

WAS THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION REALLY LIKE CAMELOT?

by William E. Jackman, PhD, May 2025

PART I: INTRODUCTION

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This essay was prompted by a discussion with our audience about the song “If Ever I Would Leave You” from *Camelot* at our recent “Spring Is Here” concert on April 6, 2025 at the Piedmont Center for the Arts in Piedmont, California.

This essay is posted in the "Language and Colonialism" section of <https://www.jackmanstatistics.com/commentary.html>

It is posted in the "Language and **Colonialism**" section because the roles of King Arthur and of his father Uther Pendragon in fighting the Saxon invasion of southeastern England were a direct result of Britain being a Roman **colony** (province) for 367 years (AD 43-AD 410).

PART I: INTRODUCTION

“If Ever I Would Leave You (How could it be in springtime)”

For decades, we have included the 1960 song “If Ever I Would Leave You (How could it be in springtime)” in our annual “Spring Is Here” concert. Our concert attendees like to know about the tunes we present, so we have informed them that “If Ever I Would Leave You” was first presented in the 1960 Broadway stage musical *Camelot* with music by Frederick Lowe and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner (who also collaborated on “My Fair Lady”). *Camelot* was also presented as a film in 1967.

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

Camelot was the court and castle associated with the legendary King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. (King Arthur was a hero of Celtic mythology in the sixth century AD.) Camelot has come to refer to a place and time of idyllic happiness.

Camelot, the 1960 Broadway musical and the 1967 film, presented an idealized view of Camelot

- as a glorious kingdom ruled over by King Arthur
- as a place of peace, beauty, and enlightenment where knights uphold chivalry and virtue
- and as a symbol of a utopian society where justice and good governance prevail

Sir Lancelot stops the show.

As a major role in the 1960 Broadway play, Sir Lancelot performed the highly **dramatic ballad** "If Ever I Would Leave You" contrasting the four seasons and concluding that he could never leave Guinevere. In the role of Lancelot 1960/1961, **Robert Goulet** received favorable reviews, most notably for his rendition of the **show-stopping romantic ballad** "If Ever I Would Leave You", which became his signature song. After Camelot's run, Goulet appeared on The Danny Thomas Show, The Ed Sullivan Show, and other T.V. shows which made him a household name among American audiences.

A "brief, shining moment"

The Kennedy administration is often referred to as "Camelot" due to a Life magazine interview of Jacqueline Kennedy after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (JFK). Jackie described the era of the Kennedy administration as a "**brief, shining moment**". She quoted from the musical's final song, "Don't let it be forgot, that for one brief, shining moment there was Camelot".

The mantle of Camelot passed to Barack Obama

When Caroline Kennedy endorsed Barack Obama in 2008 as her father's rightful heir, she laid upon him the mantle of Camelot and the enduring mystique of John F. Kennedy. In

an interview with ABC News' Charles Gibson, Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., and his niece Caroline Kennedy placed a Camelot crown on the Illinois senator, describing him as an heir to the legacy of the late John F. Kennedy. Kennedy said he was "always going to support the candidate that was going to inspire me and I thought would inspire the Democratic Party."

Which will be the next administration to receive the mantle of Camelot? It was not the Biden administration, the successor to the Obama administration. Not does it appear it will be the Trump administration. If Kamala Harris had won the presidential election, she would have been the first U.S. woman president and the first U.S. black woman president, and the mantle of Camelot might have been passed to her.

"If Ever I Would Leave You" as a rumba

As noted above, "If Ever I Would Leave You" was done as **romantic ballad** in the 1960 stage presentation of Camelot and its 1967 film presentation. This is also how Robert Goulet popularized the song in his appearances on The Danny Thomas Show, The Ed Sullivan Show, and other T.V. shows. Aretha Franklin also did the tune as a **romantic ballad** on her album "Laughing on the Outside" (1962). To our knowledge, we are the **first group** to do "If Ever I Would Leave You" as a **rumba** and as a **very danceable rumba**.

Questions About Camelot

For decades, the information above was all the history I provided to our audience about "If Ever I Would Leave You" and Camelot. I did not further investigate whether the Kennedy administration, in fact, met the lofty standards of Camelot nor whether the real Camelot was what Jacqueline Kennedy thought it was.

PART II: DID THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION REALLY MEET THE LOFTY STANDARDS OF CAMELOT?

There have been numerous articles/studies that suggest that Kennedy administration did not meet the lofty standards of Camelot, e.g., “Inside the Myth: What Was Kennedy’s Camelot?” by Peta Stamper (18 Nov 2021). Ms. Stamper writes that Kennedy, unlike the faithful, loving husband King Arthur of Arthurian legend, was a “serial womaniser who surrounded himself with a ‘cleaning crew’ who prevented news of his infidelities from getting out.” She also writes that he failed in foreign policy: “In foreign policy, during his first year as president Kennedy ordered a failed overthrow of the Cuban revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro.”

<https://www.historyhit.com/inside-the-myth-what-was-kennedys-camelot/#:~:text=Camelot%20is%20a%20fictional%20castle%20and%20court%20that>

A Serial Womanizer

President Kennedy’s serial womanizing was a major factor in John and Jackie’s marital difficulties. Jackie was aware of John’s rumored affairs and even considered divorce, but they seemingly remained in a complex relationship with each other.

People magazine reported Jackie later told her family she was considering divorce because John did not return from a cruise to be by her side after the death of their daughter. The idea of divorce would come up again in their marriage, reportedly because of his affairs with other women. "She wasn't naïve to it. (Jul 24, 2024)

A “Conga Line” of Paramours

“JFK and his conga line of concubines” by Tom Leonard of the DAILY MAIL

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Notes from his aides in his 1960 election trail reveal how terrified JFK (John Fitzgerald Kennedy) was that his insatiable sex drive might be exposed.

JFK was a prolific womanizer, from Hollywood stars to White House secretaries. Newly uncovered notes reveal how his sexual appetite weighed on his mind. In the scrawled messages to aides, he fretted that it might cost him the election

John F. Kennedy wasn't really picky about the women who made up his 'conga line' of paramours. From Hollywood stars to White House secretaries — including a pair known as Fiddle and Faddle — interns, Mafia molls, strippers, and call girls, for the libidinous President it was all about the sex.

As he confided to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan: 'If I don't have a woman for three days, I get a terrible headache.'

The reports cited above suggest that the Kennedy administration might not have met the lofty standards of Camelot and might not have been the "**brief, shining moment**" that Jackie said it was.

PART III: DID KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE REALLY MEET THE LOFTY STANDARDS OF CAMELOT THAT JACQUELINE KENNEDY THOUGHT THEY DID?

As written in PART II, there have been numerous articles/studies that suggest that Kennedy administration did not meet the lofty standards of Camelot. However, there have been fewer articles/studies (or none) that investigated whether King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table really met the lofty standards of Camelot and whether Jacqueline Kennedy's conception of Camelot as "one brief, shining moment" and as a "place and time of idyllic happiness" corresponded even remotely to the actual life and times of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Jacqueline Kennedy's conception of Camelot

It appears that Jackie's conception of Camelot came from "Camelot," the Broadway musical about an idealized King Arthur's Court that opened the month after Kennedy

won the presidency in November 1960. The musical became popular during the Kennedy era, and President Kennedy was known to enjoy it.

Post-assassination interview with journalist Theodore H. White

“The term Camelot was first publicly used by Jackie in a *Life* magazine interview, after she invited the journalist Theodore H. White to the White House just days after the assassination. White was best known for his Making of a President series about Kennedy’s election.

“In the interview, Jackie referred to the Broadway musical, Camelot, which John Kennedy apparently listened to often. The musical [lyrics] had been written by his Choate and Harvard schoolmate Alan Jay Lerner. Jackie quoted the ending lines of the final song:

“Don’t let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief, shining moment that was known as Camelot. There’ll be great presidents again... but there will never be another Camelot.”

Cementing the Camelot Myth Despite the Objections of Life magazine

“When White took the 1,000-word essay [interview] to his editors at *Life*, they complained the Camelot theme was too much. Yet Jackie objected to any changes and herself edited the interview.”

The immediacy of the interview helped cement the image of Kennedy’s America as Camelot. In that moment, Jackie was a grieving widow and mother in front of the world. Her audience was sympathetic and receptive. Significantly, journalists also bought into it.

If Jackie had known, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration “Camelot.”

As will be shown in the following sections, the true life and times of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table were replete with incest (including King Arthur himself), infidelity (adultery), conspiracy, treason, betrayal, unjustified wars, murder, treachery, and **chaos**. Moreover, King Arthur and his knights expended immense resources pursuing the Holy Grail which diminished their ability to fight the invading Saxons who

took over southeast and central Britain. If Jackie had known how things really were in the age of the legendary King Arthur, **she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."**

Before the Internet, it was difficult to research the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Our knowledge of Arthurian legends comes from Celtic mythology, Welsh and Breton traditions, and later French and English literary works. Some of the most important sources include

- "History of the Kings of Britain" by Geoffrey of Monmouth was written around 1136 (approximately 384 pages). This work is considered the foundational text for the Arthurian legend. It introduced many of the key elements, including the magical sword Excalibur, the wizard Merlin, and the Lady of the Lake. The work became a popular and influential text during the Middle Ages.
- "Le Morte d'Arthur" by Thomas Malory is the most famous English-language version of the Arthurian legend, consolidating many of the earlier tales into a single narrative. It was completed by Malory about 1470 and printed by William Caxton in 1485. (It has 584 pages and takes approximately 15 hours and 38 minutes to read at a pace averaging 250 words per minute.)
- The Mabinogion, a collection of early Welsh stories contains elements that influenced later Arthurian romances, particularly those related to the Holy Grail.
- Romances by the French poet Chrétien de Troyes such as "The Knight of the Lion" and "The Knight of the Cart" which introduced new themes and characters, including the concept of courtly love and the quest for the Holy Grail.

- The Vulgate Cycle, a series of French prose romances developed and expanded upon the themes introduced by Chrétien de Troyes, including the Estoire del Saint Grail, the Estoire de Merlin, and the Lancelot propre.

Before the Internet, it was a daunting task to obtain these books and plow through them to learn, for example, that King Arthur's son Mordred was born of an incestuous relationship between Arthur and his half-sister Morgause.

The Internet was not available in November 1960 when Jacqueline Kennedy developed her idealized image and concept of Camelot.

The Internet first become widely available for use by the public in the United States on April 30th, 1993. This was more than 30 years after the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In the 32 years since Internet first become widely available for use by the public (1993-2025), immense amounts of content have been posted to the Internet, facilitating research. Today AI (Artificial Intelligence) has made Internet research easier and faster because AI does a research project for you in response to your queries. Before AI, you had to search around for the information that AI now retrieves and organizes into a report for you. (Note: You cannot just accept AI results unquestionably. Sometimes (or often) the results from a query in Google Chrome are significantly different from the results from the same query in Microsoft Edge. Also, AI sometimes writes clumsy English with superfluous words which must be edited.)

The Birth of King Arthur:

Surrounded by deception, treachery, violence, unprovoked war, and chaos

At a feast celebrating a great victory over their Saxon enemies, Uther Pendragon, King of Britain and the future father of King Arthur, became captivated by the beauty of Igraine, the wife of one of his lords, Duke Gorlois of Cornwall. When Gorlois refused Uther's advances and left with Igraine, Uther declared war on Gorlois and besieged Gorlois' castles Tintagel and Dimilioc.

Igraine was placed her at the more defensible Tintagel Castle, while Gorlois defended himself in Dimilioc. Uther was unable to breach the wall of Dimilioc, so he devised a plan with Merlin, the magician. Merlin used magic to transform Uther into the likeness of Gorlois, allowing him to enter Tintagel and have a child with Igraine, who was unaware of his true identity.

Meanwhile, Uther's army besieged Dimilioc, and Gorlois was slain in the ensuing battle. Igraine eventually married Uther, unaware that she had previously conceived Arthur with the disguised king. Uther became stepfather to Igraine's daughters, Morgause, Morgan le Fay, and Elaine,

(Note: According to Arthurian legend, King Uther Pendragon was not married before his marriage to Igraine. He is portrayed as having no wife and no heir before taking Igraine to become the mother of his son, Arthur.)

Arthur taken away by Merlin after his birth to protect him.

As a condition of Merlin's help in sneaking King Uther into Tintagel, Merlin took Arthur after his birth and hid him with one of the king's vassal's, Sir Ector, for protection. Shortly after, Igraine, Arthur's mother, died, perhaps from grief. Not long after her death, King Uther was killed by his Saxon enemies. Britain **fell into chaos** for years after his passing.

If Jackie had known

If Jacqueline Kennedy had known the actual **conditions surrounding the birth of King Arthur**, it is unlikely she would have compared the Kennedy administration to Camelot: a "**brief, shining moment**". However, it appears that Jackie's image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

Who were the Saxons and why were they fighting the Celtic Britons?

It was noted above that Uther Pendragon, King of Britain and the father of King Arthur, won a great victory over their Saxon enemies but was later slain in battle against them. King Arthur and his knights initially fought the Saxons successfully but then were

distracted from this mission (to be discussed below), allowing the Saxons to take over southeast and central Britain

The legacy of Roman colonialism

The Saxons' invasion of southeast and central Britain was a legacy of Roman colonialism (explained below). The Roman Empire's period of dominance and colonialism spanned from approximately 27 BC to AD 476 in the West (and continued in the East until the fall of Constantinople in AD 1453). This was a period for the Roman Empire of vast territorial expansion and colonialism, cultural influence, and imperial rule.

The Roman army invades Britain

When Rome invaded Britain in AD 43, it was occupied by Celtic tribes. In AD 43, the Roman army was strong and disciplined and used modern weapons and military tactics. The Romans invaded Britain in force, with 40,000 soldiers. Subsequently, Britain became a Roman colony for 367 years (approximately AD 43 to AD 410) and was part of the Roman province of Britannia.

The Celtic tribes strongly resist the Roman invasion

Despite the might of the Roman army, the native Celtic tribes resisted them vigorously when the Romans invaded Britain in AD 43. Some notable examples:

- Caratacus, a leader of the Catuvellauni tribe, became a symbol of resistance and fought the Romans for several years, even after fleeing to Wales.
- Boudican Revolt: A significant revolt led by Queen Boudica of the Iceni tribe in 60/61 AD further demonstrated the continued resistance and the resentment toward Roman rule.

Roman military might prevails

Despite the fierce resistance by the native Celtic tribes, the Romans quickly established control over southern Britain, including the southeastern areas. Rome firmly controlled southeastern England until AD 410.

The Roman army pacifies the Celtic tribes in southeastern Britain

The Roman army firmly controlled southeastern Britain by AD 84 (although it never was able to control tribes in the north and west). As noted above, the Celts in southeastern Britain initially resisted the Roman armies fiercely. However, they eventually became part of the Roman province of Britannia, with many adopting aspects of Roman culture and government.

The Roman army pacified conquered territories through a combination of military presence, political integration, and economic incentives. While military occupation and the threat of force were used to maintain order and prevent rebellion, the Romans also strategically integrated some conquered peoples into the Roman system, offering benefits like citizenship and access to trade.

Pacification of the Celtic tribes of southeastern Britain included disarming them.

Celtic tribes in southeastern Britain under Roman control were generally not allowed to have weapons, particularly those that might be used for military purposes. This was a key aspect of Roman pacification and control strategies.

- Disarming the population: After conquering a region, Romans often disarmed the local population, including Celtic tribes, to prevent future rebellions and uprisings.
- Maintaining order: This disarming policy was crucial for maintaining peace and order within the Roman province of Britain. By limiting access to weapons, the Romans could exert greater control over the local population.
- Roman military control: The Romans maintained their own military presence in Britain, using a strong army to ensure their authority and enforce their laws.

The Celtic tribes in southeastern Britain lose their martial skills.

When did the Romans take control of southeastern Britain (during AD 43 and AD 84), the Celtic tribes were warrior tribes with strong martial skills. However, the native Celts subsequently lived peacefully under Roman rule for over 300 years, during which time

they were disarmed and their martial capabilities disappeared. The erosion of their military skills would make them vulnerable to invasion by Germanic tribes when the Romans pulled out of Britain in AD 410.

The Celtic tribes in **western** Britain were **not** disarmed and **not** pacified by the Romans but retained their martial skills.

The Romans were able to firmly control southeastern Britain. By the end of the first century AD, they had successfully established a functional province of the Roman Empire in Britain, with southeastern Britain as a key area of control and Romanization. But they did not achieve firm control over western Britain which they never fully subdued nor pacified. Resistance by Celtic Britons to Roman colonization continued in the western regions of Britain.

King Arthur and his father King Uther Pendragon were Celtic Britons based in southwestern Britain who retained their martial capabilities during the Roman occupation of Britain and were capable of resisting the Saxon invaders when the Romans left Britain in AD 410.

King Uther Pendragon

King Uther Pendragon's primary base of power was in Cornwall (in the westernmost part of the South West Peninsula). According to Arthurian legend, he won battles against the Saxons. After rising to the throne, Uther faced a Saxon threat and defeated the Saxon leaders, Octa and Eosa. He also secured Britain's frontiers and quelled Saxon uprisings.

King Arthur

Like his father, King Arthur's base of power was in far western Britain where his mythical castle Camelot was located. However, Arthur's activities were also often centered in Celtic strongholds like Wessex, Cornwall, and Wales. King Arthur is depicted in Arthurian legends as a victorious leader who repelled the Saxon invaders:

- King Arthur is credited with leading the Britons to victory in numerous battles.

- King Arthur and his knights met the Saxons at Bath and secured a decisive victory in battle, halting their advance.
- King Arthur is credited with leading the Britons to victory in the pivotal Battle of Mount Badon. This battle is a key part of Arthurian lore, with some accounts claiming Arthur personally killed nearly 1,000 Saxons. This victory is said to have halted the Saxon advances and established a period of relative peace.

Did King Arthur really exist?

Historians cannot confirm King Arthur's existence, but some speculate that he was a real warrior who led British armies against the Saxons in the 6th century, achieving significant victories. These were his primary accomplishments and the main reason his subjects supported him and admired him. However, in Arthurian legend, King Arthur was also portrayed as a good and just king who treated the people of his country with respect.

Rome withdraws from Britain in AD 410. "Barbarians" at the gates of Rome.

The Roman withdrew from Britain in AD 410 because of Rome's own internal struggles and the increasing pressure of barbarian invasions on multiple fronts in Italy. For example, the Visigoths sacked Rome in 410. Several barbarian tribes contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire, including the Huns, Goths (including Visigoths and Ostrogoths), Vandals, Franks, and Burgundians. The Huns, specifically, are considered to have initiated a wave of migrations and invasions that destabilized the empire.

The Saxons invaded Britain after Rome withdrew in AD 410

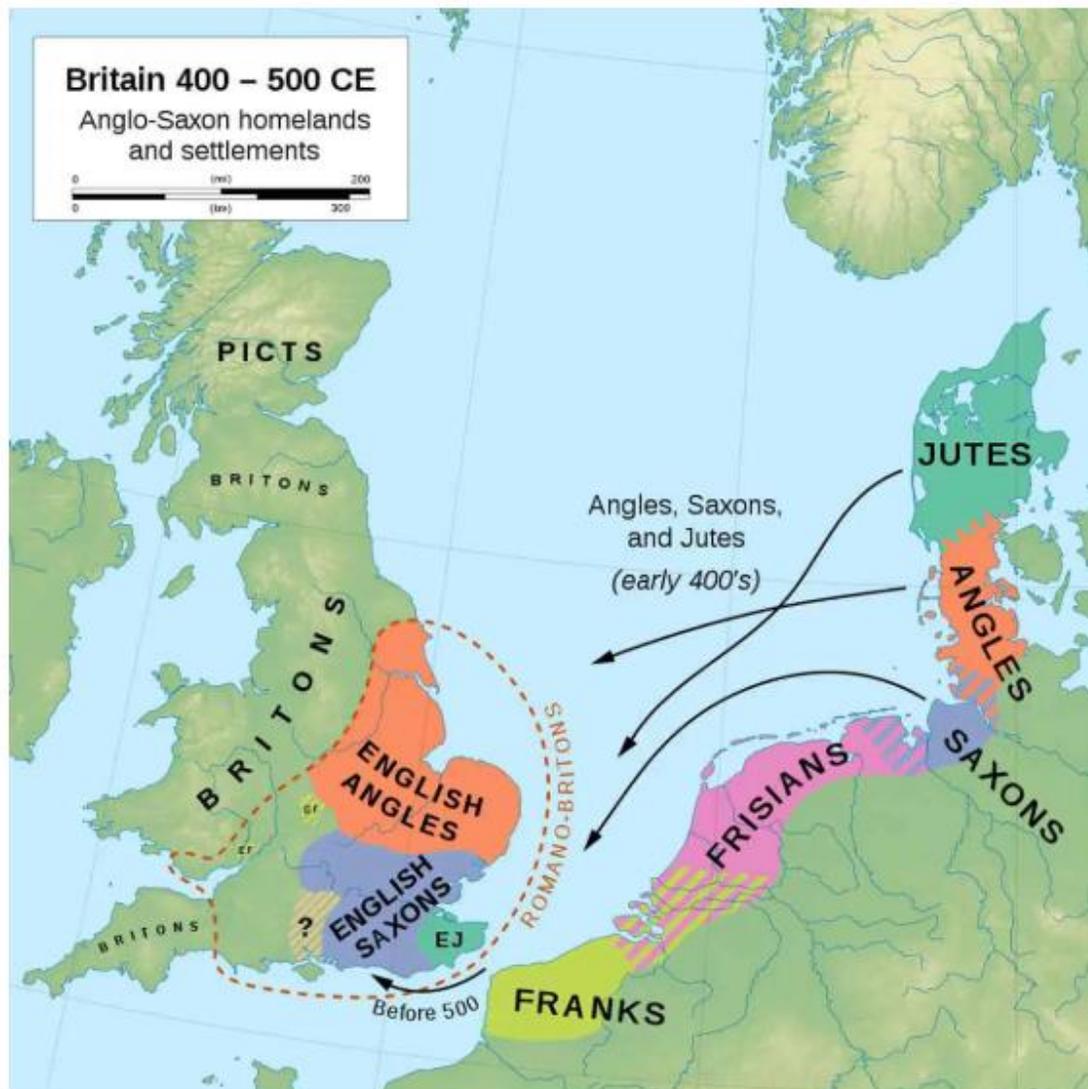
The Saxons (from northwestern Germany and southern Denmark) and other Germanic tribes attempted to invade and settle in central and southeastern Britain while Rome still controlled it but were repelled by the Romans. The Roman withdrawal in AD 410 created a power vacuum, and the Saxons, along with other Germanic tribes like the Angles and Jutes, began to settle in Britain and establish kingdoms. The Saxons were skilled warriors able to defeat the Britons and establish their presence in southeastern Britain. As noted earlier, the native Celtic tribes in southeastern Britain were pacified and disarmed and

lost their martial skills during over 300 years of Roman colonial occupation/pacification so were not prepared to effectively resist the Saxon invaders.

An Economic Incentive to Invade Britain: Rich farmland

The Saxons were attracted to Britain by its rich, fertile farmland land for their agriculture. Their homelands in Scandinavia often flooded, making it difficult to grow enough crops to support their populations.

The Traditional Narrative of the Anglo-Saxon Invasion



Anglo-Saxon Homelands and Settlements, by mbarthelem, 2020, via Wikimedia Commons

The Birth of King Arthur

The preceding several pages were dedicated to explaining who the Saxons were and why they were invading Britain and fighting the Celtic Britons. It was noted earlier that Uther Pendragon, King of Britain and the father of King Arthur, won a great victory for the Celtic Britons over their Saxon enemies but was later slain in battle against them. King Arthur and his knights initially fought the Saxons successfully but then were distracted from this mission (to be discussed below), allowing the Saxons to take over southeast and central Britain. **We now return to discussing King Arthur.**

King Arthur: Born in deceit and treachery

Recall from above that King Arthur was born in deceit and treachery. Merlin used magic to transform King Uther Pendragon into the likeness of Gorlois, Igraine's husband, allowing Uther to enter the highly-fortified castle Tintagel and have a child with Igraine, who was unaware of Uther's true identity. Meanwhile, Uther's army besieged Gorlois in his other castle Dimilioc, and Gorlois was slain in the ensuing battle.

Taken away at birth by the powerful wizard Merlin

As a condition of Merlin's help in sneaking King Uther into Tintagel, Merlin took Arthur after his birth and hid him with one of the king's vassal's, Sir Ector, for protection. Shortly after, Igraine, Arthur's mother, died, perhaps from grief. Not long after her death, King Uther was killed in battle by his Saxon enemies. Uther had no clear successor, and Britain fell into **chaos** for years after his passing.

(Note: In Arthurian legends, Merlin is typically portrayed as a wizard, but also sometimes referred to as a magician, seer, or even sorcerer. His powers include prophecy, shapeshifting, and control of the elements, all of which align with the traditional roles of a wizard. The term "magician" is often used in a broader sense to encompass any individual with magical abilities, so while Merlin is primarily a wizard, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.)

If Jackie had had known the conditions of King Arthur's birth, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."

Jacqueline Kennedy described the era of the Kennedy administration as a "**brief, shining moment**". She quoted from the musical's final song, "Don't let it be forgot, that for one brief, shining moment there was Camelot". *Camelot*, the 1960 Broadway musical and the 1967 film, presented an idealized view of Camelot as a glorious kingdom ruled over by King Arthur.

Contrary to what Jackie believed, King Arthur was born in circumstances of treachery and murder, including

- King Uther's war against Gorlois in which Gorlois was killed. (Gorlois was Igraine's husband and the father of their three daughters.)
- The deception of Igraine by Merlin's magic so that Igraine thought Uther was her husband Gorlois.
- Arthur being taken away from Igraine at birth
- Igraine's death soon after, perhaps from grief
- Not long after her death, King Uther was killed in battle by his Saxon enemies

If Jackie had known the circumstances of King Arthur's birth, **she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."**

King Arthur becomes King of the Celtic Britons

"Whosoever pulls this sword from this stone is the rightful king of England."

In Arthurian legend, King Arthur didn't have a formal "proof" of his lineage to Uther Pendragon. Instead, his claim to the throne was established by his ability to draw the sword from the stone. This feat, and the inscription on the sword, served as a symbolic validation of his right to rule.

Some background

- The Sword in the Stone: The sword was placed in a stone with an inscription claiming that "whosoever pulls this sword from this stone is the rightful king of England".
- Arthur was able to pull the sword out easily: Aged fifteen, Arthur came to visit London. When he saw the stone, he approached it and pulled the sword out easily! Soon after, Arthur was crowned High King of Britain. Merlin, his father's old wizard, helped him rule.
- Arthur's Drawing the Sword: Despite countless attempts by other nobles, only Arthur was able to draw the sword, proving his legitimacy.
- Merlin's Role: Merlin, the magician, played a significant role in Arthur's life, including raising him and guiding him to the sword.
- Parentage Revealed: After drawing the sword, Arthur's parentage as the son of Uther Pendragon was revealed, further solidifying his claim to the throne.

John F. Kennedy became president of the United States by the consent of the governed.

John F. Kennedy won a hard-fought election victory over Vice President Nixon in 1960 with one of the narrowest margins in presidential history: 34,227,096 popular votes to Richard Nixon's 34,107,646. He did not become president by heredity (e.g., because he was the king's oldest surviving son: primogeniture) or by a demonstration of strength and/or magic by pulling a sword out of a stone. Kennedy was elected because his intellectual capabilities and leadership qualities won over American voters. Our country was founded on the then radical concept (1776) that the right to govern comes from the consent of those governed, not from heredity – as it had in the Britain of Arthurian times and in most countries for thousands of years.

If Jackie had given it some thought, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."

Jacqueline Kennedy described the era of the Kennedy administration as a "**brief, shining**

moment". She quoted from the musical's final song, "Don't let it be forgot, that for one brief, shining moment there was Camelot". *Camelot*, the 1960 Broadway musical and the 1967 film, presented an idealized view of Camelot as a glorious kingdom ruled over by King Arthur.

Yet a political system in which the right to rule comes from heredity and/or a demonstration of strength is antithetical to the political system John F. Kennedy espoused in which the right to govern comes from the consent of those governed, not from heredity. If Jackie had given these issues some thought, **she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."**

Mordred, King's Arthur illegitimate son born from incest.

Mordred was born from an incestuous affair between King Arthur and his half-sister **Morgause** who was married to King Lot. Recall that Morgause's mother Igraine had three daughters with Gorlois before he was killed in the siege of his castle Dimilic ordered by King Uther who wanted his wife Igraine. These daughters were **Morgause**, Morgan le Fay, and Elaine. So, **Arthur** and **Morgause** had the same mother, Igraine, but different fathers. Morgause's father was Gorlois, and Arthur's father was King Uther.

King Arthur attempts to have Mordred killed and does not raise him.

Because King Arthur was embarrassed about Mordred's incestuous birth and because Merlin prophesied that a child born on May Day (Mordred's birthday) would one day kill him, Arthur tried to have all children born on May Day killed or sent to sea. He chose to have them sent to sea. Their ship perished, but Mordred miraculously survived and was raised by a fisherman*. This event, coupled with Mordred's illegitimacy and potential ambitions, led to their conflict and ultimately, Mordred's betrayal and killing of Arthur. (*In a different version of the Arthurian legends, Mordred is raised by his mother Morgause and her husband Lot.)

King Arthur married to Guinevere when he had Mordred

In most versions of the Arthurian legend, King Arthur was married to Guinevere when he

had Mordred. While the exact details of their relationship and Mordred's parentage vary, Arthur and Guinevere are almost universally portrayed as being married before Mordred was born.

If Jackie had known

If Jacqueline Kennedy had known that King Arthur had an illegitimate son Mordred born of an incestuous affair with his half-sister Morgause while he was married to Guinevere and that he attempted to have Mordred killed to hide his incestuous birth, Jackie would **not** have compared the Kennedy administration to Camelot: a "**brief, shining moment**". However, it appears that Jackie's image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

The Fall of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and the Saxon Conquest of southeastern Britain

Repelling the Saxons

As written earlier, historians speculate that King Arthur was a real warrior who led British armies against the Saxons in the 6th century, achieving significant victories. These were his primary accomplishments and the main reason his subjects supported him and admired him: he was victorious in battle against the Saxons and thwarted their attempts to conquer southeastern Britain and subjugate its native Celtic inhabitants.

Doing good deeds was secondary.

Arthurian legends say that King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table did good deeds. They were known for their chivalry, heroic deeds, and quests, often involving rescuing damsels in distress, fighting mythical creatures, and seeking the Holy Grail. However, doing good deeds was secondary to their primary mission (their *raison d'être*): defending the Celtic Britons of southeastern Britain against the invading Saxons.

The Saxons take over southeastern Britain

Due to internal conflicts and other factors such as the pursuit of the Holy Grail,

campaigns to fight monsters, and the infidelity of Sir Lancelot* and Arthur's wife Guinevere, **the ability of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table to repel the Saxon invaders deteriorated, and the Saxons took over southeastern Britain** by the end of sixth century or early seventh century.

* Lancelot is typically depicted in Arthurian legend as King Arthur's close companion and one of the greatest Knights of the Round Table, as well as a secret lover of Arthur's wife.

The following discussion of the fall of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table will be in the context of how it facilitated the Saxon conquest of southeastern Britain.

If Jackie had known, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."

If Jackie had known that King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table failed in their primary mission (their *raison d'être*) of defending the Celtic Britons of southeastern Britain against the invading Saxons because of internal conflicts and because their resources were diverted to other activities, **she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."** However, it appears that Jackie's image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

The Fall of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

Family conflicts: Mordred and Morgan le Fay

Mordred

Trying to hid Mordred's incestuous birth

Recall that King Arthur was embarrassed about Mordred's incestuous birth and was alarmed by Merlin's prophecy that a child born on May Day (Mordred's birthday) would one day kill him. So, Arthur tried to have all children born on May Day killed or sent to sea. He chose to have them sent to sea. Their ship perished, but Mordred miraculously survived. However, he was raised by others, not by Arthur. Arthur's attempt to have

Mordred killed as a child, coupled with Mordred's illegitimacy and potential ambitions, led to their conflict and ultimately Mordred's betrayal and killing of Arthur.

Mordred's anger and resentment toward King Arthur

According to Arthurian legends, Mordred felt anger and resentment toward King Arthur which fueled his betrayal and attempt to usurp the throne. This anger was rooted in a combination of factors, including feeling unwanted and Arthur's perceived failures in Mordred's upbringing. Arthurian legends also depict Mordred as ambitious and power-hungry and destined to destroy Arthur and his kingdom. Mordred sought to claim the throne for himself and plotted to overthrow Arthur and to marry his wife Guinevere.

The final Battle of Camlaan

The conflict between King Arthur and Mordred culminated in the final Battle of Camlaan (approximately AD 537) in which King Arthur slayed Mordred who was able to fatally wound King Arthur before he perished. This battle, along with the decline of Camelot and the chivalric ideal, signifies the end of Arthur's reign and the Arthurian age.

Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's implacable enemy

King Arthur's half-sister

Morgan le Fay was King Arthur's half-sister and Mordred's aunt. She was the sister of Morgause who had an incestuous affair with King Arthur from which Mordred was born. Recall that Morgan le Fay's father Gorlois was killed on orders of King Arthur's father King Uther Pendragon who wanted Gorlois's wife Igraine. Morgan le Fay and Arthur had the same mother Igraine. However, they had different fathers: Morgan le Fay's father was Gorlois, and Arthur's father was Uther.

Why did Morgan le Fay hate her half-brother King Arthur?

Morgan le Fay is often depicted in Arthurian legends as a powerful sorceress who plots against King Arthur to overthrow him. She made multiple attempts to undermine and destroy him. In Arthurian legends, Morgan le Fay's hatred for King Arthur stems from a combination of factors, including a desire for power and a sense of betrayal due to her

father's death at the hands of Uther and because Arthur had slain a knight whom she loved. Some stories also portray her as a defender of the old pagan ways against Christianity, a religion that Arthur's kingdom is embracing.

Contributing to King Arthur's demise in the final Battle of Camlaan

Morgan le Fay's actions against King Arthur included stealing the magical scabbard of Excalibur, Arthur's sword (which he drew from stone at age 15 to establish his claim to the throne). Excalibur's magical scabbard had healing properties, and its theft by Morgan le Fay is said to have contributed to Arthur's fatal wound in his final battle against Mordred at Camlaan.

Undermining the primary mission of King Arthur and his Knights

As written earlier, the primary mission of King Arthur and his Knights was to win battles against the Saxon invaders to thwart their attempts to conquer southeastern Britain and subjugate its native Celtic inhabitants. The plotting and actions of Mordred and Morgan le Fay to overthrow King Arthur undermined the capability of King Arthur and his Knights to effectively carry out their primary mission of preventing the Saxon conquest of southeastern Britain.

If Jackie had known, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."

If Jackie had known that

- King Arthur's illegitimate son Mordred had anger and resentment toward his father, plotted against him, and fatally wounded him their final battle at Camlaan
- Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's half-sister and Mordred's aunt, made multiple attempts to undermine and destroy him
- the plotting and actions of Mordred and Morgan le Fay undermined the capability of King Arthur and his Knights to effectively carry out their primary mission

she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot." However, it appears that Jackie's image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the

Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

The Fall of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

Pursuit of the Holy Grail

The primary mission of King Arthur and his Knights was to win battles against the Saxon invaders to thwart their attempts to conquer southeastern Britain and subjugate its native Celtic inhabitants. The almost obsessive pursuit of the Holy Grail by King Arthur and his Knights significantly undermined their capability to effectively carry out their primary mission. (In fact, the Saxons succeeded in taking over southeastern Britain by the end of sixth century or early seventh century.)

What was the Holy Grail?

The Holy Grail is a legendary cup or vessel traditionally believed to be the one from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper and later used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch his blood at the crucifixion. It's a powerful symbol in Christian and Arthurian literature, often associated with quests and miracles. The Holy Grail became closely intertwined with the Arthurian cycle of stories, where knights of King Arthur embarked on quests to find the grail. It was believed to possess magical or miraculous properties, such as providing sustenance or healing powers.

How did the Holy Grail get from Jerusalem to Britain?

The Last Supper of Jesus and his apostles is traditionally believed to have taken place in Jerusalem in Judea, an ancient region in the Levant, now largely encompassing the West Bank and parts of modern-day Israel. The distance from Judea to Britain in ancient times was a considerable journey, roughly 3,000 miles (4,800 kilometers). This distance would have been traveled primarily by land and sea, with the primary routes involving travel from Judea through the Mediterranean Sea to Gaul (modern France), and then north

into Britain. This journey would have taken one to two months. It is believed that Joseph of Arimathea made this journey to take the Holy Grail to Britain.

Why did King Arthur and his Knights pursue the Holy Grail?

King Arthur and his Knights believed that the quest for the Grail was the greatest quest that offered immense spiritual power and redemption and divine grace. They believed that the quest for the Grail was the ultimate spiritual journey, a test of the knight's faith and worthiness. It showed the knights' commitment to a higher purpose and their dedication to upholding Christian values.

King Arthur also wanted the Holy Grail for other reasons:

- To cure Arthur/England of a sickness caused by Morgana LaFey's curse
Gwenevere and Lancelot's betrayal
- As a symbol of his divine right to rule and end the rebellion headed by Mordred

King Arthur never found the Holy Grail himself, but his knight Sir Galahad did because of his purity of heart.

The quest for the Holy Grail undermined the fellowship and collective purpose of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

The quest for the Holy Grail contributed to the downfall of King Arthur and his court. Though successful in finding the Grail, the quest resulted in significant casualties among the knights and the disappearance of those who succeeded, leading to the disintegration of Camelot.

- Devastating impact: The quest, while fulfilling its primary objective of finding the Grail, had a devastating impact on Camelot. The quest for the Holy Grail was a long and dangerous undertaking. Half of the knights were killed, and those who succeeded in finding the Grail often disappeared, either due to their own perfection or the Grail's mystical nature. For example, Sir Galahad succeeded in finding the Holy Grail, achieved spiritual perfection, and essentially disappeared from Arthur's court.

- Disintegration of the Round Table: The quest led to the loss of many experienced knights, including Lancelot and Gawain, who were key figures in maintaining Camelot's stability. This loss of key personnel and the spiritual transformation of those who found the Grail weakened the Round Table and set the stage for its eventual collapse.
- Erosion of a collective purpose: The Holy Grail was a symbol of spiritual perfection, and the knights who pursued it focused on individual achievement rather than the collective good of the Kingdom. The quest eroded the fellowship of the Round Table.

Hindering their primary mission

The primary mission of King Arthur and his Knights was to win battles against the Saxon invaders to thwart their attempts to conquer southeastern Britain and subjugate its native Celtic inhabitants. The almost obsessive pursuit of the Holy Grail by King Arthur and his Knights significantly undermined their capability to effectively carry out their primary mission. (In fact, the Saxons succeeded in taking over southeastern Britain by the end of sixth century or early seventh century.)

If Jackie had known, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."

If Jackie had known that the almost obsessive pursuit of the Holy Grail by King Arthur and his Knights caused them to focus on individual spiritual perfection which eroded their fellowship and their dedication to the collective good of the Kingdom, **she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."** However, it appears that Jackie's image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

The Fall of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

Expeditions to fight mythical creatures.

The primary mission of King Arthur and his Knights was to win battles against the Saxon invaders to thwart their attempts to conquer southeastern Britain and subjugate its native Celtic inhabitants. However, they expended considerable time and resources in campaigns to fight mythical creatures such as cat-monsters, divine boars, dragons, dogheads, giants, and witches. These campaigns diverted their resources away from fighting the Saxons, real threat to the native Celtic Britons of southeastern Britain. There is no evidence that these mythical creatures took over southeastern Britain, but the Saxons did (by the end of sixth century or early seventh century).

If Jackie had known, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration “Camelot.”

If Jackie had known that King Arthur and his Knights expended considerable time and resources in campaigns to fight mythical creatures instead of concentrating on fighting the Saxons (who succeeded in taking over southeastern Britain by the end of sixth century or early seventh century), **she would not have called the Kennedy Administration “Camelot.”** However, it appears that Jackie’s image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

The Fall of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

The Affair of Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot

Sir Lancelot was King Arthur's close companion and one of the greatest Knights of the Round Table. However, just as Arthur's father Uther could not resist Gorlois' wife Igraine, Lancelot could not resist Arthur's wife Guinevere, and he became her secret lover. **This led to betrayal and chaos and the final downfall of King Arthur and his court.**

The reappearance of Mordred

Although King Arthur initially tried to have his son Mordred killed because of his embarrassment concerning Mordred's incestuous birth, he eventually trusts Mordred enough to let him become one of the Knights of the Round Table.

King Arthur discovers the affair between Guinevere and Lancelot.

In the Arthurian legend, King Arthur discovered the affair between Guinevere and Lancelot when Mordred informed him of their infidelity, leading to Guinevere's condemnation and Lancelot's flight.

Sequence of events:

- The Affair: Guinevere and Sir Lancelot became lovers, despite Guinevere's marriage to King Arthur.
- Mordred's Role: Mordred, who knew of the affair, informed Arthur of his wife's infidelity.
- King Arthur's Reaction: King Arthur, upon learning of the affair, condemned Guinevere to be burned at the stake for adultery and treason.
- Lancelot's Response: Queen Guinevere escaped being burned at the stake because Sir Lancelot and his knights intervened and rescued her, preventing the execution.
- War between King Arthur and Lancelot: King Arthur put Mordred in charge of Camelot and pursued Lancelot. A bitter civil war ensued between Arthur and

Lancelot that devastated Arthur's kingdom. Many of Arthur's knights were killed, including some of his best. Some knights followed Lancelot to France and set up another court.

- Mordred takes advantage of the situation: Mordred, who wanted to become king and marry Guinevere (his mother-in-law), told everyone that Arthur was killed in battle with Lancelot, leading to Mordred becoming king.
- Guinevere locks herself in the Tower of London: Guinevere, wanting to avoid Mordred's rule as king and forced marriage, locks herself in the Tower of London, effectively barricading herself within its walls.
- The Final Battle of Camlaan: When King Arthur returned to reclaim his throne, Arthur and Mordred fought in the final Battle of Camlaan (c. AD 537). Arthur killed Mordred but was fatally wounded. This devastating battle resulted in a great number of casualties and death, in which many, if not most, of the combatants perished. **The Battle of Camlann is widely considered to mark the end of the Arthurian era.**
- Guinevere enters the convent after King Arthur's death in battle. After King Arthur's death in battle, Guinevere entered a convent where she spent the rest of her life praying and helping the poor. She vowed never to see Lancelot again and was buried beside King Arthur.
- Sir Lancelot becomes a monk. Following Arthur's death, Lancelot, burdened by his affair with Guinevere, renounced his knighthood and sought a life of penance and religious devotion. He retired to a hermitage and became a monk, dedicating himself to prayer and fasting.

If Jackie had known, she would not have called the Kennedy Administration "Camelot."

If Jackie had known the sequence of events triggered by the secret affair between King Arthur's wife Guinevere and Sir Lancelot, **she would not have called the Kennedy**

Administration “Camelot.” However, it appears that Jackie’s image and conception of Camelot and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table came from seeing beautiful actors in the 1960 Broadway stage production of *Camelot*.

William E. Jackman, PhD

Statistician/SAS & SQL Programmer

Jazz and Popular Pianist

Oakland, California

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I am a second-generation Irish-American who grew up with immigrant Irish grandparents and aunts in Oakland. I am a graduate of Oakland High School and of the College of Engineering at UC Berkeley. I am fluent in Spanish.