

Class 11 Main Lesson: *Parzival* – Day 1 – Monday

Welcome, and congratulations on 'taking your first step, into a much larger world' (Obi-Wan Kenobi).

I do not use this reference lightly, as Star Wars, as well as nearly every great narrative ever told (yes, even including LOTR!), draws on the mysterious storyline of our lives, first identified by Joseph Campbell in 1949 as '**the hero's journey**' (more on this to come).

If you are reading this document then you, like our eponymous hero Parzival, whom you are shortly to meet, have already passed the threshold of the first stage of the Journey – you have heard, and you have answered – the Call.

But before our journey travels any further, we, like every good Knight, must attend to our house.

Housekeeping:

- I would prefer it if you did all of the work in a ML book (a purple one was mailed out); if you think that the only way you can 'do' the ML involves other ways of completing the work – then you do what you feel you must. Of the utmost importance is just that you listen to and re-tell the story, and complete all of the thinking and **personal reflection** tasks.
- I would also love an artistically presented ML book (but do what you can).
- All of the personal stuff, and your opinions, I will get you to write **in the back of your book** – this does not need to be nicely presented (just simple pen border fine) and ball-point is fine if you prefer it. **Please date each entry in the back of your book.**
- I will upload work most days, but will give you some **finishing days**.
- **PLEASE – make it a habit to do this work first, each day – I will try to keep it under half an hour!** (today, being the first day, might be a bit longer)
- This is **important** because I will give you thinking questions to do most nights (and they really won't work nearly as well if you don't 'sleep on' the questions – you'll have to trust me on this.)

1. Please write into your ML books the following very "Special Verse"

I would like you to say this verse (out loud preferably, in your head otherwise), **at the start of each day as you sit down to do your ML work:**

We are not granted

A rest on any step.

The active human being

Must live and strive

From life to life.

As plants renew themselves

From spring to spring

So human beings must rise

*Through error to truth
From fetters into freedom
Through sickness and through death
To beauty, health and life.*

2. Thinking question: what do you know about Knights? Their attitudes? Their motivations? Their origins?

Some notes:

The cult of Knighthood grew out of the Germanic tribes towards the end of the Roman Empire:

(cult of violence, and of fighting; weakly looking babies were killed; they 'lived' for battle and trained from a young age to be warriors; it was considered a shame to grow old and not die in battle (burnt alive on pyres on boats).

However – with the spread of Christian Ideals – the cult of violence was **transformed** – and Knights emerged – who, whilst still maintaining their inherent love of fighting and battle, took on Christian ideals, and dedicated themselves to the service of protecting the weak and innocent – to champion **purity** – and to be **virtuous**.

However – the 'line' was still shaky – on one hand, a desire to want to help and protect and be noble, on the other – a desire to want to fight and kill...

These were precipitous times in the evolution of humanity.

3. Ask yourself: *is there any point studying a 900 year old story?*

What do I think, you ask? Well, if you really want to know what I think...

> Great stories, like a great song – are **timeless** – and have something to offer every generation...

> Great, or timeless stories 'hit on' the eternal questions of what it means to be human...

> Parzival seeks to answer that most fundamental question: not 'what is the meaning of life' – but more precisely, *what is the meaning of **my** life... (or **your** life.)*

It is, quite simply, the most complete narrative story ever recorded. While the story is 900 years old, the origins of the story are (potentially) several thousand years old. Every important human theme is present, yet the ideas are not explicit; it tells the story of the modern human being who emerged from the dark ages, into the human being we still are today, while also laying the path for the next incarnation of human development...

Wolfram von Eschenbach merely 'told' the story, he did not invent it. In time I may tell you more of those who have handed the story down (through secret societies which some believe still exist today), and of its ancient and enigmatic origins.

4. **LISTEN:** Let me tell you two short (true) stories:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kCq052wmoYDdKLrPXXKrrqYMEmXByH9Kj/view?usp=sharing>

5. All good things come in threes – so what of the third story? Well, the third story happened right in the middle of these two events, towards the end of the dark ages.

It is the story of Parzival. I will let you decide how and why Parzival might also be a story that has arisen from somewhere other than just ‘the mind of individuals’. What might be its cosmic and karmic significance? *Please hold this question as you listen to the story.*

Some notes:

- Parzival has been called by scholars “the first modern man” – in that, since medieval times, there has arisen in humanity, along with materialism, an idea: “**that we are all alone**” – that we are born alone, and die alone – and that no matter how well we might know others – family, friends, lovers – **they can never truly know us** – and so we are ultimately alone...

But are we?

- Parzival himself has been called by scholars “the first modern (hu)man” – in that, as a character/person – he *is* an outsider; he is alone and lonely; **and his quest is to reconcile his material loneliness with a way to find true fullness and happiness... through...**

both: the mysteries of the **spirit**; and the mysteries of **matter**.

- The significance of Parzival is that it bridges the two worlds revealed in the two stories I told you before – **of matter** (e.g. the atom) **and spirit** (the ancient Mysteries...)

These the mysteries surrounding Parzival are known as **the secrets of the Holy Grail.**

6. **So what is the holy grail?** In the back of your book, please explain (as a note, not as a proper titled and bordered page) – your current understanding of what the holy grail is. What do *you* think it is?

7. Now, in the back of your book, write:

“Questions for ML:

> What is the grail? *To answer by the end...*

> Do I have to change myself to be of service to others?

> Who *am* I & what is my purpose?”

These are to be ‘overriding questions’ – I may, or may not ask you to answer them at the end of the Main Lesson (not the last question – that will remain well past the ML).

8. **LISTEN: Parzival’s parents** – the story so far: https://drive.google.com/file/d/129kHcByEu-UR33lrNjTF47lh_oP6gbjs/view?usp=sharing

9. **THINKING QUESTIONS for tomorrow** (think about them now, and then think about them later today/tonight – preferably as you’re going to bed!).

A)

- > What am I grateful for?
- > Who inspires me?
- > What gives my life meaning?

Pretty simple!! (irony)

B)

- What am I going to sacrifice?

- What **virtue*** am I going to adopt?

* **Virtues:**

- discipline;
- chastity;
- gentleness;
- loyalty;
- care;
- shame;
- modesty;
- care;
- patience;
- humility;
- love;
- perseverance;
- moderation.

Your second, secret challenge, is to choose one of the **virtues** listed above, and for the rest of the Main Lesson, you are to try to **embody** this virtue as best you can. You must remind yourself daily, and really consciously try to make it part of your life. Do not tell anyone, until the end (and then see if anyone in your household has noticed!).

TOMORROW: we shall begin the story of Parzival.