

5. What is an *auctour*, and what did medieval poets do with them?
An auctour (derived from the Latin word auctor, which means “originator” or “authority”) is an older writer who can be claimed as an authority. Lewis says that “Every [medieval] writer, if he possibly can, bases himself on an earlier writer, follows an auctor: preferably a Latin one” (5).
6. Looking at *The Dream of the Rood*, why might this medieval author have used the context of a dream (dream or vision genre) to tell his story?
Two reasons immediately suggest themselves:
- A medieval writer might use the dream setting because a reader would be more likely to believe fantastic happenings if they were set in that context. It is commonly accepted that strange things happen in dreams.*
 - A medieval author might use the vision setting (which often overlaps with the dream setting) to suggest a special supernatural revelation, like the dreams of Joseph in the Bible, the visions of John in Revelation, or the dream-vision of Scipio in Cicero.*
7. What is a good allegorical interpretation of *The Parable of the Christ-Knight*? In other words, what do the various symbolic details stand for, what is the theme (which is different from the meaning of the symbols), and what is the application of the theme for the reader? (NOTE: This is a brush-up exercise for the student, who was taught the basics of allegorical interpretation at the end of Year 1.)
- The symbolic details are easily picked out, since the author interprets them herself (59):*
 - The lady is “our soul,” which refers to the human soul which is beset by “enemies” (devils or sin).*
 - The king, of course, is Christ.*
 - The death of the king, which he performs in order to win the lady’s love, is Christ’s crucifixion.*
 - The details of the shield are explained also on the same page (we will not list them here), but the shield seems to be a tangent from or addition to the main point of the story, so we will not consider it here.*
 - The theme is the king’s sacrificial love-unto-death for the lady, which was completely undeserved on her side, yet was necessary in order to “attract her heart” and give her no excuse for denying his love.*
 - The application of the theme is that we, who are so unworthy, and yet so loved, must not fail to love Christ. “Could he not have saved us without so much suffering?” “Yes, indeed... but he did not wish to.” “Why?” “To deprive us of any excuse for denying him our love, since he had paid so dearly for it” (159).*
 - Page 409 of Ryken’s *Words of Delight* outlines a good strategy for interpreting parables, though in order to use it your student will have to remember what is meant by “narrative analysis” (essentially, the process of looking for patterns and meaning in the plot, characters, and setting of the story). He will also probably need to modify the last step of the strategy, since we do not really need to know what the parable meant “then” as opposed to “now.” We only need to know what it means “now.”*

OPTIONAL: Imaginative Writing Exercise

If your student has an interest in imaginative writing, or if he has some spare time, you might consider assigning this exercise to him after he has finished his reading assignments. It will help him appreciate medieval works of literature in a new way, and may be the beginning of a truly interesting story.

To the student: Write your own dream vision or short allegory or parable. Use *The Dream of the Rood* or *The Parable of the Christ-Knight* for your model. If you like, choose a subject from the “Medieval Frameworks” supplement or *The Discarded Image*. You may choose, for example, to write a story in which you dreamed that you were caught up into the spheres of the stars. Or you might write a short allegory or parable in which you go out to do battle with the sin of pride or laziness or selfishness. Try to mention an *auctour* (whether real or fictional) who wrote about your subject before you, and see if you can make your readers believe that you aren’t writing something new at all, but are instead retelling a worthwhile old story.

GEOGRAPHY: BACKGROUND INFORMATION



As mentioned in the Year 2 Introductory Notes, this curriculum emphasizes geographic studies at every grade level during every year-plan. Your student will do some geography work most weeks. Many weeks this will be map work, and you must decide this week what kind of maps you would like to make. Please see the *Loom* for suggested approaches, and then purchase necessary materials to get you started:

- Make photocopies or print outs of maps for the first six weeks.
- Purchase transparency film for your printer for overlays to be placed in a notebook.
- Gather colored pencils or markers (find the proper type for your map surface).

This week, one goal is to understand the movements of barbarian tribes that hastened the fall of the Roman Empire. You can use the map ¹ above for reference as you discuss the barbarian tribes.

FINE ARTS AND ACTIVITIES: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Review of Roman art and architecture:

Last year we learned that the Greeks were great inventors and the Romans were great administrators. With regards to the arts, the Romans appropriated and improved Greek architecture and art. For information on Roman architecture, see the sidebar at right.

Roman sculpture, painting, drama, oration, and buildings all bear an unmistakable Greek stamp, yet something distinctively Roman was added. Sometimes, as with oration and buildings, the Romans actually improved on Greek inventions. Sometimes, as in drama and sculpture, their efforts were but pale copies of brilliant originals.

Roman Architecture

The Romans¹ built more kinds of structures than did the people of any earlier civilization. In addition to houses, temples, and palaces, the Romans constructed such projects as aqueducts, public baths, shops, theaters, and gigantic outdoor arenas. Most of these structures were built during the period from about 100 B.C. to the A.D. 300's.

The Romans were the first to fully utilize two structural forms, the arch and the vault. A vault is an arched ceiling. The dome was a common form of vault in Roman architecture. The use of the arch and vault reduced or eliminated the need for columns to support the roof. Instead, the roof could rest solely on the outer walls. The Romans often used columns simply as sculptural decoration attached to walls.

The Arch ²

The first people to fully utilize the arch were architects of ancient Rome. During the 300's B.C., they began to use semicircular arches to build aqueducts and bridges. Later, they also constructed triumphal arches to honor their leaders. Pointed arches were developed during the Middle Ages. Medieval architects arranged arches in rows to form passageways called arcades. They also built arched roofs called vaults. Arches shaped like horseshoes are common in Islamic architecture.

The Dome³

A dome is a curved roof erected on a circular base, much like a bowl turned upside down. The earliest domes covered primitive huts and were made of brick or stone. The ancient Romans used domes to top such circular temples as the Pantheon in Rome. The Pantheon has one of the largest masonry domes ever built, with a height and a diameter of 142 feet (43 meters).

¹ Excerpted from a *World Book* article entitled *Architecture*. Contributor: G. L. Hersey, Ph.D., Professor of the History of Art, Yale University.
² Excerpted from *World Book* articles entitled *The Arch*, *Architecture (Roman Architecture)*, and *The Dome*. Contributor: William J. Hennessey, Ph.D., President and Director, Chrysler Museum of Art.
³ Excerpted from a *World Book* article entitled *Dome*. Contributor: William J. Hennessey, Ph.D., President and Director, Chrysler Museum of Art.

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