The enchanter and wise man in Arthurian legend and romantic tales of the Middle Ages, Merlin the magician is known primarily as the tutor and educator of King Arthur, a legendary king of ancient Britain. According to legend, Merlin was born to a human mother and a demon father. He gained his magical powers from the demon. Some stories said that Merlin was evil while others said that he was good, despite his demonic background.

Merlin was known as a prophet. He predicted that Arthur would be king, and he also predicted Britain’s defeat by the Saxons. Merlin was an adviser to several kings in the Arthurian legend, including Arthur and his father, Uther Pendragon. He advised Uther to set up the Order of the Round Table which was the group of knights who later served Arthur. Using his powers, Merlin helped King Uther to meet Ygerne (also spelled Igraine), Arthur’s mother. Once Arthur was born, Merlin took the baby to be raised away from his parents. After Uther died, Merlin said that the next king would be the man who could remove the legendary sword Excalibur from a stone. Many knights failed to remove the sword, but Arthur succeeded. Merlin then helped Arthur to claim the throne. The Walt Disney film company’s The Sword in the Stone (1963) was a popular animated feature based on this theme.

In some stories, Merlin fell in love with the Lady of the Lake, a mysterious fairy to whom he taught his magic. However, she used this knowledge to imprison Merlin forever. Merlin plays a role in many of the Arthurian tales that were written down during the Middle Ages. From then until the present, Merlin has continued to be a popular character, appearing in many stories, poems, novels, children’s books, and movies.

Cite

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