

Study Guide



The Legend Factory

Tristan and Iseult

Table of content

Tristan and Iseult.....	3
Brief Synopsis	3
Legend Factory's version	5
Historical context.....	5
Bibliography	5
Jeopardy style quiz.....	6
Post presentation activity #1.....	9

Tristan and Iseult

The story of Tristan and Iseult dates from the middle ages. The story was told from storytellers for decades until it was first written by Bérout and Thomas of Britain in the 13th century. Many versions of the legend have been told, some even including King Arthur.

In Modern times, Bédier, a French medieval scholar, revived the legend in a French book called “Le roman de Tristan et Iseult (1900)”.

The Legend includes many variations, but always revolves around the love of Tristan for Iseult.

Brief Synopsis

(Do not read synopsis to students before the presentation)

Marc a French king in Cornwall, is helped fight invaders by King Rivalen from Loonois (French Bretagne). In exchange for his loyalty, Rivalen marries Marc’s sister Blanchefleur.

When Rivalen return to his kingdom with his new wife, he is killed a Duke Morgan. Blanchefleur gives birth to Tristan and dies the day after. Rohalt, the former marshal of Rivalen takes Tristan as is son.

When Tristan is older he is kidnapped by Norwegian sailors who bring him to Cornwall. There, Tristan will be reacquainted with his uncle, king Marc.

Tristan returns to Loonois to avenge his father. He defeats Duke Morgan and appoints Rohalt as king of Loonois.

When Tristan returns to Cornwall, the kingdom has fallen to an Irish king. Every year, a giant (Morholt) comes to receive the yearly tribute (150 male and 150 female). Tristan opposed the tribute and confront Morholt in a duel. Tristan wins but is wounded in the battle

Because his injuries are mortal, Tristan asks to be left in a boat to drift. He will land in Ireland where he will be healed by Iseult, the niece of Morholt.

When he returns to Cornwall, king Marc is looking for a bride. Two birds landed on his window carrying a golden hair and king Marc will only marry the owner of that hair.

Tristan knows that the golden hair belongs to Iseult, he will return to find the bride for his uncle.

When Tristan arrives in Ireland, he hears of a dragon who terrorizes the kingdom. The king is offering his daughter as a reward to whoever can kill the dragon. Tristan kills the dragon and claims Iseult for his uncle.

Iseult's mother has prepared a love potion that will make whoever drinks it fall in love for a year. During the voyage back, Tristan and Iseult drink the potion by mistake.

After Iseult and the king are married, Tristan continues to see Iseult. The king's barons suspect the love between Tristan and Iseult and Tristan is banished from the kingdom.

Eventually, the barons bring false witnesses and Tristan and Iseult are to be executed. Tristan escapes his guards and Iseult is sent to live with a leper colony. Tristan saves Iseult from the lepers and he takes her to live in the forest.

They live for months in the forest and are eventually discovered by a hunter. Iseult is returned to the castle and Tristan is exiled. Because it has been more than a year, the potion is no longer controlling the two lovers.

Tristan goes to live in another kingdom and marries another woman. When he is mortally wounded, he calls on a friend to go get Iseult.

He instructs the friend to bring two sets of sails. If he returns with a white sail, Iseult is with him, if not, the ship has to have black sails.

Iseult returns to heal Tristan, but the current wife of Tristan tells him that the ship carries black sails. Tristan let himself die before he can see Iseult. When Iseult arrives by Tristan she dies of sorrow.

Legend Factory's version

While the version is very close to the original, the theme of sexuality has been taken out. Some parts of the story that have strong sexual connotations have been taken out.

Because the main audience are students, Tristan and Iseult are in love but are never really depicted as having sexual relations.

Historical context

The French and the English would very often fight each other during that part of the middle ages. (It explains how Marc a French person is king in Cornwall England).

England and France had already been conquered by the romans (They left in the 5th century).

The Catholic Church was present in medieval Europe and was responsible for the preservation of science and knowledge.

Most people were not educated.

Bibliography

(French books only)

- Joseph Bédier, Le roman de Tristan et Iseult
- René Louis, Tristan et Iseult.

Jeopardy style quiz

Materiel:

- A photocopy of the quiz on a transparency (the blank copy)
- The master copy with questions and answers
- Overhead projector
- The name of each team's participants on a piece of paper
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This activity must be done after viewing the legend of the Flying Canoe presentation.

The class can be divided into two or four teams. The teacher draws the name of a student from the first group. The student must choose a category and the number of points ventured. (The higher the number of points, the harder the question)

The teacher asks the question corresponding to the category and number of points. If the student answers correctly, the teacher writes the name of the team in the proper cell on the transparency. If the student fails, the teacher writes an "X" in the cell.

The teacher draws the name of another student from the next team.

Once all the cells have been answered, the team with the highest number of points wins.

Tristan and Iseult	Characters	Locations	Which happened first?	Context
100 points	What was the name of Tristan's tutor? Governal	In which kingdom did king Marc live? Tintagel	Iseult escapes execution / Tristan escapes execution Tristan	How long did the love potion last? 1 year
200 points	What was the name of Tristan's parents (2 names)? Rivalen Blanchefleur	What was the kingdom of Rivalen? Loonois	Governal looks for Tristan / Tristan kills Morholt Governal looks for Tristan	Who made the love potion? Iseult's mother
300 points	What was the name of the Irish challenger? Morholt	From which country did Iseult come from? Ireland	Tristan kills the Dragon or Tristan kill Morholt? (dragon)	Which part of the dragon is vulnerable? The inside of the mouth
400 points	What was the name of Tristan's adoptive father? Rohalt	What was the kingdom of Iseult the white? Carhaix	Tristan marries Iseult / Tristan marries Iseult the white Iseult the white.	Why did Rohalt lie about Tristan's family? Duke Morgan would have killed the heir.
500 points	Who killed Tristan's father Rivalen? Duke Morgan	What was the nationality of the sailors who kidnapped Tristan? Norwegian	Rivalen returns to Loonois or Tristan is born? Return to Loonois	How did Tristan escape execution? By jumping the window of a chapel.
600 points	Who married Tristan? White hand Iseult	Where did the duel between Morholt and Tristan take place? An Island	Tristan and Iseult live in the forest / Tristan and Iseult meet in the garden Garden	Who inspired the first authors of Tristan and Iseult? Fair Storytellers.

Tristan and Iseult	Characters Locations Which happened first? Context			
100 points				
200 points				
300 points				
400 points				
500 points				
600 points				

Post presentation activity #1

Your own version

Tristan and Iseult

Today's Hollywood movies usually finish with a happy ending.

Create your own ending to the story, you can change whichever part of the story to make your ending work properly.

Number of words to be determined by the teacher.