A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain was born in Missouri in the 1835, when slavery was still legal in the state. He spent much of his childhood in Hannibal, Missouri, on the banks of the Mississippi River. At the age of 12, shortly after his father died of influenza, Twain left school and became first a printer's apprentice and, later, a typesetter and printer. He read voraciously at public libraries in his free time, completing his informal education. Ultimately, Twain realized his childhood ambition to become a Mississippi river boat captain, a job he held until the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861. Twain and his brother Orion then moved to Nevada, where Twain turned to journalism after failing to find success as a miner. Twain married Olivia Langdon in 1870. They had four children, one of whom died in childhood, and two of whom died tragically in their 20s. Although Twain made good money as a writer, he lost much of it investing in technologies that failed to take off. In his later years, Twain became increasingly depressed following the deaths of his wife and two of his adult children. He died of a heart attack in the spring of 1910.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Published several decades after the end of the American Civil War, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is nevertheless deeply concerned with issues of slavery, social caste, and civil strife. Hank frequently compares feudal society to American slavery, and in a climactic scene, Hank experiences what it's like to be on the auction block himself after he and King Arthur are captured and sold as slaves. It's useful to consider Hank's forceful rejection of medieval chivalry in light of the way that the Confederate States of America co-opted the language of chivalry to defend their way of life during the Civil War and the years of Reconstruction. And, given the entrenched social class structure of America in the late 1900s, Hank's condemnation of the feudal system also offers a critique of turn-of-the-century American Culture. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* follows the Arthurian mythology by depicting the brutal civil war that destroyed Camelot and killed King Arthur himself. But the reader must interpret the vicious violence that characterizes both this conflict and Hank's final battle against chivalry in the context of the American Civil War. In this brutal conflict, nearly one in four soldiers died, and the United States lost 2 percent of its overall population to the war. The other main contemporary context of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is the technological advancements of the late 19th century. Mark Twain was deeply interested in technological development; he was friends with Nikola Tesla (the inventor of alternating current or "AC" electrical power), and he invested much of his personal wealth into innovations like the Paige typesetting machine (which, unfortunately for Twain and his family, failed miserably). Still, the novel features many technological advances of the 19th century, including steam locomotion, the telegraph, gatling machine guns, the telephone, and electric power.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is a work of science fiction that borrows from the conventions of medieval chivalric romances (tales of knights and their adventures). On the science fiction side, it is linked to other works of the then-new genre that were being published in the late 1800s, including Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards: 2000-1887* (published in 1888) and H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (published in 1895). Both novels, like *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, use the device of time travel to examine pressing issues of their own time, including the advancing state of technology, the benefits and limits of capitalism and democracy, and issues of social class. More directly, because it is set in Medieval Britain and at King Arthur's court, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* takes inspiration from medieval literature, especially Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (published in 1485). In fact, Twain directly quotes or closely paraphrases several passages from *Morte d'Arthur* in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and the authorial narrator of the first and final chapters of Twain's novel is shown reading Mallory at the beginning of the book. *Morte d'Arthur* assembled legends of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table from various French and English sources to provide a complete, authoritative version of Arthurian mythology. Twain most likely read Sidney Lanier's somewhat edited version of Malory's work, *The Boy's King Arthur*, which was first published in 1880. In using satire to explore the ideals and limits of civilization, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* has much in common with Twain's own *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which satirizes entrenched American ideas about civilization and racism. And finally, as a castaway on an uncivilized island in a distant time, Hank's experience in Arthurian Britain parallels that of the title character in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (published in 1719). Hank makes a direct comparison between himself and Crusoe early in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and both men use their superior reason, intelligence, and ingenuity to impose civilization on wild and untamed lands.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
- **When Written:** Between 1885 and 1889
- **Where Written:** Twain mostly composed *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* during vacations at his family's summer home in Elmira, New York, but he finished it in Hartford, Connecticut.
- **When Published:** December 1889
- **Literary Period:** American Realism
- **Genre:** Science Fiction, Satire
- **Setting:** Sixth-century Britain, during the reign of the legendary King Arthur
- **Climax:** Hank and his small band of "republicans" confront 30,000 knights in a battle to determine whether England will be controlled by medieval chivalry or a 19th-century democratic technocracy.
- **Antagonist:** Merlin
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Unaccountable Freaks. Twain was born just two weeks after Halley's Comet passed by earth in 1850, and he felt an affinity for the heavenly body, telling people that he expected to die when it next reached its perigee because "The Almighty has said…'Now here are these two unaccountable freaks; they came in together, they must go out together.'" Eerily, Twain died of a heart attack in 1910—just one day after the comet's closest approach.

Reel Classy. In 1909, Thomas Edison visited Twain's summer home and filmed the author walking on the property and having tea with his daughters. Later, Edison included this footage in a two-reel silent film adaptation of Twain's novel *The Prince and the Pauper*.

PLOT SUMMARY

A narrator identified as "M.T." (pointing to the book's author, Mark Twain) encounters a strange tourist (Hank Morgan) at Warwick Castle in England. It turns out that both men are at the same hotel, and later that night, Hank begins to tell M.T. his life story. He was born and raised in 19th-century Hartford, Connecticut. Hank blacked out after receiving a blow to the head during a workplace brawl, though—and when he woke up, he was in medieval England. M.T. becomes too tired to go on, and so he gives M.T. a book containing his life story to read.

Hank's book begins with a knight named Sir Kay capturing Hank and bringing him to Camelot as his prisoner. In Camelot, Hank manages to escape execution and establish a reputation as a powerful magician by predicting a total solar eclipse. Afterward, he uses his 19th-century knowledge to blow up resident sorcerer Merlin's tower. (Hank creates blasting powder, places it in the tower, and connects it to a lightning rod. Then, he uses his talent for showmanship to work the miracle during the next thunderstorm, utterly convincing the primitive medieval people that he has the power to control nature itself.)

Hank's first two miracles vault him to the second-most powerful position in the kingdom after King Arthur, earning him the title "The Boss." Hank is busy laying the groundwork for an educational, social, and political revolution when Sir Sagramore challenges him to a duel. Fortunately, the date is set three or four years into the future so that Sagramore can go on a quest for the holy grail. Toward the end of this period, Hank is assigned a quest of his own when a young woman named Sandy arrives at Camelot with a horrific tale of being imprisoned (along with dozens of other ladies and princesses) by a trio of ogres. On their way to rescue the ladies, she and Hank have some other minor adventures. They stay the night with Morgan le Fay, whose brutality both horrifies and impresses Hank. When they reach Sandy's "ladies," Hank is shocked to find that the women are really a herd of pigs, and her "ogres" are a trio of scrawny swineherds. But Sandy is convinced that they've been enchanted to look like animals to Hank, and Hank "rescues" them to humor her, thus completing his quest.

No sooner have Hank and Sandy turned back toward Camelot than they encounter a group of pilgrims who are traveling to see a miraculous fountain in the Valley of Holiness. When the bad news arrives that the fountain has dried up, Hank uses 19th-century technology to restore it, adding another "miracle" to his repertoire.

Following the success of his quest and his growing list of miracles, Hank decides to see how the common people live by disguising himself as a freeman and traveling incognito around the kingdom. King Arthur, delighted with the idea, insists on joining Hank. During their travels, King Arthur and Hank learn how difficult life is for the common people, who are denied mercy and common humanity by the knights, their lords, or church authorities, die of smallpox, and can barely support families thanks to heavy tax burdens.

But when Hank, ever the showman, overreaches and offends a group of freemen in a small village, he and the Arthur find themselves running for their lives. A gentleman rescues Hank and Arthur from a mob of angry villagers—only to sell them into slavery. sells them into slavery.

Hank and Arthur witness more scenes of brutality as they're taken to London to be sold at auction. In London, Hank escapes and instigates a slave uprising that kills the slave master, for which all the slaves are condemned to death. Hank is recaptured and taken to the gallows with the rest of the slaves, but Sir Launcelot and a rescue party of 500 knights rides into the city on newfangled bikes and rescue them just in the nick of time.

Restored to his position of authority in the kingdom, Hank prepares for his duel with Sir Sagramore. In the years since his arrival, he's quietly been laying the groundwork for a civilizing revolution that will bring 19th-century technology, moral sensibilities, and democracy into the sixth century. Only the chivalric code of knights and the Church stand in Hank's way, and the duel with Sagramore is his chance to show his superiority to chivalry once and for all. Although Merlin has allegedly enchanted Sagramore's **armor** to protect him, Hank kills the man with one shot from his revolver before dispatching nearly a dozen other knights in the same way. Having utterly humiliated and defeated knighthood, Hank is free to go public with his secret plans to reform sixth-century society.

Three years later, Hank sits at the head of a humming 19th-century economy. He's now married to Sandy, and they have a daughter named Hello-Central. Hank is working on the final part of his plan: getting King Arthur to make a decree dissolving the monarchy upon his death. But then Hello-Central falls sick, and Hank and Sandy take her to recover by the sea in France. While they're gone, a civil war breaks out between King Arthur and Launcelot, and Arthur's nephew Mordred seizes the throne. Arthur and Mordred kill each other in battle, the Church places the island under interdict, and Hank's 19th-century innovations come to a screeching halt.

Hank returns to England to find his second-hand man, Clarence, and 50 young boys ready to fight with him on the side of 19th century; 30,000 men ride against them. Hank and his boys defeat the knights with electric fences and explosives. But in doing so, they trap themselves behind a wall of dead bodies. The decomposition of these corpses causes disease, Hank falls into a coma, and the rest of the boys die, too.

M.T. finishes reading the manuscript and goes to the stranger's room. The door is ajar, and when he pushes it open, he sees the stranger lying in bed, delirious. M.T. stays and listens to his feverish ravings until the man's strength fails, and he dies.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Hank Morgan – Hank Morgan is the Connecticut Yankee who finds himself thrown into sixth-century Britain and the court of King Arthur at Camelot. There, he takes on Clarence as a protégé, Sandy as a damsel in distress and later as his wife, and the knights of the Round Table, particularly Sir Sagramore, as impediments to his goal of using technological innovation and schools ("man **factories**") to create a 19th-century civilization in Arthurian England. Hank is a man of paradoxes; though he is a dedicated advocate of American democracy, he aspires to be "The Boss" of his new society and relishes using his power (like when he forces Morgan le Fay to release her prisoners). He is bent on imposing his version of the ideal 19th-century society—one that is democratic, Protestant, capitalistic, and a technologically advanced superpower—on medieval Camelot, whether medieval society wants this change or not. Despite espousing self-determination, calling his schools "factories," suggesting that he's only interested in making one kind of person. Hank is a masterful showman, easily able to out-class Merlin and usurp his place as Arthur's chief advisor. Hank confesses his addiction to performing these "effects"—the gaudier the better—and in the end, they are his downfall. Flaunting his wealth alienates people like Marco, Phyllis, and Dowley, and disparaging the laws makes him sound like a maniac. Finally, the "effect" by which Hank aspires to prove his superiority once and for all—defeating 30,000 knights with a force of fewer than 60 men and boys armed with machine guns—traps him and his supporters behind a wall of corpses and condemns them all to die of starvation and disease. According to Clarence, Merlin puts Hank into a magic coma. M.T. then encounters Hank in the 19th-century present, where Hank dies in a hotel room after crying out for Sandy.

King Arthur – King Arthur sits at the top of the feudal hierarchy in medieval England. With his wife, Queen Guenever at his side, he rules from Camelot, home to Sir Kay, Sir Launcelot, Sir Gawaine, Sir Sagramore, Sir Dinadan, and the other knights of the Round Table. Although he's followed Merlin's counsel since his youth, Arthur elevates Hank Morgan to an important position in the kingdom after seeing apparent proof of the time traveler's superior magical powers. In this way, King Arthur shows that he is no less superstitious than his medieval peers. Yet, although Hank looks down on the uncivilized, occasionally barbaric ways of Arthur's England, he develops a great deal of respect for Arthur himself. In his personal excellence of character, King Arthur represents an idealized form of chivalry. He is brave in the face of danger, either in personal combat or battling illness; he expects nothing of his knights that he's unwilling to do himself; he has self-respect and pride that cannot be extinguished by enslavement or being viciously whipped; and while he consistently defends feudal principles, he also empathizes with common folks' suffering and has a willingness to change social paradigms. When Arthur is sold into slavery, for instance, the experience inspires him to abolish slavery, and he is open to Hank's idea of retiring the monarchy with Arthur's own death. Nevertheless, Arthur equally represents the medieval mindset's limitations: he's unable to develop empathy for the commoners until he gains firsthand experience with their hardships; his respect for Hank is founded on a belief in Hank's magical powers; he's unable to see or accept that the wife he thinks is honorable is having an affair with Sir Launcelot, his best and most admirable knight; and he's unable to abandon his desire for fighting and revenge, even when he knows his life is in danger. Arthur's unwillingness to back down from a fight with his nephew and potential usurper, Mordred, allows him to kill Mordred, but it also leads to his own death, which occurs before Hank has

finished transforming medieval society with 19th-century technology and ideals.

Sandy – Demoiselle Alisande la Carteloise, whom Hank Morgan quickly begins to call "Sandy," is a young woman who travels to Camelot with a tragic tale of being imprisoned (along with dozens of other fine ladies) in a castle guarded by ogres. Hank accompanies Sandy on a quest to free the remaining women. When they arrive to find a herd of pigs, Sandy insists the women have just been enchanted to look like pigs. In this way, Sandy represents the superstitious imagination and illogical belief systems of the uncivilized, medieval Britons. But, like Clarence, Sandy plays a key role as one of Hank's sixth-century interpreters. She learns to translate his 19th-century slang and teaches him the meaning of medieval idioms. She also tells him the history of other knights he encounters and teaches him the conventions of knight errantry (for instance, once Hank has defeated the "ogres," his responsibility to the ladies/pigs is over, and he doesn't have to escort each one home individually). Sandy shows her devotion to Hank when she searches all over England for him after he disappears without warning from the Valley of Holiness (he is traveling incognito). Hank eventually realizes Sandy's value and comes to see her as a wife and a friend. Sandy names their daughter Hello-Central because she mistakenly thinks that this is the name of one of Hank's long-lost 19th-century beloveds, implying not only that she believes his outlandish tale of travel though time and space, but that she loves him enough to care about his life before he came to England. She and Hank are separated when he leaves her and Hello-Central (who is recuperating from a serious illness) in France and returns to find that England has plunged into civil war.

Clarence – Clarence is a 12-year-old page at the court of King Arthur when Hank Morgan finds himself thrown into medieval England. Although everyone believes Sir Kay's claims that Hank is a dangerous monster with sharp teeth and claws, Clarence nevertheless befriends the man. This suggests his innate good sense and his ability to rely on hard evidence rather than the superstitious beliefs of his peers. Nevertheless, Clarence initially believes in Merlin's power, suggesting the strength of the beliefs that his medieval society trained into him in his childhood. After Hank proves himself to be more powerful than Merlin, Clarence becomes Hank's protégé, helping him to establish the "man **factories**" that will introduce 19th-century civilization into Arthurian England. Although Clarence truly believes in the value of Hank's civilization project, he still clings to aspects of his medieval training, like his instinctive respect for the institution of monarchy. Nevertheless, he follows and supports Hank until his death in the cave where Hank and his true believers made their final stand for civilization over barbaric chivalry.

Merlin – Merlin is a sorcerer who serves King Arthur. Because he represents (and draws his power from) superstition and belief, Merlin is a natural foil for Hank Morgan, and the two men maintain a professional rivalry throughout the book. Merlin fails to restore the fountain in the Valley of Holiness or to protect Sir Sagramore with his magic, but he gets the last laugh (literally) when he infiltrates the camp of Hank and his allies and enchants Hank into a coma at the end of the book. Merlin dies when he accidentally touches the electrified fence surrounding Hank's base of operations.

Morgan le Fay – Morgan le Fay is King Arthur's sister. A powerful enchantress and ruler in her own right, she has an antagonistic, competitive relationship with her brother. She has a reputation for wickedness, yet she is also exceptionally beautiful and charming. When Hank Morgan and Sandy are guests in her home, she both repels and fascinates the Yankee. As with the rest of the ruling class in medieval England, Hank attributes her cruelty and callousness toward others (especially her prisoners) to her training and upbringing in a society he finds superstitious and barbaric.

Dowley – Dowley is an affluent blacksmith in a small English village. He was orphaned as a child and had odd jobs until he attracted the attention of the old blacksmith, who took him on as an apprentice. In this way, Dowley's story is a medieval version of an American self-determination, where a person who has nothing raises his status in the world through hard work and initiative. Dowley is proud of his success and happy to brag about it to Hank Morgan when mutual acquaintance Marco introduces the two men. But Hank shames Dowley by flaunting his own wealth during a dinner party he attends at Marco's house. And when Hank then accidentally threatens Dowley while trying to make a point about the injustice of certain medieval English laws, the blacksmith attacks Hank in an act of self-preservation.

Sir Launcelot – Sir Launcelot is the strongest and mightiest of the knights who serve King Arthur and sit at his Round Table. He's also Queen Guenever's lover, a fact that is common knowledge to everyone but Arthur. When Hank Morgan overthrows the chivalric order in England, Launcelot becomes the president of the stock board and takes to destroying his rivals financially rather than through physical combat. He and Hank are close friends, and Launcelot loves Hank's daughter, Hello-Central, like a niece. But when Launcelot's affair with Guenever is revealed, his indiscretion plunges the kingdom into civil war, ultimately leading to Arthur's death and Hank's downfall.

Marco – Marco is a freeman who, along with his wife Phyllis, hosts Hank Morgan and King Arthur while they travel the country disguised as commoners. In thanks, Hank buys new **clothes**, furniture, and lavish amounts of food for the couple. The book insinuates that "Marco" is a name assigned by Hank, who often gives his medieval acquaintances modern names. Marco is a charcoal burner who makes a small living for himself but isn't as rich as others in his village, like the blacksmith,

Dowley. Nevertheless, he is generous and conscientious. He treats Hank and Arthur with kindness until Hank's attempts to show off his superior intellect scare Marco, Dowley, and the other villagers into attacking the strangers in their midst.

Sir Sagramore – As a knight, Sir Sagramore serves King Arthur and sits at the Round Table. He is a physically imposing and powerful knight. When he overhears Hank Morgan wishing ill on Sir Dinadan and thinks Hank's malice is meant for him, he challenges "The Boss" (Hank) to a duel. This duel becomes a symbol battle between medieval civilization and 19th-century civilization, with Sagramore representing the medieval chivalric ideal and Hank representing the 19th-century ideal. Despite his experience and enlisting the magical help of Merlin, Sagramore loses his dignity, the duel, and his life to Hank.

Sir Gawaine – Sir Gawaine serves King Arthur and as one of the knights of the Round Table. Sandy tells Hank Morgan about Gawaine's chivalric exploits, which include fighting with and befriending the Irish prince Marhaus. When a brutal civil war breaks out between Arthur and Sir Launcelot over Guenever's affections, Launcelot accidentally kills two of Gawaine's brothers. Gawaine refuses to forgive Launcelot or sign a truce, and he loses his life in the ongoing conflict.

Marhaus – Marhaus is an Irish prince. He's a central player in the story Sandy tells Hank Morgan while they ride on Hank's quest. Marhaus once crossed swords with Sir Gawaine and, impressed by Gawaine's brave fighting and dauntless courage, befriended him. Marhaus later defeats a duke and his six sons, sending them to Camelot to serve King Arthur.

Sir Kay – Sir Kay is the first knight whom Hank Morgan encounters in medieval England. Kay captures Hank and brings him back to Camelot as a prisoner. Claiming that Hank is a powerful magician, Kay wants Hank burned at the stake, but his plan falls through when Hank convinces everyone that he is a powerful magician. Sir Kay dies in the civil war that breaks out after King Arthur discovers Guenever's affair with Sir Launcelot.

Sir Dinadan – Sir Dinadan is one of the knights who serve King Arthur at Camelot. He is a prankster and a jokester, although Hank Morgan finds his sense of humor unfunny and outdated. He is the inadvertent cause of Hank's duel with Sir Sagramore after Sagramore overhears Hank wish that that the Dinadan would die in his joust and mistakenly believes Hank's comment is directed at him.

Mordred – As King Arthur's nephew, Mordred was left in charge of the kingdom when his uncle accompanied Sir Gawaine to attack Sir Launcelot in one phase of the kingdom's brutal civil war. Mordred attempted to proclaim himself the king and marry Guenever but was frustrated on both accounts. He and Arthur then fought each other, and in their last battle, each delivered a fatal wound to the other.

M.T. – M.T. is the narrator who writes the first chapter and final postscript of A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. The narrator's initials match Mark Twain's name, suggesting that readers are meant to take the narrator as the book's author. The novel opens with M.T. encountering Hank Morgan at Warwick Castle and eagerly reading the manuscript Hank hands him at their hotel later that night (*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is a framed story, and the main story comes from Hank's manuscript).

MINOR CHARACTERS

Phyllis – Phyllis is married to Marco, a freeman charcoal burner. Along with her husband, she hosts Hank Morgan and King Arthur while they are traveling the country disguised as peasants. The fact that "Phyllis" (like Marco) never introduces herself insinuates that Hank gave her a modern-sounding name in his story.

Guenever – Guenever is King Arthur's wife and Sir Launcelot's lover. Everyone but Arthur acknowledges the affair, and when the king can no longer deny it, her indiscretions lead to civil war. After Arthur's death, Guenever becomes a nun.

Earl Grip – Earl Grip is a noble gentleman who stops a mob of angry villagers from killing King Arthur and Hank Morgan when they are disguised as commoners—only to immediately sell them into slavery.

Hello-Central – Hello-Central is Hank Morgan and Sandy's daughter, named after the greeting that Hank used to hear when he picked up the telephone to make a call in the 19th century.

Sir La Cote Male Taile – Sir La Cote Male Taile is a knight of the Round Table whom Hank Morgan employs as a traveling soap salesman.

TERMS

Chivalry – Chivalry is the name of the religious, social, and moral codes of medieval knighthood. Chivalric ideals reached their highest development in the 12th and 13th centuries, largely in conjunction with the Crusades (a series of military campaigns in which European forces attempted to capture and hold the Holy Land—modern day Israel, Syria, and Jordan) and the popularity of French literature celebrating Arthurian mythology and the Knights of the Round Table. In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, **Arthur** and knights like **Sir Kay**, **Sir Gawain**, **Marhaus**, and **Sir Launcelot** demonstrate their chivalric values when they display courage, patriotism, religious belief, and loyalty to their king.

Feudalism – Feudalism was the dominant social and political system in medieval Europe. Roughly speaking, a feudal system is a pyramid-shaped organization of society that emphasizes relationships of reciprocal responsibility. Under this system,

the royal family, the Church, and members of the nobility owned land which they allowed their social underlings, or vassals, to use. The lords were supposed to protect their vassals from danger. In exchange, a vassal owed his or her lord obedience and tax revenue. In practice, the system was open to abuses of power on the part of the nobility, and it concentrated power and wealth in a very small range of society.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

NEW WORLD VS. OLD WORLD

Hank Morgan, the protagonist of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, is torn from nineteenth-century America and transported back in time to sixth-century England. The novel uses Hank's experiences to explore the contrast between the democratic, egalitarian ideals of the American "New World" and the "Old World" ideals of medieval England. This contrast is a favorite theme of Hank's, who is a big fan of the New World and of the revolutions—American, French, and Industrial—that advanced democracy. Hank describes himself as a "true Yankee," a working-class man born and raised in Connecticut who rose through the ranks at the local arms **factory** to become the boss of 1,000 workers. As a self-made man, Hank respects those who earn their position through hard work. Therefore, he respects (and feels a sense of competition toward) medieval blacksmith Dowley, who worked his way into the medieval version of middle-class success after a childhood of poverty. Hank resents the limits that the monarchy's strict, hierarchal social classes impose on merit. Despite his relative wealth and his advanced technological know-how, the fact that he wasn't born with a noble title limits his influence. This contrast between a democratic meritocracy (where the best and smartest rise to the top) and an aristocracy can be seen with acute clarity during the episode where Hank and King Arthur examine army officer candidates. Hank's man, although clearly much more qualified, is a commoner, and so he loses to an unqualified but nobly born knight.

Although Hank believes in the New World's inherent superiority, the book also examines its limits. The contrast Hank draws between the America of his birth and medieval England becomes less distinct when he considers the inhumanity of slavery in both societies. Hank may think it's better for Sir Launcelot to channel his fighting instincts into a 19th-century innovation like the stock market, but Launcelot's aggressive trading is nevertheless violent enough to instigate a civil war. The book also shows how technological progress doesn't automatically assure the public good. Some of Hank's technological innovations allow for fast, accurate communication across the kingdom (the telephone and telegraph lines); but other novel products, like land mines, bring nothing but wholesale destruction. In this way, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* praises many of the ideals of New World American democracy while simultaneously suggesting that it's challenging—if not impossible—to create a just and human society regardless of time, place, or political philosophy.

IMPERIALISM

When Hank Morgan, the protagonist of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, finds himself stranded in sixth-century Britain, he thinks of himself a new Robinson Crusoe, Christopher Columbus, or Hernando Cortéz. Each of these men (Crusoe is fictional; Columbus and Cortéz are historical) is responsible for imposing his rule on the unsuspecting population of a distant land. As soon as Hank realizes that he's landed in a less advanced society, his first goal is to rule it. Near the end of the story, he's even preparing to re-enact and preempt Columbus's voyage by 700 years with an expedition of his own to "discover" America. Hank displays an imperialist tendency to dehumanize conquered people in his ongoing comparisons of the medieval Britons to irrational, unintelligent animals. Similarly, his ongoing habit of comparing the "savage" and uncivilized Britons to "Comanches" and "white Indians" mirrors the vexed relationship between the Native American tribes in the New World and the European colonizers who ultimately established the United States.

Hank sees the technologies and values that he introduces to medieval Britain—soap, the telephone, the telegraph, trains, gunpowder, and the **factories** that make these things—as unmitigated goods. But the story suggests that the colonizer's story is more complicated and less triumphant than Hank makes it out to be. Cleaning the bodies of the gentry doesn't change their political values; despite superior communication technology, the Church still manages to strand Hank in France while the kingdom falls into civil war; and, in the end, Hank's ability to command the total annihilation of life is also his undoing. His belief in the superiority of his own beliefs blinds him to the good and noble in the medieval world, like King Arthur's noble gentleness. By failing to see the value in these beliefs, the colonizer—Hank—underestimates how deeply committed people are to them. The dangers that imperialism poses to the colonizer are subtle. But Hank's failure to see the humanity of his newly minted modern citizens leads to his own annihilation. The village locals turn on Hank when he tries to prove the superiority of his economic theories and unwittingly oversteps and insults them. And after he unleashes a previously

unimaginable amount of destruction on the ranks of English chivalry with gatling guns and land mines, Hank finds himself trapped behind a wall made up of his enemies' rotting bodies. Believing in his own superiority, Hank ensnares himself in his own trap, belatedly learning that that the danger in trying to conquer others is at least as great as the perceived rewards.

NATURE VS. NURTURE

In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan travels back in time from nineteenth-century America to sixth-century England, where he becomes the second-most powerful man in King Arthur's kingdom. In this position, he tries to single-handedly establish an industrial civilization 13 centuries ahead of its time. But to succeed in this effort, Hank must overcome the "training," of Arthur's citizens. Hank maintains that training—the values and ideals a person is taught—is the strongest determiner of a person's character. Thus, his efforts to establish a new civilization also examine whether nature or nurture (a person's upbringing or, in Hank's words, "training") has a more powerful role in shaping a person's personality. Hank attributes the many flaws he sees in medieval society—from the nobility's arrogance to the lower classes' extreme, self-defeating respect for authority—to the training that medieval institutions (especially the Roman Catholic Church) have imposed on society. In other words, he believes that training is more powerful than nature and, by extension, that new training can easily replace old training. Thus, he thinks that if he can simply inject 19th-century values into medieval society through advertising, technological advances, and "man **factories**" (Hank's term the schools he establishes), then he will be able to single-handedly bring about the most peaceful governmental revolution of all time.

But there are indications along the way that Hank's ideas are misguided. King Arthur, for example, retains a noble bearing despite being captured, sold as a slave, and viciously beaten over the course of the novel. This should suggest to Hank that nobility and courage are innate parts of Arthur's character, not just the result of his royal training. Meanwhile, Hank is so convinced of the superiority of his modern, democratic, American ideals that he never considers that he himself, though vastly outnumbered by medieval, feudal Britons, refuses to abandon his own training. The book never fully resolves the question of whether nature or nurture plays a stronger role in shaping society or influencing a person's behavior, but it does suggest that a person's character—as a combination of both nature and nurture—rarely strays from its well-worn path. When civil war and religious strife break out, the medieval people quickly revert to their old ways, forcing Hank to admit that his project has failed. He then blows up his "civilization-factories" and makes his last stand with his protégé Clarence and 52 boys young enough that they've spent more than half of their lives in Hank's educational factories. Thus, the novel suggests that once a person's character is fully entrenched, it can never completely change—regardless of how their character comes to be,

SUPERIORITY, POWER, AND AUTHORITY

Hank Morgan, a nineteenth-century American man who's travelled backward through time and space to sixth-century England, upholds many believes about himself and his beloved American democracy; but above all else, Hank believes he's superior to everyone in the medieval world. And in order to persuade his unsuspecting medieval followers of this superiority, he uses his superior technological know-how to create one stunning "effect" or "miracle" after another. During a natural eclipse, he pretends to have power over the sun. He goes on to blow up Merlin's tower with a lightning rod and blasting powder, restore a miraculous fountain to working order, and accurately predict King Arthur's arrival at a holy site. These performances earn Hank the second highest position in the kingdom and the title "The Boss." Hank's ascendance demonstrates that one route to power lies in convincing people of one's own superiority; meanwhile Merlin, who was only powerful because people feared him, loses authority in the face of Hank's seemingly more powerful, fearsome magic. In contrast, King Arthur's authority comes not from fear but from love. The commoners love their sovereigns, and King Arthur shows that he is worthy of this devotion when, disguised as a commoner, he cares for some of his lowliest citizens, a woman and her daughter who are dying of smallpox. Further, Hank realizes that King Arthur's power would be compromised if people stopped believing in his ability to heal "the king's disease" (the skin infection scrofula).

Because Hank has earned his power through force and fear, not love, his authority is doomed to be temporary. When he tries to flaunt his wealth and superior knowledge to Marco, Dowley, and other simple villagers, he earns their distrust and fear instead of their respect. At one point, as Hank prepares to abolish the monarchy, Clarence warns him that the people love their kings and queens and worries that the social order will collapse without the cult of royalty. But Hank, blinded by the knowledge that his showmanship and technological know-how are superior to anyone else in the kingdom, fails to hear Clarence's message. When Hank "magically" defeats nearly a dozen knights in a tournament, he proves the superiority of nineteenth-century technology over sixth-century chivalry. But the defeated chivalric order's resentment simmers in the background until its knights have a chance to challenge Hank again. In the climactic Battle of the Sand Belt, Hank unleashes the full extent of his power in a show of wanton destruction: he massacres thousands of knights with land mines, electric fences, and gatling guns. But this last "effect," while powerful in sending a message about his destructive capabilities, also

shows the limitations of his power. Having defeated the knights by a show of his power, without earning the true love and respect of the medieval population, Hank traps himself behind a wall of dead bodies. Showing the full extent of his destructive capabilities ironically deprives Hank of his power over the kingdom, offering a stark reminder that brute force alone is not enough to earn true authority.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

FACTORIES

In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, factories represent Hank Morgan's desire to recreate a 19th-century American civilization in medieval England. That factories are places where raw materials become valuable commodities suggests not only the transformation Hank wants to see but also hints at his obsession with money—many of Hank's civilizing plans involve economics, and they conveniently make him a rich man. Hank creates two kinds of factories: literal and metaphorical ones. His literal factories make technologically advanced goods like soap, clothing, gunpowder, lead pipes, and telephones. Meanwhile, Hank's schools, or "man factories," re-educate the members of society Hank deems capable of becoming "civilized." He intends the literal factories to advance the medieval Britons by making their lives more comfortable and by encouraging them to adopt 19th-century habits of bathing and communication. Meanwhile, Hank's metaphorical "man factories" are supposed to indoctrinate their students with 19th-century American values like democracy, Protestant Christianity, and social mobility.

But Hank's use of factories to reform Arthurian England imply the limits of Hank's imagination. Hank is so committed to producing his new citizens, for instance, that he is willing to use violence to compel medieval Britons to accept his improvements. Moreover, factory-made goods are uniform, if not identical, suggesting that Hank wants to create just one type of person, despite his alleged enthusiasm for democratic self-determination. In this way, although he criticizes medieval nobles and knights for clinging to the antiquated values their society instilled in them—for example, the view that nobles are better than commoners or that the authority of the Church is absolute—he wants medieval Britons to cling just as strongly to 19th-century values.

Hank's factories ultimately fail in their mission to modernize medieval England. When a civil war and Church interdict throw England into chaos, almost all of Hank's newly educated citizens revert to their old, superstitious, religious, and monarchist beliefs. Only a small group of teenage boys, who were raised entirely under Hank's civilizing schemes, sides with Hank and with modernization. And even the goods produced in Hank's literal factories fail to improve his society—the Church forbids the use of electricity and other 19th-century conveniences, and when Hank prepares to make his final stand against the feudal world order, he blows the factories up. This prevents the factories from falling into enemy hands, but it also suggests that his factories were more aimed at destruction of the old order than creation of the new world order. Like the electric fences, batteries, and dynamite torpedoes (land mines) that Hank uses in his final stand against medieval England, Hank's factories are ultimately destructive and violent; it is fitting then, that they become not only the end of Camelot but Hank's personal defeat as well.

CLOTHING

Clothing can convey information about a person's occupation, social status, and gender. In A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, clothing symbolizes various characters' ability to exert authority and control over others. Importantly, an ongoing concern with clothing contributes to the book's critique of the rigidly hierarchal class system in feudal society. In Hank Morgan and Sir Sagramore's climactic battle, Sagramore wears full plate armor while Hank wears a simple leotard and shorts. Sagramore's armor protects him, but it's also unwieldy and awkward to move around in. While Hank's clothing leaves him more exposed, it also grants him easier mobility. Initially, this seems to suggest that the Hank's nimble, 19th-century approach to the world is better than Sagramore's medieval one, supporting Hank's belief that everything about the 19th century is superior to the sixth century. But it's not that simple. Like his armor, Sagramore's medieval worldview is rigid and protective: his strongly-held worldviews give him a reasonable expectation of how the world works, and this helps him protect himself against outside dangers and opposing viewpoints. In contrast, the un-armored (and unsuspecting) Hank ultimately dies following the Battle of the Sand Belt when a wounded knight stabs him. Hank's untimely death thus shows that Hank's 19th-century approach to the world leaves him vulnerable and ill-equipped to survive in a world he doesn't understand.

Because fashions change, the meaning of clothing is likewise malleable. Hank fails in his attempts to undermine the power of the knighthood by introducing silly fads like adding advertisements to their kit or replacing helmets with top hats. When enough knights have adopted the style, it becomes just another marker of their class status, rather than the indication of foolishness that Hank intended it to become. And because clothing conveys class status, changing costumes gives people the power to manipulate others' perceptions. When King Arthur and Hank dress up as peasants to travel the countryside

incognito, no one recognizes them. Nor does anyone recognize Merlin when he infiltrates the cave of Hank's last stand disguised as a woman. In part, this offers a critique of hierarchal societies of divine-right monarchy. If a person's clothing *can't* actually say anything about the wearer's class or gender, then people would be wise to avoid accepting truths based on appearance. Further, the fact that no one can recognize the most powerful two men in the kingdom unless they're wearing fancy clothes suggests that there is nothing that inherently separates them from the lowlier members of the community.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Signet Classics edition of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* published in 2004.

Chapter 2 Quotes

I was not the only prisoner present [...]. Poor devils, many of them were maimed, hacked, carved, in a frightful way; and their hair, their faces, their clothing, were caked with black [...] blood. They were suffering sharp physical pain [...] and weariness, and hunger and thirst, no doubt; and at least none had given them the comfort of a wash, or even the poor charity of a lotion for their wounds; yet you never heard them utter a moan or a groan, or saw them show any sign of restlessness, or any disposition to complain. The thought was forced upon me: "The rascals—*they* have served other people so in their day; it being their own turn, now, they were not expecting any better treatment than this; so their philosophical bearing is not an outcome of mental training, intellectual fortitude, reasoning; it is mere animal training; they are white Indians."

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur , Sir Kay

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

After Hank Morgan find himself in the medieval past, Sir Kay captures him and takes him as a prisoner to King Arthur's court at Camelot. There, Hank considers the prisoners of the Round Table's other knights while he awaits his own fate. Hank's belief that all medieval people are animalistic and uncivilized "savages" underwrites his imperialistic ambition to forcefully impose his own form of government and society on them. Moreover, he associates his plans with other colonial projects when he maps these medieval "rascals" onto the Native Americans of his own time, declaring the prisoners to be "white Indians." The other prisoners seem to await their fate as calmly as Hank himself, but with no other evidence than his own beliefs, Hank asserts that their stoicism results from their animalistic stupidity while his arises from his superior rationalism.

Hank's ruminations connect to two other important themes in the book: the importance of training in forming a person's character and the general cruelty and awfulness of monarchal systems. The book builds its critique of monarchies on the contrast between Hank's own time and the medieval past; thus any moment that highlights medieval backwardness, cruelty, or injustice—such as the abuses these dirty, injured, and mistreated prisoners have suffered—contributes to its case against monarchy. Finally, this passage introduces Hank's belief that training—the beliefs and ideals that culture impresses on a person—forms the most durable part of character. Training instructs these prisoners, accustomed to treating their own prisoners inhumanely, to expect no better when they themselves become prisoners.

Chapter 4 Quotes

He spoke of me all the time, in the blandest way, as "this prodigious giant," and "this horrible sky-towering monster," and "this tusked and taloned man-devouring ogre"; and everybody took in all this bosh in the naivest way, and never smiled or seemed to notice that there was any discrepancy between these watered statistics and me. He said that in trying to escape from him I spang to the top of a tree two hundred cubits high at a single bound, but he dislodged me with a stone the size of a cow, which "all-to-brast" the most of my bones, and then swore me to appear at Arthur's court for sentence. He ended by condemning me to die at noon on the twenty-first; and was so little concerned about it that he stopped to yawn before he named the date.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur , Sir Kay

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

Near the end of the feast, Sir Kay, who captured Hank Morgan and brought him to Camelot, tells the court about his grand adventure. Hank repeats some of the details of Kay's story in this passage, expressing incredulity over the

fact that people believe an obviously inflated tale. On the one hand, this passage illustrates the inherent superstition and gullibility that Hank attaches to the medieval people who accept Kay's account without argument. In turn, this suggests how potently a person's "training" influences their behavior. Even when confronted with visible evidence to the contrary, the audience's belief in miracles and wonders—and in the almost superhuman strength of knights like Kay—disposes them to believe Kay's claims. On the other hand, while this gullibility irks Hank, he himself will soon capitalize on it to vault himself to a position of great authority in the kingdom. Kay's introduction of Hank as a powerful monster with magical healing abilities and superhuman strength lays the foundation for Hank's reputation as a sorcerer and his rise to power. As much as he judges the medieval audience for taking Kay's "bosh" literally, Hank eagerly capitalizes on the respect (and fear) of the court to escape execution, become "The Boss," and introduce medieval culture to technological marvels like electricity and telecommunications.

❝ […] many of the terms used in the most matter-of-fact way by this great assemblage of first ladies and gentlemen in the country would have made a Comanche blush. Indelicacy is too mild a term to convey the idea. However, I had read "Tom Jones" and "Roderick Ransom," and other books of that kind, and knew that the highest and first ladies and gentlemen in England had remained little or no cleaner in their talk, and in the morals and conduct which such talk implies, clear up to a hundred years ago; in fact clear into our own nineteenth century—in which century, broadly speaking, the earliest samples of the real lady and real gentleman discoverable in English history—or in European history, for that matter—may be said to have made their appearance.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Sir Kay

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

As Sir Kay casually condemns Hank to death, excited speculation breaks out among the lords and ladies in the hall about Hank's clothing, which Kay claimed was enchanted to protect the wearer from all harm. Despite the danger he faces, Hank still notes the crudity of the conversation. This confirms his ideas about the importance of "training," or the customs and social norms a culture instills in its people. Hank feels embarrassed by the medieval people's crude language because of his 19th-century training, but medieval society hasn't instilled such embarrassment in its people.

But, by contrasting the vulgarity of prior centuries with the 19th century's (implied) propriety, this passage contributes to the book's argument about the superiority of 19th-century American ways. Importantly, Hank further claims that European societies were slow to adopt a more proper form of speech and behavior and that true enlightenment didn't appear until the 19th century. But because Hank situates this criticism squarely in Europe (and more specifically England) he suggests the possibility that true ladies and gentlemen existed elsewhere—perhaps the United States—earlier. Moreover, by associating medieval people with debased manners and morals, Hank bolsters his sense that he has a right to enforce cultural change in Camelot like a colonial power. And yet again, his imperial aspirations recall the dispossession of Native American tribes like the Comanche as the United States expanded westward in the 19th century.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ I have reflected, Sir King. For a lesson, I will let this darkness proceed, and spread night in the world; but whether I blot out the sun for good or restore it, shall rest with you. These are the terms, to wit: You shall remain king over all your dominions, and receive all the glories and honors that belong to the kingship; but you shall appoint me your perpetual minister and executive, and give me for my services one per cent of such actual increase of revenue over and above its present amount as I may succeed in creating for the state. If I can't live on that, I shan't ask anybody to give me a lift. Is it satisfactory?

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

Luckily for Hank, the date and time of his execution coincide with the full solar eclipse he predicted. From the stake, he pretends to control the darkening of the sun, and he threatens to destroy the sun completely unless his captors release him. King Arthur immediately offers vast rewards if Hank stops the calamity. But because Hank isn't actually controlling the eclipse, he must stall for time to maintain the illusion of his trick. In doing so, he demonstrates the connection between belief and power. It makes no

difference whether or not Hank is really controlling the eclipse; the only thing that matters is that people *believe* he is controlling it. In this way, Hank's power to control the sixth century resembles Arthur's or Merlin's in that all three men only hold authority as long as they can demonstrate their power in a believable way. Hank's request—to be elevated to the second-most-powerful position in the kingdom—betrays his imperialistic ambitions to subject the country to his ideas about technology and governance.

Finally, Hank's terms suggest both his extreme confidence in himself and the potential of 19th-century industrial progress. Although he was an average man in his own time, he relies on the advantage conferred on him by 1,300 years of historical and technological progress to give him an edge over the smartest and most powerful members of medieval society. Further, if he can make a good living off such a small portion of the increased production he promises, this will provide clear evidence of the superiority of his 19th-century American ideals.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ There were no books, pens, paper, or ink, and no glass in the openings they believed to be windows. It is a little thing—glass is—until it is absent, then it becomes a big thing. But perhaps the worst of all was, that there wasn't any sugar, coffee, tea, or tobacco. I saw that I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals, and if I wanted to make life bearable I must do as he did—invent, contrive, create, reorganize things; set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy. Well, that was in my line.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

After escaping execution by pretending to control the sun, Hank Morgan quickly becomes a star at Camelot. As King Arthur's right-hand man, he gets lavish clothing and the best available rooms in the castle. But, as this passage shows, the medieval best doesn't even rise to the basic standard of living in the 19th century. Some of this is hyperbole: remember that Hank wrote this account of his adventures in a medieval book, so books, pens (quills, at least), and ink are readily available in Camelot. But many of the other things he misses came to Europe as the result of colonial exploration: paper and tea from China; sugar, which originated in southeast Asia and was cultivated on plantations in North and South America; coffee from Africa and the Islamic world; and tobacco from North America. By presenting readers with a list things that they themselves might take for granted, the book pointedly asserts the benefits of Europe's colonial exploration.

In this passage, Hank also betrays his sense of superiority and his colonial ambitions by comparing himself to Robinson Crusoe. This character, the hero of the 18th-century *Robinson Crusoe*, found himself cast away on a desert island after a shipwreck. With luck and ingenuity, he managed to recreate a tolerable 18th-century existence from scratch. Hank shares Crusoe's ambitions to forge a 19th-century life out of the raw materials of an uncivilized and uncultivated land.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ They were the quaintest and simplest and trustingest race; why, they were nothing but rabbits. It was pitiful for a person born in a wholesome free atmosphere to listen to their humble and hearty outpourings of loyalty toward their king and Church and nobility; as if they had any more occasion to love and honor king and Church and noble than a slave has to love and honor the lash, or a dog has to love and honor the stranger that kicks him! Why, dear me, *any* kind of royalty, howsoever modified, *any* kind of aristocracy, howsoever pruned, is rightly an insult; but if you are born and brought up under that sort of arrangement you probably never find it out for yourself, and don't believe it when someone else tells you.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Page Number: 53-54

Explanation and Analysis

Having proven his superiority by allegedly blotting out and reviving the sun, Hank Morgan rockets to an unrivaled position in King Arthur's court. From his new position of power, he looks down with pity and passes judgment on the medieval people among whom he now lives. In this passage, Hank continues his casual dehumanization of medieval people, an important aspect of his imperialistic ambitions. Believing his subjects incapable of independent thought, Hank assumes it will be easy to sway their opinions and singlehandedly change their society. But in making this

assumption, he neglects to consider how their "training" (or nurturance) could induce them to love and honor the authority figures who so abuse them. Hank notes that people brought up in one system are unlikely to believe others who try to tell them that there is a better way, but he fails to consider how this theory applies to his own project.

Moreover, in reflecting on the sad fate of the medieval commoners, Hank extends his criticism of the medieval, feudal aristocracy to the broader idea of monarchy or aristocracy. This contributes to the book's ongoing critique of monarchy and European centers of power, especially as compared to Hank's own democratic American ideals. In Hank's native 19th-century (and when the novel itself was published), Europe's hereditary monarchies were gradually losing power. But not content to allow the old institution a slow decline, Hank (and the book generally) presses for revolutionary change as the only way to throw of the shackles of hereditary aristocracies and their inherent injustices.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ Four years rolled by—and then! Well, you would never imagine it in the world. Unlimited power *is* the ideal thing when it is in safe hands. The despotism of heaven is the one absolutely perfect government. An earthly despotism would be the absolutely perfect earthly government, if the conditions were the same, namely, the despot the perfectest individual of the human race, and his lease of life perpetual. But as a perishable perfect man must die and leave his despotism in the hands of an imperfect successor, an earthly despotism is not merely a bad form of government, it is the worst form that is possible.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

After becoming "The Boss" of King Arthur's medieval England, Hank busies himself improving medieval society with modern (19th century) ideas and technologies. In this passage, he reflects on the necessity of power to getting things done. This passage illustrates the tension at the heart of Hank's project. On the one hand, he seems to genuinely believe in the ideals of democratic self-governance, self-made individualism, and free trade. Thus, he wants to offer these structures to a population that would benefit enormously from them. On the other hand, having the absolute authority to govern by decree is the most direct way to accomplish social transformation. Thus, when Hank states that despotism (rule by one unquestioned authority) could be the best form of government—as long as the despot is all-good as well as all-powerful—he seems to implicitly cast himself as this kind of benign despot.

The fragility of Hank's idealism becomes clear in moments like these. To be clear, his allegedly democratic and modernizing social changes happen secretly, out of the sight of not just the ruling classes but also the common masses they are meant to benefit. The society Hank designs conforms to *his* ideals, and he wants to impose it from the top down, rather than consulting the people about their desires or needs. Thus, he purposely selects individuals to attend his schools when they demonstrate ideas that already align with Hank's own thinking. Hank's arrogant assumptions about his ability to act as a benign despot will come back to haunt him when conflict rears its head and people begin to fall back on the deep-seated social training their medieval culture has instilled in them.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ Meantime, it was getting hotter and hotter in there. You see, the sun was beating down and warming up the iron more and more all the time. Well, when you are hot, that way, every little thing irritates you. When I trotted, I rattled like a crate of dishes, and that annoyed me; and moreover I couldn't seem to stand that shield slatting and banging, now about my breast, now around my back; and if I dropped into a walk my joints creaked and screeched in that wearisome way a wheelbarrow does, and as we didn't create any breeze at that gait, I was like to get fried in that stove; and besides, the quieter you went the heavier the iron settled down on you and the more and more tons you seemed to weigh every minute.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur , Sir Sagramore

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

King Arthur, after firmly establishing Hank's reputation as his court magician and advisor, forces Hank to go on a quest so that he will be a worthy opponent when the time comes for him to meet Sir Sagramore's challenge. Questing makes

Hank abjectly miserable, as he describes here. This passage also allows Mark Twain to exercise his considerable sense of humor as he imagines how a knight in shining armor—a figure much that Western literature has romanticized since the Middle Ages—would experience his life. The armor is heavy, the metal heats up uncomfortably in the sun, and the knight loses mobility. Hank suits up in a full set of plate armor, a choice that betrays his insufficient understanding of questing and knighthood; other questing knights tend to wear lighter, more agile, and more comfortable mail armor instead. Hank's unwillingness to learn about the society he finds himself in creates trouble for him here in small and mostly annoying ways, but this dynamic will repeat itself later with more serious consequences when Hank issues a final challenge to the chivalric order.

Hank shifts his pronouns in this passage; while most of the description focuses on the discomforts he ("I") experiences, the occasional "you" draws the reader into a shared sense of discomfort. By addressing readers directly, he invites them to empathize with his situation. Notably, however, Hank invites readers to share his uncomfortable experiences rather than his successes. This subtly suggests his inflated sense of self-importance and his desire to have the power of "The Boss," or the benign despot.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ So to speak, I was become a stockholder in a corporation where nine hundred and ninety-four of the members furnished all the money and did all the work, and the other six elected themselves a permanent board of direction and took all the dividends. It seemed to me that what the nine hundred and ninety-four dupes needed was a new deal. The thing that would have best suited the circus side of my nature would have been to resign the Boss-ship and get up an insurrection and turn it into a revolution; but I knew that the Jack Cade or the Wat Tyler who tries such a thing without first educating his materials up to revolution grade is almost absolutely certain to get left.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

While discussing political systems with the freemen he encountered on his quest, Hank Morgan reflects on why it's so important to him to revolutionize the social structure of medieval England, presenting readers with an analogy he draws from 19th-century capitalism. Hank's analogy suggests that the country is like a company in which everyone holds at least one share. But the wealthy and powerful hold so many more shares that they get to set the direction of the company, even though the common people holding only one apiece vastly outnumber them. He thus suggests that they need a "new deal" to give them more power and more access to the benefits of society. Within the world of the novel, Hank believes that he holds the key to this new deal and that he himself can usher it in. But this idea has a history in the real world too, as U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt allegedly drew the name for the key social and regulatory framework of his administration—the New Deal—from *A Connecticut Yankee*.

This passage also betrays Hank's inclination toward violent revolution. Even as he claims to be a peaceful man, he wishes that he could lead a violent uprising like the historical peasants' revolts that Wat Tyler led in the 1380s and Jack Cade, in 1450. And Hank's desire foreshadows the acts of violence he eventually proves himself capable of as his time in England draws to a close. Finally, this passage illuminates the ways that capitalism—as much if not more than democracy—directs Hank's worldview. He imagines social revolution in terms of company governance, and he describes human beings as raw materials that a great man like Cade, Tyler (or perhaps Hank himself) can use to bring out the changes he wants to see in the world. Whenever Hank talks about people as materials or objects, the reader should remember that he calls his schools "factories." Long before he turns to violence, he lays the groundwork by educating his materials up to revolution grade.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ La Cote was much depressed, for he had scored here the worst failure of his campaign. He had not worked off a cake; yet he had tried all the tricks of the trade, even to the washing of a hermit; but the hermit died. This was indeed a bad failure, for this animal would now be dubbed a martyr, and would take his place among the saints of the Roman calendar. Thus made he his moan, this poor Sir La Cote Male Taile, and sorrowed passing sore. And so my heart bled for him, and I was moved to comfort and stay him. Wherefore I said—

"Forbear to grieve, fair knight, for this is not a defeat. We have brains you and I; and for such as have brains there are no defeats, but only victories."

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Sandy, Sir La Cote Male Taile

Related Themes:

Page Number: 104-105

Explanation and Analysis

While on his quest, Hank Morgan encounters Sir La Cote Male Taile, a knight whom Hank has employed to go around the countryside hawking soap. The sales-knight-errant has found only bad luck on his trip. In paraphrasing Male Taile's misadventures, Hank notably slips into language—for example, when he says that the knight "sorrowed passing sore"—that sounds more like Sandy's flowering medieval storytelling than the straight-forward, un-poetical tone of a Connecticut Yankee. Although he clings to his own training, Hank's quest makes him subtly more sympathetic to medieval concerns.

Hank's idea to turn wandering knights into traveling salesmen cleverly uses medieval frameworks as a vehicle for 19th-century innovations, and he will replicate this with ideas to divert knightly contests into baseball and financial speculation on the stock market. But Male Taile's unsuccessful trip shows how fragile the imposition of nineteenth-century values onto sixth century activities can be. Hank's instinctive abhorrence of the Roman Catholic Church and its martyrs doesn't prevent the medieval population from assuming the sainthood of a hermit whom they now believe that soap has killed.

Hank's closing admonition suggests his own sense of superiority over much of the medieval population. In stating that he (and a select few men who are like him) have "brains," he implies that everyone else does not. This mirrors his later boast that he and 53 other "minds" stand against the physical power of 30,000 English knights. However, the inability to retreat that Hank displays here will prove problematic in that very battle.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ Oh, it was no use to waste sense on her. Training—training is everything; training is all there is *to* a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training. We have no thoughts of our own, no opinions of our own; they are transmitted to us, trained into us. All that is original in us, and therefore fairly creditable or discreditable to us, can be covered up and hidden by the point of a cambric needle, all the rest being atoms contributed by, and inherited from, a procession of ancestors that stretches back a billion years to the Adam-clam or grasshopper or monkey from whom our race has been so tediously and ostentatiously and unprofitably developed.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Morgan le Fay

Related Themes:

Page Number: 119-120

Explanation and Analysis

While entertaining Hank Morgan at her castle, Morgan le Fay invites "The Boss" to witness the torture and potential execution of an alleged poacher. Hank frees the man and tries to make Morgan understand that the circumstances of the man's crime should reduce the seriousness of the crime and resulting punishment. Morgan either can't or won't understand Hank's logic, though, leading Hank to the frustrated reflections he puts forth in this passage. In the 21st century, nature versus nurture commonly refers to the question of whether a person's behavior is instinctual (nature) or learned (nurture). *A Connecticut Yankee* explores this idea at length through the framework of "training." However, Hank tends to attribute any medieval ideas he dislikes or disagrees with to training.

In contrast, when someone (always, in this book, a common medieval man) expresses a belief that aligns with Hank's own values, he celebrates the inherent dignity of human nature. This sloppiness makes it hard to discern the book's ultimate lesson about human nature versus cultural training. But this passage—and Hank's frustration—also shows how his ideas about training and his desire to reinvent Arthur's kingdom as a 19th-century democracy are alike, as Hank's project is essentially imperialistic given how Hank seeks to extinguish one devalued culture in order to replace it with his own.

❝ The newest prisoner's crime was a mere remark which he had made. He said he believed that men were about all alike, and one man as good as another, barring clothes. He said he believed that if you were to strip the nation naked and send a stranger through the crowd, he couldn't tell the king from a quack doctor, nor a duke from a hotel clerk. Apparently here was a man whose brains had not been reduced to an ineffectual mush by idiotic training. I set him loose and sent him off to the Factory.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

While enjoying Morgan le Fay's hospitality, Hank Morgan uses his authority as "The Boss" and the king's top advisor to survey and release almost all the prisoners being held in her dungeon. The fate of these men and women, all of whom were abused physically or psychologically, and many of whom were locked up on flimsy offenses like the ones laid out in the passage, contribute to the book's argument that monarchal systems inherently tend towards injustice and cruelty by concentrating power in the hands of a small group of people.

But the contrast between this moment and the recent argument in which Hank tried to get Morgan to understand the concept of "extenuating circumstances" betrays the biases he brings to his understanding of the power of "training" over people. Assuming that his beliefs and naturally correct and superior, Hank blames bad training whenever he encounters disagreement. Concordantly, when he finds people who espouse the beliefs he himself holds—here, the implication that all men are equal except for the superficial elevation of rank—he takes this as confirmation that his values are natural, right, and inherent in human nature. This assumption will become dangerous as Hank increasingly replaces traditional medieval society with his newfangled ideals because it leads him to overestimate the capacity of this society for change.

Chapter 21 Quotes

❝ Early in the afternoon we overtook another procession of pilgrims; but in this one there was no merriment, no jokes, no laughter, no playful ways, nor any happy giddiness, whether of youth or of age. Yet both were here [...] Even the children were smileless; there was not a face among all these half a hundred people but was cast down and bore that set expression of hopelessness which is red of long and hard trials and old acquaintance with despair. They were slaves.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Sandy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

After Sandy and Hank complete Hank's quest, they encounter a group of pilgrims traveling to the Valley of Holiness. They join the merry band, and soon come upon another group, described in this passage. Since a "pilgrim" is literally a traveler, these slaves fit the description. But their circumstances couldn't be more different than the middle-class pilgrims. The contrast points towards the inherent cruelty of a system that concentrates power in certain segments of society at the expense of others. But, since *A Connecticut Yankee* was published within a few decades of the American Civil War, any mention of slavery in the book creates an uncomfortable sense of similarity between the brutality of the Middle Ages and the American system of chattel slavery.

Notably, because of the novel's early medieval setting, these slaves are white. Just as Hank finds it easier to empathize with people who are like him in their beliefs and values, this suggests that Twain's initial readers may have found it easier to empathize with the plight of slaves (current or former) who were more like them. The novel has a powerful, ongoing argument against slavery as an institution. But, like the occasional use of racist and derogatory language comparing uncivilized medieval people to Native Americans, the book's stated values of democracy and human equality remain limited by the circumstances of its creation and era. This further suggests that Hank's beloved 19th century America may not be as far advanced as he thinks it is.

Chapter 22 Quotes

❝ "Yes, keep open. Isn't that plain enough? Do [the hermits] knock off at noon?"

"Knock off?"

"Knock off—yes, knock off. What is the matter with knock off? I never saw such a dunderhead; can't you understand anything at all? In plain terms, do they shut up shop, draw the game, bank the fires—"

"Shut up shop, draw—"

"There, never mind, let it go. You make me tired. You can't seem to understand the simplest thing."

"I would I might please thee, sir, and it is to me dole and sorrow that I should fail, albeit sith I am but a simple damsel and taught of none, being from the cradle unbaptized in those deep waters of learning that do anoint with a sovereignty him that partaketh of that most noble sacrament, investing him with reverend state to the mental eye of the humble mortal [...]

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Sandy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

Many hermits (religious men and women who retired from society to live a life of isolation and prayer and who were commonly believed to be especially holy) live in the Valley of Holiness, and while Hank checks out the disordered fountain, Sandy "samples" the hermits. Hank wants to see them too, and in this passage he tries to ask Sandy about their viewing hours. But, perhaps in a sign of his growing comfort with her, perhaps as a sign of his refusal to trade his own habits for medieval ways, he confuses her with his use of slang. Sandy's game willingness to try to figure out what Hank means shows promise for Hank's plans to transform society, suggesting that with the right training, he can catch everyone up to modern standards.

But in this passage, Hank's teasing comes across to readers (and to Sandy) as rude and insensitive. And indeed, he holds Sandy responsible for knowledge that can only come from him. If she doesn't understand what "knock off" means, this passage suggests, the fault lies with Hank and not with Sandy. While nothing bad comes of his educational lapse here, this foreshadows later misunderstandings underwritten by Hank's own biases and 19th-century expectations. In a twist of literary humor, Sandy's flowery, hyperbolically antiquated reply is as unintelligible to Hank (and likely to readers) as his words were to him. Thus, she offers a pointed reminder that communication requires mutual understanding and a warning that if Hank refuses to understand the medieval psyche properly, disaster will ensue.

Chapter 26 Quotes

❝ Expedition No. 3 will start adout the first of mext [redacted] month [redacted] on a search f8r Sir Sagramour le Desirous. It is in command of the renowned Knight of the Red Lawns, assisted by Sir Persant of Inde, who is compete9t, intelligent, courteous, and in every ɯay a brick, and further assisted by Sir Palamides the Saracen, who is no huckleberry himself. This is no pic-nic, these boys *m*ean busine&s.

Related Characters: Clarence (speaker), Hank Morgan , Sir Sagramore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 198

Explanation and Analysis

While in the Valley of Holiness, Hank Morgan gets his hands on a copy of the first medieval newspaper. The *Camelot Weekly Hosannah and Literary Volcano* is yet another of his 19th-century innovations. This passage is one of the news items. Hank's newspaper is a meticulously crafted part of the novel, replete with the typographical errors a newly literate person might make (such as the substitution of "d" for "b" in "about") and the typographical errors an inexperienced typesetter might fall into (for example, an upside down "w). Mark Twain was himself a typesetter in his youth, and he seems to have drawn from his experience here.

The paper, written and edited under Clarence's supervision, eloquently suggests the incremental progress of Hank's society. Hank feels understandable pride in the paper and all that it represents. It wouldn't be possible without literacy in English, training reporters and editors, the creation of paper (to replace expensive and inconvenient medieval parchment made from animal skins), and the invention of a moveable type printing press 600 years ahead of schedule. But the paper still shows roughness around the edges because Hank's innovations require time to come to full fruition.

The paper also emphasizes the contrast between modernity and the Middle Ages. Despite its advanced technologies—and the use of 19th century slang such as describing hard things as "no picnic," it bears news of the most medieval sort: knights coming and going on quests, the

affairs of great lords and ladies. Specifically, this item reminds Hank (and readers) about Sir Sagramore, who left in search of the Holy Grail after challenging Hank to combat.

Chapter 29 Quotes

❝ Here was heroism at its last and loftiest possibility, its utmost summit; this was challenging death in the open field unarmed, with all the odds against the challenger, no reward set upon the contest, and no admiring world in silks and cloth of gold to gaze and applaud; and yet the king's bearing was as serenely brave as it had always been in those cheaper contests where knight meets knight in equal fight and clothed in protecting steel. He was great, now; sublimely great. The rude statues of his ancestors in his palace should have an addition—I would see to that; and it would not be a mailed king killing a giant or a dragon, like the rest, it would be a king in commoner's garb bearing death in his arms that a peasant mother might look her last upon her child and be comforted.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

After several years in power in the kingdom, Hank Morgan decides to disguise himself as a commoner and see how the lower folk live their lives; King Arthur joins him. One day, they knock on the door of an isolated hut to find that the woman inside and her family are dying of smallpox. King Arthur climbs to the loft to check on her daughters. One has died, but in this passage, he carries the second, still clinging to life, downstairs to her mother.

Despite his disregard for the very idea of hereditary monarchy, Hank harbors a great deal of respect and affection for King Arthur himself, and this passage shows why. Despite the very real danger of infection (it's later revealed that Hank survived smallpox as a child, granting him an immunity he suspects the more sheltered Arthur lacks), Arthur rises to the occasion. His willingness to challenge death is unlike his knights' when they engage in combat, for their sacrifice benefits no one, while his brings material comfort to a dying woman and child. Moreover, the knights perform their deeds in public, for adulation. Arthur acts in private and for the benefit of a dying woman rather than anyone's praise. In this action, Arthur pushes back on Hank's belief that a person's character is nothing more than the sum of his or her training; Arthur's actions suggest an inherent, selfless nobility in his character that guides his actions just as surely in a peasant's rags as in a knight's armor.

Chapter 30 Quotes

❝ A man *is* a man, at bottom. Whole ages of abuse and oppression cannot crush the manhood clear out of him. Whoever thinks it a mistake, is himself mistaken. Yes, there is plenty good enough material for a republic in the most degraded people that ever existed—even the Russians; plenty of manhood in them—even in the Germans—if one could but force it out of its timid and suspicious privacy, to overthrow and trample in the mud any throne that was ever set up and any nobility that ever supported it. We should see certain things yet, let us hope and believe. First, a modified monarchy, till Arthur's days were done, then the destruction of the throne, nobility abolished, every member of it bound out to some useful trade, universal suffrage instituted, and the whole government placed in the hands of the men and women of the nation there to remain.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur , Marco

Related Themes:

Page Number: 231

Explanation and Analysis

While disguised as peasants, Hank and Arthur stumble into a local village drama: the lord of the manor, having terrorized one of his tenant families, imprisoned its sons. These sons broke free, murdered their lord, and set fire to his house. Arthur and Hank know who the boys are and where they have gone, and Arthur wants to turn them in. Hank, on the other hand, wants to protect them. He assures Marco, a local coal-burner, of his good intent, prompting Marco to curse the lord, for whom he feels no love. In this passage, Hank reflects on Marco's words. Notably, as in other circumstances, when Hank hears something that aligns with his own beliefs, he attributes it to innate character rather than to social training. In doing so, he puts outsized emphasis on the man's statement rather than his actions—for Marco joined a mob that visited vigilante justice on anyone suspected of being involved with the fire the night before. Hank's valuation of words over actions will lead him into trouble later.

In this passage, Hank also explains important connections in his thoughts that contribute to the book's argument for the superiority of American democracy over antiquated European monarchies. Specifically, Hank associates democracy with manhood, strength, and a willingness to use violence where necessary. This contrasts with his earlier assertions of pacifism, and it also shows how his thoughts incline toward violence as he gains power and sees his ideal society within ever closer reach.

Chapter 32 Quotes

❝ Self-made man, you know. They know how to talk. They do deserve more credit than any other breed of men, yes, that is true; and they are among the very first to find it out, too. He told how he had begun life an orphan lad without money and without friends able to help him; how he had lived as the slaves of the meanest master lived; how his day's work was from sixteen to eighteen hours long, and yielded him only enough black bread to keep him in a half-fed condition; how his faithful endeavors finally attracted the attention of a good blacksmith, who came near knocking him dead with kindness by suddenly offering, when he was totally unprepared, to take him as his bound apprentice for nine years and give him board and clothes and teach him the trade—or "mystery" as Dowley called it.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur , Dowley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 240

Explanation and Analysis

While wandering the countryside disguised as a commoner, Hank meets the blacksmith Dowley in a village. Dowley is an important man in his small world, and Hank both appreciates the man and feels a need to compete with him. In this passage, he describes Dowley as a "self-made man." Dowley represents a medieval version of the stereotypical American self-made man. By a combination of luck and hard work, Dowley pulled himself from poverty and isolation to (comparative) wealth and status in his local community. Notably, a change of clothes (indicating an improved social standing) represents Dowley's social mobility. In his own century, Hank's story (coming from a working-class background and achieving success in the arms factory) sounds somewhat similar to Dowley's, suggesting that if the playing field were held level, they would be about equal. But Hank's time traveling gives him a significant advantage over the medieval blacksmith.

Dowley represents the possibility of social mobility and the severe limits the medieval feudal system places on him. Like Hank, he's not a noble; unlike Hank, he can't claim to be a sorcerer or anything more than a simple blacksmith. Despite their grit, determination, and skill, both men's class status limits their horizons. Thus, Dowley's story forms part of the book's criticism of the rigid social hierarchies and class immobility that result from non-democratic forms of government.

Chapter 33 Quotes

❝ Well, I was smarting under a sense of defeat. Undeserved defeat, but what of that? That didn't soften the smart any. And to think of the circumstances! The first statesman of the age, the capablest man, the best-informed man in the entire world, the loftiest uncrowned head that had moved through the clouds of any political firmament for centuries, sitting here apparently defeated in argument by an ignorant country blacksmith! And I could see that those others were sorry for me—which made me blush till I could smell my whiskers scorching. Put yourself in my place; feel as mean as I did, as ashamed as I felt—wouldn't *you* have struck below the belt to get even? Yes, you would; it is simply human nature. Well, that is what I did. I am not trying to justify it; I'm only saying that I was mad, and *anybody* would have done it.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Dowley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 251

Explanation and Analysis

Disguised as a commoner, Hank befriends some freemen including Marco the coal-burner and Dowley the blacksmith. He throws a feast for them to flaunt his wealth, during which he tries to convince them of the superiority of nineteenth-century free trade economies over the sixth century feudal economy. This tests his assumption that a person's character is determined entirely by their training rather than by their native traits or common sense. In light of this belief, Hank thinks that rational education and explanation will convince the medieval population of the inherent goodness of his ideas. But in this moment, education fails as the men aren't able to transcend their instinctual understanding that money has a fixed value.

Hank finds this defeat humiliating both in terms of his

revolutionary program and his ego. His ability and right to determine the course of England's political and social fate rests on his belief that he is the smartest and "capablest" man in the world by virtue of his 19th-century knowledge and technological know-how. But in this moment, his smarts count for nothing against the others' entrenched beliefs. Moreover, despite his claim that training makes a person, Hank appeals to human nature, claiming that a desire to win arguments and get even is only natural. And once again, in betraying his baser feelings (here, embarrassment and a thirst for revenge), his narrative implicates the reader, asking "you" if you wouldn't have done the same. Hank eagerly implicates readers in his failures when he must confront the fact that he is a mere human being.

Chapter 34 Quotes

❝ This same infernal law had existed in our own south in my own time, more than thirteen hundred years later, and under it hundreds of freemen who could not prove that they were freemen had been sold into lifelong slavery without the circumstance making any particular impression upon me; but the minute law and the auction block came into my own personal experience, a think which had been merely improper became suddenly hellish. Well that's the way we are made.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Page Number: 267-268

Explanation and Analysis

While traipsing around the countryside disguised as freemen, Hank runs himself and King Arthur afoul of some villagers. The gentleman who saves them from an angry mob quickly turns around and sells them as slaves, since they don't have any identification papers on them to prove that they are in fact freemen. In this passage, Hank reflects bitterly on the injustice of a legal system that assumes all persons to be slaves unless they can prove otherwise. In this moment, the reality of medieval society hits very close to home, since laws like these also existed in the American South during slavery. While the book in general tries to argue for the superiority of 19th-century American society, representing it as the culmination of human progress, moments like this offer a pointed reminder that all human societies to date bear the marks of injustice and cruelty to some degree. Hank's words also show how important experience (or, to use his terminology, "training") is to the cultivation of empathy. Laws requiring freemen to show their papers have always been unjust, and to a certain extent, Hank has always been aware of this injustice. But he didn't truly understand the impact until he finds himself subject to the law.

❝ We took up our line of march and passed out of Cambenet at noon; and it seemed to me unaccountably strange and odd that the King of England and his chief minister, marching manacled and fettered and yoked, in a slave convoy, could move by all manner of idle men and women, and under windows where sat the sweet and the lovely, and yet never attract a curious eye, never provoke a single remark. Dear, dear, it only shows that there is nothing diviner about a king than there is about a tramp, after all. He is just a cheap and hollow artificiality when you don't know he is a king. But reveal his quality, and dear me it takes your very breath away to look at him. I reckon we are all fools. Born so, no doubt.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 268

Explanation and Analysis

Hank and King Arthur disguised themselves as freemen to travel around England incognito, but the plan backfired spectacularly when they were pursued by an angry mob, captured, and sold into slavery. In this passage, Hank remarks on their fate while also considering the artificiality of class status. As "The Boss" and the king, Hank and Arthur control the fate of the kingdom. Yet no one recognizes them through their disguises, so they have no real authority. This contributes to the book's thesis that a person only has authority insofar as people fear or respect them. Without the luxurious clothing of the upper classes or the accessories that mark them as individuals (Arthur's sword Excalibur, for example, or Hank's tobacco pipe), Hank must confront his own average humanity. However, Hank focuses most of his attention in this passage on *Arthur's* inability to command respect out of character. His oft-repeated belief in his own superiority seems to make it hard for him to admit that his own authority is as transitory and changeable as the king's. Moreover, this passage adds evidence to the argument about the superiority of 19th-century democratic ideals. This experience of powerlessness suggests that the power of the hereditary monarchy rests on external

accessories more than internal character or moral superiority, implying that it is weak, contingent, and ineffectual.

Chapter 39 Quotes

So the world thought there was a vast matter at stake here, and the world was right, but it was not the one they had in their minds. No, a far vaster one was upon the cast of this die: *the life of knight-errantry*. I was a champion, it was true, but not the champion of the frivolous black arts, I was the champion of hard unsentimental common sense and reason. I was entering the lists to either destroy knight-errantry or be its victim.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Merlin, Sir Sagramore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 293-294

Explanation and Analysis

Fresh off a variety of adventure—defeating a trio of ogres, restoring the fountain in the Valley of Holiness, traveling the realm as a freeman, and narrowly escaping slavery execution (for the second time!), Hank finally prepares to face Sir Sagramore in combat. The book uses Hank's adventures in Camelot to build an argument for the inferiority of monarchy to democracy and for the status of 19th-century American democracy as the pinnacle of human progress. To this end, the duel holds triple significance, pitting Hank against Sagramore as men, Hank against Merlin as sorcerers (since Merlin supposedly enchants Sagramore's armor), and nineteenth-century American ideals like rationality and democracy against sixth-century superstition and feudal darkness. Hank's willingness to die—or kill—for his ideals belies earlier statements in which he professed to be a peaceful man.

Hank's thinking about the duel also points toward his imperial ambitions. He has planned to enact revolutionary change in England almost since the moment of his arrival. And while there are indications that some people will welcome the change—for instance, the common freemen oppressed by their feudal lords, the harshly treated slaves, and the wrongfully imprisoned—Hank plans to enforce a democratized civilization on a society that may or may not want it. Rather than introducing his innovations widely and subjecting them to public comment, debate, and modification, Hank ironically prepares to enforce democracy through his own command. There is no room for debate or compromise: either Hank (democracy, progress, and American ideals) or Sagramore (monarchy, superstition, and feudal injustices) will win, and the other will be destroyed.

Chapter 40 Quotes

The worship of royalty being founded in unreason, these graceful and harmless cats would easily become as sacred as any other royalties, and indeed more so, because it would presently be noticed that they hanged nobody, beheaded nobody, imprisoned nobody, inflicted no cruelties or injustices of any sort, and so must be worthy of a deeper love and reverence than the customary human king, and would certainly get it. The eyes of the whole harried world would soon be fixed upon this humane and gentle system, and royal butchers would presently begin to disappear; their subjects would fill the vacancies with catlings from our own royal house; we should become a factory; we should supply the thrones of the world; within forty years all Europe would be governed by cats, wand we should furnish the cats. The reign of universal peace would begin then, to end no more forever...*M-e-e-e-yow-ow-ow—fzt—wow*!

Related Characters: Clarence (speaker), Hank Morgan , Sir Sagramore

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 305

Explanation and Analysis

After Hank defeats Sir Sagramore and the other knights in his duel, he unveils the array of secret projects by which he's been preparing to bring the nineteenth century into the sixth century. All that's left is to deprive the Church of power and to end the monarchy. On this latter point, he and Clarence disagree, as Clarence fears the social unrest that would attend the loss of a hereditary monarch. As a compromise, Clarence half-jokingly suggests replacing a human royal family with cats. Clarence's comments contribute to the book's argument about the injustice and ridiculousness of monarchy as a political system. Replacing people with cats implies that royalty are no better than anyone else in terms of morals or intelligence. Indeed, royals may be worse than most people, since they tend to enforce unjust laws then imprison and execute their citizens. It is a weak political system that could so easily be improved. But this passage also points toward a deeper lesson that Hank repeatedly fails to see, since Clarence's plan arises at least

in part from his fear that the people will revolt without a ruling royal class. In his eagerness to abolish the monarchy, Hank cannot conceptualize how tightly medieval society clings to its monarchy. And missing this language exposes him to the wrath and revolt of people who resent the changes he imposes.

Chapter 42 Quotes

"From our various works I selected all the men—boys I mean—whose faithfulness under whatsoever pressure I could swear to, and I called them together secretly and gave them their instructions. There are fifty-two of them; none younger than fourteen, and none above seventeen years old."

"Why did you select boys?"

"Because all the others were born in an atmosphere of superstition and reared in it. It is in their blood and bones. We imagined we had educated it out of them; they thought so, too; the Interdict woke them up like a thunderclap! It revealed them to themselves, and it revealed them to me, too. With boys it was different. Such as have been under our training from seven to ten years have had no acquaintance with the Church's terrors, and it was amongst these that I found my fifty-two."

Related Characters: Clarence (speaker), Hank Morgan , King Arthur , Mordred

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 322

Explanation and Analysis

Hank returns from a trip to France to find that chaos and civil war have overwhelmed the kingdom in his absence. King Arthur and his apparent heir, Mordred, have killed each other, Launcelot and Guenever have retired to a monastery and a convent, and the Roman Catholic Church has placed the whole kingdom under interdict until Hank is punished for his revolution. An interdict is a church decree that prevents anyone in a group (in this case, in the whole kingdom) from participating in the rites and rituals of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church used such decrees as political tools in the Middle Ages to much the same effect as they have in this fictitious England.

Threatened with the loss of their religion, the people turn side with the Church against Hank. The fact that Clarence and Hank have fewer than a hundred faithful followers left in the whole kingdom—and the fact that the faithful are all teenagers—proves the power of training over character. This passage implies that even those individuals Hank individually selected for his factories and schools turned on him as soon as the church flexed its power. It seems, then, that a person's initial training cannot be retrained or reeducated, no matter how miserable his life may be.

Chapter 43 Quotes

The sun rose presently and sent its unobstructed splendors over the land, and we saw a prodigious host moving slowly toward us, with the steady drift and aligned front of a wave of the sea. Nearer and nearer it came, and more and more sublimely imposing became its aspect; yes, all England were there, apparently. Soon we could see the innumerable banners fluttering, and then the sun struck the sea of armor and set it all aflash. Yes, it was a fine sight; I hadn't ever seen anything to beat it.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), Sir Sagramore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 330

Explanation and Analysis

On the morning of his final showdown with the forces of chivalry, Hank stands in his stronghold and watches the knights approach. In this passage, he describes the sight. Despite his initial claims that Yankees such as himself lack a poetical instinct, Hank demonstrates an eye for detail and a descriptive flair here. The glittering armor and fluttering flags recall his first sight of Camelot, whose beauty and splendor contrasted so sharply with the dirtiness and poverty of the village at its feet. Hank aspired to create a society devoid of such sharp social distinctions, but his final look at England before the climactic battle demonstrates how futile his attempts have been. Ultimately, the changes Hank wrought proved to be small and temporary. In comparing them to a wave, Hank rhetorically aligns the power of chivalry—and the power it holds over medieval society—to a force of nature.

The march of this innumerable force emphasizes Hank's isolation and powerlessness. Although he thought he defeated the forces of chivalry and superstition once and for all when he fought Sagramore, he was only gone from the kingdom for a few weeks before the old ways reasserted their hold on society. Once "The Boss" of the whole kingdom, as soon as the Church asserted its power

over Hank, he lost the authority he used to wield. And this further emphasizes the power of training. Hank thought that he could educate the superstitions out of the medieval population, and that improved living standards and increased equality among classes would transform society for ever. But it turns out that, as he suspected earlier, "training" is everything after all. Hank's underestimation of the strength of training—even when it induces people to act against their own interests—dooms his civilizing project to failure.

"Stand to your guns, men! Open fire!"

The thirteen gatlings began to vomit death into the fated ten thousand. They halted, they stood their ground a moment against that withering deluge of fire, then they broke, faced about and swept toward the ditch like chaff before a gale. A full forth part of their force never reached the top of the lofty embankment; the three fourths reached it and plunged over—to death by drowning.

Within ten short minutes after we had opened fire, armed resistance was totally annihilated, the campaign was ended, we fifty-four were masters of England! Twenty-five thousand men lay dead around us.

Related Characters: Hank Morgan (speaker), King Arthur

Related Themes:

Page Number: 339

Explanation and Analysis

Ultimately, Hank's adventures in medieval England end on a modern note of death and destruction. This suggests that perhaps less separates the cruelty and barbarism of the past from the progress of the present than Hank would like to believe. Remember that Hank worked in an arms factory in his own day, building the same technologies of destruction he uses in the Battle of the Sand Belt. Despite his stated plans to improve life in Arthur's England with improved technology, democratic governance, and enlightened ideals, Hank's destructive capabilities overpower his constructive ones.

Gatling guns were invented in America at the beginning of the Civil War. And the Civil War—the deadliest conflict in American history—casts a psychic shadow over this medieval battle. The extent of the death and destruction Hank visits on the knights recalls the aftermaths of some of the Civil War's deadliest conflicts, such as the Battle of Gettysburg. In defeating the forces of chivalry with his superior firepower, he decimates the population of England and traps himself and his supporters in the cave of their last stand. This pyrrhic victory (a victory achieved only at excessive cost) demonstrates the ultimate futility of his imperialistic plan to recreate medieval society in the image of a 19th-century American democracy. The love for order, hierarchy, and chivalry that medieval culture drills into its citizens wins in the end.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

An unnamed narrator (identified in the postscript as M.T.) explains that he met a "curious stranger" (Hank Morgan) at Warwick Castle during a tour. The stranger seems knowledgeable about the medieval artifacts, and when the tour guide explains that the bullet hole in a suit of armor probably happened after the age of chivalry, the stranger mutters that the real story is he shot the knight himself. The narrator is so surprised that he misses the stranger slipping away. Later that night, the narrator sits in his hotel reading tales from Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*. He transcribes one of the tales into the novel.

The book begins with the narrator—whose initials associate him with Mark Twain, the book's author—as a tourist. This positions the medieval castle and its contents as exotic objects of curiosity, suggesting that ideas like monarchy are outdated and outmoded. The narrator reading Mallory's Morte d'Arthur *reinforces this feeling of antiquity and oldness, as his collection of Arthurian mythology was first published in the 15th century.*

In the tale, Sir Launcelot kills two giants, rescuing the dozens of young ladies they imprisoned. Later that night, he wakes at midnight to the sound of a man—pursued by three other knights—knocking at the gate. Lancelot arms himself and comes to the aid of the man, since three men against one is a dishonorable fight. After Lancelot wins, the three aggressors try to pledge their loyalty to him, but he insists they give it to Sir Kay (the knight they were chasing), riding to Camelot and placing themselves under Guenever's protection until Kay returns. In the morning, Launcelot secretly trades **armor** with Sir Kay. Since no one dares to challenge Launcelot, Kay returns to Camelot without suffering any more attacks.

Mark Twain copies a medieval tale directly from Mallory's book. In many ways, it bears the typical marks of medieval tales, including monsters, midnight visions, and an emphasis on honor. It depicts a world in which defeated men can be trusted to turn themselves in at Camelot, and where knights band together for mutual protection. This world is both idyllic—Launcelot selflessly comes to Kay's rescue and protection—and full of danger and violence. The ease with which Launcelot impersonates Kay by donning his armor also points to the importance of clothing and appearance as a marker of status throughout the book.

As M.T. finishes reading, the stranger (Hank Morgan) knocks on his door. By way of introduction, he explains that he is an American, born and raised in a working-class Connecticut family. He worked in an arms **factory**, learning to make all sorts of things and ultimately becoming the supervisor of a few thousand men. One day, during a workplace brawl, Hank received a crack on the head and blacked out. When he came to, a "fellow fresh out of a picture book," wearing **armor** and mounted on a horse challenged him to joust. The knight overpowered Hank and led him back to Camelot.

Hank's story exemplifies the American ideal: democratic social mobility combined with his inherent technical aptitude allow him to rise to a position of authority at a local factory. Factories—where raw materials are transformed into useful and uniform goods—are important symbols of 19th century progress in the book. In light of this, it's notable that Hank's factory makes destructive weapons, which suggests a potential inability on his part to create things of lasting good. And, like the knights in the story, he uses violence to settle disputes. Hank's initial impression of medieval England recalls picture books, hinting at the childishness he will soon attribute to medieval ideals of knighthood and chivalry.

The stranger (Hank Morgan) says he is too tired to go on, but he gives M.T. a book with the story of his experiences. It's written on parchment, and much of it is a palimpsest—a book written on previously used sheets that have been (imperfectly) erased. M.T. begins to read it.

Hank's book being a palimpsest offers a touch of medieval realism—parchment was a precious resource and often repurposed in this way. But the idea of overwriting also suggests the way that the novel uses a medieval past to examine the social issues of 19th century America.

CHAPTER 1: CAMELOT

Hank assumes he's still in Connecticut and that "Camelot" is the name of an asylum, since he judges his captor (later revealed to be Sir Kay) to be obviously insane. The landscape is quiet and peaceful, with little sign of human activity—until they come upon a young girl with flowers in her hair. She shows no interest in the knight, but she's astonished by Hank.

Hank's rational, clearheaded approach to life leads to his initial impression that he's gotten caught up in an insane asylum. After all, time travel strains belief. But assuming Kay's insanity also creates a clear, hierarchal division between the evidently sane Hank and others who are apparently insane. Hank's belittling and dehumanizing of medieval people contributes to his imperialistic and colonial ambitions towards them.

Hank and the knight approach a town full of "wretched cabin[s]" and gardens "in indifferent state[s] of cultivation. The men are brawny and unkempt and look more like animals than people; the children are mostly naked. Dogs and pigs roam freely through the crooked, filthy streets. Then, Hank hears trumpets, and a procession of knights on horseback with "flaunting banners," "**rich doublets**," and "gilded spearheads" appears. Hank and Sir Kay join in, climbing up the hill and entering the castle.

In contrast to the advanced landscape of Hartford, Hank judges the medieval dwellings—and the people who inhabit them—as hopelessly unkempt and backward. The distinction between these people and the finely dressed nobles visibly dramatizes medieval culture's stratified social hierarchy. Importantly, this is the first time that Hank associates medieval people with animals. This comparison emphasizes his sense of superiority, and he continues to make it throughout the book.

CHAPTER 2: KING ARTHUR'S COURT

In the courtyard, Hank tries to figure out where he is, but everyone uses strange turns of phrase like "me seemeth" and "comfort [my] very liver." Finally, a page boy (later identified as Clarence) fetches Hank. The boy chatters cheerfully and then casually mentions that he was born in the year 513. Alarmed, Hank asks where—and when—he is. The page boy replies that he's at Camelot—and the date is June 19, 528.

The phrases help to set the medieval scene and contribute to Hank's sense of alienation and confusion. Thrown into this strange situation, Hank initially relies on Clarence to interpret the strange language, setting, and goings-on for him. Without a guide to the medieval context, the alleged superiority of Hank's intellect evaporates.

For some reason, Hank believes Clarence immediately. He is overwhelmed with sadness at the thought that no one he knows will be born for thirteen hundred years. He also quickly figures out a way to verify the truth. He happens to remember that a total solar eclipse happened on June 21, 528 at 11:57 am. Observing the eclipse (or not) will confirm the date. As a "practical Connecticut man," he puts the issue of time travel aside until he can thus prove or disprove it.

By his training (or nurture), Hank is a rational, cool-headed Yankee. Thus, his easy acceptance of the implausible idea of time-travel subtly emphasizes the power of training to form a person's character. His idea to use the eclipse also establishes the superiority of his basic 19th-century knowledge over the most learned medieval person.

Deciding to call the boy Clarence, Hank asks about the man who brought him to Camelot. Clarence explains that his captor is Sir Kay and Hank will have to wait in the dungeon until his friends pay his ransom. But first, Kay will show Hank off to the court and tell the tale of his capture. Clarence and Hank sit in the great hall to wait for this. The hall is enormous, with vaulted ceilings, well-worn floors, and tapestries on the wall that lack sophistication and delicacy. At the center of the hall, splendidly dressed knights sit at a round table.

Hank asserts his dominance over the medieval period by casually renaming people to suit his 19th century tastes. In this moment of extreme danger and vulnerability, assigning a new name to Clarence indicates the strength of his inherent belief in his own superiority. Hank's insistent non-appreciation of the hall's grandeur emphasizes how little regard he, as a representative of the New World, has for the old guard of European history.

Generally, everyone listens respectfully and credulously to the knights' tales, at least when a tussle among the many dogs that roam the hall doesn't distract them. Hank is one of many prisoners. Some are injured, and all are unwashed. Their patient suffering surprises him until he realizes that they've probably treated their own prisoners in the same way and don't expect better treatment. Their patience doesn't come from "intellectual fortitude" or "reasoning," but from "mere animal training." Hank considers them "white Indians."

Since the medieval court of Arthur represents the Old Order, even when ostensibly appreciating its good sides, Hank subtly denigrates it. Thus, he appreciates the knights' storytelling but finds the audience too trusting. Further, without any evidence beyond his own assumptions, he distinguishes between his own mental fortitude (the result of reason) and the other prisoners' stoicism (which is like a trick taught to an animal). In dehumanizing the medieval people, Hank compares them not only to animals but to Native Americans—a racist association that highlights the marginalized position of these nations in 19th-century America and suggests his own imperialistic ambition to colonize and reshape the new (to him) world of medieval England.

CHAPTER 3: KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND

As the knights carry on about their adventures, Hank realizes that most of their battles are irrational encounters between strangers. It's like when two boys meet, and each believes that he can "lick" the other. This childish behavior surprises Hank, who thinks the knights act like "big boobies." Although he doesn't regard the crowd as possessing much in the way of brains, he finds them loveable and attractive for their simple-hearted natures. Many, including King Arthur, and Sir Launcelot are fine examples of manliness.

By calling the knights' behavior childish, Hank implicitly separates himself from their instinctive violence. But it's important to remember that he was in a fistfight at work when he traveled through time. Moreover, Hank's inconsistent judgments demonstrate his biased reasoning. His appreciation for King Arthur and Launcelot as men of character further suggests that the dichotomy between good and bad, old and new, isn't so clear cut as he'd like to imagine.

At one point, half a dozen prisoners of Sir Kay throw themselves on the mercy of the queen, who will decide if they are pardoned, ransomed, or killed. Guenever looks disappointed that the prisoners came from Kay, but Kay himself sets the record straight. These men were captured by Launcelot when he was in Kay's armor. What's more, the ones in the hall are just the first batch, and more will arrive as their injuries heal. The queen is evidently flattered to receive Launcelot's prisoners, and she makes eyes at Launcelot across the room.

This episode introduces important motifs from Arthurian legend, specifically the love triangle between King Arthur, his wife Guenever, and Sir Launcelot. It also points back to the story M.T. read in the Prologue, which explained the backstory of these three prisoners, whom Launcelot defeated while wearing Kay's armor. The fact that they turn themselves in instead of running away suggests the strength of their "training" in medieval social codes.

Then Clarence's face falls; Merlin is about to tell the long-winded and sleep-inducing story of how King Arthur got his sword. After losing his weapon on a quest, Merlin directed Arthur to a nearby lake where he received a sword that a magical hand was holding above the water. As Merlin and King Arthur rode away, they encountered one of Arthur's enemies, whom Merlin persuaded Arthur to let pass, promising that the knight and his family would become valuable allies. When Arthur expressed his pleasure over the sword, Merlin chastised him and explained that the scabbard was much more valuable, since its magical properties would keep him from being fatally wounded as long as he wore it. When the pair returned to Carlion, the other knights were amazed to realize that they served a king who was willing to risk adventure just like a poor knight.

Merlin's story quotes another story from Arthurian mythology. Its magical elements suggest a superstitious worldview and emphasize how different this world is from the one Hank grew up in. This story also explains some of the noble character Hank appreciates in King Arthur. Hank struggles throughout the book to reconcile his disgust for monarchy with his appreciation for Arthur's character as a man and as a king. Arthur's willingness to do the same things he asks of his knight shows the qualities of a good leader and offers a partial explanation for his subjects' devotion.

CHAPTER 4: SIR DINADAN THE HUMORIST

Merlin's tale puts everyone but Hank to sleep. Sir Dinadan wakes them up with a practical joke, then he regales the crowd with a string of bad jokes that everyone but Hank (who's heard them all before) and Clarence (who calls them "rotten") appreciate.

Dinadan's tired, unfunny jokes—which the medieval audience nevertheless enjoys— confirm Hank's opinion that the medieval psyche is childish and inferior to his own. By agreeing, Clarence shows an aptitude for Hank's (supposedly) more advanced values.

Next, it's Sir Kay's turn to explain how he defeated Hank. Kay claims he found Hank in a barbarian land, defeated the magical properties of his strange **clothes** (which is just a mechanic's uniform) with prayer, and killed his 13 companions before taking him prisoner. He identifies Hank as a "prodigious giant" and a "man-devouring ogre," although everyone can see with their own eyes that he is just a man. Kay concludes by setting noon on the 21st as the date for Hank's execution.

Hank finds the audience's acceptance of Kay's story a discredit to their intelligence because it suggests a willingness to believe what they are told rather than what they can see with their own eyes. But ironically, Hank does see himself as a superhuman in this time and place, and he will capitalize on the audience's fear of him to attain power.

As the lords and ladies make off-color comments about Hank and his **outfit**, Merlin calms the crowd's fear over the magical properties of Hank's clothes with the "commonsense hint" that they strip him naked, much to Hank's embarrassment, before they lead him to the dungeon.

Hank possesses no inherent advantage until he figures out how to leverage his 19th-century knowledge. Being stripped emphasizes his vulnerability and initiates his personal and professional rivalry with Merlin as a representative of the old order.

CHAPTER 5: AN INSPIRATION

In the dungeon, Hank is so exhausted that he immediately falls asleep. Waking up, he initially thinks he's had a strange dream, but then he sees Clarence in his cell. He's scared when he realizes that this isn't a dream and he's scheduled to be executed the next day. He begs Clarence for help escaping. Clarence replies that it's impossible, due to the number of guards and the fact that Merlin has enchanted the dungeon to keep its prisoners in.

Despite his belief in his own superiority to the medieval population, Hank is momentarily at their mercy. In contrast, people's belief in and fear of Merlin's magic means that he holds a great deal of power. Hank recognizes that Merlin's anti-prison-break spells only work because people believe in them.

Hank has no patience for "old humbug" Merlin or the "chuckleheaded [...] superstitions" his so-called magic relies on. But Clarence's very real fear and respect for Merlin's power give Hank an idea. Hank tells Clarence that he is a powerful magician himself. If he isn't released, he promises to unleash a terrible calamity on the kingdom. Terrified and begging Hank not to hurt him, Clarence stumbles out of the cell to warn the court.

Clarence's fear and respect for Merlin demonstrates typical, superstitious medieval beliefs. And while Hank personally considers himself above such ignorant superstitions, he willingly uses them to his advantage. Thus, in his bid for power, he reinforces the very delusions he looks down upon.

With Clarence gone, Hank has two unsettling thoughts. First, he worries that the boy will realize it's suspicious for such a powerful magician to need his help. But then he remembers that "these animals" don't use reason, so he's pretty sure Clarence won't make this connection. Next, he realizes that he might be called on to demonstrate his magical skills. And, in fact, Merlin does send Clarence back to ask Hank to specify the calamity. Fortunately, he recalls the eclipse.

This early in his adventure, Hank still worries that someone will figure out that he's just posing and isn't as powerful as he claims to be. Thus, when Clarence, the king, and everyone else take him at his word, his sense of superiority increases. It's interesting to note that Hank was bluffing, at least at first; it's not until Clarence leaves that he realizes he can pretend to control the eclipse.

Hank confirms with Clarence that it's the 20th of June and that his execution is set for the next day at noon. Then, in a threatening voice, he promises to "blot out the sun" at the hour of his execution. His words and delivery are effective: Clarence is so scared that he collapses, and Hank must carry him out of the cell and hand him over to the guards.

Hank's performance demonstrates that he is a showman at heart. His power seems to stem as much from his ability to bring about the miracle he promises as the drama with which he plays the role of sorcerer.

CHAPTER 6: THE ECLIPSE

Left alone, the seriousness of Hank's situation begins to sink in, and his blood runs cold. But his optimistic nature ultimately wins out. He becomes certain that the eclipse won't just save his life—it'll make him the greatest man in the kingdom. Thus, he's shocked when the guards who open the door inform him that the stake is ready for his execution.

Despite his democratic idealism, when presented with the opportunity, Hank wants power and influence. And he's even willing to use distinctly undemocratic means like lying and pretending to be a wizard to get it.

In answer to Hank's protests that the execution was supposed to be the next day, the guards reply that it's been moved forward. As they lead Hank into the courtyard, Clarence proudly explains that he's responsible for the shift. To help Hank escape bondage without permanent damage to the sun, Clarence got the execution moved. He's certain that dimming the sun just a little bit, without truly hurting it will convince the king to release Hank.

Hank's plan depends on the timing of the eclipse—although he cannot control nature. Even though Hank is advanced by medieval standards, he is still just a man. Ironically, Hank's predicament comes directly from the success of his own lie about being a wizard, which galvanized Clarence into action.

The terror of the 4,000 people who have gathered to watch the execution is palpable. They sit as still and silent as stones. Executioners tie Hank to the stake and pile logs around his legs. Then a monk raises his face to heaven and begins to pray in Latin.

The fear and desperation in the gathered crowd shows how simply the medieval people accept Hank's claims of magical power. But the power to induce fear won't do Hank any good unless he can follow through on his threat.

Suddenly, the monk falls silent. Hank follows his gaze and sees the beginning of the solar eclipse. Merlin shouts for Hank to be burned, but King Arthur stays the execution. Taking advantage of the moment, Hank stretches his arms toward the sun and orders everyone to freeze. The king begs him to spare the sun. Since he must let nature run its course, Hank stalls for time. He first confirms the date again with the monk, who says it's the 21st of June. Earlier, when Clarence gave Hank the date, he was mistaken.

Luckily for Hank, Clarence has gotten the dates wrong, and the eclipse begins just in the nick of time. Luckier still, Hank's flair for the dramatic enables him to stall, since his magical "effect" depends on the eclipse's timing. Any power that Hank gains over the medieval citizenry rests on his ability to make them believe that he controls events. Any loss to this aura of power will compromise the basis of his authority.

Hank tells King Arthur that he's going to blot out the sun entirely, and he will restore it only if the king appoints him chief minister and executive. Arthur agrees and sends servants to fetch new **clothes** for him. This buys a little more time, but not quite enough. Hank must wait out the eclipse with the bluff that he's allowing the darkness to make sure the king won't go back on his word. As the sun begins to reappear, Hank pretends to dissolve the curse. The crowd's cheers break the tension.

Hank plays the eclipse for all it's worth; by the time the sun begins to reappear, he has earned his freedom and is well on his way to achieving his imperialistic ambitions to create a nineteenth-century outpost in the sixth century as the second most powerful man in the kingdom. His new clothes mark his changed status; no longer a monster or a prisoner, he is now marked as a man of power and influence.

CHAPTER 7: MERLIN'S TOWER

Hank is now the second-most important person in the kingdom. This means he has fine, showy (and somewhat uncomfortable) **clothes** and the nicest rooms in the castle. Still, the rooms are drafty, poorly decorated, and lacking familiar creature comforts like "soap, matches," mirrors, "chromos" (colored illustrations popular in the late 1800s), lamps, and books. Worse, there's no sugar, coffee, tea, or tobacco. Hank feels that, like Robinson Crusoe, he's been marooned on an island populated by tame animals.

Although Hank is well on his way to achieving his political ambitions, he must still contend with medieval life. Half of the things that he's missing represent middle-class, 19th-century life, while the rest are colonial products. Hank himself has imperialistic ambitions to transform medieval England into his ideal society just as Robinson Crusoe transforms his barren island home. And thinking about superiority, he shows how little he values the humanity of the medieval people by comparing them to animals yet again.

Initially, people come from far and wide to meet Hank the powerful magician. When he fails to perform any more miracles, Merlin insinuates that he is a sham. The next eclipse is more than two years away, forcing Hank to figure out a different show of power. He has Merlin thrown in the dungeon and then tells everyone that in two weeks' time he will take a break from his busy schedule of advising the king to rain down heavenly fire on the sorcerer's tower. Hank uses the time to make blasting powder and a lightning rod which he and Clarence place in the crumbling tower, which was built centuries earlier by the Romans.

Merlin's tower was built by the Romans when they ruled Britain. It stands as a testament to civilizations that flourished before the current medieval one and offers a pointed reminder that other civilizations will replace Camelot in the future, too. Hank believes in the virtues of 19th-century America, but the ruins promise that it, too, will eventually crumble. In much the same way, Hank's power requires the people's belief, so he must arrange for another show of force. This is the first direct confrontation between Hank as a representative of the New World and Merlin as a representative of the Old Order.

Although there have been many recent thunderstorms, the day appointed for the miracle is threateningly sunny. Finally, at dusk, a storm begins to gather on the horizon, and Hank starts the show. In front of King Arthur, Merlin, and the assembled crowds, he offers Merlin the chance to magically protect his tower. Merlin mutters and waves his arms vigorously until Hank stops him. As the storm breaks overhead, Hank waves his hands three times. A bolt of lightning hits the rod and blows up the charges in the walls. After this "effective miracle," the droves of visitors vanish, and Merlin has lost all his power in the kingdom.

Hank destroys Merlin's tower (and his reputation) by channeling the electrical power of lightning. As with the eclipse, Hank's magic depends on his ability to scientifically predict natural events while simultaneously putting on a convincing show of power. This second demonstration cements his reputation—and thus his power—in the kingdom.

CHAPTER 8: THE BOSS

Blowing up Merlin's tower consolidates Hank's power. Although it's initially hard to accept that he's really in the sixth century, he soon becomes used to the situation. In fact, he says that he wouldn't have willingly return to the 20th century. In the past, his superior "brains, pluck, and enterprise" allow him to outcompete the less sophisticated and uncivilized medieval people. Hank is powerful—if not more—than King Arthur himself. The only thing that holds more power than Hank is the Church.

Hank's reflections demonstrate an awareness that his power depends on unfair advantages; he's just an average man in the 19th century, and he would be primitive in comparison to a man from his future. Yet, his focus on attributes such as his intelligence and drive suggest that he feels an almost divine right to run England the way he wants.

The aristocracy and the Church enslave the people of sixth-century Britain. To Hank, born in the "wholesome free atmosphere" of 19th-century America, their outpourings of love and respect for whomever holds the thrones of power, regardless of their capacity to rule, sound strange. Hank considers the position of all the kingdom's inhabitants as no better than slavery, even for the so-called "freemen."

The contrast between the New World and the Old World (America and Europe, respectively) animates much of Hank's frustration and judgement throughout the book. He particularly dislikes the Roman Catholic Church and the idea of hereditary monarchy, since both allow unfit men to control the lives of both freemen and slaves.

To a certain extent, Hank realizes that his own ideas are as entrenched as those of the medieval Britons; he knows it's nearly impossible to argue away ideas worn into "ruts [...] of time and habit." For example, without a title, no matter what he does, Hank can only earn so much respect in this hierarchal society. He attributes the people's servility to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which manipulated people into accepting the divine right of the kings that the Church controls. But the future shows that this can change; by Hank's day, the taint of "reverence for blood and title" will be absent, at least from America.

Whenever Hank runs into a medieval attitude or institution that he doesn't like, he chalks it up to "training"—the ideas and values taught to members of a society. On the one hand, training suggests the malleability of ideas, since in theory, new information could cause changes in knowledge and thus in training. But in practice, old ideas, which run on well-worn social paths, are quite hard to dislodge. Hank knows from the future that the Roman Catholic Church and the idea of monarchy aren't unassailable. But he regularly underestimates the strength of time and habit. Finally, Hank's personal desire for power comes into focus when he complains that his lack of a noble title prevents his social advancement.

Although Hank considers himself a "a man among children," he gets less respect than even the most unintelligent earl whose title comes from an ancestor being the king's mistress. King Arthur offers Hank a rank, but Hank refuses on principle. As an American, he thinks that only the people of the nation can legitimately confer titles of authority. Eventually, a village blacksmith gives Hank a title of authority, calling Hank "The Boss." Hank likes this because it comes from a commoner, and because it's a special title. There are many kings, bishops, and earls, but there is only *one* Boss, and that's Hank.

Hank espouses a belief in meritocracy and democracy—the ideas that authority should be earned through accomplishment and that the people should choose their own leaders. Yet, he aspires to be "the Boss" of the kingdom, taking on a role that sounds suspiciously hierarchal. And he "earns" his position by inspiring fear (as an alleged wizard) rather than demonstrating his superior capacity to lead. Again and again, Hank's actions betray his professed values.

The exchange of respect and disrespect between Hank and the medieval people is mutual. Hank looks down on the king and the knights as men but respects their offices. And the king and his knights look down on Hank as a commoner, although they respect his power.

For all his professed affection for the citizens of King Arthur's Britain, Hank's orientation toward them is patronizing at best and directly hostile at worst. He resents not having the respect of people he believes to be inferior while he disparages the nobility for looking down on the commoners they believe to be their inferiors.

CHAPTER 9: THE TOURNAMENT

Tournaments—where knights fight each other in jousts and war games—are common at Camelot. Hank appreciates the spectacle even if his "practical mind" finds tournaments pointless. Besides, as a "statesman," he must participate in the activities that are important to the community. Calling himself a "statesman" reminds him to mention that the first official act of his "administration" is to establish a patent office.

In line with Hank's ambitions to create a nineteenth-century society in sixth-century Britain, he makes himself into the "statesman" in charge of an "administration." Thus, while denigrating the monarchy, Hank benefits from singular, unelected authority, which makes him sound suspiciously like a king.

One particularly grand tournament lasts more than a week and involves 500 knights. Spectators dressed in gaudy colors flock to the affair, enthralled by the spectacle and the violence. The crowd's shouts and cheers mercifully drown out the sounds of the doctors amputating the limbs of injured knights. As part of his efforts to establish a newspaper, Hank asks a priest from his "Department of Public Morals and Agriculture" to write a report of the tournament's events.

Hank has an equivocal response to the tournament. He seems to be drawn to the spectacle while simultaneously rejecting the violence of the combat. Yet, it is important to remember that he isn't above indulging in violence and contests of power himself. He uses priests as newspaper reporters because, historically, they had the highest literacy rates among medieval people. But this also indicates the various ways that, once in a position of power, Hank must compromise his alleged values. Despite a mortal hatred of the Church, he's not above using it.

Although it lacks the "lurid description" of a real newspaper, the priest's piece captures the day's action in detail with the "antique wording" of the period. An excerpt details long list of battles between knights. Notably, Sir Gareth defeats many men (including Sir Dinadan and Sir Sagramore) by changing the colors of his **armor** each time he returns to the field. King Arthur then suggests that Launcelot challenge Gareth, but Launcelot declines, arguing that it would be cruel to defeat a knight on a day of such success and when Launcelot has already won so much honor.

The priest's description sounds like the passage from Arthurian legend that M.T. read in the prologue. Its antiquated language and phrasing remind Hank of the distance between himself and his own time and place. In the tournament, Gareth becomes unrecognizable when he wears different armor. This suggests that relying on appearances (of class, status, or power) alone is dangerous, since externalities like dress and decoration can be deceiving.

One event doesn't make it into the priest's final report. While fighting Sir Gareth, Sir Sagramore overhears Hank wishing for a knight's death. Sagramore (incorrectly) assumes it's directed at him, and he challenges Hank to a duel to take place three or four years in the future. The lapse of time is to allow Sir Sagramore to go on a quest for the Holy Grail. Hank observes that the knights of the Round Table go off, once a year or so, on this quest, although they never find the Grail.

Hank attributes Sir Sagramore's challenge to an accident of fate, even as he exhibits ongoing and clear disrespect for the institution of knighthood. His discussion of the quest is a good example: Hank clearly finds the search for the Holy Grail—the most elite adventure in Arthurian legend—silly and pointless.

CHAPTER 10: BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION

The court eagerly discusses the upcoming fight between Hank and Sir Sagramore. Many people encourage Hank to go on his own quest so he can gain enough renown to become a worthy opponent. Before questing, though, Hank wants to establish the "system and machinery" of his "future civilization." First, he sets up a "teacher **factory**" to build a system of schools (away from the Church's watchful eye) to train artisans and scientists. He also establishes a "complete variety" of Protestant churches. Hank believes in religious freedom and in separation of church and state—the only religious teaching in his system happens in special Sunday Schools. Next, he tries to modernize the mines.

As an American from the 19th century, Hank Morgan becomes a sort of reverse colonizer in his attempts to create a "modern" society in medieval England. Thus, he starts laying the groundwork for a civilization founded on American values like Protestant (as opposed to Catholic) Christianity and the separation of church and state. It's at this point that the limits of Hank's knowledge come into question. He may have a better education than the most learned medieval scholars, thanks to his 1300-year advantage, but it strains belief to accept that he could establish a teacher's college, half a dozen theologically distinct churches, and train both artisans and scientists. Finally, this is the first time he uses the word "factories" to describe his schools and other programs. The word suggests his vision is perhaps not as democratic as he claims, since factories tend to turn out a uniform product rather than a self-directed and individualistic population. Hank makes people with his values for his new civilization.

Four years pass, showing what a benign despot like Hank can accomplish. He has all the pieces of a 19th-century civilization ready to go, but he is introducing them slowly to avoid scaring people or attracting unwanted attention from the Church. He has quietly established military and naval academies, a newspaper, telegraph and telephone lines, and he's modernized the royal tax system. With everything running smoothly, he's finally willing to take on a quest.

Again, Hank emphasizes his superior knowledge and experience when he lists his various enterprises. But although he might know more than a sixth-century sage, it strains belief to accept that he knows enough about the army, navy, telecommunications, economics, and journalism and printing to create successful versions of each.

CHAPTER 11: THE YANKEE IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE

According to Hank, the country is full of "wandering liars" of both sexes. Sure enough, a woman soon appears at Camelot claiming that three one-eyed giants are holding her, her mistress, and 44 other noble and royal women captive in a distant castle. Although all the knights beg for the honor of the quest, the king (Arthur) assigns it to Hank. Clarence is as excited as Hank is annoyed.

Hank's opinion that almost everybody is a wandering liar points back to the tall tales Sir Kay told of his capture. And Sandy's tale does include a lot of unbelievable elements from the perspective of the 19th (or 21st) century. But to continue consolidating power, Hank must follow medieval conventions, including questing.

Hank calls for the young lady and asks her questions about the particulars of her account. He discovers that she's very fuzzy on the details. Her name is Alisande la Carteloise (Hank will call her Sandy). She can't acceptably explain how far or in which direction the ogres' castle lies. Hank likes to think of things as having fixed locations, while Sandy claims that God gives things their directions from each other, and that fixed locations are a vain attempt to thwart his will. When Hank complains to Clarence that he can't imagine how he's supposed to find the castle without a map, Clarence explains that Sandy will accompany him to show him the way. Hank is worried about what people will think if he and Sandy ride off alone, and he suddenly remembers his girlfriend in Connecticut.

Like Clarence earlier, Sandy becomes an important guide and interpreter for Hank as he sometimes struggles to understand medieval conventions. In this way, she offers medieval training to augment Hank's 19th-century training. But he asserts his dominance over her in several ways, including talking down to her and calling her by a shorter nickname to suit his own preferences. Sandy's arrival also opens a sudden and unexpected window into Hank's past, forcing him (and readers) to remember that he isn't really a knight-errant and that this isn't his rightful world.

The knights, good if childish creatures, eagerly give Hank pointers for his quest. They don't seem to see how it's illogical to give advice to a man they believe to be an all-powerful sorcerer. Tradition dictates that Hank will leave at dawn, but he's late because he has so much trouble getting into his **suit** of plate armor, which is heavy and renders him nearly immobile. Hank realizes the plate armor may have been an ignorant choice on his part; as he's dressing, he sees another knight outfitted for his own quest in a much more sensible outfit of chain mail. But Hank has no time to change. The others hoist him onto his horse, Sandy climbs up behind him, and they set off.

Yet again, Hank's interactions with the knights emphasize their childishness and lack of critical thinking skills, allowing him to feel. But Hank shows ignorance of medieval matters by selecting an inappropriate type of armor for his trip. This implies that he is, in effect, donning a costume to play a part. Once committed to the path, Hank can't deviate from it—a character trait that will later get him in trouble—and he refuses to take the time to correct his mistake.

As they ride through the village, the local boys throw clods of dirt at them, and Hank wishes he could hop down and settle the score. But without a derrick (a tower with a hoist on it), he has no hope of remounting the horse.

The rude village boys offer a point of connection between the medieval past and Hank's former world. But their disrespect also shows that in armor, Hank has become just another knight. Without the external appearance of his "Boss" role, his authority evaporates.

CHAPTER 12: SLOW TORTURE

As Hank and Sandy ride through the countryside, Hank reflects on its charm and beauty. But the romance soon wears off. The woods are shady and cool, but the exposed stretches of road are hot with glaring sunshine. The hot, heavy armor makes Hank sweaty, but he can't reach the handkerchief stashed in his helmet to wipe the sweat out of his eyes. Flies buzz mercilessly around his face, but his stiff, heavy coat prevents him from swatting them away.

The book criticizes an overly romantic view of the past and the Old World, which it sees as victims of monarchal and theological manipulation. Hank's uncomfortable experience in his hot armor plays contributes to this criticism. It suggests that readers should take what they encounter in books with caution, since victors often leave out the uncomfortable and unflattering parts of the story.

Finally, Hank and Sandy stop by a stream. Sandy removes Hank's helmet, brings him a drink, and douses him with cool water. But now they're stuck until someone else comes along, because Hank can't get back on the horse without the help of someone stronger than Sandy. And while they wait, he must listen to Sandy's ceaseless, silly chatter.

Although the suit of armor should protect Hank from danger, it instead makes him increasingly vulnerable and dependent on Sandy and random strangers for help. This episode helps to explain why Hank wants to create a 19th-century society: rather than conforming to the world he's in, he would prefer to remake it according to his preferences.

CHAPTER 13: FREEMEN!

Though the break initially feels like a relief, Hank quickly becomes dissatisfied because he can't light his pipe. He's found a tobacco substitute and started a match **factory**, but he forgot to bring matches on the quest. Also, he's hungry, but medieval custom says that knights must go on quests without picnic baskets.

Hank rejects the medieval paradigms of the quest, which throw the knight-errant on the mercy of fate, chance, or God for shelter, food, and safety. He prefers the stability and predictability represented by the products of industry, such as the matches from his factory. And he continues his colonial project by creating substitutes for New World products like tobacco.


When night falls, it brings a storm. Hank finds a dry place under a rock for Sandy, who sleeps soundly and wakes up refreshed. In contrast, Hank spends a cold, wet night being bitten by various bugs that crawl into his armor for warmth. Sandy's lack of concern about sleeping on the ground, missing a bath, or skipping a meal prove to him that the medieval people are just "modified savages."

This humorous episode illustrates the power of training: Sandy's medieval training prepared her for the hardships of a quest, and Hank's 19th-century training did not. Unable to relearn his habits, he struggles uncomfortably through the night. Then, true to form, rather than considering his own training, he dismisses Sandy and the rest of the knights-errant as an inferior.


Before sunrise, they are on the road again, Sandy riding the horse, and Hank limping wearily along behind her. Soon, they come upon a group of "ragged poor creatures" on road maintenance duty. Hank asks them to share their breakfast, but Sandy turns up her nose, saying she'd just as soon eat with cattle as with poor men such as these. They are independent farmers and artisans, so-called "freemen." And although, to Hank's sensibilities, these are the people who make up the "actual Nation," the aristocracy and the Church control every aspect of their lives. They rely on local lords or bishops for permission to move about the country and for flour to make their bread, and they pay taxes and tithes on their produce or wares. Hank even suggests that the lords and bishops feel the right to take the freemen's daughters for their sexual pleasures.

In the so-called "freemen"—who are still subject to the authority of the feudal aristocracy—Hank finds a clear example of the inferiority of Middle Ages to the 19th century and of monarchy to democracy. These men are free in title only, still required to relinquish unpaid good and labor and still dependent on their lords for protection. The novel uses the example of "droit du seigneur" (the lord's right to deflower the daughters of his freemen on their wedding nights) as the ultimate example of feudal evil. While widely accepted as fact in the 19th century when the book was written, modern historians tend to view it as a myth rather than historical reality.

These men, who were required to work for free on the lord bishop's roads three days each year, remind Hank of the "blessed Revolution" in France. In Hank's opinion, France experienced two reigns of terror, and the short one during which the people rebelled and murdered members of the aristocracy gets more attention than the longer one, which took place over centuries as the aristocracy took advantage of and abused the people. Hank asks the freemen if they had the chance to elect a leader whether they would choose a single man and his descendants to rule the nation forever. But the freemen can barely make sense of a government in which people have any choices at all. But one bright man grasps the concept and proclaims that no one would voluntarily choose to subjugate himself to a ruling family in that way.

The "reign of terror" was a phase of the French Revolution characterized by bloody massacres and public executions of churchmen and nobility. Hank suggests that the more important reign of terror occurred during the centuries in which the monarchy and the Church oppressed and abused the commoners. Invoking such a bloody period reinforces Hank's anti-monarchal values and suggests a latent tendency to use violence to achieve his ends. And it's important to remember that the advanced and improved government Hank tries to explain to the freemen isn't perfect: in the late-nineteenth century, all women and many poor, non-white Americans were unable to vote.

This man impresses Hank; Hank believes that if enough people held the man's views, then he could replace the monarchy with a new government. This would constitute an act of loyalty to the "real" and "substantial" country rather than its empty institutions and undeserving officeholders. Hank believes that the medieval peasants are "loyal to rags," that they occupy a lowly position invented by and belonging to monarchy. In contrast, he is from Connecticut, where the constitution gives political power to the people, who have the right to alter the government as they judge best.

This one freeman represents a kind of ideal medieval man for Hank, which again suggests that Hank wants to use his factories to make one specific sort of person, not necessarily the whole variety that makes up a truly democratic society. This is also the first time he talks openly about his plans to overthrow a government he considers illegitimate. He feels entitled to do this based on the rights granted to him by a constitution that won't be written for centuries yet. Rather than improving the medieval world from within, Hank intends to impose his ideas on it as if it's a colony.

In medieval England, Hank is like a stockholder in a company where six people out of 1,000 make the choices and take the benefits, while the other 994 do all the work. These 994 need a new system that Hank is so impatient to see that he wishes he could start a revolution like Jack Cade or Wat Tyler. But he needs enough people behind him. He settles for sending the smartest of the road-workers—bearing a letter written by Hank in the man's own blood—to his "Man **Factory**."

Continuing with his revolutionary musings, Hank thinks about two Englishmen who led uprisings against feudalism: Wat Tyler (who led the 1381 Peasants' Revolt) and Jack Cade (who marched with a rebel army against London in the 1450s). And the suggestion of a bloody revolutionary lurks behind Hank's using the man's blood as ink.

CHAPTER 14: "DEFEND THEE, LORD!"

To show his appreciation for the meal, Hank gives the freemen three pennies (by now he has the kingdom using American monetary values). They give him a flint and steel and help him mount his horse. Finally underway again, Hank gratefully uses the flint to light his pipe. But when he puffs its smoke, the freemen run away in terror, assuming that he is a dragon. Hank calms them down by explaining that he only uses enchantments like this against his enemies.

The freemen confirm Hank's low opinion of medieval intelligence when they take him to be a dragon because he's smoking a pipe. Yet again, Hank finds that fear is a potent source of power. And while he calms the men down, he doesn't take the opportunity to correct or educate them. He might profess a desire to create a knowledgeable, self-governing society, but he frequently takes advantage of ignorance and fear to enhance his own power instead.

Hank and Sandy spend the night with a holy hermit before resuming their journey. At midafternoon on the following day, Sandy warns Hank to defend himself. A short way off, some knights are preparing to challenge him. Hank lights his pipe, and when the knights charge, he shoots a stream of smoke through the bars in his helmet. Like the freemen, they scatter in fear, waiting just outside of Hank's range. He wants to leave immediately before they regather their wits and attack again, but Sandy explains that he has defeated them. She goes to talk to the knights on his behalf, explaining that they've met "The Boss" and must now turn themselves in at Camelot to wait for Hank's return.

The trick with the smoke that proved so effective with the freemen allows Hank to defeat this bunch of knights without any violence—and also without him having to engage in hand-to-hand combat, where the knights (trained since childhood in wearing armor and wielding swords) would have a distinct advantage. Again, Hank uses fear to control others and assert his power and dominance over them.

CHAPTER 15: SANDY'S TALE

As they ride on, Hank asks Sandy where the seven defeated knights "hang out." Once she understands what it means, she is charmed by the turn of phrase. She repeats it a few times then launches into the knights' history. Hank regrets getting her going, since she's impossible to stop once she starts talking.

Thus far, readers have seen Hank befuddled by the strange, medieval language at Camelot. But now, as he solidifies his own power and position in the kingdom, he begins to teach Sandy some of his 19th-century slang. He's not so dependent on his interpreters as he was.

According to Sandy, Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine discovered a dozen ladies dishonoring a knight's shield. Hank interrupts to say he believes it, since even the most well-bred medieval woman could learn a lot about manners, in his opinion, from the lowliest 19th-century telephone operator. Returning to her tale, Sandy explains that the women told Gawaine that the shield's owner hated women. They wanted Gawaine, a man of prowess, to challenge the shield owner for them. Hank interrupts again to inform Sandy that a brainy man is more valuable than a strong one. But since Camelot is "a court of Comanches" he feels that the women are no better than "squaw[s]" who want "the biggest buck."

Sandy tells her story with the detail and diction of a medieval romance. And because Hank finds this way of storytelling fanciful and tedious, he interrupts her frequently. Sandy learns Hank's slang but is undeterred by his interruptions, suggesting the potential—and the limits—of his attempts to retrain her. She learns to accept some, but not all his modern ways. When Hank interrupts, he uses racist slurs and the name of a Native tribe that was assigned by a colonizing force to associate the medieval people with Native Americans, implying the inferiority of both groups. He uses the language of colonizers as he criticizes the society he plans to colonize himself.

Sandy resumes her tale, with Hank occasionally interrupting to correct her archaic phrasing. The woman-hating knight was Irish prince Marhaus. Sir Gawaine warned the women that the two knights guarding their tower wouldn't be able to withstand him. And indeed, when Marhaus appeared, he quickly defeated their champions. Hank's attention wanders, and he picks up the thread of the story again after Sir Uwaine has joined the battle against Marhaus.

Sandy's story so bores Hank that he stops paying attention. He aspires to run the kingdom, but his evident disinterest in the affairs of its ruling classes points toward trouble he will have in the future. By ignoring the needs, desires, and values of the society he plans to colonize, he leaves himself unprepared for its resistance.

Hank interrupts with a complaint about Sandy's limited vocabulary and repetitive narrative style. Without details, he says her stories are "pale and noiseless—just ghosts scuffling in a fog." Undisturbed, Sandy picks up where she left off, with Marhaus unhorsing Sir Gawaine. Hank slips into daydreams about boyhood trips to the seashore, and he ruminates on the misfortune of strong and brave men like the knights throwing away their energies to fight each other.

Hank's comments on Sandy's storytelling here may represent his desire for his 19th-century way of doing things. But it's also an opportunity for Mark Twain to get in digs at other writers; since he himself is such a colorful writer, then others must be the pale ghosts in the fog. In any case, Hank's complete disinterest in the concerns and affairs of the sixth century allows him to daydream and judge the knights for their culturally determined choices.

When Hank's attention returns to the story, the knights have come upon three damsels (ladies) by a fountain. Hank tries to convince Sandy to give the characters accents, like an Irish brogue for Marhaus. Sandy ignores him, doggedly returning to her story. The ladies are 60, 30, and 15 years old, and the youngest reminds Hank of his telephone operator girlfriend. In Connecticut, he would pick up the telephone just to hear her greeting of "Hello, Central." Hank loses himself in sad thoughts until a castle appears in the distance around sunset. Sandy recognizes it but doesn't know to whom it belongs.

As this chapter draws to a close, Hank rides with Sandy, and his thoughts freely wander between her story and memories of his own time and place. Hearing the history of the knights he defeated seems to ignite his own homesickness and nostalgia; no one in Sandy's stories has come as far or as mysteriously as Hank himself. Hank shows his attachment to modern technology in the way his memory of his girlfriend specifically involves calling her on the phone.

CHAPTER 16: MORGAN LE FAY

According to the Round Table's knights-errant, not all castles are good places to stop. And while Hank usually feels that their tales are vastly overexaggerated, he does like to find out who owns a place before he knocks on the door. As he and Sandy approach the castle, they encounter a knight wearing an advertisement placard for "Persimmon's Soap." This is one of Hank's civilizing projects. He hopes that the ads will undermine chivalry by making the knights look silly, and that if he can introduce a basic idea of cleanliness into the nobility and the populace, it will subtly undermine the Church's authority. Since the established Church is, in his opinion, a "slave pen," he doesn't have any scruples about undermining it.

For all his talk about education and democratic ideals, Hank's early initiatives focus on middle-class, 19th-century American creature comforts like tobacco and soap. And as with other of Hank's plans, the connection between soap and undermining the authority of the Church or placard advertisements and reducing respect for chivalry remains murky. It seems as if Hank believes that if he can just recreate the conveniences and technologies of the 19th century, democratic ideals will arise on their own.

A sales-knight is supposed to read the signs for the illiterate, then explain what the product is. If the lords and ladies of a castle are afraid to try the soap, he's supposed to demonstrate how to use the soap on a dog or himself. If all else fails, he should wash a hermit. If he encounters another knight-errant, he should wash him and turn him into a sales-knight. Hank's soap **factory** supports this effort; the factory is quickly growing, though Camelot's residents don't appreciate the factory's stink.

The uphill battle the sales-knights face shows the power of training to influence people's behavior. Soap is not harmful and even beneficial—but it's so strange and novel to the medieval mindset that it requires Herculean efforts to overcome people's fears. This should suggest to Hank that the changes he hopes for will be harder to achieve than he anticipates.

The sales-knight tells Hank that the castle belongs to Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister. Then he admits that his sales trip is going poorly. He hasn't sold a single cake of soap. He tried washing a hermit, but the hermit died and will be turned into a saint. This knight used to be renowned for great feats, which Sandy tells Hank all about as they ride to the castle.

The sales-knight's failures highlight the difficulty Hank Morgan faces in reaching his goal of remaking the kingdom in the image of the 19th century. Appropriately, Hank finds himself visiting a shining example of medieval power in Morgan le Fay.

Morgan le Fay has an unpleasant reputation. She's a sorceress, a wicked and devilish woman full of cold-blooded malice. She's clearly in charge, with more power than her subdued husband, King Uriens, or her brawny son, Sir Uwaine (one of the knights in Sandy's tale). In person, Morgan is surprisingly beautiful and alluring enough to make Hank conclude that her evil reputation is an exaggeration. But then, she kills a servant in cold blood for an innocent stumble. Slightly stunned, Hank still has the presence of mind to appreciate how quickly and thoroughly Morgan commands her servants to clean up the bloody mess.

The alignment of their names creates a strong association between Hank Morgan and Morgan le Fay. In many ways, Morgan epitomizes the feudal monarchy Hank wants to topple. Still, he finds her alluring and impressive despite her violence. This suggests a tendency toward physical force that Hank has so far denied. He also notices the contrast between her looks and reputation. Importantly, this contrast foreshadows ways in which Hank's efforts at modernization seem beneficial but ultimately unleash chaos and violence.

When Hank momentarily forgets the bad blood between Morgan and her brother and compliments King Arthur, Morgan orders him into the dungeon. Fortunately, Sandy pipes up, asking if Morgan covets destruction; it's dangerous to cross "The Boss." Instantly, Morgan becomes gracious, fawning over Hank and begging for an example of his great sorcery.

Although he's been in the kingdom for a little more than four years, Hank still has much to learn about medieval society. In this moment of danger, when he falls back on his modern training and forgets all he's learned about the conflicts of this medieval kingdom, Sandy steps into the breach. Luckily, his fearsome reputation nudges Morgan back into line.

CHAPTER 17: A ROYAL BANQUET

Morgan tries to give Hank an excuse to show off. The call to evening prayer spares Hank from having to demonstrate his sorcery. No matter how immoral they are, the members of the medieval nobility are "deeply and enthusiastically religious." Everyone prays in their family chapel several times a day. After prayers, Morgan welcomes her guests with a grand banquet. While people sit down at tables according to their social ranks, Morgan's band plays truly awful and discordant music. People socialize over dinner, with guests drinking heavily and telling improper stories.

Hank's reputation depends on people's beliefs, so Morgan's desire to see it poses a serious danger to him. Since his magical "effects" are all the result of carefully planned applications of technology (or lucky coincidences of natural phenomena like eclipses), there's no way he can fulfil her request. Luckily for him, despite his aversion to the Roman Catholic Church (in part because it cares more about power than morality), the court's belief in its rules saves him in this moment.

Suddenly, an old woman hobbles into the hall, calling a curse down on Morgan for killing her grandson (the servant she murdered earlier). Unafraid of the curse, Morgan instantly orders the woman to be burnt at the stake. Sandy jumps up to intervene, promising that "The Boss" will dissolve the castle if harm comes to the woman. An alarmed Hank knows that he can't follow through on the threat. Fortunately, Morgan believes his reputation enough to back down. Then she's afraid to execute the band leader without Hank's blessing. Hank makes the band play their song again and since it's so awful, he gives her permission to execute not just the composer but the whole band.

Thus far in the book, Hank has asserted his abhorrence of violence, claiming his own interest in fair laws and peace. Yet, in this moment, he reveals himself to be as capricious and bloodthirsty as any of the medieval nobles he reviles. It seems unlikely that a band leader or composer in a democracy would be executed for poor music. But in this moment, Hank's thirst for power and authority draws him into alignment with Morgan over the values he claims to hold. He even surpasses her violence by condemning the whole band to death.

During a lull in the after-dinner conversation, Hank hears a scream from the depths of the castle. Morgan offers to take Hank to see the "blithe sight": her executioners are torturing a man who has been anonymously accused of poaching game that belongs to her. The torture is meant to extract his confession, since if he dies unconfessed, he'll go to hell. Morgan doesn't want to be responsible for his damnation, so she needs him to confess before she kills him.

The fate of the prisoner, as related by Hank, indicts the medieval nobility for their cruelty and capriciousness. The tortured man has been accused but not proven guilty, and in Hank's mind, the torture thus amounts to unjust punishment. However, it's important to remember that Hank's mercy is variable; he just executed the whole band. He seems to be more bothered by the man's lack of a fair trial than the pain of his torture.

In the torture chamber, a giant young peasant lies strapped to the rack, a table with winches at the ends. As the executioner puts tension on the winches, it pulls the man's arms and legs in opposite directions painfully. In the corner, a woman huddles with a small child. A horrified Hank stops the execution. He has the peasant unbound and then dismisses Morgan and her men, leaning on his position as "The Boss" to secure their compliance.

Hank's description of the torture chamber and instruments paints the time and place as barbaric, inhumane. This barbarity stands in implied contrast to his 19th-century experience. Yet, in the end, he intervenes in this situation on the strength of his reputation as "The Boss"—which he earned through manipulating people's fears in much the same way the threat of torture scares people into submission.

The peasant's wife rushes to embrace him. Hank, worried about a false accusation by the anonymous informant (whom Hank suspects of being the real poacher), asks to hear the rest of the story. He's surprised to learn that the peasant *is* the poacher. The poacher wants to avoid confessing because as long as he doesn't he can't be proven guilty and Morgan can't confiscate his property after his death, leaving his widow and child penniless. His wife wants him to secure a quicker, less painful death with a confession. These bitter laws disgust Hank, but the couple's bravery impresses him. He promises to send both to his "colony" where he has a "**Factory**" that turns "groping and grubbing automata into *men*."

In Morgan's castle, the power Hank possesses by virtue of being "the Boss" allows him to interfere with justice. Although he espouses democratic ideals, he freely uses his unelected authority as he sees fit, up to and including allowing guilty criminals to go free. The same sense of superiority that characterizes all medieval people as sub-human machines (as opposed to real, factory-produced "men") underwrites his casual assumption that his legal judgement is above reproach, whether he's executing the innocent or freeing the guilty.

CHAPTER 18: IN THE QUEEN'S DUNGEONS

Hank arranges to send the poaching peasant home. The priest asks Hank to punish the executioner for needlessly terrorizing the peasant's wife. This forces Hank to acknowledge, despite his distaste for the Church, that many low-level priests are truly decent, moral people. Hank doesn't want to get rid of religion entirely. But his distrust of singular authority means that he would prefer to have "forty sects" whose competition would prevent any single one from becoming too powerful. Hank declines to rack the executioner but punishes him by appointing him the new leader of the castle's band.

This episode with the priest forces Hank to question some of his assumptions about medieval society. However, Hank usually chooses to ignore or downplay evidence contrary to his established beliefs (for instance, that all priests are bad and greedy). Thus, he shows himself to be as blinded by his own beliefs and as he thinks the medieval people are blinded by superstition and ignorance.

Morgan is outraged to have been denied the peasant's property or his life. While Hank admits that law and custom entitle her to both, he claims that extenuating circumstances required him to pardon the prisoner. Morgan can't understand the concept of extenuating circumstances, forcing Hank to recognize the futility of trying to educate her. He reflects that a person's nature is the result of their training and education more than their inborn personality. Morgan is intelligent, but the norms of her century and class hold her back.

Episodes like this one, where Hank shows his intent to impose his values on medieval society rather than to change medieval society from within its own context, point toward the colonial attitude Hank has toward people he believes to be inferior to him morally and intellectually. Thus, while he claims to have a democratic project underway in England, many of his actions recall those of conquering colonizers. In other words, even as he expresses frustration with Morgan's inability to rise above her own training, he fails to critically examine the effects of his training on himself.


Hank and Morgan have mutually unintelligible concepts of justice. Morgan believes that she has the right to take the lives of her servants and peasants at will. By this logic, she doesn't own the murdered servant's family anything, but she still plans to pay his grandmother a recompense for his life to please Hank. Hank knows that she's going above her legal responsibility, but because he rejects the idea that she should own these lives can't respect her for her efforts. He offers her the weak compliment that her "people will adore [her]" for this generosity. But he knows that if he gets the chance, he will hang her for the crime of following laws that he thinks are "altogether too bad."

In judging Morgan, Hank places himself above the law. Earlier he explained that he feels the right to do so because his constitution (in 19th-century Connecticut) invests the people to change their government. But this isn't his government—he's an outsider. Thus, although he claims to be animated by democratic values, Hank's actions often suggest that he enjoys having unchecked power to impose his will on those around him. Morgan's frustration with being deprived of her rights provides insight into the kinds of resentments that will turn the nobility against Hank later in the book.


Thoroughly disgusted, Hank wants to leave, but his conscience demands that he first examine the contents of Morgan le Fay's dungeons. He finds a woman who was imprisoned on her wedding night nine years before for refusing a local lord "*le droit du Seigneur*" (the right to have sex with the bride before the groom does) and scratching him in the process. Her fiancée is in the dungeons too, but they have both been so physically and mentally destroyed by their confinement that they don't recognize each other when Hank reunites them.

Again, Hank's tour of Morgan's dungeons provides a litany of human rights abuses perpetuated by the medieval aristocracy he considers so barbaric. The "droit du seigneur," although almost certainly a historical fiction, is a particularly emotionally compelling example of aristocratic abuse. And it's easy for Hank to note medieval abuses without having to turn a critical eye on the sins of his own time and place.

Hank orders all but one of Morgan's 47 prisoners released. The one prisoner who remains imprisoned is awaiting execution for murdering one of Morgan's relatives. Hank doesn't care about this but does care that the man maliciously destroyed a village, as well, ruining the lives of his peasants in the process. The rest of the prisoners committed offenses like calling Morgan's hair "red" instead of "auburn" or declaring that no one could tell a king from a commoner without the distinctive **clothes** of rank. Hank sends the second man to his **factory**. Some of the prisoners have suffered psychological torture at Morgan's command; others have been there so long that no one remembers their names or crimes.

The reason Hank allows Morgan to keep the one prisoner highlights the democratic and populist values he holds—the man cruelly repressed and harmed the freemen living on his lands. But this provides another example of Hank holding himself above the law. There are no democratically decided laws for him to follow, and he refuses to acknowledge the monarchy's right to rule, which means that he makes decisions entirely based on his own thoughts and feelings. In this way, he is no better than Morgan, who jailed and tortured people as easily on silly offenses as treasonous ones. And again, Hank selectively sends to his factory people who already espouse the values he wants to inculcate, suggesting that his idea of democracy—government by the people—isn't as broad as he implies.

When Hank brings this procession of "human bats" into the sunshine, he expresses his wish that he could photograph the spectacle they present as evidence against the cruelty of the monarchy and Church. Morgan, who can't possibly know what "photograph" means, grabs an ax and offers to do it for him. But Hank stops her before she can do any further harm.

Again, despite the mercy he seems to show in freeing these prisoners, Hank can't resist applying the same dehumanizing language to them as everyone else. It seems he's no more capable of rising above his instinctive responses than Morgan.

CHAPTER 19: KNIGHT-ERRANTRY AS A TRADE

The next morning, Hank and Sandy are on the road again, riding through the pleasant fresh air. Hank is in a particularly good mood and allows Sandy to finish telling the story of the seven knights they met the day before. Having left the magical fountain with the 30-year-old damsel, Marhaus spent the night at the Duke of the South Marches's home. Marhaus, accepting the duke's challenge of combat, defeated him and his six sons. When they yielded, he commanded them to throw themselves on King Arthur's mercy at Camelot and promise to respect the king's knights. Hank and Sandy met the duke and his sons on their trip to the castle.

Hank attributes his good mood to allowing Sandy to tell her circuitous, medieval tale, again pointing to the way he holds himself above the culture he's found himself in. The story, which comes almost directly from Arthurian legend, carries themes of rivalry but also honor and hospitality. Victorious knights care for rather than destroy the losers. At this point, it's an open question whether Hank understands the importance of this moral.

After Sandy finishes her story, Hank declares he understands a little bit more about knight-errantry as a trade. A knight who can get valuable enough prisoners can make quite a bit of money off their ransoms. But as soon as a stronger man comes along, the knight is just as likely to find himself victim as victor. To his mind, it's even worse than cornering the market on pork just before a crash, because when the knight-errantry market has a reversal, there's no leftover pork to eat. Sandy can't quite understand this metaphor, although Hank respects her for trying despite a total lack of business education.

Typically, Hank takes Sandy's medieval story, filters it through his 19th-century, capitalistic sensibilities, and derives his own morals from it. First, Hank realizes that a knight-errant can make a lot of money, even though the medieval knights joust and quest for glory and honor, with ransoms being a secondary consideration. Second, and more importantly, the main lesson Hank derives from the tale is "might makes right"—whoever is strongest or most superior (as Hank believes himself to be) will prevail.

CHAPTER 20: THE OGRE'S CASTLE

Around noon, Hank and Sandy encounter Sir Madok de la Montaine, one of Hank's sales-knights who advertises toothbrushes and toothpaste. Madok explains that he fell victim to a prank that Sir Ossaise of Surluse, Hank's stove-polish man, played on him. (Hank wants to create demand for stove-polish so that when stoves are introduced, people will be ready to buy it.) Ossaise told Madok about a band of travelers in need of his products. Madok rushed though rough terrain to reach them, only to discover that they were the prisoners from Morgan's dungeons. They didn't have a tooth among them.

Hank's second sales-knight also sells hygiene products which both signify the modernity of the 19th century and, by extension, offer a reminder of the uncivilized nature of medieval life. But the advertisements for stove polish invite questions since Hank hasn't introduced stoves yet. Even the toothpaste, as the practical joke demonstrates, has limited use in this time and place. This raises questions about Hank's motives and suggests that he might not be prioritizing the most important or useful changes to medieval culture.

Still angry, Sir Madok rides off. Later in the afternoon, Hank and Sandy see one of the freed prisoners. The prisoner's friends and neighbors welcome him home, but it's a sad sight because imprisonment has destroyed his mind and memories and left him a broken man. It's also sad because it shows Hank how willingly the commoners accept their lot in life despite its injustices. Hank realizes that "goody-goody talk" alone can't free people; sometimes a bloody revolution is necessary. But he claims that he's not the man for bloody revolutions.

The situation of the freed prisoner does point toward the cruelty and injustice of the medieval laws, thus confirming Hank's belief about medieval moral inferiority. But as he increasingly thinks of revolution in terms of violence, it seems that he himself tends toward cruelty; he did just allow Morgan to execute a bunch of people for the crime of playing their music badly.

Two days later, Sandy announces that they've arrived at the ogres' castle. But Hank looks ahead of them and sees three scrawny swineherds guarding a pigsty. Sandy decides that the castle must have been enchanted. With a promise that he knows how to treat a lady whether she looks like a princess or a pig, Hank springs into action. He buys the herd off the swineherds. This saves the swineherds from bankruptcy by giving them the cash they need to pay their taxes to the lord of the manor and the Church. When Hank opens the gate, Sandy rushes in to embrace and address the pigs as if they were fine ladies. Finally, after considerable difficulty, Hank and Sandy herd the animals to a manor house ten miles away.

Sandy's insistence that the swineherds are ogres, despite the evidence she presumably sees with her own eyes, recalls the credulous way that the court at Camelot accepted Kay's claims that Hank was a magical giant. This suggests the strength of training to direct belief—taught that magic and marvels fill the world, Sandy works to accommodate reality to this belief. In playing along, Hank completes his quest, but he also seems to miss the fact that he's conforming to Sandy's belief. He's missing the warning that it will be harder than he assumes to overcome the lessons nurtured into the medieval population.

CHAPTER 21: THE PILGRIMS

Hank is exhausted from the adventure, but he can't sleep because the pigs—which are running around in the house—are making lots of noise. He's also puzzled by how Sandy, as sane as anyone in the kingdom, could be deluded enough to think the pigs were women. But sanity is in the eye of the beholder: if he told her about the technology of the 19th century, like trains, hot air balloons, and telephones, she would think that he was crazy.

During his sleepless night, Hank considers the question of Sandy's training and how deeply it has shaped her ideas about the world. Neither the sound, nor the smell, nor the sight of the pigs can convince her that she and Hank didn't rescue ladies. His catalogue of modern technology that Sandy couldn't imagine also points toward the importance of experience in maintaining belief.

In the morning, Sandy serves the pigs a grand breakfast at the main table, while Hank (because he is a commoner) is banished to a lesser seat in the hall. It turns out, to Hank's surprise, that this isn't Sandy's home—they've just dropped off a herd of pigs at a random nobleman's house. Sandy, however, maintains that the homeowner will be honored to host so many fine ladies. Hank's next worry is how they're going to get all these "ladies" home to their families, but Sandy breezily assures him that each lady is responsible for herself from now on. They come from such far-flung places that escorting them all would be an impossible task. She and Hank can leave them and return to Camelot together.

The pig breakfast criticizes the absurd limits of rank of title. It suggests that, in an aristocratic society, "nobles" deserve respect no matter how unqualified, dirty, or even un-human they are. In terms of the book's ongoing criticism of monarchy and the old order represented by Arthurian England, the pigs stand for any and all hereditary nobles. Further, this episode literalizes Hank's ongoing comparison of medieval people to animals, underwriting his imperialistic ambitions to force his vision of society on the sixth century.

While Sandy bids farewell to "the pork," Hank suggests that the servants to clean up the place before the family returns. He wants them to "dust around" where the "nobilities" left their mark, and he's horrified when all the servants do is add another layer of rushes over the excrement and filth.

Since Hank compares medieval people to animals frequently throughout the book, the pig-ladies seem to represent the limit of medieval animality. The suggestion that no one cares where the animals defecate contributes to Hank's dehumanizing opinions about the backwardness of feudal society.

No sooner are Hank and Sandy on their way then they come upon a procession of **well-dressed**, well-equipped, middle-class pilgrims heading towards the Valley of Holiness. Like Chaucer's pilgrims, they are pleasant and merry, and they're telling off-color tales.

Leaving the pigs behind, Hank and Sandy encounter a cheerful sight that initially seems like it might show the Middle Ages (as a representative of the Old World) in a good light. Even so, the pilgrims tell crude stories.

Sandy explains the Valley of Holiness to Hank. Long ago, a group of monks moved there to study, pray, and practice austerities, like not bathing. Their spiritual endeavors quickly attracted pilgrims. There was no water source in the Valley initially, until God miraculously provided it in response an abbot's (the leader of a community of monks) prayer. Unfortunately, fresh water allowed the devil to tempt the monks into worldly vanities like bathing. They constructed a bath. Because their desire for physical cleanliness destroyed their spiritual purity in God's eyes, he dried up the well as punishment. Only after they destroyed the bath and vowed never to wash again did the water flow again. The community prospered, and now it includes a monastery, a convent, a foundling asylum (orphanage), and all the kinds of hermits a person could wish to see.

Sandy's explanation of the Valley of Holiness satirizes the alleged holiness of Roman Catholic monks insofar as it suggests that their idea of spiritual cleanliness opposes Hank's modern ideas about physical cleanliness. And since a criticism of Catholic Church forms a key part of the book's criticism of the Old World generally, the episode in the Valley of Holiness serves to reinforce Hank's (and the book's views) on the superiority of the New World. This story also chides what the books sees as the superstitious element of Catholic faith since the monks fail to base their decisions on reason.

Later that afternoon, Hank, Sandy, and the pilgrims encounter another group of travelers. They are also pilgrims of a sort, but they are far less merry than the first band because they are slaves. These starved, filthy, and injured people are a pitiable sight. One stumbles with fatigue, and the slave drivers whip her furiously. Hank feels horror, but the pilgrims just note how expertly the driver wields the whip. Hank watches as a family is torn apart because the mother and baby were sold to a local lord, but not the father.

The contrast between the well-off pilgrims and the poor, downtrodden slaves emphasizes the cruelty and inhumanity of the medieval caste system and contributes to the book's criticism of Old World social hierarchies. But this episode also forms part of the book's satirical criticism of 19th-century American social issues, specifically its history of slavery. The book was published only a few decades after the end of the Civil War.


The band of pilgrims stops at an inn for the night. In the morning, Hank intercepts Sir Ozana le Cure Hardy, another of his knights. Ozana carries stovepipe **hats**. Hank hopes he can undermine the power of the knighthood by making knights adopt ridiculous fashions. Sir Ozana bears bad news from the Valley of Holiness, where the miraculous fountain stopped flowing nine days ago. As prayers and repentance haven't had an effect, the monks have sent for "The Boss" and Merlin to restore the miracle. Merlin is already there, working his charms.

Because clothing indicates status in medieval society, Hank tries to undermine the power of chivalry through foolish-looking fashions. But this demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of fashion—if enough knights adopt, say, the stovepipe hats, they will simply become part of the style and not look ridiculous. More to the point, at the inn Hank learns of another opportunity to press his advantage over Merlin and consolidate more power.

Hank sends Ozana back to Camelot with a requisition for Clarence to send men and supplies from the Chemical Department to the Valley of Holiness as quickly as possible.

Hank's request for chemicals and tools accentuates the contrast between magic, faith, and superstition—represented by the monks and Merlin—and science. In this way, the book suggests that the Catholic faith lies closer to superstition than science, further demonstrating the superiority of the new, Protestant, scientific world over the superstitious Old World.

CHAPTER 22: THE HOLY FOUNTAIN

The pilgrims, notwithstanding the miraculous fountain is out of order, insist on continuing as quickly as possible to the Valley of Holiness. The band arrives shortly before sunset to find a community shrouded in a sense of doom. The abbot in charge sheds tears of relief on Hank's arrival.

Although Hank attributes the pilgrims' lack of rational action to their human nature rather than their medieval social training, his comments nevertheless continue to imply the inferiority of the superstitious medieval mindset.

Because he needs to buy some time for his materials to arrive, Hank explains that it's bad form for two rival magicians to work at the same time. He will wait for Merlin to give up before he does his own magic. The abbot, confident in the authority of the Church to command everyone in the kingdom, offers to order Merlin to stop or to "persuade" him by more subtle means to give up. But Hank points out that an annoyed Merlin might then try to sabotage the fountain in order to frustrate his rival, "The Boss."

As with the earlier eclipse, Hank's "magic" depends on the rational laws of nature and scientific principles, which prevent him from performing his miracles on demand. To further concentrate his authority, he must create the circumstances of his own success. And Hank must fight against the tendency of the feudal system (represented here by the Church and the abbot) to impose its own will regardless of justice or fairness.


Despite this enforced wait, the monks are so relieved by Hank's arrival that they finally eat a decent meal and begin to cheer up. When start drinking mead (alcohol), they become very jolly indeed, telling off-color stories and singing "questionable songs." Hank throws his own joke into the mix, although he has to repeat himself many times before the crowd finally understands the joke well enough to laugh.

The fact that the monks trust Hank more than God (or Merlin) to fix their fountain suggests that their belief isn't as true or as strong as it might be. Moreover, in their relief, the revert to crude, uncivilized medieval habits. The vanguards of the old order—the Church and the nobility—aren't capable, in the book's opinion, of being civilized.

In the morning, Hank visits the well, where Merlin is busy waving his arms and muttering incantations. He's too busy to stop Hank from checking out the situation. The miraculous "fountain" is a regular well lined with stones from which the monks draw water with a bucket. Hank suspects that it's sprung a leak, a suspicion he confirms after having the monks lower him in the bucket. He had hoped to perform a more spectacular miracle with a dynamite torpedo, but it won't be necessary. Hank will have to wait for that show.

Merlin's inattention to both the fountain itself and to Hank's presence shows how blinded he is by superstition, by extension implicating almost all the medieval people in this same blindness. This also points yet again to the power of training: reason seems to be bafflingly unavailable to the medieval psyche because their environment and culture condition them to believe in, and look for, the miraculous instead of the reasonable. But, ironically, even as he judges the medieval "savages" for their irrationality, Hank regrets not being able to play on their superstitions and fears by showing off his new bomb.

Having determined that he can restore the fountain, Hank promises the monks that he will try if or when Merlin fails. And he warns them that it is a difficult miracle. The monks aren't surprised; their records show that it took a year to restore the well the last time it stopped. Hank plans to exploit the notion that the task is difficult, since he knows that a person can enlarge even the smallest thing with "the right kind of advertising."

The monks' inability to understand what's obvious (at least to Hank) about the well's decidedly mundane mechanics makes them appear childish and ignorant. This ignorance supports Hank's exploitation, and his choices here contribute to the book's exploration of the dynamics of colonialism. Instead of teaching the monks, Hank would prefer to exploit their ignorance to increase his power over them.

On his way back to the pilgrims' quarters, Hank runs into Sandy, who has been out "sampling the hermits." He wants to do the same if the hermits don't "knock off," "shut up shop," or "draw the game" at noon. Sandy can't understand his 19th-century slang, but then again, he has a hard time following the flowery and long-winded apology she offers for her ignorance. Hank feels ashamed for teasing her over things she couldn't possibly be expected to know. He apologizes and they set off together to visit the hermits. All afternoon, they drift from one to another, marveling at their various forms of spiritual exercise.

Hank initially mocks Sandy for her inability to understand his 19th-century slang. This makes him seem callous and cruel and suggests that he might not be as morally superior as he believes. In response, Sandy offers an oblique criticism of his behavior, and Hank seems able to accept it mostly because it's indirect. Later, Clarence will be able to offer criticism obliquely as well. Moments like this emphasize the way that Hank's sense of superiority isolates and disadvantages him.

The most famous hermit lives atop a tall pillar. He bows rapidly and repetitively, and this motion is so nearly perpetual that it gives Hank an idea. Hank briefly turns aside from the chronology of his narrative, to explain how he later hooked the hermit up to a sewing machine and produced 18,000 linen shirts over five years. They sold well, due to their allegedly holy properties and a widespread advertising campaign. Hank even introduced a fashion line before the monk's health started failing. Then, he unloaded the business for a tidy profit on some knights prior to the hermit's death.

The hermit Hank describes here is based on the historical St Simeon Stylites, a fifth-century Syrian holy man. The exotic weirdness of his actions suggests that gap between the superstitious medieval worldview and Hank's modern one. But his business plan casually dehumanizes the man, suggesting that 19th-century business practices see people as cogs in an economic machine rather than as people. Although Hank criticizes the Church for using religion to consolidate wealth and power, he's willing to do that himself.

CHAPTER 23: RESTORATION OF THE FOUNTAIN

By Saturday, despite waving his hands and generating a lot of smoke, Merlin has given up. He explains that a demon with an unpronounceable name has cursed the well and that no one can break the curse. Hank agrees with Merlin's assessment about the demon but assures the abbot that he can break the spell, as long as no one comes within a half mile of the well while he works his magic. Merlin warns Hank that breaking the spell requires saying the demon's name, and saying it means certain death. Hank, unafraid, tells Merlin to go home and get back to predicting the weather—a branch of magic in which Merlin is particularly unskilled.

Merlin's dramatic motions align him with the repetitive bowing of the hermit Hank's just visited and seem to form part of the book's criticism of Roman Catholicism by suggesting that the dramatic motions of the faith are nonsense. If Merlin represents the superstitions of the Old World and Catholicism, Hank stands for a modern (implicitly protestant and American) approach to the world that shuns superstition and fear for rationality. And, given his desire for power, Hank can't resist throwing in a personal dig against Merlin's poor job as a sorcerer.

That evening, Hank's men and supplies arrive from Camelot, and they make quick work of repairing the well's brickwork. They place an iron pump and lead pipe to spray water under the chamber door and stage bowls of Greek Fire and fireworks on the roof. Hank wants to work his miracle on Sunday, since Sunday miracles are worth more, so he calls the crowds to witness his show starting at 10:30 pm.

Hank accomplishes his miracle through the application of simple 19th-century engineering. But, because he thirsts for power, he reveals the results with a dramatic show designed to impress ignorant medieval minds. His motivations include both helping the people out and increasing his own status.

The excitement in the crowd builds to a fever pitch. Hank stands on a platform, holding out his hands and pronouncing nonsense words. At the end of each string of syllables, he electronically ignites one of the bowls of Greek Fire on the roof. Then he commands the "fell spirit" to "disgorge" the rest of his "infernal fires" into the sky and depart. Uttering more nonsense, Hank ignites the fireworks and starts the pump. The crowd goes wild when they see water flowing under the door.

Yet again, although Hank (and the book) disparages the slavish and superstitious medieval beliefs, he leans on these same beliefs to generate his own aura of power. Instead of taking the opportunity to educate, Hank appropriates religious language to manipulate medieval beliefs to his advantage.

Hank shows the monks how to work the pump—they won't have to laboriously draw the water by hand anymore—and retires feeling very pleased with himself. It has been "an immense night." He has proved himself to be a superior being to everyone in the sixth century.

Hank's sense of well-being derives from his ability to outsmart and outperform the medieval population, thanks to the unfair advantage of coming from 1300 years in the future. Moments like this raise questions about meritocracy. Technically, Hank can outperform anyone in the sixth century. But, like the nobles, who have power because of their families, he starts from ahead. It's not clear that he'd be as successful if the playing field were even.

CHAPTER 24: A RIVAL MAGICIAN

Hank decides to do something valuable with his esteemed reputation. He uses the arrival of one of his soap sales-knights as an opportunity to preach the good news of personal cleanliness. He persuades the abbot to wash with the promise that it won't drive the water away again. But then Hank comes down with a bad cold. While he convalesces, he comes up with a plan to disguise himself as a freeman and learn about the lives and circumstances of the poor.

In reestablishing the baths in the Valley of Holiness, Hank not only makes a great leap forward for his soap business, but he also further asserts his superiority over the authority of the Church. It seems that only nature itself outpowers Hank, as demonstrated by his susceptibility to the common cold. Hank's plan to travel incognito initiates the second half of the novel.

One morning during his recovery, Hank talks a walk past a cave that a hermit recently vacated. Inside, he hears a bell and a voice calling "Hello, Central! Is this you, Camelot?" It seems that Hank's telephone clerks have established an office in the Valley. The clerk in the cavern connects Hank to Clarence at Camelot, who tells Hank that the king and queen are on the way to the Valley of Holiness to see the restored waters. They will arrive within three days.

The telephone outpost offers a reminder to readers that Hank's civilizing plans continued in the background while he's been on his quest. It also demonstrates the advantage 19th-century technologies give Hank in his plan to rule the kingdom, since the telephone gives him knowledge of the king's actions that no one else has.

Clarence further reports that King Arthur, delighted with Hank's idea to raise as standing army, has already begun recruiting officers. Disappointingly, none of them are from Hank's "West Point" (the military academy he's secretly established). But because two candidates are traveling with the king, Hank will have the chance to examine them himself. Clarence connects Hank with the new telephone line at West Point so that Hank can request a cadet and several professors to meet him in the Valley of Holiness as soon as possible.

Although Hank mentioned his military and naval academies in passing earlier, the discussion of a standing army and his "West Point" military academy points toward in the increasing militarism of his agenda. By involving himself in military affairs, Hank's designs on the kingdom look more like conquest than altruistic modernization, and the threat of military violence recalls the military might that colonizers used to overpower native populations.

Back at the monastery, Hank finds a traveling magician who claims that he can see what any person anywhere in the world is doing. When Hank challenges the magician to say what he himself is doing with the fingers hidden behind his back, the magician clarifies that he sees people "of lofty birth." Hank asks what Arthur is up to; the magician says he's napping after a hunt. Hank disagrees and predicts that the king and queen are riding and that they will arrive in the Valley on the afternoon of the third day.

The unnamed magician demonstrates a serious threat to Hank's authority: it only exists insofar as people believe in his power, and belief seems to depend more on putting on a good show than anything else. Thus, the audience tends to believe the flashy magician over Hank, despite his current track record of success (the eclipse, Merlin's tower, and the fountain.)

On the day that Hank thinks King Arthur is supposed to arrive, the monks show no sign of preparation for a royal visit, demonstrating their trust in the fake magician's predictions. Not wanting the king to arrive "without any fuss and feathers," Hank rounds up some pilgrims and hermits to greet the royal entourage. When the abbot realizes he's been caught unawares by the king, he feels humiliated about his failure of hospitality. And Hank's reputation rises even higher.

Although Hank despises the unearned authority of the aristocracy and royalty, he still possesses an instinctive reverence for Arthur's authority; hence he can't imagine the king arriving without a grand greeting. It also helps his own cause against the rival magician to ensure that people witness the vindication of his prediction.

CHAPTER 25: A COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION

Whenever King Arthur travels, part of the court goes with him so he can continue to do royal business. That's why the commission examining army candidates is with him. The king also continues to judge cases as the Chief Justice of the King's Bench on the road. Hank considers King Arthur a "wise and humane judge," although his training means that he has an unconscious bias toward nobility. In Hank's mind, it's similar to how people of his day talk about the "blunting effects of slavery" on morality. The aristocracy are like slaveholders; both consider regard themselves as "superior being[s]."

By Hank's account, Arthur is a hardworking and diligent king who earns respect through his title—but also with his own actions. Thus, he offers an example of how nature and nurture together can make a truly great man. Nevertheless, his socially determined (in Hank's words, "trained") biases still get the better of him. Hank recognizes this tendency in the people of his own age, too: slaveholders were trained to believe in their inherent superiority. Yet they lost the American Civil War, foreshadowing the future Hank envisions for the medieval aristocracy.

One case that King Arthur hears in the Valley particularly bothers Hank. An orphaned young noblewoman married a poor young man. Her father was a vassal to a bishop (under the bishop's authority). The bishop claimed that, by marrying secretly, the girl had denied his "*droit du seigneur.*" The penalty is confiscation of her property. The girl argues that, since church law demands that bishops be celibate, she denied him nothing. She's in a bind since she was destined to lose something (her property or her virtue) either way. This reminds Hank of the story about how London aldermen raised money by nominating unqualified people for sheriff, then fining them for refusing to serve.

This case illustrates not just the limits of the king's training but also the cruelty and injustice of the aristocratic system, particularly when the Church abuses it. Thus, this episode contributes to the book's critique of the old order that medieval England represents. Notably, this is the third time Hank's outrage against the nobility hinges on the idea of "droit du seigneur." Although modern consensus agrees this was a myth, the book uses it as a visceral example of injustice. Both the girl's case and the aldermen's example illustrate the way feudal systems encourage power imbalances.

King Arthur sides with the bishop, reasoning that if the girl had informed the bishop of her marriage, he could have gotten a dispensation allowing him to exercise his rights. As punishment, the girl and her husband lose all their possessions to him. Hank believes that brutal laws like these are only possible where not everyone has a vote, and that even an enlightened monarchy can't provide the best conditions for all its citizens.

Hank's belief in the inherent superiority of his own ideals blinds him to their limits. He calls out the hypocrisy of the bishop (who took a vow of celibacy yet wants to assert his sexual rights) while conveniently forgetting gross injustices in American history like slavery.

King Arthur's officer selection provides another example of ways in which the monarchy fails to serve the interests of its citizens. He follows Hank's suggestion that all candidates be examined, but the only qualification he looks for is four generations of noble blood. Although the noble candidate doesn't know much about military matters, he has the right family. In contrast, the West Point candidate Hank brought is literate and well versed in military history, theory, and technology, Arthur refuses to commission him because he doesn't have noble blood.

The examination of the two candidates is hardly competitive: Arthur's candidate outclasses the other by the criteria of nobility, while Hank's excels according to the merit, intelligence, and education. By showing the ineptitude of Arthur's candidate, this episode adds to the book's critique of monarchy compared to meritocratic democracy. Notably, Hank shames a nobleman to prove that blood alone (nature) doesn't qualify a person for anything. Excellence requires training, too.

Eventually, Hank hits on a solution by suggesting that King Arthur select officers for a "King's Own Regiment," stocked entirely with men of noble birth. The rest of the standing army will be commanded by nobodies forced to do the dirty work of war without aristocratic independence. When the King's Own want a break, the nobodies will take over. The King's Own is also a convenient place to stash princes of the royal blood, who are currently supported by taxes on the people. Hank will give them the option to exchange this public support with a special "gaudy and awe-compelling" rank in the King's Own. He has no doubt that they will jump at the opportunity thanks to the special reverence it will earn them.

Hank's solution to the question of the army officers shows his capacity as a political operator. It also allows him to isolate his rivals—those whom he sees as underqualified but who outrank him in the social hierarchy—in one, relatively powerless group. Again, Hank and the book criticize the uselessness of a hereditary ruling class by suggesting that the ruling class cares more for showy but ultimately meaningless titles than meaningful work that would actually better society. But it's also notable that, for all his disrespect for the despotism of divinely appointed kings, Hank consults no one but himself when he contradicts the king's will in this way. Although he's trying to replace the monarchy with democracy, he exercises decidedly anti-democratic power.

CHAPTER 26: THE FIRST NEWSPAPER

When Hank shares his plan to disguise himself as a freeman, King Arthur immediately wants to join him. Hank thinks it's a great idea, although he insists that Arthur let Guenever know about his trip and follow through on his scheduled "king's-evil business" first. No one expects Guenever to miss Arthur much (Launcelot is in the Valley), but he can't disappoint the sick people who want the king to touch them in hopes that it will heal them.

Arthur's casual aside about Guenever's neglect of Arthur for Launcelot offers a pointed reminder of the Arthurian mythology in which the affair between the queen and the knight ends up destroying the kingdom. This foreshadows the book's end and calls the efficacy of any of Hank's efforts into question.

Hank attends the king's laying-on of hands as a matter of state; the proceedings are boring to him by now. A doctor certifies that a person is ill, King Arthur touches their sores, and they receive a coin. The whole business used to be very expensive thanks to the gold coins the king handed out. But Hank, who grew up keeping his coins for himself and putting buttons in the charity box, feels that the amount of money isn't important to the invalids. So, he switched the gold coins with nickels. This saves the kingdom a lot of money. Hank claims that the king "cured" many people because they believed sincerely enough that his touch was healing. Their belief is rooted in their faith in the monarchy; if the people stopped believing that the king could take care of them, the monarchy would topple.

The tradition of a king laying hands on people suffering from scrofula—a skin infection that causes unsightly rashes—dates to the 11th century. For Hank, watching Arthur lay hands on ill peasants illustrates two points: first, it confirms the importance of belief to authority. Arthur's power lasts only as long as people continue to believe that he's able to take care of their needs. Second, it highlights the superstitious beliefs of uncivilized people—whom the book generally sees as anyone who doesn't conform to Hank's 19th-century American ideals.

Something new happens to interrupt Hank's boredom: the cry of a boy hawking the "Camelot *Weekly Hosannah and Literary Volcano*" newspaper. Immensely pleased, Hank buys a copy. It's written in the best style of the 19th-century press. Headlines about Merlin's embarrassment and the little social interest pieces are familiar to Hank, but they now sound discordant to him. He reads about Sir Launcelot defeating King Agrivance of Ireland; a search for the missing Sir Sagramore; and the adventures of many other knights. The paper even has a printed schedule of King Arthur's daily visits to the park.

The arrival of the newspaper—a modern invention—mercifully interrupts Hank's boredom with the medieval proceedings. Up to this point, Hank has never questioned the superiority of his 19th-century ideas, but the newspaper's tone strikes an incongruous note. This suggests, on the one hand, that Hank is assimilating to medieval culture. But on the other, it also raises questions about whether 19th-century, new world inventions (such as the sensationalist, often inaccurate "yellow" journalism) are always as superior as Hank believes.

A gaggle of curious monks interrupts Hank's eager reading. Hank explains that the thin material is paper (the monks mistook it for cloth); it's covered in reading material (they can read Latin but not English); that there are 1,000 exact copies of the issue; and that they were printed on a press rather than being copied by hand (the only way the monks know to copy books). Hank reads the account of the well's restoration aloud, and the monks are impressed with its accuracy. Their excitement and interest in the newspaper makes Hank as proud as a new mother is of her baby.

The monks' interest begs the question of who makes up the newspaper's intended audience. Most of the medieval citizenry remain illiterate, and although Hank has established underground schools, he never shares details about how many people they educate. Thus, when he shows off the multiple innovations that the newspaper represents—the manufacture of paper, movable type printing, and mass, non-Latin literacy—it is unclear how these innovations will affect a medieval society yet unprepared for them. Nevertheless, the newspaper proves that Hank can accomplish his goal of introducing the nineteenth century to the sixth.

CHAPTER 27: THE YANKEE AND THE KING TRAVEL INCOGNITO

Around bedtime, Hank takes King Arthur up to his room and gives him an awkward haircut to help him better blend in with the commoners. Dressed in plain **clothing**, they can easily pass for farmers, shepherds, artisans, or other types of common people. They set out before dawn, with Hank carrying a backpack full of food to transition Arthur from his royal diet to the plainer fare of the poor. When they stop to eat, Hank takes the opportunity to withdraw from the king to sit and rest; customarily, he stands in the king's presence.

The ease with which Arthur and Hank can change their appearances to conform to expectations of commoners suggests that there is very little that sets them apart from everyone else, despite Arthur's royalty and Hank's ongoing, egotistical emphasis on his own superiority to all the medieval "savages." But the fact that Hank continues to show respect by standing in Arthur's presence suggests that he's adopted a more deferential attitude toward royalty than he'd like to admit.

But the sound of approaching voices interrupts Hank's rest. A train of nobles, servants, and baggage-mules appears in the road. Hank rushes back to the king to get him on his feet and remind him to show deference to the approaching nobles. Arthur does his best, although his posture isn't very humble at all. One of the passing noblemen, angered by this affront, raises his whip, and Hank jumps to take the blow for the king.

The beginning of the road trip suggests the power of training to direct a person's actions: King Arthur's royal training means that he's accustomed to receiving deference, not giving it. And it's incredibly difficult for him to change his habits. Yet again, despite his distaste for monarchy, Hank's willingness to protect Arthur with his own body demonstrates the respect he has for the king.

Arthur naively wanders in and out of mischief for the next few days, taxing Hank's patience and energy. After the king procures a dagger from a smuggler (commoners aren't allowed to have weapons) he wants to know why Hank doesn't just stop him when an inconvenient idea pops into his head. Taken aback, Hank stammers that he can't read the king's mind, only to realize that Merlin has claimed to be able to do so. Frantically trying to retain his reputation, Hank explains to the king that he's out of practice with prophesying almost-current events. He's better with the far distant future, even up to 1300 years hence. This surprises Arthur, who thinks it should be easier to prophesy the near feature. But he accepts Hank's explanation and eagerly eats up the wonders Hank tells him about the future.

Arthur's question to Hank shows the extent to which the citizens of the sixth century believe in his power. Because Hank knows that his power depends on others' belief to sustain it, he must quickly reassert his skills in Arthur's eyes. But in claiming that he's better at prophesying certain events—things so far in the future that Arthur will never have a chance to verify them—Hank essentially recreates the performance of the rival magician he clashed with in the Valley of Holiness. While this suggests the gullibility of simple medieval minds, it also offers a timely reminder that the foundation of Hank's power is fragile.

Whenever a knight-errant passes by, Arthur's posture betrays his pride and his martial desire to challenge the man to a fight. Hank usually gets him out of the road in time. But on the third day, a rather spectacular incident occurs. Hank trips and goes flying. Nothing happens, but the near miss convinces him that it's too dangerous to be carrying a dynamite torpedo around with him. As he's thinking what to do with it, two knights-errant approach. Arthur, reverting to his royal training, expects them to turn aside. When they don't, the knights' horses nearly run over Arthur. Arthur hurls epithets at the knights, prompting them to charge at him, intending to strike him down where he stands. In the nick of time, Hank throws the torpedo at the horses' feet.

Arthur's inherent nobility continues to make it hard for him to show the proper deference and suggests that maybe something deeper in his character—and not just training—informs his attitude. The nearly exploded torpedo metaphorically foreshadows the powder keg conditions that Hank's attempts to modernize medieval society are slowly creating. When Hank uses the torpedo—to spectacular effect—he demonstrates his unquestionable superiority to the knights. But his dominance lies in the field of killing and destruction, not in creating a better world.

Fragments of horse and knight flesh rain down on Hank and a stunned Arthur. There's a hole in the road that no one will be able to explain. As the pair travel on, Hank explains that this miracle depends on a particular set of atmospheric conditions, so it's unlikely he'll perform another one like it any time soon.

Having just had to explain away the evident limits on his magical ability to mind-read to Arthur, Hank takes a proactive stance here to explain why he won't be able to deploy another miracle (at least until he gets another torpedo from his weapons factory). Again, the knights' gruesome end points toward Hank's power being destructive, not creative.

CHAPTER 28: DRILLING THE KING

By the fourth day of the trip, Hank knows he must rehearse Arthur's peasant act until it's finally convincing. The king's **clothing** is right, but his bearing is too "straight" and "confident." Hank demonstrates the downtrodden demeanor of the lower classes then asks Arthur to practice it himself. Arthur quickly masters the details, but his performance is so careful that it still doesn't look natural. Hank decides that they'll spend the whole day practicing.

Arthur's clothing indicates lowly status externally, but his attitude and character suggest his noble upbringing. The amount of effort required to teach (or retrain) him to emulate the lower classes' downtrodden demeanor points to the uphill challenge Hank faces in overcoming medieval attitudes and biases. And Arthur's ultimate failure to make his commonness look unrehearsed suggests that there might be an inherent superiority or nobility to his character.

Hank asks King Arthur to demonstrate how he would approach a hut situated nearby. Arthur's instinct is to demand that the "varlet" who lives there bring him a seat. Hank explains that common folk address each other as "friend" or "brother." He points out that Arthur has forgotten to ask for a second seat for Hank (with whom he is pretending to be equal) and informs him that he will have to enter the house to partake of whatever hospitality—and filth—he finds there.

Hank's drills also have the effect of forcing Arthur to adopt (however temporarily) a more democratic attitude, one that holds Hank as an equal, even though he lacks noble blood. The activity also paints Hank's ideal vision of the world: one where all men are friends and brothers and where everyone sits at the same table.

As Arthur resumes practicing his downtrodden peasant attitude, Hank encourages him to imagine a life completely unlike his own, one in which he is in debt, out of work, and unable to feed his children. Arthur's lack of life experience limits his ability to empathize. In contrast, Hank has lived the life of a manual laborer and knows how degrading it can be. He prefers his current, extremely pleasurable "intellectual" work. It's just an unfair part of life that the more pleasurable jobs seem to pay better.

To Hank's frustration, Arthur demonstrates a nearly complete inability to imagine himself in the commoners' shoes. In contrast, Hank understands being downtrodden and refuses to step into that role again. But he has his own gaps in understanding and finds it as hard to conceive of the nobility's feelings as it is for Arthur to imagine peasants' feelings.

CHAPTER 29: THE SMALLPOX HUT

By midafternoon, Hank thinks King Arthur's disguise might fool people. They approach the nearby hut, which is shrouded in unnatural silence and stillness. Nobody answers their loud knocking, but Hank pushes his way in through the slightly opened door. A woman in the shadows begs for their mercy in a weak voice. She tells them that all her valuables are gone and that she's under the Church's ban. Talking to her could get Hank in trouble with the religious authorities. But he insists on helping her, and when she asks for water, he rushes to collect some from a nearby stream.

The woman in the smallpox hut, like the prisoners in Morgan's dungeons, demonstrates the extent of medieval cruelty, which the book casts as the cruelty of power concentrated and unjustly used by the Church and nobility. In the medieval period, being "banned" by the Church meant being exiled from spiritual, social, and economic activities, since the Church exercised authority over almost the entire society.

Hank returns to find King Arthur inside opening the shutters. The new light reveals that the woman is dying of smallpox. Hank's first instinct is to get Arthur outside, beyond risk of infection. But, insisting that it would be shameful for a king to show fear, Arthur insists on remaining to help. The woman asks them to check the loft, and Arthur goes to the ladder, passing the body of the woman's husband on the way. The woman expresses her gratitude that her husband has been released from suffering. Even if he's in hell, he's finally beyond the reach of abbots or bishops.

Smallpox is an incredibly contagious, often deadly viral illness that ran rampant in Europe during the Middle Ages and in America until the middle of the 20th century. In this moment, Arthur behaves with courage and humanity, showing readers why Hank so respects him, and suggesting that something might genuinely distinguish his character as truly noble.

King Arthur returns from the loft carrying the body of a teenaged girl, dying of the same illness as her parents. He places her in her mother's arms, gently telling her that her other daughter lies dead in the loft. Caressing her daughter, the woman tells her family's tragic tale. They struggled but made a successful living until the lord of the manor planted some fruit trees on their farm. Since they only lease the land and the lord owns it, it was his right to do so. But when someone cut the trees down and her three sons ran to report the crime, her sons were imprisoned for it.

Even though smallpox points towards a common humanity—King Arthur is as susceptible to the illness as the poorest of the poor—the rest of the woman's sad tale emphasizes the abuses and injustices that an unchecked aristocracy and Church can inflict on the powerless. Although the family were so-called "freemen," they were still subject to the authority of the local lord and had no redress when he first stole their land and then falsely imprisoned their sons.

Thus, the woman, her husband, and their two daughters were left to harvest a crop that the family of seven had planted. Then, they were fined for sending a smaller harvest—which only happened because they were too busy helping harvest the lord's crops to tend to their own, which subsequently died. Then the bishop and the lord claimed their meager stores for taxes. The family was placed under interdict (barred from participation in the Church) when the traumatized and ill woman uttered a blasphemy in front of the priest. She tried to nurse her family through the illness, but she had to watch as they slowly died, one by one. Now in the present, the woman hears her last child's death rattle and bursts into tears.

This story suggests the ways in which the feudal system was set up to benefit those at the top of the hierarchy exclusively—hence the family was punished doubly, first by the loss of their sons and then for their consequent drop in productivity. The Church, instead of offering succor and charity, compounded the problem when it proved itself to be as greedy and heartless as the lord of the manor, demanding its full allotment of taxes despite the family's trials. And then, when the woman dared to voice her frustration, the Church punished her further by an essentially unjust, antidemocratic system.

CHAPTER 30: THE TRAGEDY OF THE MANOR HOUSE

Hank and King Arthur stay with the woman until she dies around midnight. Since the family died outside of the Church's grace, they won't get a Christian burial, so they leave the bodies in the house. Hearing footsteps, Hank and the king hide behind the hut. The woman's three sons have come to tell their family that they've escaped but must run away immediately. As Hank and Arthur steal away from the hut, Arthur frets that the boys escaped justice and insists that they should bring them back to their lord.

The overreach of the Church into the lives of its subjects doesn't end at death but follows them to the grave; having died on the wrong side of religious authority, the Church denies the family the rites they believe will allow them admittance to heaven. But despite the pathos of the woman's story—and the clear evidence she presents that her sons were unjustly accused—Arthur can't overcome his noble bias to image granting them mercy.

Although Hank recognizes that King Arthur is a product of his upbringing, Arthur's unjust beliefs still annoy him. The sight of fire in the distance silences their argument. It reminds Hank of his insurance business. Although the Church shut down his fire and life insurance products as "insolent attempt[s] to hinder the decrees of God," his accident insurance is still going strong. Knights-errant live dangerous lives and are happy to buy policies for injury and accident. Hank and Arthur are making their way through a thick forest toward the fire when a flash of lightning illuminates a man's body hanging from a tree.

The fire stops the nascent argument between Hank and Arthur over the injustice of laws that automatically and unthinkingly privilege the nobility. It also gives Hank an opportunity to brag about more of his 19th-century innovations. Yet again, the good that these innovations add to medieval society is questionable. They undoubtedly enrich Hank (helping him to extend his influence). But insurance doesn't improve the safety or the lives of the knights-errant. Yet again, Hank's innovations allow him to benefit from destruction.

Hank and King Arthur pass six more bodies in the woods, as a once-distant murmur grows into the roar of a mob hunting down men and women in the forest. Near dawn, as the commotion dies down, they sneak toward the nearest village, stopping when they reach the humble cottage of a charcoal burner and his wife. There, King Arthur and Hank sleep until the afternoon.

The incident of the fire and the bodies in the forest baffles and alarms Hank and Arthur, men used to controlling their destinies. This foreshadows the events that will unfold out of their adventure in disguise as commoners, in which they will increasingly find themselves at the mercy of others.

When Hank and King Arthur wake, the wife (later identified as Phyllis) details the previous night's events. After dark, the manor house went up in flames. People rushed to rescue the family. They couldn't find the lord in the house, although two yeomen died searching for him. His body, bound, gagged, and stabbed, was later found lying in the darkness beyond the house. Suspicion fell on a local family he'd recently mistreated, and the mob began to hunt down their friends and relations.

Hank's casual renaming of the peasants provides another example of his assumption that the world belongs to him to remake. "Yeoman" is another (medieval) word for "freeman," and the fact that even the freemen consider their lives less valuable than the lives of their masters shows the degree to which the feudal system has trained everyone to conform to the status quo.

In the present, Phyllis's husband (later identified as Marco) returns with more information. In addition to the two yeomen, 13 prisoners died in the fire, and the mob hanged or killed 18 other prisoners. Hank wants to know why the prisoners died. It didn't occur to Marco or anyone else to release them, since they might have escaped. In fact, as Arthur points out, three of them did escape and should be caught and punished for murdering their lord. Hank steers the conversation in another direction. Meanwhile, he considers how quickly the commoners turned on one other at the behest of the lord's family.

The deaths of the prisoners and innocent villagers in addition to the yeoman reinforces the idea that the lives of the non-noble classes are worthless and expendable. None of the rescuers even thought to release the prisoners, showing the degree to which they have been trained to support their noble masters. And this episode shows an important rift between Arthur and Hank. Both know that the smallpox victim's sons are the perpetrators, but their divergent values make them each want to approach the situation differently.

The commoners' instinctive willingness to turn on one other in ways that serve the interests of the aristocracy reminds Hank of the "poor whites" in the American south who sacrificed their lives to protect the interests of the slave-holding upper classes. Arthur interrupts Hank's reverie, impatiently insisting that they pursue the murderers. To placate Arthur, Hank offers to show Marco the direction he thinks they murderers went.

Hank's connection between the way that the powerful abuse and manipulate the powerless in the medieval world and in his own world suggests that some injustices transcend simplified divisions like "Old Order vs. New World." The system's ability to indoctrinate its participants means that Marco's actions—however unwilling—will reinforce the status quo that Arthur wants to defend.

But when they leave the house, Hank makes it clear he has no intention of helping anyone catch the "poor lads." Marco is relieved, and he unburdens his soul to Hank, explaining that he participated in the mob because showing insufficient zeal for the cause would have brought him under suspicion. This whole affair has confirmed Hank's desire to rid England of the monarchy as soon as he can.

Marco explains how the feudal system (or, by extension, any government) requires complicity for safety. He provides a sympathetic explanation of how the freemen can be induced to operate against their own best interests. Fed up with the injustice he sees, Hank reiterates his desire to overthrow the monarchy.

CHAPTER 31: MARCO

Marco and Hank stroll toward the village. This allows them to pretend that they've summoned the authorities and set them after the young men. And it allows Hank to observe the sixth century's caste-based behaviors. Marco shows reverence to the clergy and aristocrat; he's friendly with the freemen; and he despises the slave. As they walk, a mob of children bursts out of the woods screaming for help. The men follow them into the woods to discover that the mob of children has nearly killed one of their members by hanging him from a tree with a bark rope.

Marco's behavior toward the different levels of feudal society and the children's cruel game both point to the strength of training in determining a person's behavior in the world. But he also leans on his own slim superiority as a freeman over the slaves, suggesting that caste identification may be more inherent in humanity (and thus harder to overcome) than Hank assumes. In light of this behavior, it's important to remember that Hank possesses unshakable belief in his own superiority.

One matter on which Hank questions Marco is that of wages. As a good economist, Hank understands that it's not the sheer amount of money one has that matters, but the purchasing power of that money. And speaking of money, he's grateful to note that the new American denomination, coins, are in wide circulation there. While Marco haggles with a shopkeeper, Hank visits the local goldsmith and asks if he can make change for a $20 gold piece.

Hank can't win his argument with Marco, since his position is based on post-medieval economic theories Marco doesn't understand. This offers a pointed reminder about the limits of Hank's power—which he has only as long as he convinces people of his superior understanding or power.

The most interesting villager Hank meets is Dowley, the blacksmith. Dowley is wealthy (by village standards) and respected, and Hank invites him (and the head mason and wheelwright) to come to dinner at Marco's on Sunday. Marco is pleased when Dowley accepts—then immediately terrified at the prospect of the cost he will incur. Hank insists that he will pay the entire bill to repay Marco and Phyllis for the hospitality they've shown to him and Jones (his alias for King Arthur).

Hank likes Dowley because he exemplifies the traits of the self-made man that Hank wants to turn out in his factories. But he also wants to show off and his desire to flaunt his wealth points towards personality traits (egotism, competitiveness) that bump against his democratic ideals and start to cause him increasing trouble from this point.

Marco and Phyllis wear the coarse, heavily patched **clothing** of the commoners. Hank wants to get them each a "new suit." Hank invents a backstory for Jones (Arthur), claiming that he's a farmer who sometimes gets a big head. But Arthur is also deeply grateful for the hospitality and has asked Hank to demonstrate it by buying new clothes for Marco and Phyllis. They mustn't let on that Hank told them it was Jones's idea, though, due to the delicacy of Jones's feelings. This not only provides the excuse for the gift but covers any mistakes the king might make in his poor-farmer act.

As an easily visible marker of status, clothing allows the medieval population to quickly pigeonhole each other in the social hierarchy. Thus, Hank's desire to redress Marco and Phyllis runs parallel to his desire to elevate the status of the common man socially and political in medieval England. His attribution to Arthur further suggests that the king's freeman act still hasn't improved very much.

Hank can't do anything quietly and without theatrical flair. He flashes his money at a shopkeeper, then he orders all the necessary items for the dinner. The goods will be delivered Saturday afternoon and the bill will follow on Sunday.

Hank's power has grown in direct proportion to the flashiness of his "effects." But these happened under the understanding that he is a sorcerer or "The Boss," not that he's a common man. He's about to test the limits of his authority.

CHAPTER 32: DOWLEY'S HUMILIATION

When Hank's purchases start arriving on Saturday, Marco and Phyllis are completely overwhelmed. It's not just food: Hank bought new furniture, crockery, beer, and the **clothes**. He asks them to keep quiet about his generosity so that he can have a chance to surprise the guests and "show off a little." Marco and Phyllis especially appreciate their new clothes, but Arthur doesn't even notice the difference.

Hank generously rewards Marco and Phyllis, elevating their status in the community. But his capricious generosity benefits only one family, making it look very much like the arbitrary power that medieval nobility and the Church exercise—and that Hank so despises. And Hank's desire to "show off" suggests a need to consolidate his own power as "The Boss."

On the day of the party, Hank encourages Dowley to talk about himself which, as a self-made man, he is only too happy to do. Orphaned at a young age, his hard work earned the attention of a blacksmith who agreed to take him on as an apprentice. Now, he's taken over the trade and married his former master's daughter. They can afford luxuries like white bread every Sunday, salt meat twice a week, and fresh meat twice a month. The wheelwright and mason testify to the fineness of his household furnishings, which include five stools (for three family members), six wooden goblets, and two pewter platters. Despite his greatness, Dowley also wants people to know that he finds all men his equals, even, he insists cordially, Jones (King Arthur).

Dowley's story illustrates the success and social mobility that Hank values. Hank's Yankee and capitalistic past influence his ideas about democratic possibilities. For Hank, material items indicate success. By medieval material standards, Dowley lives quite a comfortable life. But it's beyond impoverished by 19th-century standards. It's also clear that, despite his words to the contrary, he considers himself better than others at the table, including (ironically and humorously) King Arthur.

Dowley finishes boasting, and Phyllis starts to bring out the dinner equipment, starting with the table, a tablecloth (which even the blacksmith can't afford), and six of their eight new stools. Then she brings out the new dishes, wooden goblets, "beer, fish, chicken, a goose, eggs, roast beef, roast mutton, a ham, a small roast pig," and plenty of fine white bread. And when the table is spread, Hank subtly beckons the shopkeeper's son to present the bill, which comes to 39,150 milrays (a denomination unique to Hank's system which are each worth 1/100th of a cent), an amount so great that the shopkeeper expects to be paid on an installment plan. But Hank coolly drops four dollars on the table and tells the shopkeeper's son to keep the change.

In contrast to Dowley, Hank shows off almost unimaginable wealth. While generosity motivates him to a certain extent, the desire to be admired and assert his superiority animates his actions as well. His public receipt of the bill—including having it read aloud—demonstrates this quite clearly. Hank intends this effect, like the others, to raise him in the estimation of his audience. Then, he plans to use his newly raised authority to influence them. And this certainly shows him to be a wealthy man.

The guests are falling out of their chairs in amazement when Hank completes the show by handing Marco and Phyllis each a miller-gun (a money-dispensing device of his own design) loaded with fifteen cents. Hank's triumph is complete, and Dowley is "mashed." For all his boasting, the entire cost of his family's extravagances is only about sixty-nine cents, and Hank has spent four dollars on one meal and shown how little such expenditures worry him.

Hank, knowing that no mere commoner, however well off by medieval standards, can have access to the wealth his four dollars represents, asserts his dominance over Marco, Dowley, and everyone else at the table. But raising others' opinion of him comes at the cost of humiliating them, which leaves Hank in an elevated, but also exposed position.

CHAPTER 33: SIXTH-CENTURY POLITICAL ECONOMY

Hank has humiliated Dowley. But his evidently great wealth has also earned the blacksmith's respect. If Hank only had a noble title, he could have earned "adoration" as well. The British won't have shaken their love of their oppressive aristocracy even by the 19th century. Arthur leaves the table to take a post-dinner nap, and the talk turns to the wages under the local king—whose lands are governed by the feudal or "protection" system—compared to the wages in Camelot, where "free trade" flourishes. Dowley and his neighbors earn many more cents per week for their labor (he can even afford to pay his men more than the going rate), so they conclude that protection is superior. Hank tries to explain that total wages don't matter as much as their purchasing power; under free trade, workers earn fewer cents, but they can afford more with them.

While Hank uses Dowley's humiliation to reflect on the British hereditary love of aristocracy (thus contributing to the book's ongoing critique of old world, especially British, society), it also sounds like he would almost like to have the noble title that would earn him Dowley's adoration as well as respect. This is thus one of many points in the book where Hank's desire for personal power and respect runs up against his professed democratic values, suggesting that he values personal authority more after all. In his usual fashion, however, he follows his show with an attempt to educate or overwrite medieval values—in this case with a 19th-century, American-based economic lesson.

But Dowley's fails to understand that the value of money can vary from one kingdom to the next. Hank is the "best-informed man in the entire world," yet an ignorant blacksmith has won the argument with his irrational beliefs. Never one to allow another man to best him, Hank takes one more line of attack. Citing the unwritten law of advancing wages, he announces that he can predict what they will be many hundreds of years into the future. Hank whisks his audience through the centuries and predicts that, 1300 years or so in their future, a "mechanic" (skilled laborer) will make 200 cents in a day. They are flabbergasted at the idea; two dollars is more than a sixth-century earl earns in a day.

But Hank's attempts to educate the villagers prove futile; they either cannot understand or accept his arguments. This irks Hank and wounds his pride. Having failed to convince via rational argument, he refuses to step down, intent on imposing his 19th-century worldview on people he perceives as ignorant natives. He thus falls back on his stage persona as a magician and leverages the medieval gullibility and superstition he so disrespects to soothe his own ego and make his point.

Hank also shares that, in the future, it won't be the magistrate who fixes the wages for everyone else. The workers will combine into "trade unions" and negotiate their own pay. In the distant future, Hank promises, a man "will be his own property" and won't be pilloried (exposed to public punishment) for leaving his job. But this information fails to have its intended effect; Dowley is horrified at the thought of an age in which there is so little respect for authority. Hank argues that the pillory should be abolished. In theory, it's a non-capital form of punishment, since it's just supposed to expose the condemned to public humiliation. But in practice, a man so exposed is liable to be killed through the malice or envy of his neighbors, who can take advantage of the opportunity to stone him to serious disability or death.

Hank, invigorated by his success predicting future wages, continues to explain the worker's utopia he sees the 19th century to be. But here he has overshot, apparently having forgotten the power of training to influence people's behavior and beliefs. Rather than being charmed at the idea of a world in which people like them have power, the villagers react with horror at what sounds to them like anarchy. Even Hank's thesis on the cruel and unusual nature of punishment on the pillory fails to move them.

Hank sets up his final blow by pointing to another unfair law: if a person knows about a neighbor's illegal act and fails to report it, the person can be punished for this failure. Isn't it a shame, he asks, that he should be required to report Dowley for illegally paying his employees more than the going rate? Dowley and the others are nearly frightened to death; for an instant, Hank is proud of the finest "effect" he's ever produced. But then, he realizes he's gone too far. These men don't know him, so they have no reason to trust that he *won't* inform on Dowley.

As pervious episodes have demonstrated, Hank only has power so long as people fear and respect him. In his desperate desire to win the argument and to show off his superiority, he overshoots his mark. He earns the villagers' fear—but not their respect. After all, he's only shown his wealth. He hasn't done anything that would appear magical to the medieval mind. Belatedly, he realizes the limits on his own power to change medieval society.

CHAPTER 34: THE YANKEE AND THE KING SOLD AS SLAVES

Hank tries to regain control of the situation with a diversion. The closest one is the miller-gun he gave to Marco, which is still clutched in the man's frozen hand. Hank invented the device himself. It's filled with two sizes of lead shot, one of which represents a mil and one of which represents a milray. A mechanical button allows the device to precisely dispense the tokens. And, since Hank is currently the only person in the world who knows how to make shot, these forms of currency are counterfeit-proof.

Without "magic" to impress his audience, Hank tries to distract them with a sort of automated change-purse he's invented. Notably, despite his oft-stated desire to put power in the hands of the nation's people, Hank proudly explains how he gained control of the economy by switching currency to shot—something that no one else has the means or the knowledge to produce.

Just then, Arthur returns from his nap with an ominous twinkle in his eye. Hank can't prevent him from launching into a lecture on farming that betrays his absolute ignorance of the subject. With a cry that one will betray them and the other is mad, the freemen leap up and attack Hank and the king. Arthur throws himself into the fight with relish and displays his considerable strength and martial skill. The fight devolves into such confusion that the men eventually turn on themselves, allowing Hank and Arthur an opportunity to escape. But no sooner do they reach the shelter of the nearby forest than they hear an approaching mob. Apparently, Marco and Phyllis slipped away from the fight to get help.

Arthur picks an inopportune moment to try his freeman act, and he totally botches it. This yet again points to the power of his training. A few days with Hank can't overwrite or change years of being the king. Luckily for Hank and Arthur, the same mob mentality that allowed these men to turn on their friends and neighbors a few nights earlier after the fire at the manor house kicks in again, and in the confusion, they escape.

Pursued by the villagers and their dogs, Hank and Arthur momentarily gain an advantage by crossing a stream and climbing into a nearby tree using a branch that conveniently hangs over the water. And although it initially appears that their hiding spot has confused the mob, soon enough, someone gets the bright idea to check the higher branches. For a while, Arthur and Hank can hold them off—they do have the high ground, and the villagers can only climb the tree one at a time—but then the mob lights a fire, smoking them out, and forcing Arthur and Hank down from the tree.

For much of the book, Hank has relied on his apparent superiority of wits, intelligence, and education to maintain an edge over a population he judges savage and uncivilized. But without the trappings of power—"the Boss" title, his flashy clothes, or the authority that his closeness to the king grants him—his superiority evaporates entirely.

As Hank and Arthur descend a gentleman named Earl Grip saves them from the mob. Grip generously invites them to join his group, since they are all traveling in the same direction. The next morning, they enter a small town, where the remnants of the slave train Hank encountered on his quest are being sold at auction. Boiling with rage over the injustice of human slavery, Hank is just about to rush the block when Earl Grip's men handcuff Hank and Arthur so that they can sell Arthur and Hank, too, into slavery.

Hank and Arthur both instinctively trust Earl Grip as a man of similar status to themselves in the kingdom. But, evidently forgetting their commoners' disguises, they are horrified and offended when he double-crosses them and sells them into slavery for his own profit.

Hank and Arthur protest that they are freemen. But they are strangers in this village, and unless they have the papers to prove their status, their claims aren't enough to stop the sale. They're no better off than the Black freemen in the American South during the years of slavery. Hank is incensed that he and the king are sold, like swine, at auction, and that the slave driver bought them both at a bargain price: the king for $7 and Hank for $9 when they were easily worth much more.

For a second time, the institution of slavery offers a chance for Hank to dissect the injustices of caste while also insinuating that his nineteenth-century society isn't perhaps so far advanced over the sixth century one as he would like to believe. In both cases, the poor and the downtrodden are subject to the whims of the wealthy and powerful. And Hank's inability to think of himself outside of his economic value—being sold for less than he considers himself worth—implicates him in political and economic structures that underwrite slavery.

CHAPTER 35: A PITIFUL INCIDENT

As Hank, Arthur, and the slaves march toward London, Arthur broods over the insult of being sold for a mere $7. No matter what subject Hank tries to divert him to, he always works back around to this issue. His noble bearing is a mark against him to potential buyers, who are wary of his "thirty-dollar style." To cure this defect, the slave driver spends a week trying to beat him into submission, but he's unable to dampen Arthur's noble spirit. Faced with the knowledge that Arthur will remain a man till he dies, the slave driver gives up.

Although Hank also considered his selling price insulting, he judges Arthur for continually griping about being sold for such a small amount. In part, potential buyers interpret his noble bearing as a defiant attitude. This adds to the sense that Arthur's kingly attitude arises from his character and not just his training and the external circumstance of being given power, since he retains it even when his power is gone. His dignity won't even succumb to violent beatings.

One good thing comes of the experience: Arthur completely reverses his opinion on the question of abolishing slavery, something he refused to even talk to Hank about when they were at Camelot. His change of heart increases Hank's desire to escape. But true to form, he prefers a theatrical, attention-grabbing plan rather than an expedient one. He's even willing to delay their freedom by months for the sake of making a dramatic getaway.

Never one to waste an opportunity, Hank uses the experience to bring about one of his cherished political goals: the abolition of slavery. This also demonstrates the importance of experience to empathy—earlier the king couldn't imagine the life of a commoner or a slave, but having experienced both, he has more compassion. Notably, too, Hank's desire to put on a good show—to shame his captors and increase his own reputation yet further—prevents a timelier escape.

Along the way, they have several adventures that show how brutal and dehumanizing life is in sixth-century Britain. Once, a snowstorm catches the band by surprise on the road. Several slaves die of exposure. While the rest jump about trying to stay warm, a woman rushes into their midst, pursued by a mob that wants to burn her as a witch. The slave driver relinquishes her to the mob after they promise to erect the stake right there, and the heat of her execution prevents the rest of the slaves from dying.

The episodes from the slave drive emphasize how dehumanizing slavery is and highlight the injustice of the medieval society, opposing the old guard's hierarchy to the democratic impulse of Hank's 19th-century America. The slave driver's inhumane but utilitarian use of the alleged witch leans on hyperbole to reinforce the book's anti-superstitious, anti-elitist social commentary.

Then, on the outskirts of London, they watch as a young mother with a baby at her breast is carried to her execution. A priest accompanies the woman and tells her sad tale to the assembled crowd, and Hank paraphrases the priest's words in his account. He notes that sometimes justice fails, as in this case. The woman's husband was (legally) forced into naval service without her knowledge. In his absence, she could no longer support herself and their child, and when she reached a truly desperate stage of poverty and starvation, she stole a piece of cloth which she intended to sell so she could buy some food. The cloth merchant caught her in the act and pressed charges.

For the third time, the book uses the tragic story of an oppressed woman to show the depths of depravity and injustice inherent in feudal society. The book borrows ideas from other time periods to create this vignette—press gangs like the one that forced the woman's husband into the navy were indeed a danger to English men in the 17th-19th centuries. Nevertheless, the story criticizes the cruelty of a system that further represses the powerless and which treats the lives of common men and women as property of the state.

At the trial, the woman admitted her guilt but explained her pitiful extenuating circumstances. Everyone—including the cloth merchant—wanted the judge to show her mercy. But the judge, noting an increase in petty theft, was afraid that leniency would encourage more crime, so he upheld the sentence of death. The cloth merchant was so horrified that he died by suicide.

The pitiable woman exemplifies extenuating circumstances—the idea that the seriousness of her crime and punishment should be considered in light of the challenges that led her to commit it. Yet, the judge, protected by noble privilege and unable to imagine such desperation and hunger, upholds the law and makes an example of the woman.

In the present, the priest contends that the rulers and lawmakers of Britain are guilty of murdering both the merchant and the woman. When the noose is around the woman's neck, the baby is pried from her arms, and as she gives it one last kiss, the priest promises to be its "father [...] friend [...] and mother" until his death. There are no words to describe the look of gratitude the woman gives the priest.

The priest's actions stand in stark contrast to the inhumanity of the judge and the general inhumanity that Hank and the book have attributed to the Roman Catholic Church up to this point. In this way, the priest represents the best impulses of religion—charity, kindness, and love—when it's divorced from the corrupting influence of political and economic power.

CHAPTER 36: AN ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK

In dirty, crowded London, none of the **well-dressed** noble people recognize Arthur and Hank. Hank is relieved, however, to see that Clarence is still carrying on his work, as evidenced by a newspaper boy and a telephone or telegraph line hooked up to a building in town. Hank's escape plan is to pick his and Arthur's locks, beat the slave driver to the point that he's unrecognizable, shackle him as one of the slaves, and triumphantly lead the whole procession to Camelot. For a while, though, he has trouble procuring the necessary tool for lockpicking.

The trip to London allows Hank to narrate the dramatic contrast between the different strata of society. No one recognizes him or Arthur without the symbols of their status, such as the grand clothing their friends wear. However, Hank's ambitions to become the Boss of the whole country aren't yet lost; even in his absence, his underlings have continued to install the machinery of transformation.

One gentleman is particularly interested in buying Hank but not quite willing to pay the slave driver's asking price of $22. But he keeps coming back to haggle, and on one of his visits, while he inspects Hank at close range, Hank steals a pin from his coat. Hank will need to make his escape quickly: the slave driver offers to give the gentleman Hank if he will take the unsellable Arthur in the bargain, all for $22. The slave driver gives the gentleman 24 hours to think it over.

There is no explanation for Hank's extravagant price, but it humorously confirms his elevated estimation of his own importance. The fact that Hank depends on the slave driver and potential buyers to determine his fate reminds readers that, despite his egotism, he is still a human and at the mercy of circumstance.

Hank impatiently waits for the rest of the slaves to settle into a deep sleep, then he picks the locks on his chains. He's about to free Arthur when the slave driver returns, stands absently in the doorway for a moment, then leaves. Hank rushes after him. The night is dark, but he quickly tackles a figure he thinks is the slave driver. As they tussle, the noise draws the attention of onlookers—and their lanterns. Soon, a watchman strikes Hank across the back with a halberd as he takes the two fighters into custody. As Hank worries about what will happen when the slave driver realizes who attacked him, he catches sight of his opponent and realizes it's not the slave driver after all.

In the first half of the book, Hank's power increases as he impresses the gullible medieval populace with his power. But his power depends in part on his visible position in the kingdom and his identity as a sorcerer. Bereft of the marks of rank, it turns out that he is just as subject to random chance and bad luck as any other man. While on the one hand, this might point toward a democratic understanding that all people are created equal, it also emphasizes the ephemeral quality of power.

CHAPTER 37: AN AWFUL PREDICAMENT

Hank spends a miserable night in the city jail. In the morning, when the magistrate hears his case, he claims that he's a slave of the Earl Grip. When the earl was taken ill the previous evening, Hank explains, he was sent to fetch a doctor. It was in the midst of this errand that a commoner engaged him in a fight. The other man interrupts, shouting that Hank attacked him without provocation, but the magistrate finds Hank's tale convincing. Not only does he set Hank free, but he orders the commoner to be whipped as punishment for treating the servant of a nobleman so poorly.

Although Hank frequently criticizes the capricious medieval justice system—which depends on judges' feelings rather than hard evidence—he yet again demonstrates his willingness to abandon his principles for the sake of self-interest when he allows an innocent common man to be whipped for a crime that he didn't commit.

Hank returns to the slave quarters and finds that the slave master has been beaten to death. An onlooker tells Hank that, during the night, the master found his most valuable slave missing. When he started to beat the remaining 15 slaves, they joined forces and killed him. Since it's an open and shut case, all of the slaves have been sentenced to death as soon as officers can find the missing one. A guard has been put on all the city gates, and officers of the watch have enlisted the convicted slaves to help them search for the missing slave.

The mass punishment of the slaves forms part of the book's criticism of slavery and the injustice of hierarchal social systems. But it also highlights Hank's callous attitude towards others. Believing in his own infallible superiority, he risked the lives of everyone on a dramatic escape.

Hank procures a **disguise** at a second-hand clothes seller's shop, then he follows the telegraph line to the local office. He orders the surprised clerk to call Clarence at Camelot. After ordering the clerk to leave, he taps out a coded message, telling Clarence what's happened and asking him to send Launcelot and 500 knights to spring them from jail. Launcelot will be able to recognize Hank by the white cloth wrapped around his right arm. Hank knows it will take the heavily equipped knights most of the day to make the trip on horseback. But he's already eagerly anticipating the theatrics of the knights surrounding the prison and rescuing the king.

Hank's disguise emphasizes the idea presented throughout the book that the clothes make the man. If being dressed as a slave prevented him from being recognized as The Boss, then changing into more boss-like clothes should provide him some measure of authority and protection. Having been disempowered, first by choice (in disguise as a commoner) and then by force (sold into slavery), Hank eagerly anticipates reclaiming his role and authority as The Boss with a flashy rescue.

In the meantime, Hank plans to reveal himself to some of the people he knows in town. But he needs to look more recognizable, so he plans to trade up his **clothes** until he's dressed in his normal, sumptuous garb. But almost immediately, he encounters one of the patrols out looking for him, and the slave accompanying the watchman recognizes him. Hank ducks into a nearby shop. Telling the keeper that he's a disguised officer chasing the escaped slave, he ducks out the back, locking the door behind him. He's made a "picturesque" excuse rather than a "plausible" one. The officer easily sees through it and promptly takes him into custody.

Notably, however, Hank's desire to create picturesque effects rather than plausible ones has been a source of trouble since he disguised himself as a commoner. This suggests that his authority lies in manipulating others' belief in his power, not in his inherent superiority. But Hank doesn't seem to understand this distinction. He does intuit, however, the importance of looking like the powerful version of himself, so he starts to trade up his clothes slowly.

The slave identifies Hank as the missing man, eager that the person responsible for his death sentence should hang, as well. Hank accepts his logic and doesn't press the matter, but he does promise that they will be free by the morning. The officer of the watch interrupts to point out that the slaves will now be hung today at midafternoon. No further delay is necessary since they've caught Hank. Hank goes weak in the knees; the knights will never arrive in time to save the king, or, more importantly, him. And the baby civilization he's fostering will die.

Bereft of the sources of his authority, Hank agrees with the slave's view of justice: since Hank caused the trouble it's only fair that he is punished alongside the others. But realizing that he's about to die before he can accomplish his effect causes him to confess his true attitude. As a would-be colonizer of the sixth century and feudal society, Hank truly does consider himself the most important person in the kingdom.

CHAPTER 38: SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE KNIGHTS TO THE RESCUE

At around 4:00 in the afternoon, a crowd of Londoners gathers to watch the slaves' execution. As he is lead to the gallows platform, Arthur proclaims himself King of England and threatens to punish everyone responsible for this affair with treason. He's hurt when the people don't recognize him. Three slaves are executed, then the executioners blindfold Arthur and lead him to the rope. Hank instinctively leaps forward to try to rescue the king just as 500 "mailed and belted knights" come tearing down the street on bicycles.

Dressed as a slave, Arthur cannot convince anyone of his identity, and he must reckon with the realization that his power (and Hank's) depends on the belief of others rather than lying in himself alone. But any humility that he might have learned from the experience evaporates when the knights ride into town just in time—a stroke of good luck that depends on his civilizing inventions, like the bicycle.

Hank waves his (cloth-wrapped) right arm wildly in the air, drawing Launcelot's attention, extricates Arthur from the noose and blindfold and shouts that anyone who fails to fall on their knees and salute the king "shall sup in hell tonight!" He always uses grand language when "climaxing an effect." The crowd drops to its knees before the king, notwithstanding his ragged and filthy appearance, and as Hank looks on, he must admit that there really is something "peculiarly grand" about the king's bearing that sets him apart from the common man after all. And he's pleased with the way the situation worked out; it's one of the "gaudiest effects" he ever "instigated."

Hank's flair for the dramatic allows him to seize control of the situation, but not until he has the backing of hundreds of well-armed knights. This suggests that his power lies in his role as the Boss more than in superior intellect or reason. And while the people's recognition of their king partially reinforces the idea that kingship depends on belief—nothing about Arthur has changed, just the people's opinion of social status—it also reminds Hank (and readers) of the inherent noble bearing that Arthur couldn't disguise as a commoner or even as a slave.

CHAPTER 39: THE YANKEE'S FIGHT WITH THE KNIGHTS

A few days later, Hank is back at Camelot, perusing the paper. It announces the date of his long-delayed fight to the death with Sir Sagramore, which will take place on the 16th of the month. He pastes into the narrative a torn-away clipping of the editorial Clarence wrote about the affair, which makes several novel points about this duel. First, spectators will have to pay for admission, and the money raised will go to the hospital fund—Hank has established the hospital as a democratic charity, which will help anyone regardless of "race, creed, condition, or color." Second, readers might "want to make a note" that the contestants can use any weapon they choose.

The book reproduces not just the pertinent column of the newspaper, but also ragged edges of the columns to the left and right, adding a charming touch of realism to narrative and reminding readers that the book is meant to be a transcription of Hank's first-person narrative. Even before the duel begins, the article asserts that Hank has delivered Camelot into a new age, with new considerations such as state charity, the theoretical equality of all people in the kingdom, and a relaxing of the old rules of combat.

No one in Britain can talk about anything but the upcoming contest, which is not just a duel between men but between great magicians. Merlin is enchanting Sir Sagramore's weapons and armor, and Hank has already shown himself to be one of the "master enchanters of the age." What no one else knows, however, is that it's also a contest between "hard unsentimental common sense" and chivalry. Hank will either destroy the institution of the knighthood—or the institution will destroy Hank. For this reason, any knight with "ambition or caste feeling" is there the day of the contest, ready to offer their own challenges to Hank if Sir Sagramore fails.

The duel operates on three levels. The first two—Hank vs. Sagramore and Hank vs. Merlin—are common knowledge. Only Hank and a select group of his followers understand the third, a contest between sixth-century chivalric culture and Hank's vision of nineteenth-century society. Although the general public remains unaware of Hank's colonial project, his plan to replace their society with his own, but the knights' massive show of support for Sagramore suggests an intuition of how much rests on the outcome.

Sir Sagramore looks grand in his heavy plate **armor** on his armored horse. In contrast, Hank sits astride an unarmored horse wearing nothing more than a "gymnast's costume" of a unitard and shorts. The king gives the signal, and the contestants charge towards each other. On three separate passes, Hank and his nimble mount dodge the tip of Sagramore's lance at the last minute. This angers Sagramore, who chases Hank around the grounds for a few minutes before returning to his end of the lists. This time, when he charges, Hank lassoes the knight and pulls him off his horse. No one has ever seen a show like this, and the crowd goes wild.

Even the clothes Hank and Sagramore wear point toward the gulf between their sixth- and nineteenth-century worldviews: Sagramore's grand, nearly impenetrable armor protects him but also makes him clumsy and slow. Hank's exposed body allows him to be nimble and quick. During the duel, Hank has the opportunity to achieve one of his most cherished goals, which he's been working at obliquely for years: not just defeating, but utterly humiliating the knighthood.

With Sir Sagramore unhorsed, the field is open for other knights to challenge Hank, and he quickly dispatches Sir Hervis de Revel, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and Sir Galahad in the same way. When Sir Sagramore emerges from his tent to offer a second challenge, this time with a sword, he catches Hank off guard. This gives Merlin the opportunity to sneak up and snatch away Hank's rope. King Arthur is anguished to discover that Hank has lost his weapon and doesn't have a spare with him, but according to the rules of engagement, Arthur has no choice but to give the signal for the round to begin.

The deck seems to be stacked against Hank in this second challenge, which Sagramore intends to take place in close quarters and without the benefit of Hank's weapon. The fact that Merlin resorts to cheating suggests his understanding that he can't win against Hank in a fair fight. Like Hank, Merlin depends on his reputation for inspiring fear and others' belief in him to hold power. And like Hank, he's willing to cheat to get power.

This time, when Sir Sagramore charges, Hank stands his ground while the anguished crowd screams at him to save himself. When Sagramore is nearly upon him, Hank snatches a revolver from his belt, fires once through Sagramore's heart, and hides the gun again before anyone knows what's happened. Now that Sagramore is dead, it is Hank's right to offer a new challenge, and he challenges "the chivalry of England" to fight him at once. Instantly, hundreds of knights clamber into their saddles. Hank fatally shoots one after another, but he only has 12 bullets. Fortunately, after the ninth knight falls, the rest give up. Chivalry is dead; the "magic of science" has carried the day against the "magic of folderol."

Hank's fights are never fair, thanks to the advantage of his 19th-century education and technological know-how. And it suits his sense of the dramatic for all to seem lost for him in the moment before he evidently fells the mighty Sir Sagramore by an act of magic. Of course, it's not magic, just 19-century, technologically underwritten violence; Hank brought a gun to a lance-and sword fight. Thus, his challenge to the chivalry generally not only allows him to assert the dominance of science and nineteenth-century ways over magic and sixth-century superstition, it's also a mini version of the wholesale devastation his technology can create.

CHAPTER 40: THREE YEARS LATER

Having broken "the back of knight-errantry," Hank unveils all the schools, mines, **factories**, newspapers, printing presses, telegraphs, telephones, and steam- and electric-powered technology he's been developing in secret. He publishes an open challenge to any knight, but after three years, the chivalric class has "shut up" instead of "put[ting] up." Within three years, the kingdom is establishing rail service, and Hank finds useful employment for the nobility there. He keeps the knights busy as "missionaries," since they're already good at wandering about. They're tasked with getting people to try innovations and allowed to "remove" those who refuse.

Hank shows his desire for power and dominance when he crows about not just overcoming chivalry but also utterly eviscerating it. No one wants to challenge him for power. Having reclaimed his role as the most powerful man in the kingdom, like a colonial power, he rushes to introduce all the technological and social innovations he feels medieval society lacks. His re-employment of the knights as civilization "missionaries" echoes the colonial use of religious missionaries as a tool of cultural change. Notably, in terms of Hank's character, his narrative tends to gloss over the periods of creation, telling them in brief flashbacks like this one. In this way, the book emphasizes Hank's destructive capabilities—which it often describes in detail—over his constructive ones.

Hank has two long-term projects remaining: overthrowing the Roman Catholic Church and replacing it with Protestant denominations and getting Arthur to issue a decree dissolving the monarchy upon his death and establishing an immediate democracy. Everyone will have a vote—at least, every man and every mature woman deemed as intelligent as her sons. Hank is excited for this, the first "complete governmental revolution without bloodshed," and even fancies that he would make a good first president.

But while Hank easily remakes external society, dislodging the monarchy and the Church from their historical seats of power proves to be much harder. He looks forward to an impressive, peaceful revolution, but it has yet to happen. Thinking about it also fires Hank's hunger for power, and he fantasizes about being president—the recognized leader of society, not just the de facto, behind-the-scenes one he's been up to this point.

Clarence is eager for the revolution, too, although he worries that getting rid of the royal family entirely will cause the citizens too much despair. If, as Hank claims, kings are dangerous, Clarence thinks that they could be replaced with cats. Cats would be about as useful as any other royals, with the benefit of being much less expensive to maintain and much less given to imprisoning, executing, or persecuting anyone. But when he promises Hank that this system would be so successful that England would become a "**factory**" supplying all the world's royalties, Hank realizes he is only joking. Hank is disappointed that his protégé could imagine an improvement on the monarchy but be "too featherheaded" to mean it seriously.

Clarence shares Hank's vision for the future and even his industrial sensibilities, imagining England itself as a "civilization factory" in the future, exporting rulers and ideals to the rest of Europe. But he was born and trained in the sixth century, which allows him to see potential pitfalls much more clearly than Hank. While his humorous idea to replace the royal family with cats pokes fun at the very idea of hereditary monarchy, it also offers a pointed reminder that deeply ingrained ideas about social organization are much harder to change than, say, replacing horses with bicycles.

Just as Hank is about to scold Clarence for his jokes, Sandy rushes in. Hank and Sandy's daughter, Hello-Central, is seriously ill with croup. Launcelot, on his way to the Round Table (which is now the stock exchange) is distressed to discover that his "pet" is sick, and he joins Hank and Sandy in nursing the child through her illness. Fortunately, she recovers, but the doctors suggest that Hank and Sandy take her to the seaside for fresh air while she recuperates. The family travels to France.

In marrying Sandy and starting a family, Hank continues to assimilate to his medieval life. But his daughter—named after the 19th-century telephone operator's greeting—offers a continual reminder of the life he lost. Launcelot seems to be a success story for Hank, since he's been able to transfer his aggression from physical combat to fiscal combat on the stock exchange.

After a month, Hank sends the company's vessel back to England for fresh supplies and news. He's particularly anxious to learn the state of his latest experiment: a baseball team. He is trying to redirect the martial and chivalric impulses of the upper classes into athletic competition, and the teams are entirely composed of kings. They all insist on playing in armor, but Hank convinces them to differentiate by teams. One team wears mail, while the other team wears plate armor.

When all is said and done, Hank feels the most pride and excitement for baseball. As a particularly American sport, the baseball team symbolizes the ascendance of Hank's 19th-century, New World, American ideals over the medieval, backward European institutions of monarchy and Catholicism. But it also suggests the essential solipsism of Hank's project: he's recreating the world that he *wants, not necessarily one that's good for everyone's needs.*

CHAPTER 41: THE INTERDICT

Soon after Hank dispatches the ship for England, Hello-Central takes a turn for the worse, demanding all of Hank and Sandy's attention for the next two and a half weeks. Hank explains that Sandy felt honor-bound to stay with him after he rescued her from the ogres, at least until another knight defeated Hank and claimed her. Eventually, he married her out of a sense that it was inappropriate for an unmarried couple to spend so much time traveling together. Thus, at first, he didn't realize what a prize he was drawing. Sandy is "a flawless wife and mother," and he shares a beautiful friendship with her.

Hank's partnership with Sandy was initially utilitarian. Only later did he come to appreciate Sandy for her personality. In a way, Sandy reads as a metaphor for medieval England; Hank is so busy trying to remake it into his image of the perfect 19th-century society that he fails to see and appreciate it for what it is. And even his praise—offered in vague and general terms—suggests that Hank doesn't fully appreciate Sandy.

Sandy named the child "Hello-Central" because Hank would sometimes call that out in his sleep, and she thought he was saying the name of a long-lost darling. When she told Hank, he nearly died from the effort it takes not to laugh at her mistake. And when Sandy first used the telephone, Hank had to make up the quick lie that he'd ordered the phone salutation in honor of their daughter and her namesake.

Sandy's fundamental misunderstanding of "Hello-Central" creates the humor of her daughter's name. And it points to the cultural distance between sixth-century Britain and nineteenth-century America. But, by equating Hank's daughter with his technological innovations, the novel subtly suggests his inability to appreciate what's truly important in life.

When Hello-Central fully recovers, Hank and Sandy feel an enormous sense of relief and gratitude. And then they realize that their ship still hasn't come back, and there are no signs of any British vessels in the Channel either. Not knowing whether an invasion, earthquake, pestilence, or other disaster has struck, Hank leaves Sandy and Hello-Central in the safety of France, returning to England alone. When he arrives, the kingdom shows no signs of life, and Hank soon realizes that the island has been placed under something worse than war: "The INTERDICT!" Hank borrows a **disguise** from one of his servants and carefully makes his way through the dark, desolate, and damaged countryside to Camelot.

In the medieval period, the Roman Catholic Church exercised political authority through the application of "interdicts," which were essentially proclamations that forbade a person, group of people, or country, from participating in the rites of the Church. It's notable that Hank has servants form whom to borrow commoners' clothing; it seems that a desire to grant everyone a vote is, in his mind, compatible with continuing to enforce social subjugation of the lower classes to the needs of the upper classes. And, when it's dangerous to be The Boss, he knows to fade into the background.

CHAPTER 42: WAR!

Hank finds a melancholy Clarence brooding in his quarters. Clarence recognizes his boss instantly, despite the **disguise**. He tells Hank that Guenever and Launcelot's ongoing affair precipitated the disaster. Launcelot shorted a bunch of stocks, which cost Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred (both nephews to the king) a lot of money. Agravaine and Mordred told Arthur about the queen's affair. Arthur set a trap to confirm their story, and Launcelot walked right into it. This plunged the country into civil war, with one faction supporting Launcelot and the other supporting the king. Countless knights have died in battle or as the result of the medieval equivalent of friendly fire.

This passage demonstrates how the novel superimposes Hank's civilizing narrative on the frame of Arthurian mythology. In doing so, it questions the inherent superiority of the nineteenth century to the sixth century; Launcelot's economic violence, allowed by Hank's innovations and the creation of the stock market, has the same effects in this book that his physical violence did in the medieval romances. In the end, Hank's changes have perpetuated the exact same violence they aimed to prevent.

The Church tried to broker a peace, but Sir Gawaine insisted on making Launcelot pay for the accidental deaths of two of Gawaine's brothers. Arthur agreed to join Gawaine's force against Launcelot, and he left the kingdom in the hands of his nephew, Mordred. Mordred tried to turn his temporary power into a permanent kingship by marrying Guenever, but she refused; when Mordred attacked her forces, the Church laid the interdict on the country. Arthur returned, and his forces clashed with Mordred's. Clarence took advantage of the civil war to inaugurate war journalism. Now, Clarence gives Hank a copy of one of the war correspondents' reports of the final battle.

The novel draws this sequence of events directly from Arthurian mythology. Notably, all this happened while Hank was in France with his family, suggesting that his innovations depended more on the strength of his character and his power in the kingdom than on their own inherent benefits to last. Without Hank in place to enforce the social changes, the Church and the formerly embarrassed chivalry quickly reassert their control.

After a mistaken signal set off an epic battle between Arthur's and Mordred's forces, only four men survived: Mordred, Arthur, Sir Lucan de Butlere and Sir Bedivere. Sir Lucan pled for mercy on Mordred's behalf, but Arthur insisted on killing him. They clashed, and Arthur stabbed Mordred clear through with his spear, but with his dying strength, Mordred delt Arthur a grievous blow to the head.

Clarence's war reporting draws language directly from Mallory's version of events in Morte d'Arthur *and suggests the inherent fragility of all political systems. If neither Arthur (the best of all kings) nor Hank (the bearer of unimagined technological progress) could create a stable society, the novel suggests, perhaps such a society simply isn't possible.*

Hank wants to know how Arthur is doing now, and Clarence explains that Arthur died and Guenever retired to a convent. The Interdict is still in place because it named Mordred and Hank; the Church is rallying the kingdom's remaining knights to ride against Hank. On their side, Hank and Clarence have few faithful followers remaining. When the Interdict fell, most of the people in the "schools [...] colleges [...and] vast workshops" returned quickly to their superstitious ways. The Church also engineered Hank's absence, planting doctors at Camelot to encourage a trip for Hello-Central's health and making sure that his ship was piloted back to England by sailors faithful to the Church's cause.

The people's reaction to the Interdict proves how hard it is to re-educate people out of their basic, instinctive social training. As soon as the Church moved against Hank, old grievances and fears reared their heads, and the populace turned on the formerly respected (if not adored) Boss. Therefore, only a small number of faithful followers remain with Hank and Clarence; even the men Hank personally selected for his factories because of their anti-monarchial or pro-democratic beliefs quickly reverted to their old ways.

Fortunately, Clarence has been busy. He selected 52 faithful followers between the ages of 14 and 17—old enough to fight, and young enough to have been spared the indoctrination of Church and aristocracy. If someone was trained to respect these institutions from birth, Hank's schools won't be able to reeducate them. Clarence established a secret base in Merlin's old cave, protected by electric fences. Hank quizzes Clarence on the set-up of these fences, and when he learns that Clarence has set them up in a way that will waste electricity needlessly, he explains how to rewire them more economically. Clarence and the boys have also set up the gatling guns and seeded the ground outside the fences with "glass cylinder dynamite torpedoes" (land mines).

Training, as Hank previously maintained, is key. Only boys whom Hank and Clarence were able to train from a very early age have remained faithful. Reeducation has limited power. But although Hank, Clarence, and the forces of 19th-century modernity lack numbers, they hold a vast advantage in terms of technology and firepower. And when Hank corrects Clarence's electrical wiring for the sake of economy, he betrays the strength of his own training as an economizing Yankee. Even in this moment of extreme danger, he's worried about his bottom line.

Clarence wants to wait for the fury of the knights and the Church to break over them, but Hank wants to strike first. He does this by issuing a proclamation that, with the "executive authority vested in me" by the king's death, he, "The Boss," declares that the monarchy has lapsed, and that power has returned to "the people of the nation." The nobility, privileged class and "Established Church" are all void; all men are "exactly equal." The people of this new republic must now come together and elect their new representatives. Clarence promulgates the proclamation, and he and Hank retreat to Merlin's Cave.

Incapable of admitting defeat, Hank tries to seize control by attempting to capitalize on the breach that the deaths of the king and his heir apparent caused. The last time Hank challenged the forces of chivalry, he won, and this seems to imbue him with confidence now. But the circumstances have changed; by leaving the kingdom himself for the space of several months, Hank has allowed his own power and authority to lapse. Ironically, he attempts to enforce 19th-century ideals, including equality and democracy, by fiat.

CHAPTER 43: THE BATTLE OF THE SAND BELT

In Merlin's Cave, Hank, Clarence, and their 52 "fresh, bright, well-educated, clean-minded [...] British boys" wait for the onslaught. Hank orders all the factories closed and abandoned with the warning that he will be blowing them up in the near future. In the week they wait for the attack, Hank busies himself with writing, first catching the story of his adventures up to the present moment and then writing letters to Sandy and Hello-Central. The letters make him feel almost as if his family is with him.

Hank and the tiny fragment of medieval England he was ultimately able to adopt his 19th-century ideals wait for the crashing wave of England's chivalry. Hank's account of writing letters to his family, although an aside to the novel's plot, offers a touching description of the power of writing to make distant events and people feel close—a fitting reflection for a work of fiction.

Hank's spies carry news of the gathering forces of knights and priests, and Hank slowly starts to realize how much of a "donkey" he was to believe that just introducing the idea of a republic would be sufficient change society. The spies tell Hank that as soon as the gentry and the Church expressed their displeasure, the remaining ranks of society quickly fell into line behind their "righteous cause" of killing the republic. Soon enough, the boys realize what Hank already knows: "*All England*—ALL ENGLAND—*is marching against [them]*!" They don't want to destroy their nation or kill their own kin.

Despite his awareness of the power that training holds over people's thoughts and actions, Hank failed to fully account for it in his attempt to impose his 19th-century society on the Arthurian England. With a colonial mindset that his ways were inherently superior, he misjudged how complacent most people were in the old status quo. As soon as the opportunity arises to reclaim their power, the chivalry and nobility seize it, the rest of the country falls into line out of habit.

Hank assures his boys that they will have to do no such thing. Thirty thousand knights march against them, and as soon as they engage with the republican's greater force, the rest of the "civilian multitude" will abandon them. Sufficiently heartened, the boys shout their refusal to retire from the field of battle. When the sun rises on the "big day," it reveals a host of knights approaching the cave like a tsunami. When they are close enough that the defenders can see the plumes on their helmets, a trumpet sounds and the cavalry breaks into a gallop. When the reach the yellow belt of sand, they trigger the land mines and are turned into "a whirling tempest of rags and fragments." Hank choses that moment to remotely detonate the explosives under all of the abandoned "civilization-**factories**."

Having once seized authority from the medieval society by defeating Sagramore and others in combat, Hank confidently predicts that he can do so again. Despite his belief in the power of democracy and the inherent equality and rights of the English citizens, he betrays a profound disrespect for their autonomy in his assurance that, with their leaders gone, they will fall into line behind him again. Hank doesn't see the lesson of how people cling to their old ways, although he has concluded that no remnant of the old order can remain.

It takes half an hour for the smoke to clear away, revealing no living creatures anywhere near the cave, and a new ditch carved out by the explosions. The "destruction of life" is "amazing" and "beyond estimate" since the dead are no longer individuals, only "homogeneous protoplasm." Hank knows that there are no reinforcements and that this is the "last stand of chivalry in England." He issues a congratulatory proclamation to his army for their "brief" and "glorious" conflict. This is, he knows, the only engagement in the war. And it's imperative that they finish the job, since "English knights can be killed, but they cannot be conquered."

Hank's reaction to the knights' deaths shows that he values gaining and maintaining personal power more than he values improving and empowering society at large. Only smoking craters and undifferentiated goo remain as monuments to the productive capacity of Hank's factories. And, by blowing up his factories, Hank literalizes his opinion of medieval society as an undistinguishable mass for him to manipulate rather than a nation of individuals to for him to free.

To prepare for the next attack from the ignorant forces of chivalry, Hank has some of the boys dig a ditch to divert a nearby stream behind the line of the electrified fences. Then he waits for the knights' next move, which he expects will be an attempted sneak attack under the cover of darkness. He drafts a message warning the knights that the strength of their thousands is no match for the 50-odd "minds" in the cave and their only chance for survival is unconditional surrender. Clarence laughs at the message then reminds him what they knights will do: they will disregard the message and likely kill the messenger who brings it.

Hank believes he will win because he can predict what the intellectually inferior forces arrayed against him will do next. To emphasize this point, he drafts a message in which he claims the outright superiority of mind over might. But Clarence, ever the bridge between Hank's 19th-century ideas and the realities of the medieval world, knows that this will change nothing. The knights, determined to protect the way of life they were raised to uphold, will never surrender.

Hank waits in the darkness, straining to hear any approaching knights since the night is too dark to see. When he hears enough commotion to know that the knights are gathering in the ditch, he turns on the power to the two innermost electric fences. He and Clarence approach the fences to watch the show, where they find a knight has already touched the upper wire of the second fence and electrocuted himself. They watch many knights sneak up, swords drawn, only to fall silent and dead with a little zap when they touch the wires. Once the dead bodies clog the space between the second and third fences, Hank turns on the current to the third fence, and so the area in front of the cave gradually fills up with an impenetrable bulwark of corpses.

Hank and the vast army arrayed against him are equally unwilling to surrender and admit defeat. And he has the superior technology to back up his feeling of superiority. Heavy, old-fashioned plate armor protects the knights against attacks by sword or lance. But it renders them vulnerable to electrocution. Hank allows his technology to do the dirty work of killing off the knights one by one. But he doesn't appreciate the importance of the mountain of corpses he's creating.

Feeling that the moment has come, Hank throws a switch and turns on floodlights that illuminate the area outside the cave. The knights who are still alive instantly freeze. Before they have a chance to swallow their surprise and rush the wires (which they would likely have destroyed with a concerted enough force), Hank floods the plain with the water-diverted stream and orders his boys to open fire with the gatling guns. Within ten minutes, 25,000 men lie dead at their feet. This is where Hank closes his account, not wishing to write of a "thing" that happened "by my own fault" within the hour.

In a harshly ironic twist, all of the work that Hank has poured into modernizing medieval England over the course of nearly a decade culminates in an act of utter annihilation. The end of the Battle of the Sand Belt braids together the morals of many of the novel's strands: despite his belief in the superiority of his New World values, Hank realizes that it's hard to create a just society in any century, that the strength of a person's early training is almost impossible to overcome, and that his desire to conquer and impose his will on others has planted the seeds of his own destruction.

CHAPTER 44: A POSTSCRIPT BY CLARENCE

Clarence finishes the tale of the Connecticut Yankee. He recounts how, soon after the end of the battle, Hank decides (over Clarence's objections) to go out and see if there are wounded who need help. They find a still-living knight who stabs Hank the instant he comes close enough to render assistance. Clarence and the boys carry "The Boss" back into the cave and tend to his wound. While he convalesces, Hank finishes up his narrative.

As if to prove the undying moral enmity between the conqueror and the conquered, Hank isn't just trapped by his own destruction. He is also injured while trying to render assistance to the wounded. His recovery from the wound seems to vindicate his quest to change medieval society. Hank and his ideals survive the battle, if only just barely.

Within a few days, Merlin arrives at the cave, disguised as a woman who was left behind when the remnants of the chivalric forces retreated. The **disguise** fools the force in the cave, who are by this point in a desperate trap of their own making. As the dead begin to rot, the victors fall sick. They will either succumb to the "poisonous air" or lose their invincibility by abandoning their fortified position. Hank is on the verge of going out to try and broker a truce when Clarence catches Merlin casting a spell that will put him to sleep for 1,300 years. He is delighted with himself for so slyly conquering the conquerors. In a fit of laugher. he stumbles into the fence, electrocuting himself. In death, his face is frozen in a silent laugh.

But Hank's victory is pyrrhic; he's trapped by his very capability to unleash utter destruction. And while he's stayed one step ahead of Merlin throughout the book, Hank's self-inflicted powerlessness allows the wizard to have the book's last laugh. It's not clear whether Hank's coma results from his injury or Merlin's actions. But, since belief confers authority, the men's belief that Merlin has put their beloved leader to sleep confirms his final power.

Clarence reports that "The Boss" sleeps like a stone and that the remaining forces are giving him one more day to wake. If he does not, they will carry him to a safe corner of the cave. They have all agreed that if any of them escapes, they will note it in the book and then hide the manuscript with Hank, since it belongs to him.

By leaving Hank at the back of the cave, asleep but not yet dead, the novel also makes a final connection between Hank and Arthur. According to Arthurian legend, the king didn't die by Mordred's hand; instead, he was carried to the mythical island of Avalon to recover so that he can return one day when England needs him.

A FINAL P.S. BY M.T.

M.T. finishes reading as dawn is about to break. He finds the door to the stranger's room ajar. Inside, the stranger (Hank) lies in bed, talking to himself in an animated and delirious manner. He hears the narrator and misidentifies him as Sandy. He asks after Hello-Central and complains of terrible dreams about the king's death and a terrible war. Worse, he has dreamed that he was pulled from their century into the future and abandoned 13 centuries distant from her. His words become incoherent, and the narrator knows his death is immanent. Suddenly, he cries out for people to "man the battlements" in his final, unfinished "effect."

M.T.'s postscript pulls back from Hank's narrative and plants doubt in the reader's mind. The impositions of Arthurian mythology and the apparent deliriousness of the stranger in his bed suggest that the story might be entirely fictional. Ultimately, the power of Hank's story lies in his ability to make M.T.—or the modern reader—believe him. Both his death and M.T.'s assurance that this is another "effect" or attempted trick suggest the ultimate insubstantiality of Hank's power.

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