

# Study Guide Workbook: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

## Before Reading (Preview & Anticipation)

- What makes a knight truly a knight—his sword, his courage, his word, or his moral integrity?

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- Is loyalty to one's king or to God the higher knightly duty?

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- What do you expect a "Green Knight" might symbolize? Nature? Magic? Pagan forces? Something else?

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- How might games, contests, or challenges reveal a person's true character?

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- Do you think perfect virtue is possible, or is failure inevitable for humans?

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## Part I – The Challenge (Arthur’s Court & the Beheading Game)

- Why might the Green Knight choose to appear in Arthur’s court during a feast?

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- What does Gawain’s decision to accept the challenge say about his knightly identity?

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- When Gawain agrees to the beheading game, what clues suggest that this is not just a simple contest of bravery?

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- Does Gawain act out of courage, duty, humility, or pride in stepping forward?

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- Was Gawain truly free to act otherwise, or was his destiny bound once the Green Knight appeared?

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## Part II – The Journey (Gawain’s Travels & the Winter Landscape)

- How do the harsh winter landscapes foreshadow Gawain’s inner trials later?

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- What role do hunger, cold, and isolation play in shaping Gawain’s character before he reaches the castle?

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- How does Gawain’s perseverance reflect (or fail to reflect) the knightly code?

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- Why might the poem dwell so much on natural forces and monsters in this section? What is the poet emphasizing about Gawain’s test?

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- Does the struggle against the wilderness prepare Gawain more for physical battles or spiritual ones?

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### Part III – The Temptations (The Castle & Lady Bertilak)

- What is the significance of the “trading game” between Gawain and Lord Bertilak?

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- How does Lady Bertilak’s persistence test not only Gawain’s chastity, but also his honesty and loyalty?

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- Is Gawain’s greatest failure here his fear of death or his breaking of the knightly code by concealing the girdle?

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- Why does a simple piece of cloth (the girdle) carry such heavy moral and symbolic weight?

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- What do these “games” reveal about the tension between human desire and knightly ideals?

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## Part IV – The Green Chapel (The Final Test & Revelation)

- How does Gawain react to the Green Knight's axe and what does it reveal about his courage?

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- Does the Green Knight function more as an enemy, a teacher, or a mirror of Gawain's flaws?

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- Why does the Green Knight forgive Gawain's concealment of the girdle? What lesson is being taught?

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- How does Morgan le Fay's hidden role reshape our understanding of the entire journey?

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- Is Gawain's shame at the end a mark of weakness, or does it show his deeper understanding of humility?

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## After Reading (Reflection & Analysis)

- Compare Gawain's understanding of honor at the beginning versus the end of the poem.

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- Is Gawain's concealment of the girdle a moral failure, or an understandable act of self-preservation?

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- How does the poem reconcile Christian ideals (truth, humility, grace) with chivalric ideals (bravery, honor, reputation)?

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- To what extent is fear the ultimate enemy of knighthood—or is fear actually a necessary part of wisdom?

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- How does Sir Gawain and the Green Knight bridge pagan folklore with Christian morality?

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