday " "	Detail: Scenes 6, 8, 10 & narration
7	Thursday " "	Detail: Scenes 7, 1, 2, 10
8	Friday " "	Run-Through and Narration
11	Monday " "	Detail: Scenes 7, 8, 9, 10
12	Tuesday " "	Detail: Scenes 3, 4, 5, 6
13	Wednesday " "	Run-Through
14	Thursday " "	Detail: Scenes 1, 7, 9 & Run- Through
15	Friday " "	Run-Through & Tech
16	Saturday 2:00-4:00	Tech & Dress
17	Sunday 7:00 Call	Performance 8:00 (Invited Audience)
18	Monday 10:00 Call 2:00 Call	Performance 10:30 & 2:30

APPENDIX D
PUBLICITY LETTER TO THE TEACHERS

APPENDIX D. PUBLICITY LETTER TO THE TEACHERS

AN ADAPTATION AND PRODUCTION OF
T. H. WHITE'S THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING
FOR INTERPRETERS THEATRE

The script to be presented is an adaptation of the first book of The Once and Future King. The legends about King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table are well known. But T. H. White's story of the young Arthur adds a new and interesting insight into the many stories about King Arthur.

Our script deals with the young Arthur, the Wart. Central to the story is the Wart's tutelage by Merlyn, a magician that turns the Wart into animals as part of his education. Another step in his education is the viewing of a joust. The conflict centers around young Wart and his step-brother, Kay. The presentation gives incidents during the Wart's growing up until he discovers his true identity, King Arthur.

The style of presentation is Interpreters Theatre. The basic difference between Interpreters Theatre and traditional theatre is the concentration on the book. The book or a symbol of it is usually on stage during this kind of production. Another major difference is in the "story-telling" aspect rather than the "showing" or acting-out of the story. It would be of assistance if the children were told not to expect a full-stage production. Interpreters Theatre can be as

exciting as traditional theatre, but the emphasis is on the literature rather than the spectacle of a play.

Interpreters Theatre has been used successfully for children. The purpose of this experiment is to make a record and comment on the particular audience reactions to each part of the presentation. The audience will be filmed, but the camera will not be seen. Please do not tell the children that they will be filmed.

This story could form the basis of a broader discussion of medieval life, the folk hero in general, or of King Arthur. Some of the scenes could be used for dramatization by the children in the classroom.

Thank you for attending this performance. If I may answer any questions or provide further information, please call me at 343-1200, ext. 265, or at my home, 342-4229. We will meet your group in the lobby of the College Theatre and guide you to the back stage area where the performance is to be given.

APPENDIX E

PROGRAM NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION

APPENDIX E. PROGRAM NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION

The Once and Future King

Book I

by

T. H. White

Adapted and Directed by Christine Kelly

Stage Manager:

Suzanne Thompson

Scenery and Lighting:

Tim Kelly, Bob Lark, and Brad Swanson

Characters

Cast

Narrator I	Freda Remmers
Narrator II	Jim Baird
Wart	Rick Jenkins
Kay	Jim Daniels
Merlyn	Brent Thomas
Sir Ector	Jim Baird
Sir Grummore	Jim Daniels
King Pellinore	Jim Baird
Archimedes	Freda Remmers
Sergeant	Jim Daniels

Time: 12th Century

Place: England, The Castle of the Forest Sauvage

"Well, it just goes on to the end, you know, and then stops--as legends do." T. H. White

APPENDIX F

T. H. WHITE'S THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING, PART I

AS ADAPTED FOR INTERPRETERS THEATRE

By Christine Kelly

APPENDIX F.

T. H. WHITE'S THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING, PART I
AS ADAPTED FOR INTERPRETERS THEATRE

By Christine Kelly

[Cast enters. Narrator II sits at reading stand left stage. Merlyn sits upstage left facing offstage left. Wart sits on third level upstage right, facing audience. Kay sits center stage right, on second level, facing audience. Narrator I moves downstage right, on the audience level, below reading stand. When the cast is seated, Narrator I begins speaking directly to the audience.]

Narrator I

Perhaps you didn't grow up in a castle in twelfth century England. Perhaps you've wondered what happened to people who did. You undoubtedly believe it would be more interesting than growing up now. And, in some respects you'd be quite right. In others, well, you would be very wrong, for it could be awfully dull. For instance . . . [Narrator I crosses to reading stand, stage right, and sits.]

Narrator II

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays it was Court Hand.

Narrator I

The study of court manners.

Narrator II

And Summulae Logicales.

Narrator I

The study of logic.

Narrator II

While the rest of the week it was the Organon.

Narrator I

The study of rhetoric.

Narrator II

Repetition.

Narrator I

The proper phrase for the proper occasion.

Narrator II

And Astrology.

Narrator I

The study of the stars.

Narrator II

The governess was always getting muddled with her astrolabe.

Narrator I

An instrument for measuring the distance to the stars.

Narrator II

And when she got specially muddled she would take it out on the Wart by rapping his knuckles. [Narrator I crosses to Wart.

Raps his knuckles.] She did not rap Kay's knuckles, because when Kay grew older he would be . . .

Kay

Sir Kay. [Narrator I crosses to Kay. Pats his hand, lovingly. Then crosses to reading stand, stage right.]

Narrator II

The master of the estate. The Wart was called . . .

Wart

Wart.

Narrator II

Because it more or less rhymed with . . .

Wart

Art.

Narrator II

Which was short for his real name. Kay had given him the nickname. Kay was not called anything but Kay, as he was too dignified to have a nickname and would have flown into a passion if anybody had tried to give him one.

Narrator I

The governess had red hair and some mysterious wound from which she derived a lot of prestige by showing it to all the women of the castle, behind closed doors. It was believed to be

where she sat down, and to have been caused by sitting on some armour at a picnic by mistake. Eventually she offered to show it to Sir Ector [Sir Ector, read by Narrator II, stands, coughs, and crosses to center stage left. He sits, facing audience.] who was Kay's father, had hysterics and was sent away. They found out afterwards that she had been in a lunatic hospital for three years. When they had got rid of the governess, Sir Ector said,

Sir Ector

[All the focus is offstage unless otherwise indicated. Sir Ector addresses Sir Grummore.] After all, dash it all, we can't have the boys running about all day like hooligans-- after all, dash it all? Ought to be havin' a first rate eddication, at their age. When I was their age, I was doin' all this Latin and stuff at five o'clock every mornin'. Happiest time of me life. Pass the port. [Throughout this scene, the drinking, pouring, and passing of the port is pantomimed when indicated by the lines. The focus is always offstage, however.]

Narrator I

Sir Grummore Grummursum, who was staying the night because he had been benighted out questin' after a specially long run, said that when he was their age he was swished every mornin' because he would go hawkin' instead of learnin'. He passed the port.

Sir Ector

Had a good quest today?

Sir Grummore

Oh, not so bad, Rattlin' good day, in fact. Found a chap called Sir Bruce Saunce Pite choppin' off a maiden's head in Weedon Bushes, ran him to Mixbury Plantation in the Bicester, where he doubled back, and lost him in Wicken Wood. Must have been a good twenty-five miles as he ran.

Sir Ector

A straight-necked 'un. But about these boys and all this Latin and that. Amo, Amas, you know, and runnin' about like hooligans: what would you advise?

Sir Grummore

Ah, that takes a deal of thinkin' about, if you don't mind my sayin' so.

Sir Ector

Don't mind at all, very kind of you to say anythin'. Much obliged, I'm sure. Help yourself to port.

Sir Grummore

Good port this.

Sir Ector

Get it from a friend of mine.

Sir Grummore

But about these boys, how many of them are there, do you know?

Sir Ector

Two, counting them both, that is.

Sir Grummore

The only thing, is to have a tutor.

Sir Ector

You mean a fellow who teaches you.

Sir Grummore

That's it, a tutor, you know, a fellow who teaches you.

Sir Ector

Have some more port. But even if you was to have a tutor, I don't see how you would get him.

Sir Grummore

Advertise.

Sir Ector

I have advertised, it was cried by the Humberland Newsman and
Cardoile Advertiser.

Sir Grummore

The only other way, is to start a quest.

Sir Ector

You mean a quest for a tutor?

Sir Grummore

That's it.

Sir Ector

Hic, Haec, Hoc. Have some more of this drink, whatever it calls itself.

Sir Grummore

Hunc. [They toast each other.]

Narrator I

So it was decided. When Grummore Grummursum had gone home next day, Sir Ector tied a knot in his handkerchief to remember to start a quest for a tutor as soon as he had time to do so, and, as he was not sure how to set about it, he told the boys,

Sir Ector

[Crosses to reading stand, left, during line. Sits.] Sir Grummore has suggested we start a quest for a tutor. Don't be hooligans meanwhile.

Wart

Come on, Kay. I vote we go hawking and see if we can get some rabbits.

Kay

Ahh, Wart. The rabbits will not be out in this wet.

Wart

Oh, come on. It will soon be dry.

Kay

I must carry Cully, then.

Narrator II

Kay insisted on carrying the hawk and flying her, when they went hawking together. This he had a right to do, not only because he was older than the Wart but also because he was Sir Ector's proper son. The Wart was not a proper son. He did not understand this, but it made him feel unhappy, because Kay seemed to regard it as making him inferior in some way.

Wart

Also it was different not having a father and mother, and Kay had taught him that being different was wrong. Nobody talked to him about it, but he thought about it when he was alone, and was distressed. He did not like people to bring it up. Since the other boy always did bring it up when a question of precedence arose, he had got into the habit of giving in at once before it could be mentioned.

Narrator I

Besides, he admired Kay and was a born follower. He was a hero-worshipper.

Wart

Come, on, then.

Narrator I

They scampered off after Cully, the hawk. When they reached the Mews, where the birds were kept, Kay put on one of the left-hand gauntlets and called Cully from the perch--but Cully, with all his feathers close-set and malevolent glared at him with a mad eye and refused to come. So Kay took him up.

Wart

Do you think we ought to fly him? Deep in the moult like this?

Kay

Of course we can fly him, you ninny. He only wants to be carried a bit, that's all.

Wart

Hob says that we must not fly Cully till he has roused at least twice.

Kay

Hob does not know anything about it. Nobody can tell whether a hawk is fit to fly except the man who is carrying it. Hob is only a villain anyway.

Narrator II

When Cully felt the trappings being taken off him, so that he was in hunting order, he did make some movements as if to rouse. But at the last moment he thought better or worse of

it and subsided without the rattle. This movement of the hawk's made the Wart itch to carry him.

Wart

He yearned to take him away from Kay and set him to rights himself. He felt certain that he could get Cully into a good temper if only he were allowed to do it himself, instead of having to plod along behind with the stupid lure. But he knew how annoying it must be for the elder boy to be continually subjected to advice, and so he held his peace.

Kay

[Gesture as if lifting the hawk into the air.] So-ho!

Narrator I

Kay threw his arm upward to give the hawk a better take-off, and a rabbit was scooting across the close-nibbled turf in front of them, and Cully was in the air. The movement had surprised the Wart, the rabbit and the hawk, all three, and all three hung a moment in surprise. [Kay, Wart and Narrator I watch the hawk.] Then the great wings of the aerial assassin began to row the air, but reluctant and undecided. The rabbit vanished in a hidden hole. Up went the hawk, swooping like a child flung high in a swing, until the wings folded and he was sitting in a tree. Cully looked down at his masters, opened his beak in an angry pant of failure and remained motionless. The two hearts stood still.

Narrator I

A good while later, when they had been whistling and luring and following the disturbed and sulky hawk from tree to tree, Kay lost his temper.

Kay

Let him go, then. He is no use anyway.

Wart

Oh, we could not leave him. What would Hob say?

Kay

It is my hawk, not Hob's. What does it matter what Hob says? He is a servant.

Wart

But Hob made Cully. It is all right for us to lose him, because we did not have to sit up with him three nights and carry him all day and all that. But we can't lose Hob's hawk. It would be beastly.

Kay

Serve him right, then. He is a fool and it is a rotten hawk. Who wants a rotten stupid hawk? You had better stay yourself, if you are so keen on it. I am going home. [Kay leaves scene. Sits above Narrator I, center right.]

Wart

I will stay, if you will send Hob when you get there.

Narrator II

A long time after that, the Wart was on the verge of the true forest, and Cully was inside it. In a series of infuriating removes they had come nearer, and nearer, till they were further from the castle than the boy had ever been and now they had reached the great forest, The Forest Sauvage. Wart would not have been frightened of an English forest nowadays, but the great jungle of Old England was a different matter. The mad and wicked animals were not the only inhabitants of the crowded gloom. When men themselves became wicked they took refuge there, outlaws cunning and bloody as the gore-crow, and as persecuted. There were magicians in the forest also in those legendary days, as well as strange animals. There were regular bands of Saxon outlaws--there were even a few dragons, though these were small ones, which lived under stones and could hiss like a kettle. Added to this there was the fact that it was getting dark.

Narrator I

The evening hush had fallen, and the high trees stood looking at the Wart without a sound. He felt that it would be safer to go home, while he still knew where he was--but he had a stout heart, and did not want to give in. He understood that once Cully had slept in freedom for a whole night he would be wild again and irreclaimable.

Narrator II

The sun finished the last rays of its lingering good-bye, and the moon rose in awful majesty over the silver tree-tops. Wart wandered on forlorn, making the easiest way and trusting himself to God. He had been walking like this for about half an hour, when he came upon the most beautiful thing that he had seen in his short life so far.

Narrator I

There was a clearing in the forest, a wide sward of moonlit grass, and the white rays shone full upon the tree trunks on the opposite side. There was the smallest movement [King Pellinore, read by Narrator II, crosses to center left.] and a silvery clink. Before the clink there were just the beeches, but immediately afterward there was a knight in full armour, standing still and silent and unearthly, among the majestic trunks. The Wart did not know what to do. He did not know whether it would be safe to go up to this knight, for there were so many terrible things in the forest that even the knight might be a ghost. Eventually the boy made up his mind that even if it were a ghost, it would be the ghost of a knight, and knights were bound by their vows to help people in distress.

Wart

Excuse me, but can you tell me the way back to Sir Ector's castle?

Narrator I

At this the ghost jumped, [King Pellinore jumps.] so that it nearly fell off its horse, and gave out a muffled

King Pellinore

Baaaa.

Narrator I

through its visor, like a sheep.

Wart

Excuse me . . .

King Pellinore

What, what? [King Pellinore pantomimes action as he describes it.] The ghost lifted up its visor, revealing two enormous eyes frosted like ice; took off its eyes--which turned out to be horn-rimmed spectacles, fogged by being inside the helmet; tried to wipe them on the horse's mane--which only made them worse; lifted both hands above its head and tried to wipe them on its plume; dropped its lance; dropped the spectacles; got off the horse to search for them--the visor shutting in the process; lifted its visor; bent down for the spectacles; stood up again as the visor shut once more. Oh, dear! [Wart hands him the glasses.]

Narrator I

The Wart found the spectacles, wiped them, and gave them to

the ghost,

King Pellinore

who immediately put them on (the visor shut at once) and began scrambling back on its horse for dear life. When it was there it held out its hand for the lance, which the Wart handed up, [Wart hands him the lance.] and, feeling all secure, opened the visor with its left hand, and held it open. It peered at the boy with one hand up--like a lost mariner searching for land. Ah-hah! Whom have we here, what?

Wart

Please, I am a boy whose guardian is Sir Ector.

King Pellinore

Charming fellow. [To audience.] Never met him in me life.

Wart

Can you tell me the way back to his castle?

King Pellinore

Faintest idea. Stranger in these parts meself.

Wart

I am lost.

King Pellinore

Funny thing that. Now I have been lost for seventeen years. Name of King Pellinore. May have heard of me, what?

Narrator I

The visor shut with a pop, like an echo to the What, but was opened again immediately.

King Pellinore

Seventeen years ago, come Michaelmas, and been after the Questing Beast ever since. Boring, very.

Wart

I should think it would be.

King Pellinore

It is the burden of the Pellinores. Only a Pellinore can catch it--the Questing Beast that is, of course. Train all the Pellinores with that idea in mind. Limited eddication, rather. Fewmets, and all that.

Wart

I know what fewmets are. They are the droppings of the beast pursued. The harborer keeps them in his horn, to show to his master, and can tell by them whether it is a warrantable beast or otherwise, and what state it is in.

King Pellinore

[To audience.] Intelligent child. Very. Now I carry fewmets about with me practically all the time. Insanitary habit, and quite pointless. Only one Questing Beast, you know, so there can't be any question whether she is warrantable or not.

Wart

What does the Questing Beast look like?

King Pellinore

Ah, we call it the Beast Glatissant, you know. Now the Beast Glatissant, or, as we say in English, the Questing Beast--you may call it either, this Beast has the head of a serpent, ah, and the body of a libbard, the haunches of a lion, and he is footed like a hart. Wherever this beast goes he makes a noise in his belly as it had been the noise of thirty couple of hounds questing. [To audience.] Except when he is drinking, of course.

Wart

It must be a dreadful kind of monster.

King Pellinore

A dreadful monster. It is the Beast Glatissant.

Wart

And how do you go after it?

King Pellinore

I have a brachet. There she is, over there. [Indicates off left, in the audience.]

Narrator I

The Wart saw a lot of rope wound round a tree. The other end

of the rope was tied to King Pellinore's saddle.

Wart

I do not see her very well.

King Pellinore

Wound herself round the other side, I dare say. She always goes the opposite way from me. It's quite a good brachet, only it pants so, and gets wound round things, and goes the opposite way. What with that and the visor, what, I sometimes don't know which way to turn. It is eight months, anyway, since we saw the Beast at all. It is the curse of the Pellinores. Always mollocking about after that beastly Beast. What on earth use is she, anyway? First you have to stop to unwind the brachet, then your visor falls down, then you can't see through your spectacles. Nowhere to sleep, never know where you are. Rheumatism in the winter, sun-stroke in the summer. All this horrid armour takes hours to put on. When it is on it's frying or freezing, and it gets rusty. You have to sit up all night polishing the stuff. Oh, how I do wish I had a nice house of my own to live in, a house with beds in it and real pillows and sheets. If I was rich that's what I would buy. A nice bed with a nice pillow and a nice sheet that you could lie in, and then I would put this beastly horse in a meadow and tell that beastly brachet to run away and play, and throw all this beastly armour out of the window,

and let the beastly beast go and chase himself--that I would.

Wart

If you could show me the way home, I am sure Sir Ector would put you up in a bed for the night.

King Pellinore

Do you really mean it? In a bed?

Wart

A feather bed.

King Pellinore

A feather bed! Would it have pillows?

Wart

Down pillows.

King Pellinore

Down pillows! What a lovely house your gentleman must have!

Wart

I do not think it is more than two hours away.

King Pellinore

And did this gentleman really send you out to invite me to it? How nice of him, how very nice of him, I do think, what?

Wart

He will be pleased to see us.

King Pellinore

How nice of him. Fleas in the bed?

Wart

Not one.

King Pellinore

Well! It does sound too nice for words, I must say. A feather bed and none of those fewmets for ever so long. How long did you say it would take us to get there?

Wart

Two hours.

Narrator I

But he had to shout the second of these words, for the sounds were drowned in his mouth by a noise which had that moment arisen close beside them.

Wart

What was that?

King Pellinore

[Jumping to his feet.] Hark! Mercy! It is the Beast!

Narrator I

And immediately the loving huntsman had forgotten everything else, but was busied about his task.

King Pellinore

[Again, pantomimes action as he describes it.] He wiped his spectacles upon the seat of his trousers. He balanced them on the end of his long nose, just before the visor automatically clapped to. He clutched his jousting lance in his right hand, and galloped off in the direction of the noise. He was brought up short by the rope which was wound round the tree and fell off his horse with a tremendous clang. In a second he was up again and hopping round the white horse with one foot in the stirrup. The girths stood the test and he was in the saddle somehow, with his jousting lance between his legs, and then he was galloping round and round the tree, in the opposite direction to the one in which the brachet had wound herself up. He went round three times too often, the brachet meanwhile running and yelping the other way, and then, after four or five back casts, they were both free of the obstruction. Yoicks, what! [Exits to reading stand, left. Sits.]

Narrator I

Then he disappeared into the gloom of the forest. It had been difficult to go to sleep in the bright summer moonlight, but once Wart was there it was not difficult to stay. It was nine o'clock, five hours after daylight, before he rolled over, opened his eyes and was awake at once. He decided that he could not have gone more than three or four miles from home, and that the best thing he could do would be to sit still and

listen. [Merlyn rises, facing off left. Cranks well handle.]
What he heard was a faint clanking noise, which made him think that King Pellinore must be after the Questing Beast again, close. Only the noise was so regular and single in intention that it made him think of King Pellinore doing some special action, with great patience and concentration--trying to scratch his back without taking off his armour, for instance. He went toward the noise.

Narrator II

There was a clearing in the forest, and in this clearing there was a snug cottage built of stone. There was a well in front of the cottage, and the metallic noise which the Wart had heard was caused by a very old gentleman who was drawing water out of it by means of a handle and chain.

Merlyn

[Facing front.] Drat the whole thing! You would think that after all these years of study you could do better for yourself than a by-our-lady well with a by-our-lady bucket, whatever the by-our-lady cost. By this and by that, why can't they get us the electric light and company's water?

Wart

[Focus onstage. To Merlyn.] Excuse me, sir, but can you tell me the way to Sir Ector's castle, if you don't mind?

Merlyn

Your name would be the Wart.

Wart

Yes, sir, please, sir.

Merlyn

My name, is Merlyn.

Wart

How do you do?

Merlyn

How do.

Narrator I

When these formalities had been concluded, the Wart had leisure to look at him more closely. Merlyn had a long white beard and long white moustaches which hung down on either side of it. Close inspection showed that he was far from clean. It was not that he had dirty fingernails, or anything like that, but some large bird seemed to have been nesting in his hair. He had a worried expression, as though he were trying to remember some name which began with

Merlyn

[To audience.] Chol

Narrator I

but which was pronounced in quite a different way, possibly

Merlyn

[To audience.] Menzies

Narrator I

or was it

Merlyn

[To audience.] Dalziel?

Narrator I

His mild blue eyes, very big and round under the tarantula spectacles, [Merlyn looks at the Wart.] gradually filmed and clouded over as he gazed at the boy, and then [Focus offstage.] he turned his head away with a resigned expression, as though it was all too much for him after all.

Merlyn

Do you like peaches?

Wart

Very much indeed.

Merlyn

They are scarcely in season. [Merlyn moves to center left. Wart follows to center stage right.]

Narrator II

The Wart followed after Merlyn in the direction of the cottage.

waited while he counted keys--while he muttered and mislaid them and dropped them in the grass. Finally, he climbed up the ladder after his host and found himself in the upstairs room. [Merlyn and Wart sit.] It was the most marvelous room that he had ever been in.

Narrator I

There were thousands of brown books in leather bindings, some chained to the book-shelves and others propped against each other as if they had had too much to drink and did not really trust themselves. These gave out a smell of must and solid brownness which was most secure.

Narrator II

Then there were stuffed birds, popinjays, and kingfishers, and peacocks with all their feathers but two, and tiny birds like beetles.

Narrator I

There were several boar's tusks

Narrator II

and the claws of tigers

Narrator I

six live grass snakes in a kind of aquarium

Narrator II

an ordinary bee-hive whose inhabitants went in and out of the

window unmolested,

Narrator I

two young hedgehogs in cotton wool

Narrator II

a pair of badgers which immediately began to cry YIK-YIK-YIK-YIK in loud voices as soon as the magician appeared,

Narrator I

twenty boxes which contained stick caterpillars

Narrator II

a guncase with all sorts of weapons which would not be invented for half a thousand years

Narrator I

another chest whose drawers were labelled Mandragora, Mandrake, Old man's Beard, etc.,

Narrator II

a bunch of turkey feathers and goose-quills for making pens, an astrolabe,

Narrator I

twelve pairs of boots,

Narrator II

three dozen rabbit wires

Narrator I

twelve corkscrews

Narrator II

a nest of field mice all

Narrator I

alive-o [Narrator II and Narrator I exchange glances, nod, and continue on, quickly.]

Narrator II

two skulls,

Narrator I

plenty of cut glass

Narrator II

two paint-boxes,

Narrator I

three globes of the known geographical world,

Narrator II

a few fossils,

Narrator I

bunsen burners,

Narrators I and II

and a complete set of cigarette cards depicting wild fowl by

Peter Scott.

Narrator II

Merlyn took off his pointed hat when he came into this chamber, [Archimedes, read by Narrator I, moves to sit right of Wart.] and immediately there was a scamper in one of the dark corners and a tawny owl was sitting on the black skull-cap which protected the top of his head.

Wart

Oh, what a lovely owl!

Archimedes

[To audience.] There is no owl.

Merlyn

It is only a boy.

Archimedes

[To audience.] There is no boy.

Merlyn

We see so little company, that Archimedes is a little shy of strangers. Come, Archimedes, I want you to meet a friend of mine called Wart.

Narrator II

Here he held out his hand to the owl who hopped down to Merlyn's finger with every sign of reluctance.

Merlyn

Hold out your finger and put it behind his legs.

Narrator I

The Wart stood there delighted, while the furry feet held tight on his finger and the sharp claws prickled his skin.

Merlyn

Say how d'you do properly.

Archimedes

I will not.

Wart

Oh, he is lovely. Have you had him long?

Merlyn

Archimedes has stayed with me since he was small, indeed since he had a tiny head like a chicken's.

Wart

I wish he would talk to me.

Merlyn

Perhaps if you were to give him this mouse here, politely, he might learn to know you better.

Narrator II

Merlyn took a dead mouse out of his skull-cap.

Merlyn

I always keep them there, and worms too for fishing. I find it most convenient.

Narrator II

Wart held it out rather gingerly toward Archimedes. Archimedes looked closely at the mouse, blinked at the Wart, moved nearer on the finger, closed his eyes and leaned forward. Then he lifted his right foot and took hold of the mouse. He turned it round so that it was head first, and gave one gulp. He looked round at the company with the tail hanging out of the corner of his mouth--as much as to say, "I wish you would not all stare at me so"--turned his head away, politely swallowed the tail, scratched his sailor's beard with his left toe, and began to ruffle out his feathers.

Merlyn

Let him alone. Perhaps he does not want to be friends with you until he knows what you are like. With owls, it is never easy-come and easy-go.

Wart

Perhaps he will sit on my shoulder.

Narrator II

The owl, who liked to be high as possible, ran up Wart's lowered hand and stood shyly beside his ear.

Merlyn

Now breakfast.

Narrator II

There were peaches. There were also melons, strawberries and cream, and a choice of boiling coffee or best chocolate made with cream in large cups. The Wart was much impressed by the kindness of the old man and he asked something which had been puzzling him for some time.

Wart

Would you mind if I ask you a question?

Merlyn

It is what I am for.

Wart

How did you know to set breakfast for two?

Merlyn

Have you ever tried to draw in a look-glass?

Wart

I don't think I have.

Merlyn

Looking-glass! [Narrator II crosses to left of Merlyn with props. He hands Merlyn the props as asked for. Focus onstage.]

Not that kind you fool. I want one big enough to shave in.
Pencil and paper.

Narrator II

He then got an unsharpened pencil and the Morning Post; sent them back; got a fountain pen with no ink in it and six reams of brown paper suitable for parcels; sent them back; flew into a passion in which he said

Merlyn

By-our-lady!

Narrator II

quite often, and ended up with a carbon pencil and some cigarette papers which he said would have to do. He put one of the papers in front of the glass and made five dots.

Merlyn

Now, I want you to join those five dots up to make a W, looking only in the glass. Well, it is not bad, and in a way it does look a bit like an M. [Narrator II crosses to reading stand left. Focus offstage.]

Wart

About the breakfast?

Merlyn

Ah, yes. How did I know to set breakfast for two? That was

why I showed you the looking-glass. Now ordinary people are born forwards in Time, if you understand what I mean, and nearly everything in the world goes forward too. This makes it quite easy for the ordinary people to live, just as it would be easy to join those five dots into a W if you were allowed to look at them forwards, instead of backwards and inside out. But I unfortunately was born at the wrong end of time, and I have to live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind. Some people call it having second sight. Have I told you this before?

Wart

No, we only met about half an hour ago.

Merlyn

So little time to pass? Am I going to tell it you again?

Wart

I do not know unless you have not finished telling me yet.

Merlyn

You see, one gets confused with Time, when it is like that. If you know what is going to happen to people, and not what has happened to them, it makes it difficult to prevent it happening, if you don't want it to have happened, if you see what I mean? Like drawing in a mirror!

Narrator II

The Wart did not quite see, but was just going to say that he was sorry for Merlyn if these things made him unhappy, when he felt a curious sensation at his ear.

Merlyn

Don't jump.

Narrator II

Archimedes, who had been standing forgotten on his shoulder all this time, was gently touching himself against the Wart.

Archimedes

How d'you do.

Wart

Oh, owl! Look, he has decided to talk to me! I shall call him Archie!

Merlyn

I trust you will do nothing of the sort.

Wart

Is it wrong?

Archimedes

You might as well call me Wol, or Olly, and have done with it. or Bubbles.

Merlyn

You are young, and do not understand these things. But you will learn that owls are the most courteous, single-hearted and faithful creatures living. You must never be familiar, rude or vulgar with them, or make them look ridiculous. Their mother is Athene, the goddess of wisdom, and, although they are often ready to play the buffoon to amuse you, such conduct is the prerogative of the truly wise. No owl can possibly be called Archie.

Wart

I am sorry, Owl.

Archimedes

And I am sorry, boy, I can see that you spoke in ignorance, and I bitterly regret that I should have been so petty as to take offence where none was intended.

Merlyn

Well, now that we have finished breakfast, I think it is high time that we should all three find our way back to Sir Ector. Excuse me a moment, wash up.

Narrator II

At this all the china and cutlery scrambled down off the table, ran down the ladder to the bucket, and there was such a noise and yelling as if a lot of children had been let out of school.

Merlyn

Mind, nobody is to get broken.

Narrator II

But his voice was entirely drowned in shrill squeals, splashes, and cries:

Kay

My, it is cold,

Narrator II

I shan't stay in long,

Kay

Look out, you'll break me,

Narrator II

Come on, let's duck the teapot.

Wart

Are you really coming all the way home with me?

Merlyn

Why not? How else can I be your tutor?

Wart

My! I must have been on a Quest!

#

Merlyn

Shall we go out? I think it is about time we began lessons.

Narrator I

The Wart's heart sank at this. His tutor had been there a month, and it was now August, but they had done no lessons so far. Now he suddenly remembered that this was what Merlyn was for, and he thought with dread of Summulae Logicales and the filthy astrolabe. He knew that it had to be borne, however. They went into the courtyard. It was baking.

Wart

[To himself.] If only, I did not have to go into a stuffy classroom, but could take off my clothes and swim in the moat.

Narrator I

In one last dash they had reached the drawbridge--could Merlyn have guessed what he was thinking?--and were staring down into the moat.

Wart

I wish I was a fish.

Merlyn

What sort of fish?

Wart

I think I should like to be a perch. They are braver than the silly roach and not quite so slaughterous as the pike are.

Narrator II

Merlyn took off his hat and raising his staff of Lignum Vitae politely:

Merlyn

[Flourishing his staff.] Snylrem stnemilpmoc ot enutpen dna lliw eh yldnik tpecca siht yob sa a hsif?

Narrator I

Immediately there was a loud blowing of sea-shells, conches and so forth, and a stout, jolly-looking gentleman appeared seated on a well-blown-up cloud above the battlements. He had an anchor tattooed on his stomach and a handsome mermaid with Mabel written under her on his chest. He ejected a quid of tobacco, nodded affably to Merlyn and pointed his trident at the Wart. The Wart found he had no clothes on. He found that he had tumbled off the drawbridge, landing with a smack on his side in the water. He found that the moat and the bridge had grown hundreds of times bigger. He knew that he was turning into a fish.

Wart

Oh, Merlyn, please come too.

Merlyn

For this once. I will come. But in future you will have to go by yourself. Education is experience, and the essence of

experience is self-reliance.

Wart

It is no good trying to swim like a human being. It makes me go corkscrew and too slowly.

Merlyn

Not like that, put your chin on your left shoulder and do jack-knives. Never mind about the fins to begin with.

Narrator II

The Wart's legs had fused together into his backbone and his feet and toes had become a tail fin. His arms had become two more fins--of a delicate pink--and he had sprouted some more somewhere about his stomach. His head faced over his shoulder, so that when he bent in the middle his toes were moving toward his ear instead of toward his forehead. He was a beautiful olive-green, with rather scratchy plate-armour all over him, and dark bands down his sides. Merlyn had become a large and solemn tench.

Merlyn

Use your feet to turn to left or right, and spread those fins on your tummy to keep level. You are living in two planes now, not one. Come back. You must learn to swim before you can dart.

Wart

I do not seem to keep quite straight.

Merlyn

The trouble with you is that you do not swim from the shoulder. You swim as if you were a boy bending at the hips. Try doing your jack-knives right from the neck downward, and move your body exactly the same amount to the right as you are going to move it to the left. Put your back into it.

Narrator II

Wart undulated toward the voice in one terrific shove, to show off. They collided end to end.

Merlyn

Good. But direction is the better part of valour. Let us go for a little swim.

Narrator I

The Wart was on an even keel now, and reasonably able to move about. He had leisure to look at the extraordinary universe into which the tattooed gentleman's trident had plunged him. It is difficult to imagine.

Narrator II

The next most lovely thing was that the Wart had no weight. He could do what men have always wanted to do, that is, fly. There is practically no difference between flying in the water

and flying in the air.

Merlyn

You swim along, as if there was nothing to be afraid of in the world. Don't you see that this place is exactly like the forest which you had to come through to find me?

Wart

Is it?

Merlyn

Look over there.

Narrator I

The Wart at first saw nothing. Then he saw a small translucent shape hanging motionless near the surface. It would be a killer when it grew up.

Merlyn

I am taking you to see one of these, the Emperor of these waters. Since the tench is a doctor, I have immunity, and I dare say he will respect you as my companion as well-but you had better keep your tail bent in case he is feeling tyrannical.

Wart

Is he the King of the Moat?

Merlyn

He is. Old Jack they call him, and some call him Black Peter.

but for the most part they do not mention him by name at all. They just call him Mr. P. You will see what it is to be a king.

Narrator II

[Mr. P., read by Kay, rises and stands slightly to the right, behind the Wart.] When Wart saw the old despot, he started back in horror, for Mr. P. was four feet long, his weight incalculable. The great body, shadowy and almost invisible among the stems, ended in a face which had been ravaged by all the passions of an absolute monarch--by cruelty, sorrow, loneliness and thought too strong for individual brains. There he hung or hovered, his vast ironic mouth permanently drawn downward in a kind of melancholy, his lean clear-shaven chops giving him an American expression, like that of Uncle Sam. He was remorseless, fierce, pitiless--but his great jewel of an eye was that of a stricken deer, large, fearful, sensitive and full of griefs. He made no movement, but looked upon them with his bitter eye.

Merlyn

Lord, I have brought a young professor who would learn to profess.

Mr. P.

To profess what?

Merlyn

Power.

Mr. P.

Let him speak for himself.

Wart

Please, I don't know what I ought to ask.

Mr. P.

[To audience.] There is nothing, except the power which you pretend to seek: [Crossing on upper level to stage right during his line.] power to grind, and power to digest, power to seek and power to find, power to await and power to claim, [Crossing behind Wart and Merlyn on second level to end of line. Focus is on Wart.] all power and pitilessness springing from the nape of the neck.

Wart

Thank you.

Mr. P.

[Crosses on first level to stage right during line.] Love is a trick played on us by the forces of evolution. Pleasure is the bait laid down by the same. There is only power. Power is of the individual mind, but the mind's power is not enough. Power of the body decides everything in the end, and only [To audience.] Might is Right. [Moves down on audience level.]

Crosses to stage right.] Now I think it is time that you should go away, young master, for I find this conversation uninteresting and exhausting. I think you ought to go away really almost at once, in case my disillusioned mouth should suddenly determine to introduce you to my great gills, which have teeth in them also. [Moves menacingly toward audience.] Yes, I really think you might be wise to go away this moment. [Crossingly quickly upstage to original position.] Indeed, I think you ought to put your back into it. [To audience.] And so, a long farewell to all my greatness.

Narrator II

The Wart had found himself almost hypnotized by the big words, and hardly noticed that the tight mouth was coming closer and closer to him.

Wart

It came imperceptibly, as the lecture distracted his attention, and suddenly it was looming within an inch of his nose. On the last sentence it opened, horrible and vast, the skin stretching ravenously from bone to bone and tooth to tooth. Inside there seemed to be nothing but teeth, sharp teeth like thorns in rows and ridges everywhere, like the nails in labourers' boots and it was only at the last second that he was able to regain his own will, to pull himself together, to recollect his instructions and to escape.

Narrator II

All these teeth clashed behind him at the tip of his tail, as he gave the heartiest jack-knife he had ever given. [Mr. P. moves out of the scene. Sits above Narrator I, right stage.] In a second he was on dry land once again, standing beside Merlyn on the piping drawbridge, panting in his stuffy clothes.

#

[Kay crosses to center stage right. Wart moves to top level, right.]

Narrator I

One Thursday afternoon the boys were doing their archery as usual. Archery was a serious occupation in those days. It had not yet been turned over to Indians and small boys. When you were shooting badly you got into a bad temper. Kay was shooting badly. He was trying too hard and plucking on his loose, instead of leaving it to the bow.

Kay

Oh, come on. I am sick of these beastly targets. I vote, that we go to those buries in the chase, and see if we can get a rabbit. It would be more fun than shooting at these targets.

Narrator II

They did this. They chose two trees about a hundred yards apart, and each boy stood under one of them waiting for the rabbits to

come out again. They had six arrows each and would be able to fire and mark them all before they needed to frighten the rabbits back by walking about to collect. [Kay pantomimes shooting.] At the fifth shot Kay was lucky. He allowed just the right amount for wind and distance, and his point took a young rabbit square in the head. It had been standing up on end to look at him, wondering what he was.

Wart

Oh, well shot!

Narrator II

The two boys prepared to go home with their prize. But before they unstrung their bows they used to observe a ceremony. Every Thursday afternoon, after the last serious arrow had been shot, they were allowed to fit one more nock [Kay begins to pantomime shooting.] to their strings and to shoot the arrow straight up into the air.

Narrator I

It was partly a gesture of farewell, partly of triumph, and it was beautiful. [Wart begins to pantomime his shot. Focus on arrows when released.] They did it now as salute to their first prey. The Wart watched his arrow go up. The sun was already westing toward evening, and the trees where they were had plunged them into a partial shade. So as the arrow topped the trees and climbed into sunlight, [Kay's focus on Wart's

arrow, now.] it began to burn against the evening like the sun itself. Up and up it went, not weaving as it would have done with a snatching loose, but soaring, swimming, aspiring to heaven steady, golden and superb. Just as it had spent its force just as its ambition had been dimmed by destiny and it was preparing to faint, to turn over, to pour back into the bosom of its mother earth, a portent happened. A crow came flapping wearily before the approaching night. It came, it did not waver, it took the arrow. It flew away, heavy and hoisting with the arrow in its beak. [Kay faces the Wart.] Kay was frightened by this, but the Wart was furious. He had loved his arrow's movement, its burning ambition in the sunlight, and besides, it was his best one.

Kay

It was a witch.

#

[Wart sits. Kay moves above Narrator right stage and sits.]

Narrator II

Tilting and horsemanship had two afternoons a week because they were the most important branches of a gentleman's education in those days. Merlyn grumbled about athletics, saying nowadays people seem to think that you are an educated man if you can knock another man off a horse and that the craze for games is

the ruin of scholarship.

Narrator I

The day was cooler than it had been for some time, for the autumn was almost within sight, and the two boys were in the tilting yard with the master armourer and Merlyn.

Narrator II

Wart lay beside Merlyn in the shade of the grandstand and scratched himself for harvest bugs. Wart was pleased that it was Kay's turn to go through it and he lay drowsily in the shade snoozing, scratching, twitching like a dog and partly attending to the tilting practice. From far off at the other side of the tilting ground the sergeant's voice came floating on the still air.

Sergeant

Nah, nah, Master Kay, that ain't it at all. Has you were. Has you were. The spear should be 'eld between the thumb and forefinger of the right 'and, with the shield in line with the seam of the trahser leg . . .

Narrator I

The Wart scratched and sighed.

Merlyn

What are you grieving about?

Wart

I was not grieving; I was thinking.

Merlyn

What were you thinking?

Wart

Oh, it was not anything. I was thinking about Kay learning to be a knight.

Merlyn

And well you may grieve. A lot of brainless unicorns swaggering about and calling themselves educated just because they can push each other off a horse with a bit of stick! It makes me tired.

Wart

I was not thinking quite about that. As a matter of fact, I was thinking how nice it would be to be a knight like Kay.

Merlyn

Well, you will be one soon enough, won't you? Won't you?
. . . What is the matter now?

Wart

I shall not be a knight. I shall not be a knight because I am not a proper son of Sir Ector's. They will knight Kay, and I shall be his squire.

Merlyn

Too bad.

Wart

Oh, but I should have liked to be born with a proper father and mother, so that I could be a knight errant.

Merlyn

Would you like to see some real knights errant? Now, for the sake of your education?

Wart

Oh, I would!

Merlyn

I suppose it is educational, in a way.

Wart

It is very educational. I can't think of anything more educational than to see some real knights fighting. Oh, won't you please do it?

Merlyn

Do you prefer any particular knight?

Wart

King Pellinore.

Merlyn

That will do very well. Put your hands to your sides and

relax your muscles. [Flourishes his staff.] Cabricias arcithuram, catalamus, singulariter, nominativa, haec musa. Shut your eyes and keep them shut. Bonus, bona, bonum. Here we go. Deus Sanctus, est-ne oratio Latinas? Etiam, oui, quare? Pourquoi? Quai substantive et adjectivum concordat in generi, numerum et casus. Here we are.

Narrator I

The Wart found himself lying under a beech tree in the Forest Sauvage. [Focus onstage now until end of scene.]

Merlyn

Here we are. [Wart and Merlyn rise.] Get up and dust your clothes. And there, I think is your friend King Pellinore, pricking toward us o'er the plain.

King Pellinore

[King Pellinore, read by Narrator II, enters scene from stage left and moves to center left.] Hallo, hallo. It's the young boy with the feather bed, isn't it, I say, what?

Wart

Yes it is. And I am very glad to see you. Did you manage to catch the Beast?

King Pellinore

No. Didn't catch the Beast. Oh, do come here, you brachet, [Gestures toward the audience.] and leave that bush alone.

Tcha! Tcha! Naughty, naughty! I say, I must say, won't you introduce me to your friend, what?

Wart

This is my tutor Merlyn, a great magician.

King Pellinore

How-de-do. [They shake hands.] Always like to meet magicians. In fact I always like to meet anybody. It passes the time away, what, on a quest.

Merlyn

Hail.

King Pellinore

Hail. [They shake hands.] Did you say hail? I thought it was going to be fine, myself.

Wart

He meant How-do-you-do.

King Pellinore

Ah, yes, How-de-do? [They shake hands a third time.] Good afternoon. What do you think the weather looks like now?

Merlyn

I think it looks like an anti-cyclone.

King Pellinore

Ah, yes. An anti-cyclone. Well, I suppose I ought to be

getting along. [Faces audience.] I beg your pardon?

Wart

He is a white magician. You need not be afraid of him. He is my best friend, your majesty, and in any case he generally gets his spells muddled up.

King Pellinore

Ah, yes.

Merlyn

I should not go away if I were you. Sir Grummore Grummursum is on the way to challenge you to a joust.

King Pellinore

No, you don't say? Sir what 'you' may 'call' it is coming here to challenge me to a joust?

Merlyn

Assuredly.

King Pellinore

[Addressing audience.] Well, I must say, it never hails but it pours.

Narrator I

Sir Grummore Grummursum was cantering up the clearing in full panoply of war. Instead of his ordinary helmet with a visor he was wearing the proper tilting-helm, which looked like a

large coal-scuttle, and as he cantered he clanged. [Sir Grummore enters scene singing. Stands center stage to the right of Wart, on second level.] He was singing his old school song:

Sir Grummore

We'll tilt together / Steady from crupper to poll, / And
nothin' in life shall sever / Our love for the dear old coll. /
Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up, follow-up, follow-up / Till
the shield ring again and again / With the clanks of the clanky
true men.

King Pellinore

Goodness. It's about two months since I had a proper tilt.

Sir Grummore

[To Wart.] Mornin'. You're Sir Ector's boys, ain't you?
[Gestures toward Merlyn.] And who's that chap in the comic
hat?

Wart

That is my tutor, Merlyn the Magician.

Sir Grummore

Ah, a magician. How-de-do?

Wart

And this is King Pellinore. Sir Grummore Grummursum--King
Pellinore.

Sir Grummore

[Moves down to stage right, beside King Pellinore.] How-de-do?

King Pellinore

Hail. No, I mean it won't hail, will it?

Sir Grummore

Nice day. Been questin' today?

King Pellinore

Oh, yes, thank you. Always am questing, you know. Would you like to see some fewmets?

Sir Grummore

By jove, yes, like to see some fewmets.

King Pellinore

[Takes fewmets out of leather purse.] I have some better ones, at home, but these are quite good, really.

Sir Grummore

Bless my soul. So these are her fewmets.

King Pellinore

Yes, these are her fewmets.

Sir Grummore

Interestin' fewmets.

King Pellinore

Yes, they are interesting, aren't they? Only you get tired

of them.

Sir Grummore

Suppose we'd better have a joust, eh, what?

King Pellinore

Yes, I suppose we had better, really.

Merlyn

I think we had better climb this tree. You never know what will happen in a joust like this. [Wart and Merlyn sit stage center on the upper level.]

Narrator I

They climbed up the big beech, and the Wart stationed himself where he could get a good view. And you'd better station yourselves to get a good view.

Sir Grummore

What shall we have it for?

King Pellinore

Oh, the usual thing, I suppose. [King Pellinore and Sir Grummore move downstage to audience level.]

Narrator I

The two knights stationed themselves at each end of the clearing and then advanced to meet in the middle.

King Pellinore

Fair knight I pray thee tell me thy name.

Sir Grummore

That me regards.

King Pellinore

That is uncourteously said, what? For no knight ne dreadeth for to speak his name openly, but for some reason of shame.

Sir Grummore

Be that as it may, I choose that thou shalt not know my name as at this time, for no askin'.

King Pellinore

Then you must stay and joust with me, false knight.

Sir Grummore

Haven't you got that wrong, Pellinore? I believe it ought to be "thou shalt."

King Pellinore

Oh, I'm sorry, Sir Grummore. Yes, so it should, of course. Then thou shalt stay and joust with me, false knight.

Narrator I

To be able to picture the terrible battle which now took place, there is one thing which ought to be known. A knight in his full armour of these days was generally carrying as much or

more than his own weight in metal.

King Pellinore

Defend thee.

Sir Grummore

God save thee. (They drew swords and rushed together with such ferocity that each, after dealing the other a dint on the helm, sat down suddenly backwards.)

King Pellinore

Bah!

Sir Grummore

Booh!

Narrator I

The knights had now lost their tempers and the battle was joined in earnest. It did not matter much, however, for they were so encased in metal that they could not do each other much damage. (Then they stood opposite each other for about five blows, and walloped each other on the helm, taking turns. The second stage was introduced as a change, by common consent. They parted, went opposite directions then turned around distributed their weight properly in front of them, so that they were just off their balance, then each broke into a trot to keep up with himself. They hurtled together as it had been two boars. They met in the middle, breast to breast, and

both, bouncing off, fell breathless on their backs. They lay thus panting. Then they slowly began to heave themselves to their feet and it was obvious that they had lost their tempers once again. King Pellinore had not only lost his temper but he seemed to have been a bit astonished by the impact. He got up facing the wrong way and could not find Sir Grummore.)

Wart

Perhaps he has broken his spectacles. (Sir Grummore was quick to seize his advantage.)

Sir Grummore

Take that! [Dealing him a blow.] (King Pellinore turned round morosely, but his opponent had been too quick for him. He had ambled round so that he was still behind the king, and now gave him another terrific blow in the same place.)

King Pellinore

Where are you?

Sir Grummore

Here. (Giving him another blow. The poor King turned himself round as nimbly as possible, but Sir Grummore had given him the slip again.) Tally-ho, back.

King Pellinore

I think you're a cad.

Sir Grummore

Wallop! (Doing it. The King could now be seen to be visibly troubled in his brains. He swayed backward and forward under the hail of blows.)

Wart

Poor King. I wish he would not hit him so.

Sir Grummore

Do you want Pax? (pause) If you don't say Pax, I shall cut your head off.

King Pellinore

I won't. (WHANG! went the sword on the top of his head.

WHANG! It went again. WHANG! For the third time.)

King Pellinore

Pax. (mumbling rather. Then, just as Sir Grummore was relaxing with the fruits of victory, he swung round upon him, shouted) Non! (at the top of his voice, and gave him a good push in the middle of the chest. Sir Grummore fell backwards.)

Wart

Well! What a cheat! I would not have thought it of him.

Narrator I

King Pellinore hurriedly sat on his victim's chest.

Sir Grummore

You said Pax.

King Pellinore

I said Pax Non under my breath.

Sir Grummore

It's a swindle.

King Pellinore

It's not.

Sir Grummore

You're a cad.

King Pellinore

No, I'm not.

Sir Grummore

Yes, you are.

King Pellinore

No, I'm not.

Sir Grummore

Yes, you are.

King Pellinore

Yield thee, recreant.

Sir Grummore

Shan't!

King Pellinore

You have got to yield, or I shall cut off your head.

Sir Grummore

Cut it off then.

King Pellinore

Oh, come on. You know you have to yield.

Sir Grummore

Feign, I.

King Pellinore

Then I shall just cut your head off.

Sir Grummore

I don't care. (The King waved his sword menacingly in the air.)

Go on, I dare you to.

King Pellinore

Oh, I say, do yield, please.

Sir Grummore

Well, I have feigned yieldin'.

King Pellinore

Oh, come on Grummore. I do think you are a cad not to yield.

You know very well I can't cut your head off.

Sir Grummore

I would not yield to a cheat who started fightin' after he

said Pax.

King Pellinore

I am not a cheat.

Sir Grummore

You are a cheat.

King Pellinore

No, I'm not.

Sir Grummore

Yes, you are.

King Pellinore

Very well, you can jolly well get up and we will have a fight.
I won't be called a cheat for anybody.

Sir Grummore

Cheat! (They retreated to opposite ends of the clearing, and came rumbling and thundering together. Unfortunately they were now so cross that they ceased to be vigilant, and in the fury of the moment they missed each other altogether. Then Sir Grummore rammed his head against the beech [right stage wall] in which the Wart and Merlyn were sitting and King Pellinore collided with a chestnut [left stage wall] at the other side of the clearing. The forest rang. The two knights stood to attention while one could count three. Then, with a

last unanimous melodious clang, they both fell prostrate on the ground.)

Merlyn

Stunned, I should think.

Wart

Oh, dear. Ought we to get down and help them?

Merlyn

We could pour water on their heads, but I don't suppose they would thank us for making their armour rusty. They will be all right. Besides, it is time that we were home.

Wart

But they might be dead.

Merlyn

They are not dead, I know. In a minute or two they will come round and go off home to dinner.

Wart

Poor King Pellinore has not got a home.

Merlyn

Then Sir Grummore will invite him to stay the night. They will be the best of friends when they come to. They always are.

Wart

Do you think so?

Merlyn

My dear boy, I know so. Shut your eyes and we will be off.

Wart

Do you think that Sir Grummore has a feather bed?

Merlyn

Probably.

Wart

Good . . . that will be nice for King Pellinore, even if he was stunned.

Narrator I

[Sir Grummore crosses above Narrator I and sits stage right. Pellinore moves to the reading stand left stage. Focus offstage.]
The Latin words were spoken and the secret passes made. The funnel of whistling noise and space received them. In two seconds they were lying under the grandstand, and the Sergeant's voice was calling from the opposite side of the tilting ground.

Sergeant

Nah then, Master Art, Nah then. You've been a-snoozing there long enough. Come aht into the sunlight 'ere with Master Kay,

One-Two, One-Two, and see some real tilting.

[Music bridge. Passage of time. Kay moves to center stage right. Sits.]

Narrator I

It was hay-making again, and Merlyn had been with them a year. The boys looked longer in the leg, but otherwise everything was the same. Six other years passed by. Nobody else seemed to change at all, except the boys.

Narrator II

They grew longer. They ran like wild colts as before, and had innumerable adventures too lengthy to be recorded. Merlyn's extra teaching went on just the same--for in those days even the grown-up people were so childish that they saw nothing uninteresting in being turned into animals. The Wart was changed into countless different animals.

Narrator I

Kay became more difficult. He frequently lost his temper. Also he became more sarcastic. He went on at the Wart about his father and mother when Sir Ector was not about. He did not seem to want to do this. It was as if he disliked it, but could not help it. The Wart continued to be stupid and fond of Kay. Merlyn looked younger every year--which was only natural, because he was.

Narrator II

The years passed regularly and the Old English snow lay as it was expected to lie--and in the end it was nearly time for Kay's initiation as a full-blown knight. Proportionately as the day became nearer, the two boys drifted apart. The Wart, who would have to be Kay's squire, followed him about as long as he was allowed to do so, [Wart crosses to center stage left. Kay turns facing offstage right, out of the scene.] and then went off full miserably to amuse himself alone, as best he might. He went to the kitchen.

Wart

Well, I am a Cinderella now. Even if I have had the best of it for some mysterious reason, up to the present time--in our education--now I must pay for past pleasures by being a second-rate squire and holding Kay's extra spears for him. Never mind, I have had a good time while it lasted, and it is not such bad fun being a Cinderella, when you can do it in a kitchen which has a fireplace big enough to roast an ox. It is not so bad being a servant after all.

Merlyn

Still sighing? As you were that day when we went to watch King Pellinore's joust?

Wart

Oh, no. Or rather, oh, yes, and for the same reason. But

I don't really mind. I am sure I shall make a better squire than old Kay would.

Merlyn

Only fools want to be great.

Wart

If I were to be made a knight, I should pray to God to let me encounter all the evil in the world in my own person so that if I conquered there would be none left, and, if I were defeated, I would be the one to suffer for it.

Merlyn

That would be extremely presumptuous of you, and you would be conquered, and you would suffer for it.

Wart

I shouldn't mind.

Merlyn

Wouldn't you? Wait till it happens and see.

Wart

Why do people not think, when they are grown up, as I do when I am young.

Merlyn

Oh, dear, you are making me feel confused. Suppose you wait till you are grown up and know the reason?

Wart

I don't think that is an answer at all.

Merlyn

Well, anyway, suppose they did not let you stand against all the evil in the world?

Wart

I could ask.

Merlyn

You could ask.

Narrator I

He thrust the end of his beard into his mouth, stared tragically at the fire, and began to munch it fiercely.

Narrator II

The day for the ceremony drew near, the invitations to King Pellinore and Sir Grummore were sent out, and the Wart withdrew himself more and more into the kitchen. King Pellinore arrived for the important week-end in a high state of flurry. He had two important pieces of information. [King Pellinore, read by Narrator II, stands to right of reading stand, stage left.]

King Pellinore

The King of all England, Uther Pendragon is dead, and there is

no heir to succeed him to the throne. But there have been signs and wonders of no mean might. There is a sword stuck through an anvil which stands on a stone. The stone stands outside a church. And there are words written on this sword which are as follows: Whoso Pulleth Out This Sword of This Stone and Anvil, is Rightwise King Born of All England. And so a tournament was proclaimed all over England, for New Year's Day, so that the man who comes to the tournament and pulls out the sword can be King of all England forever, what, I say? [Returns to reading stand. Sits.]

Narrator I

Sir Grummore, King Pellinore, and Kay persuaded Sir Ector that they should also go to London to the tournament.

Narrator II

London was full to the brim. If Sir Ector had not been lucky enough to own a little land in Pie Street, on which there stood a respectable inn, they would have been hard put to it to find a lodging.

Narrator I

On the first day of the tournament, Sir Kay managed to get them on the way to the lists at least an hour before the jousts began. He had lain awake all night, imagining how he was going to beat the best barons in England, and he had not been able to eat his breakfast. [Kay turns to audience, into the scene.]

Now he rode at the front of the cavalcade, with pale cheeks, and Wart wished there was something he could do to calm him down.

Kay

Good heavens! I have left my sword at home.

Sir Ector

[Read by Narrator II.] Better go and fetch it. You have time.

Kay

My squire will do. What a damned mistake to make. Here, squire, ride hard back to the inn and fetch my sword. You shall have a shilling if you fetch it in time. [Turns out of scene.]

Wart

To offer me money! To look down at this beastly little donkey-affair off his great charger and to call me Squire! Oh, Merlyn, give me patience with the brute, and stop me from throwing his filthy shilling in his face.

Narrator I

When he got to the inn it was closed. The wooden shutters bolted over the downstairs windows were two inches thick and the doors were double-barred.

Wart

Now what do I do? To earn my shilling! Poor Kay, all that

shilling stuff was only because he was scared and miserable, and now he has good cause to be. Well, he shall have a sword of some sort if I have to break into the tower of London.

Narrator II

He turned his mount and cantered off along the street. [Wart crosses downstage center on audience level.] There was a quiet churchyard at the end of it, with a kind of square in front of the church door. In the middle of the square there was a heavy stone with an anvil on it, and a fine new sword was stuck through the anvil.

Wart

Well, I suppose it is some sort of war memorial, but it will have to do. I am sure nobody would grudge Kay a war memorial, if they knew his desperate straits. [Pantomime action with sword as indicated by his lines. Focus offstage.] Come sword, I must cry your mercy and take you for a better cause. This is extraordinary. I feel strange when I have hold of this sword, and I notice everything much more clearly. See how splendidly all the famous banners in the aisle are waving. How clean the snow is. There is something in this place. There are people. Oh, people, what do you want? People I must take this sword. It is not for me, but for Kay. I will bring it back. Come sword. It is well fixed. Oh, Merlyn, help me to get this weapon.

Narrator I

There was a kind of rushing noise, and a long chord played along with it. All round the churchyard there were hundreds of old friends. They loomed round the church wall, the lovers and helpers of the Wart, and they all spoke solemnly in turn. Some of them had come from the banners in the church, some from the waters and the sky and the fields about--but all, down to the smallest shrew mouse, had come to help on account of love. Wart felt his power grow.

Mr. P.

Put your back into it, as you once did when I was going to snap you up. Remember that power springs from the nape of the neck.

Merlyn

Now then, Captain Wart, what is the first law of the foot? I thought I once heard something about never letting go?

Narrator I

The Wart walked up to the great sword for the third time. He put out his right hand softly and drew it out as gently as from a scabbard.

Narrator II

There was a lot of cheering. In the middle of the noise, after a long time, he saw Kay and gave him the sword. [Suggests

handing sword to Kay. Kay accepts.] The people at the tournament were making a frightful row.

Kay

This is not my sword.

Wart

It was the only one I could get. The inn was locked.

Kay

Where did you get it?

Wart

I found it stuck in a stone, outside a church.

Kay

That is a funny place to find one.

Wart

Yes, it was stuck through an anvil.

Kay

[Kay jumps up. Moves to right of Wart.] What? Did you just say this sword was stuck in a stone?

Wart

It was. It was a sort of a war memorial.

Kay

Father, come here a moment.

Sir Ector

[Crosses to left of Wart.] Yes, my boy. Splendid falls these professional chaps do manage. Why what's the matter, Kay? You look as white as a sheet.

Kay

Do you remember that sword which the King of England would pull out?

Sir Ector

Yes.

Kay

Well, here it is. I have it. It is in my hand. I pulled it out.

Sir Ector

We will go back to the church. Now then Kay, here is the stone and the sword. It will make you the King of England. You are my son that I am proud of, and always will be, whatever you do. Will you promise me that you took it out by your own might?

Kay

I am a liar. Wart pulled it out. [Kay slowly backs to center stage right. Sits. Sir Ector crosses to reading stand, left. Wart returns, last, to center stage left.]

Narrator I

As far as the Wart was concerned, there was a time after this

in which Sir Ector kept telling him to put the sword back into the stone--which he did--and in which Sir Ector and Kay then vainly tried to take it out. The Wart took it out for them and stuck it back again once or twice.

Narrator II

The coronation was a splendid ceremony. What was still more splendid, it was like a birthday or Christmas Day. Everybody sent presents to the Wart, for his prowess in having learned to pull swords out of stones. There were many tasteful presents, but the nicest present of all was sent most affectionately by his own guardian, old Sir Ector. This present was a dunce's cap, which you lit at the top end. [Wart pantomimes this.] The Wart lit it and watched it grow. When the flame had quite gone out, Merlyn was standing before him in his magic hat.

Merlyn

[Standing. To the Wart.] Well, Wart. Here we are--or were--again. How nice you look in your crown. I was not allowed to tell you before or since, but your father was, or will be King Uther Pendragon, and it was I myself, disguised as a beggar, who first carried you to Sir Ector's castle. I know all about your birth and parentage and who gave you your real name. I know the sorrows before you, and the joys, and how there will never again be anybody who dares call you by the friendly name of Wart. In future it will be your glorious doom to take up

the burden and to enjoy the nobility of your proper title: so now I shall crave the privilege of being the very first of your subjects to address you with it--as my dear liege lord, King Arthur.

Wart

Will you stay with me for a long time?

Merlyn

Yes, Wart, or rather, as I should say (or is it have said?)

Yes, King Arthur. [Wart crosses upstage center. Kay, Merlyn and the narrators stand and focus on the Wart. Hold for music cue. Exit following Wart.]