



# **Four Arthurian Romances: Erec Et Enide, Cligès, Yvain, The Knight of the Lion, and Lancelot, The Knight of the Cart**

*Chrétien de Troyes*

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Originally written in rhyming eight-syllable couplets, these epic poems date from the twelfth century and served as the original inspiration of what became the Arthurian Cycles—the legends of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, Courtly Love and popular Medieval imagery and life.

Erec and Enide tells the story of Erec, who serves as part of Queen Guinevere's retinue, his quest for the hand of princess Enide, and his struggle for honor on the battlefield, and finally their crowning as King and Queen of Nantes.

Cligès tells the story of the knight Cligès, the prince regent of Constantinople and also second cousin to King Arthur. While Cligès is growing up in Britain, Constantinople is ruled by his uncle Alis. Upon his return to that city, Cligès falls in love with Alis's wife, Fenice—who, by means of a magic potion, has never consummated her marriage. The drama which ensues is a whirlwind of deception, but ultimate victory for courtly love.

Yvain, the Knight with the Lion, tells the famous story of the knight whose loyal servant is a lion he rescues from a servant—and whose strength in battle saves his life more than once in battle with natural and supernatural foes.

Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart, tells of the love affair between Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, after he rescues her from abduction by Meleagant, the son of Bademagu. It tells of Lancelot's struggles to rescue the queen and of the battle to balance his duties of loyalty to Arthur and his personal love for Guinevere.

Chrétien de Troyes's works played a major role in helping to shape Arthurian romance—but also, due to his detailed descriptions of everyday court life, provided a fascinating window into early Medieval ruling class lifestyles.

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