

The plot thickens! Making stories out of stories

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At Camelot, on New Year's Eve, King Arthur and Guinevere are having a feast.

The doors blow open and a huge green man on a green horse comes in!

He has an axe in one hand and a sprig of holly in the other.

He says: 'I challenge the bravest knight to strike me with this axe. If I survive, I'll win the right to return the blow in exactly one year and a day from now.'

Gawain cuts off his head.

The body picks up the head and gets on his horse.

The head reminds Gawain he must go to the Green Chapel one year and a day from now.

In November, Gawain leaves Camelot on his quest.

On Christmas Eve, he sees a castle, where he asks to stay.

The host and his beautiful wife welcome Gawain, a Knight of the Round Table.

They tell him that the Green Chapel is very near!

The host proposes a game for Gawain's last three days at the castle.

The host will give Gawain what he has hunted during the day. In exchange Gawain will give the host what he has obtained in the castle.

Gawain, in bed on the morning of the first day, is visited by the host's wife who, after much flirting, gives him a kiss.

On the first evening the host gives Gawain a deer and Gawain gives him a kiss.

On the second evening a boar is exchanged for two kisses.

On the third evening a fox is exchanged for three kisses – but Gawain says nothing about the green belt that the host's wife has given him.

A guide takes Gawain to the Green Chapel. He suggests Gawain escapes.

Gawain refuses.

The Green Chapel is just a cave!

There is the noise of an axe being sharpened. The Green Knight appears!

'You are punctual,' says the Green Knight. 'Congratulations! Now, kneel down.'

At the first blow Gawain flinches and the Green Knight stops.

At the second blow the Green Knight stops.

At the third blow the Green Knight just cuts the skin on Gawain's neck.

Sir Gawain jumps up and wants to fight but the Green Knight says 'No'.

The Green Knight explains he is same person as the lord of the castle: his name is Sir Bertilak. He tests knights. His wife is his accomplice.

The Green Knight explains why there were three blows.

He gives Gawain the green belt.

At Camelot, Arthur is proud of him! All the knights will always wear green belts to honour Gawain.

But Gawain is ashamed of his weakness and cowardice.

Imagine extensions of this version of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'

Prequels: backstories (history or background of a character), origin stories, ...

Sequels: continuations (what happens just after the end, the next day...);

'proper' sequels (a year later, ten years later, fifty years later...); 'spin-offs' (the further story of a character who is not the protagonist of the source story)

Extensions to what happens *during* the story: filling in the 'gaps', 'empty spaces', 'missing moments', e.g.

- Scenes/Events that are not there but which could be invented
- Marginal characters who could be made more important or whose opinions could be heard; non-existent characters who could be included
- Places/Objects which could be described/explained further

Find out about the [World Stories](#) series here, or email robhill.vr@gmail.com

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